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5 jailed, 45 under investigation in crackdown on fake degrees

Names of people involved to be revealed • Jordan office vows strict procedures

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Five people suspected of holding fake university degrees have been jailed pending investigation and trial and 45 others are under investigation, the head of the National Assembly's educational committee said yesterday. Speaking after a meeting by the committee with the education minister, MP Awdah Al-Awdah said the information was given to the panel by the minister, who added more people are expected to be interrogated.

The issue has stunned the country amid reports that the number of people holding forged university degrees could be as high as 1,000 and that some of them are well-known public figures and others could be in high government posts. Awdah told reporters that the revelation is just the start of the issue and not the end, adding that in the past the very existence of the issue had been categorically denied.

He said that Education Minister Hamed Al-Azmi told the panel that he was not pressurized by anyone to halt the crackdown on fake degrees, and added that the minister vowed to continue investigating the matter. Awdah said the committee has expressed total support for the minister to continue his action and decided to study the possibility of approving new legislation to stop the final appointment of government employees before their degrees are thoroughly investigated. The lawmaker said the committee warned that in case the minister does not continue with the crackdown for any reason, he will be questioned in parliament.

Azmi told reporters that the ministry briefed the committee about its measures on degrees suspected of being fake. The minister said authorities will continue with the measures, adding that the issue is with the public prosecution and that the names of the suspects and details about them will be published after they are convicted by

the court. The public prosecution has already remanded an Egyptian employee at the higher education ministry to 21 days behind bars pending further investigation on suspicion that he helped authenticate several fake degrees in the computerized system of the ministry.

Opposition Islamist MP Osama Al-Shaheen yesterday demanded a thorough revision of the state's administrative systems after holders of fake degrees succeeded in infiltrating the administration. Shaheen said that the fake degrees issue is a criminal and security one and the number of those involved is rising, adding that previous governments should be held responsible for this.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's cultural office in Jordan confirmed yesterday it would implement strict procedures for approving Kuwaiti students' diplomas and screen them before official approval. In a statement in response to media reports about a Jordanian who forged certificates for Kuwaiti students, office attache

Bader Al-Edhaila said the office's strict procedures in dealing with certificates and student documents stand in the way of possible fraud, simultaneously denying that the office has witnessed cases of fake certificates during different stages of study.

Kuwaitis wishing to complete their academic studies in Jordan are urged to be cautious about being scammed by suspicious sites and to follow official channels to obtain a degree, he underlined. He also praised the Jordanian ministry of higher education and scientific research's follow-up on the matter. Last year, the ministry of higher education in Jordan took legal action after a Kuwaiti was swindled by a Jordanian on social media, who offered to provide certificates from Jordanian universities and TOEFL certificates, after a complaint by the victim was filed. More than 4,000 Kuwaiti students are enrolled in Jordanian universities and colleges in various academic disciplines.

Global brands cut ties with blogger over 'racist' video

BEIRUT: Max Factor Arabia and other leading beauty brands have severed ties with a popular Kuwaiti blogger after she said domestic workers should not be given a day off, highlighting resistance to reforms to end labor abuses in the state. Sondos Al-Qattan, whose makeup tutorials endorsing major

brands are followed by 2.3 million Instagram users, has faced a backlash online for criticizing new regulations to protect some 260,000 Filipino domestic workers from mistreatment.

"Max Factor Arabia is taking this incident very seriously and have immediately suspended all collaborations with Sondos," said the company, which had worked with Qattan. "Sondos' comments are personal and do not represent neither the values nor the principles that Max Factor Arabia stands for," it told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in emailed comments yesterday.

Kuwait and the Philippines signed a deal in May allowing domestic workers to retain

their passports, which are usually taken by employers, and to refuse to be transferred to other employers without their consent. This followed a diplomatic row triggered by the discovery of a Filipina migrant worker's body in a freezer, leading Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte to order workers in Kuwait to return to their home country.

Workers in many Gulf states are employed under a sponsorship system that gives employers the right to keep their passports and exercise full control over their stay. Rights groups say this leaves workers across the region open to exploitation.

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Sondos Al-Qattan

IS kills more than 180 in south Syria

BEIRUT: A string of suicide blasts and raids claimed by the Islamic State group killed more than 180 people in southern Syria yesterday, in one of the militants' deadliest ever assaults in the country. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said the attacks hit several areas of the largely government-held southern province of Sweida, where IS retains a presence in a northeastern desert region. They came almost a week into a deadly Russia-backed regime campaign to oust IS fighters from a holdout in a neighboring province of the country's south.

IS claimed responsibility for the violence, saying "soldiers of the caliphate" attacked Syrian government positions and security outposts in Sweida city, then detonated explosive belts. The Britain-based Observatory said four suicide bombers targeted Sweida city while others hit small villages to the north and east and shot residents in their homes. At least 183 people were killed, including 89 civilians, the Observatory said. The remaining 94 dead were pro-regime fighters, mostly residents who picked up arms to defend their homes, it said.

Sweida, whose residents are mostly from the Druze minority, has been relatively insulated from the war that has ravaged the rest of the country since 2011. "It's the bloodiest death toll in Sweida province since the start of the war" and one of the deadliest ever IS

Continued on Page 24



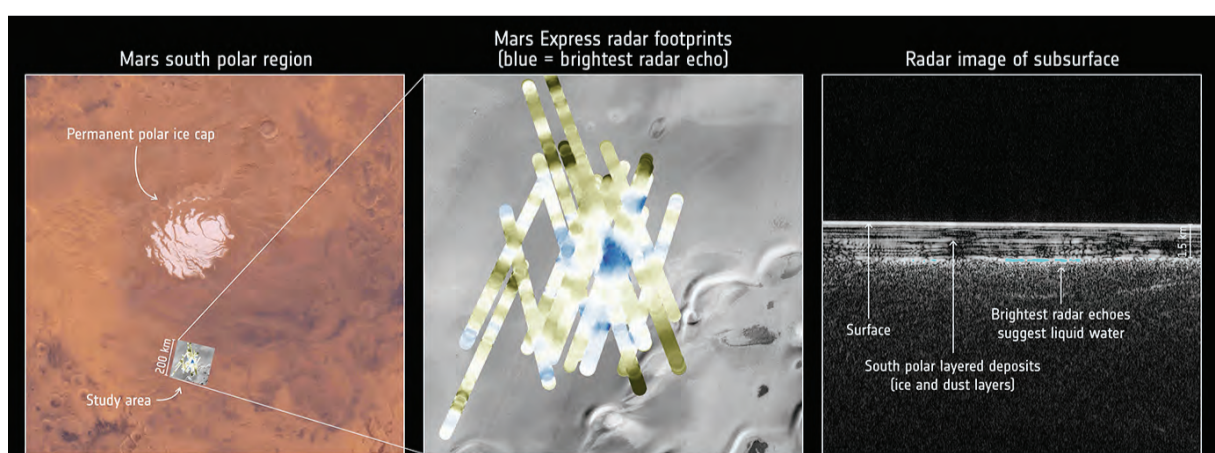
SWEIDA, Syria: A member of the Syrian security forces walks past a truck damaged in a suicide attack in this southern city yesterday. — AFP

Lebanon questions activists over social media posts

BEIRUT: Lebanon's security forces are increasingly bringing activists in for questioning over their social media posts, sparking widespread anger in recent days that freedom of expression is being squeezed. Since last week, the government's cyber crimes bureau has called in at least six activists because of comments they made on social media. One was interrogated over a post blaming President Michel Aoun for the country's widespread corruption, sluggish economy, and poor wages. Others were questioned for mocking a "miracle" by a saint revered in Lebanon.

Dozens of people on Tuesday evening gathered in downtown Beirut to protest the "unprecedented degradation in freedom of expression". Many held up signs printed with the words "#Against oppression", while one posed with a keyboard decorated with large paper-made handcuffs. Diala Haider, a Lebanon campaigner at Amnesty International, said the rights group has "noticed censorship increasingly interfering in spaces of expression in Lebanon". "More than one security or military authority have started monitoring and calling in opinion holders for questioning."

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Radar data collected by ESA's Mars Express points to a pond of liquid water buried under layers of ice and dust in the south polar region of Mars. — AFP

Massive liquid water lake found on Mars

TAMPA: A massive underground lake has been detected for the first time on Mars, raising the possibility that more water - and maybe even life - exists there, international astronomers said yesterday. Located under a layer of Martian ice, the lake is about 20 km wide, said the report led by Italian researchers in the US journal Science. It is the largest body of liquid water ever found on the Red Planet. "Water is there. We have no more doubt," co-author Enrico Flamini, the Italian space agency's Mars Express mission manager, told a

press conference.

Mars is now cold, barren and dry but used to be warm and wet. It was home to plenty of liquid water and lakes at least 3.6 billion years ago. Scientists are eager to find signs of contemporary water, because such discoveries are key to unlocking the mystery of whether life ever formed on Mars in its ancient past, or if it might persist today. "This is a stunning result that suggests water on Mars is not a temporary trickle like previous discoveries but a persistent body of water that provides the conditions for life for extended periods of time," said Alan Duffy, an associate professor at Swinburne University in Australia, who was not involved in the study.

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News in brief

US looks to resolve Gulf crisis

DOHA: The US is looking to "build some momentum" towards resolving the Gulf crisis ahead of a possible summit in the autumn, a US diplomat said yesterday. Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Bahrain and Egypt cut ties with Doha in June last year, accusing Qatar of funding terrorism and cozying up to Iran. Riyadh's regional rival. "We want to build to a point where there will be a meeting of all of the heads of state ... it might be September or it might be October", Ryan Gliba, US charge d'affaires to Qatar, told journalists. The US will "try to build some momentum" ahead of the summit to make it a "big success" when President Donald Trump calls Gulf leaders together, the charge d'affaires added. — AFP

Houthis attack Saudi tanker

RIYADH: Yemen's Houthi rebels have attacked a Saudi oil tanker in the Red Sea, causing "minor damage" to the vessel, the Saudi-led coalition said yesterday. The kingdom's Al-Ekhbariya television cited the coalition saying the oil tanker was "the target of a Houthi-Iranian terrorist attack". "The oil tanker sustained minor damage and the (Houthi) militias almost caused an environmental catastrophe," the coalition said. The statement did not provide details on the name or size of the tanker. Earlier, the pro-Houthi Al-Masirah television said that the rebels had targeted a Saudi warship named Al-Dammam, without providing further details. Saudi Arabia intervened in Yemen in 2015 at the head of a military coalition backing the country's government. — AFP

Warner Bros unveils \$1bn UAE park

ABU DHABI: The fantasy worlds inhabited by Superman, Batman and Wonder Woman merged with glitzy reality in the UAE yesterday, as Warner Bros opened a sprawling indoor theme park in Abu Dhabi. The \$1 billion facility boasts 29 rides and six themed areas - including a cartoon junction and the fictional Gotham City made famous by Batman. A golden Bugs Bunny statue, doffing his cap and holding a golden carrot, welcomes visitors to the complex, which took 11 years to take from the drawing board to reality. Warner Bros World Abu Dhabi is the entertainment giant's first indoor theme park in the region and is located on Yas Island. — AFP

Trump lashes out at Cohen

NEW YORK: US President Donald Trump lashed out at his longtime personal lawyer yesterday after CNN aired a tape in which the pair discussed how to hush up allegations that he had an affair with a Playboy model. "What kind of a lawyer would tape a client? So sad! Is this a first, never heard of it before?" Trump tweeted. "Why was the tape so abruptly terminated (cut) while I was presumably saying positive things? I hear there are other clients and many reporters that are taped - can this be so? Too bad!" On the tape released Tuesday by CNN, Trump can be heard discussing with New York fixer Michael Cohen how to buy the rights to the story of a Playboy model, who claims she had an affair with Trump in 2006. — AFP

Local

Amir cables Greek President on victims of wildfires

Amir, Crown Prince receive officials, ambassadors



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the outgoing Ambassador of Zimbabwe to Kuwait Mark Marongwe.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to Iran Majdi Ahmad Al-Thefiri.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent yesterday a cable of condolences to President of Greece Prokopis Pavlopoulos in which he expressed his sincere sympathy over the wildfires that claimed lives of scores of people near the capital. His Highness the Amir asked Almighty Allah to bestow his mercy upon the dead and speed up recovery of the wounded and wished the authorities in this friendly country could be able to

overcome repercussions of this natural disaster. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables, while National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent a cable of condolences to his Greek counterpart Nikos Voutsis.

Separately, His Highness the Amir received His Highness the Crown Prince, Speaker Ghanem, the Acting

Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and the outgoing Ambassador of Zimbabwe to Kuwait Mark Marongwe. The meetings were attended by Acting Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Deputy Prime Minister, Interior Minister and Acting Defense Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, as well as Kuwait's

Ambassador to Iran Majdi Ahmad Al-Thefiri. In other news, His Highness the Amir received a congratulatory cable from Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi yesterday over the successful surgery of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir sent President Essebsi a reply cable, thanking him for his kind sentiments, wishing Tunisia and its people peace, security and further development. — KUNA

UPAC organizes second fun day for Kuwait's Orphanage

KUWAIT: United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), a leading commercial real estate and facilities management company, organized a second 'Fun Day' for Kuwait's Orphanage at Discovery Mall.

The event, which took place on 16 July 2018, was carried out in coordination with the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, who currently manage various orphanages across Kuwait. The event catered to 17 children between the ages of 4 - 12 all of whom were given the opportunity to enjoy several activities across the mall's entertainment outlets, including Tarkeeb, Play, Cozmo Kids, Paint Ball and Young Chef. Accompanying the children were five UPAC volunteers who spent the day

alongside the children and guided them throughout the various fun activities.

Nadia Akil, Chief Executive Officer - UPAC, said: "This is the second successful activity we have carried out with Kuwait's orphanage this year, and we look forward to giving the kids the opportunity to have a full day of carefree entertainment. I would like to extend our thanks to the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor for giving us the opportunity to invite the children at our premises once again. I would also like to thank our partners at Discovery Mall for opening their doors to a great cause." UPAC places great importance on social responsibility and its overall role in increasing social awareness and participating in the wider community.

Kuwait Food Bank launches food parcels project

KUWAIT: Kuwait Food Bank launched yesterday its food parcels project dubbed 'Be a Partner in Giving' under auspices of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and in cooperation with the Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies (UCCS). The project aims at offering basic food material to people in need.

Deputy Chairman of the Board of Kuwait Food Bank Meshal Al-Ansari said during a press conference yesterday that food parcels project comes in completion of charity initiatives launched by KFB in cooperation with the civil society institutions and in order to meet the needs of poor people. This project is the first of its kind in the country, as it offers food

parcels including basic food materials to people in need in various parts of the country. Ansari said. KFB will distribute 360 transparent boxes in order to collect donations in all cooperative societies across the country to facilitate the donation process.

Assistant Undersecretary at the Ministry of Social Affairs for Cooperative Affairs Abdulaziz Shuaib said on his part during the press conference that the Ministry totally supports charity projects by facilitating its work in cooperation with various state's institutions. Meanwhile, Assistant Undersecretary of the Ministry of Social Affairs for Development Hassan Kathem, expressed his happiness for launching this project.

KFB Director General Salem Al-Hamar said that this parcel will satisfy the needs of poor families in Kuwait for a period of one month. KFB was founded upon an initiative by businessman Bader Nasser Al-Kharafi back in 2016 in order to save food from wasting and offer food and humanitarian assistance to people in need, locally, regionally and internationally. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Food Bank, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor and Union of Consumer Co-operative Societies officials pose for a group photo.

New constellation of Kuwaitis join KFH

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) concluded a comprehensive training program for a new constellation of Kuwaitis who have recently joined KFH in an attempt to improve their proficiency in banking transactions and financial services to better serve customers and cater for their aspirations. The program was tailored to qualify employees to assume duties at KFH Call Center.

The one-month program included training courses and workshops on banking products, such as: banking cards, bank accounts, deposits, letters of guarantee, and KFH e-services. In addition, the program tackled training courses on sharia basics, counterfeiting and fraud, GFS Ethix, not to mention the call center: its equipment, role, and the services it renders.

Such training programs contribute to raise the bar of employees, enrich their banking knowledge and put them on track to be well equipped and prepared to assume the responsibility of serving clients and encounter any obstacle and challenge according to the highest international standards of excellence service quality.



Local

Frozen chicken unfit for consumption found at subsidized food centers

Coordination to issue passports for bedoon pilgrims

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Food and Nutrition announced that frozen chicken at Kaifan and Khaitan co-op societies' supplies branches for subsidized food are not safe for human consumption. The authority's deputy director for inspection and control Dr Amal Al-Rashdan said samples of the frozen chicken in supplies branches in various governorates had been tested and that initial results showed that those from Khaitan and Kaifan are unsuitable for consumption. Rashdan added that proper measures had been taken to confiscate and destroy the chicken pending taking further legal actions.

Amiri Hospital

Site manager of Amiri Hospital expansion project Rawan Al-Hayyan said the project will add 314 beds, 29 cardiology intensive care beds and 30 ICU beds to the hospital. Hayyan added that developing various hospitals and clinics currently underway will cost KD 1 billion and explained that the Amiri Hospital expansion project covers a total area of 13,045 sq m, including parking areas for 600 vehicles, latest medical equipment and patient rooms with sea views, at a total cost of KD 98 million.

Job applications

Kuwait Ports Authority's deputy director for administrative, financial and Doha affairs and the authority's official spokesperson Yahya Abdal said the authority received many job applications, adding 1,407 of the applicants - who matched the conditions - had been contacted by SMS to determine further dates for them to undergo the tests needed. Abdal added that applicants who did not meet the conditions were also contacted and given a maximum 15-day period to file any complaints at the port's headquarters in Shuwaik.

Bedoon pilgrims

A delegation from the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs is due to leave for Saudi Arabia this week to follow up the final touches in preparation for the hajj season before the official hajj mission and various Kuwaiti convoys reach Saudi territory. The ministry also finished arrangements for bedoons' hajj after closing their registration, said informed sources, adding that the ministry is currently coordinating with the Interior Ministry to issue passports to bedoons approved for hajj this year.

Shrimping season starts Aug 1

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Fishermen Union held a seminar on shrimping in international waters. The seminar was held at the union's headquarters in Sharq in the presence of deputy director for fish resources affairs at the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources (PAAAFR) Marzouq Al-Habbi, and marine formations manager at the Coastguards General Department Col Tareq Al-Wazaq.

Speaking at the seminar, Habbi urged fishermen to respect the rules of fishing in international waters by not sailing out further than 12 marine miles and stressed that strict measures would be taken by PAAAFR's marine control department in collaboration with naval and coastguard forces, who will be present to protect fishermen. Habbi also warned fishermen against violating neighboring countries' national waters. "The rules of shrimping in international waters have been the same for almost 10 years now, but this year we will have more protection and control," he underlined. Responding to a question about re-allowing trawling, Habbi stressed that it is currently allowed only in international waters and Kuwait's economic waters, while allowing it in national waters is still being studied by the Cabinet. Habbi stressed the shrimping season commences on Aug 1 in all GCC states and that the season's conclusion is usually subject to the amount of shrimp reserves left.

Wazaq said that the date to launch shrimping in international waters was

determined in coordination with relevant bodies at PAAAFR and stressed that coastguards will be always patrolling the seas to make sure PAAAFR decisions were respected. Wazaq also urged fishermen to take their passports with them on sailing out from Doha port and Um Al-Maradem island to international waters and advised them to have all safety gear available onboard, as they would be inspected at coastguard checkpoints. Wazaq stressed that coastguard patrols would be available 24/7 to protect and rescue fishermen in collaboration with navy forces.

Protection for fishermen

Also speaking at the seminar, the union's chairman Thaher Al-Sowayyan demanded full protection for fishermen against pirates in international waters, reminding that many Kuwaiti fishing boats had been raided by pirates. He also expressed disappointment for suspending shrimping in national waters until further notice, noting that the decision had caused considerable losses to fishing boat owners. Sowayyan urged the government to reconsider the decision on grounds that shrimp only remain in national waters for a limited period before moving out to some neighboring countries' waters, where they catch and export them to Kuwait to be sold as imported shrimps, while they are originally local ones. Sowayyan earnestly urged the government to move the imported fish auction out of the Sharq fish market, reminding that it had been only moved there from Mubarakiya temporarily for two months. He also warned that imported fish were being sold at Sharq fish market as local ones, which can lead to commercial fraud such as the recent case where imported fish were stuffed with steel nails to increase their weight.

Interior Minister announces reshuffle

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Deputy Premier and Interior Minister Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decree yesterday appointing Sheikh Faisal Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Assistant Undersecretary for Nationality and Passports Affairs, Sheikh Mazen Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah as Assistant Undersecretary for Education and Training and Sheikh Salem Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah as Assistant Undersecretary for Border Security Affairs. Fawaz Suleiman Al-Mashan was appointed as Acting Assistant Undersecretary for Financial Affairs in addition to his current post.



Lt Gen Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah

Kuwait allows compensation for Indian workers

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti government has announced compensation for 710 Indian workers who left the country after they lost their jobs following a protracted labor dispute. The Public Authority of Manpower (PAM) has directed the Social Affairs and Labor Ministry to pay KD 250 as a relief amount to each worker registered with the PAM, an Indian Embassy official told Kuwait Times.

The Indian Embassy had initially submitted in September a list of 3,614 workers for compensation, but an agreement could not be reached on the modalities to liquidate the security deposits.

India's Minister of State for External Affairs V K Singh visited Kuwait earlier this year and held talks with the authorities to find a solution to the issue of the aggrieved laborers. The embassy also pursued the matter and held several rounds of talks, leading to the signing of a power of attorney, the official said. Subsequently, the embassy submitted a modified list of 1,262 people, out of which PAM shortlisted 710 people who would be eligible for compensation of KD 250 each. A mechanism has been evolved to remit the amount directly to the workers' accounts - who are currently out of the country - the official added.

Kuwait army chief, Australian commander discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait Army Chief of Staff General Mohammad Al-Khudher met yesterday with Chief of Joint Operations of the Australian Army, Air Marshal Melvin Hupfeld, where cooperation was the main topic discussed. According to an army statement, issues of

mutual concern, especially on the military level and ways to enhance them, were discussed. Khudher later met with the Indian military attache in Saudi Arabia, Colonel Maneesh Nagpal and discussed issues of common concern.

Meanwhile, assistant chief-of-staff for operations and planning Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Kanderi met yesterday with Director of Exercises and Training, US Central Command Major General John Mott. Both senior brasses discussed issues of mutual concern, a press release by the Public Relations and Security Media Department at the Ministry of Defense, said. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait Army Chief of Staff General Mohammad Al-Khudher meets with Chief of Joint Operations of the Australian Army, Air Marshal Melvin Hupfeld.

Kuwait reaffirms support for Palestinians

NEW YORK: Kuwait reaffirmed support for the struggling Palestinian people who are defending their sacred sites and rights, while condemning assault on innocent civilians. Permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi, addressing a Security Council session on the Middle East on Tuesday, held Israel, the occupying authority, fully responsible for the violence and escalation against the Palestinian people. He condemned Israel's systematic aggression against unarmed Palestinians, which was considered war crimes and crimes against humanity. He urged UNSC to protect Palestinian civilians and said he was looking forward for a UN Secretary General's report on international protection for the Palestinian people, in compliance with the June 13 UN General Assembly resolution.

Otaibi said Israel's occupation army continued aggression on Gaza Strip killing two children last week and injuring scores others. The occupation, he added, killed around 150 people and wounded 15,000 others since the March of Return was launched last March. He rejected the occupation authorities' tightening of siege on Gaza Strip which has been blockaded for over a decade. Karam Abu Salem crossing, the only lifeline for Gaza, has been closed by the Israelis, he said. Otaibi called for alleviating humanitarian and economic conditions of the Palestinian people specially those living in Gaza, as well as opening the crossing. Otaibi, who noted the financial strains facing UNRWA, said providing financial support for agencies offering services for the



NEW YORK: Permanent representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi addresses a Security Council session on the Middle East. — KUNA

Palestinians. He said the international community provided \$55 million for past five years. He said Israel's recent decisions aimed at promoting "Israel's discrimination and threatening Palestinian existence," citing confiscation of \$300 million in tax money, annexing Palestinian lands and Jewish nation law.

Otaibi said Israel's repeated violations against the Palestinian people, like the illegal settlements and dividing of lands, should be confronted. He said UNSC resolution 2334 considered Jewish settlements illegal and a stumbling block in the path for peace, as well as demanding Israel to immediately stop all Jewish activities in occupied Palestinian lands. He welcomed the UN special envoy for the Middle East, saying Kuwait approved allocation of \$2 million to help renovate infrastructure in Gaza Strip. He also commended Egypt for mediating between the Palestinian factions and affirmed commitment to the two-state solution in line with UN resolutions, land-for-peace principles, the Roadmap and the Arab peace initiative. — KUNA

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A young participant in the 30th annual Pearl Diving trip awaits the inauguration of the ceremony. — Photo by Ghazy Qafaf (KUNA)

Airport Friends: Kuwaiti youth endeavor to disseminate volunteerism

150 young volunteers help travelers during busy summer

KUWAIT: Kuwait attaches much attention to young people who are able to play a crucial role in societal development, especially in the oil-rich country's strategy 'New Kuwait' purposed to ensure a prosperous and sustainable future by 2035. Undoubtedly, initiatives and efforts orchestrated by Kuwaiti young people to sincerely serve various societal sectors are totally approved and backed by the government. 'Airport Friends', a voluntary endeavor done by Kuwaiti youth to help travelers at airport, is well-placed in the list of these praiseworthy voluntary campaigns. In this context, for the second year in a row some 150 young volunteers have been catering for travelers at Kuwait International Airport during the busy summer season. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA), Ministry of State for Youth Affairs and Public Authority for Youth are the co-organizers of the much-appreciated initiative.

Commenting on this effort, DGCA's Director-General Yusuf Al-Fawzan said that Kuwait and its people have been interested in volunteerism and humanitarianism, citing this Gulf country as having been designated as a humanitarian center and His Highness the Amir as a humanitarian leader. Highly commending the 'Airport Friends', Fawzan underlined that it is essential to spur and stimulate such initiatives that are unequivocally meant to promote and buttress patriotism. By so doing, Kuwaiti youth have become impressive models for others to follow in view of helping people just out of social responsibility, he pointed out.

The DGCA chairman's advisor, Fuad Bushehri, boasted that the new entity, referring to Airport Friends, seeks to



provide and train volunteers all the year in a sincere effort to promote Kuwait's international civilized place. The DGCA trained 80 male and female volunteers last year and another 150 this year, he said, hailing them as being able to work under stress during the busy summer travel season. The endeavor also aims at demonstrating the creative and special spirit of the Kuwaiti human element, and fanning out the sentiments of positivity and optimism at the airport, he added.

Alya Al-Mutar, the coordinator of voluntary work at the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, said meanwhile that the main aim of the initiative is to ease out overcrowdings at the airport and disseminate volunteerism and helpfulness.



KUWAIT: Members of the 'Airport Friends' voluntary team. — KUNA

The volunteers provide their services to travelers through three morning, afternoon and night shifts, she added. Anfal Al-Kout, a team volunteer, said the group's role is centered on giving guidance, advice and help to travelers, especially the elderly and people with special needs. She elaborated

that she made the decision to join the 'Airport Friends' in order to spend free time doing humanitarian activities. Voicing pleasure to serve others, she said it is a good thing to deal with different society categories so as to raise public awareness about voluntary work. — KUNA

Kuwait, Britain sign air services agreement

LONDON: Kuwait and Britain signed in London Tuesday an agreement that would organize air services between the two countries. This agreement is very important for Britain which is getting ready to leave the European Union (EU), British Transport Secretary Chris Grayling said after signing the deal with Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Sabah, President of Kuwait Civil Aviation Directorate. Grayling said the agreement stipulated provision of facilities for airlines of the two countries, as well as cementing security and safety measures of commercial flights.

Emad Al-Jluwi, Deputy Director General for airline safety at Civil Aviation Directorate, said the agreement aimed at exchanging transportation rights. He added that the agreement would allow private airlines to fly between Kuwait and Britain, providing they were officially registered. The deal, added Jluwi, encouraged international airlines to increase flights to Kuwait International Airport, as well as contributed to facilitating movement of passengers



LONDON: President of Kuwait Civil Aviation Directorate Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Sabah and British Transport Secretary Chris Grayling sign the deal. — KUNA

and cargo, as well as linking Kuwait airport with the largest number of airports around the world. This agreement, he said, would promote bilateral trade, offer a variety of services for passengers, as well as exempting national carriers from custom duties. — KUNA

Pearl diving trip concludes today with 'Qaffal' ceremony

KUWAIT: A huge public ceremony will be held in the presence of His Highness the Amir's representative, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Adel Al-Kharafi, to celebrate the conclusion of the 30th annual Pearl Diving Trip, which was organized by the Kuwait Sea Sports Club's (KSSC) marine heritage committee.

The ceremony will be held at 4:30 pm at KSSC's headquarters beach in Salmiya, where around 175 participants onboard of 13 dhows presented by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah would return to shore.

The Qaffal (closure of the expedition) will be covered live by Kuwait TV. A marine heritage exhibition will be held on the ceremony's sidelines, before participants' families receive them upon their arrival, while KSSC's marine heritage band would perform some traditional marine arts. This will be accompanied by opening the collected shells, before finally handing



Khaled Al-Foudery



over the pearl catch to the Amir's representative. In this regard, KSSC's Secretary General Khaled Al-Foudery said that a large number of youth took part in the expedition despite harsh weather conditions. "This truly reflects the essence of Kuwaiti youth and their will to protect and maintain their ancestors' heritage," Foudery said. He expressed gratitude to all participants, the committee members and sponsors including Gulf Bank, Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, Kuwait Flour Mills and Bakeries Company, Dar Al-Khalej Engineering and Al-Roudhatain Water Company, as well as local and foreign media.

Local

Kuwait, Iraq boost security cooperation

KUWAIT: A security cooperation agreement signed between the governments of Kuwait and Iraq was published in the official gazette 'Kuwait Al-Youm' this week. This agreement, which was approved in parliament, stipulates boosting cooperation between authorities in the two countries in order to fight terrorism, border infiltration and organized crime. The following is a transcript, edited for length, from the memorandum of understanding:

Article One

The two parties cooperate to render security support and backup for each other in the following fields:

1. Fighting terrorism.
2. Fighting border infiltration and border security.
3. Fighting organized crime.

Article Two

Support and backup mentioned above is carried out as follows:

- a) In the field of fighting terrorism:

The two parties shall work towards achieving full cooperation in the field of fighting terrorism through the following:

1. Exchange of information and data related to terrorist groups, organizations, their members, and any other information or data that help prevent and fight terrorist acts.

2. Taking necessary measures to protect their territories from being used to plan, organize, execute, attempt or participate in terrorist acts directed against the two countries in any shape or form, including preventing terrorist elements from residing in their territories or receiving, harboring, training or arming them or giving them any facilities.

3. Holding periodical meetings whenever necessary or at the request of either party for officials concerned with fighting terrorism in both countries to activate cooperation in this field.

- b) In the field of fighting border infiltration and border security:

1. The parties exchange information, studies and researchers about the development of security measures in regards to air, sea and land transport; in airports, ports and industrial facilities, energy sources and other vital sites.

2. The two parties shall exert the necessary efforts to take all suitable measures to strengthen systems related to supervision on land and sea borders as well as land, sea and airports to fight infiltrations and smuggling through their borders.

3. The two parties shall organize periodical bilateral meetings between leaders and border officials to coordinate, cooperate and exchange information to ensure prevention or limiting infiltrations or smugglings.

4. The two parties shall guarantee the security of international borders between both countries against all illegal acts or people that harm either or both of them.

- c) In the field of fighting organized crime:

The two parties cooperate in the field of fighting

organized crime through the following:

1. Exchange information related to the structure of organized group, their criminal activities, means they use, involved individuals, and those suspected in committing organized crime, their whereabouts to foil their criminal plans and arrest them.

2. Exchange of information about various methods of organized crime especially in:

- a) Forgery of passports, travel documents, visas, vehicles' documents, other official documents and currency.
- b) Theft of antiquities and artifacts, their smuggling and illegal trade.
- c) Smuggling and illegal trade of arms, ammunition, explosives, poisonous and radiating elements.
- d) Swindling, economic and money laundering crimes.
- e) Narcotics, psychoactive drugs and means used to smuggle them, their means of transport and hiding, their sources, destination and people involved in them.
- f) Piracy.

Kuwait steps up fight against money laundering: Minister

KUWAIT: Kuwait makes it a point to keep abreast of global efforts to stifle such nefarious practices as money laundering and terror financing, the country's Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan said yesterday.

Kuwait has made tremendous headway in the fight against these unscrupulous deeds, Roudhan was cited as saying in a statement issued by the ministry of commerce and industry. He added that the ministry, which is currently involved in a workshop in conjunction with the US Department of Justice over detecting suspicious business transactions, has taken steps to keep money-laundering operations at bay.

"Luring investment is highly contingent upon a vibrant business environment," the minister emphasized, citing the need for rigid anti-money laundering legislation. Local bodies and a phalanx of experts have assembled for the workshop, which concluded yesterday. — KUNA

News in brief

Operation rooms open during sentry duty

KUWAIT: Informed health sources said the health ministry approved operation theaters to be operated for surgeries in hospitals and specialized centers during sentry duty times and after midnight to alleviate congestion during morning hours. Sources said this decision came after it was noticed theaters are not operated after midnight except for critical cases, which leads to crowding in the morning. They said instructions were given to all surgeons to continue rendering services during all duty hours and not to stop work after midnight to avoid delays in providing services. — Al-Anbaa

Electoral constituencies

KUWAIT: The proposed law the government sent to the National Assembly with regards to electoral constituencies was limited to the addition of non-registered residential areas in the five constituencies, and it did not include any change in the election system or voting mechanism. The proposal added the following areas to the constituencies: Anjafa to the first constituency; Industrial Shuwaikh, the health zone, Nahda and Northwest Sulaibikhat to the second; Jaber Al-Ahmad to the fourth; and Masayel, Abu Al-Hasaniya, Abu Fateera and Sabah Al-Ahmad to the fifth constituency. The parliamentary interior and defense committee was asked by the assembly prior to the adjournment of the previous term to complete its report on the proposed laws with regards to amending the election law. — Al-Rai

Crimes

Man steals ambulance from Jahra Hospital

KUWAIT: A citizen returned an ambulance he stole from Jahra Hospital and turned himself in to Na'em police. Paramedics arrived at the hospital with an emergency case, and when they entered the hospital, the suspect got behind the wheel and disappeared. Police were informed about the incident. Na'em police station were then surprised by the suspect parking the ambulance then turning himself in and confessing to stealing the vehicle. In a separate case, a security source said interior ministry operations received a call about a suspicious person in a car at the wood scrap yard in Amghara, and they were given his car's license plate number. Police checked the car's details and found out it was reported stolen. Once police were at the scene, the suspect got out of the car and fired at them, and they took cover behind their patrol cars. The suspect fled on foot, leaving the car behind. Charges of attempted murder and theft await the fugitive.

Drug dealer arrested

A bedoon drugs pusher who was at large for 10 years after being sentenced to 99 years in jail was arrested. Detectives arrested him at a Kabd farm after resistance. Tips received about the suspect led Ahmadi detectives to look for him. Separately, a citizen was sent to the public prosecution and charged with possession of drugs for sale and a stolen car. Weapons detectives received tips about an ex-convict who seemed very rich and was spending lavishly, and it was thought he was trading in weapons. A warrant was obtained and the suspect's residence was raided where heroin, hashish, marijuana and cocaine were found. They also found a car that was reported stolen.

— Translated by Kuwait Times from the Arabic press

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India plans to battle pollution staining the Taj Mahal

France's Macron under fire over response to security aide scandal

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SANAMXAI, Laos: A resident use a boat in flooded areas of Sanamxai, Attapeu province. — AFP

19 dead, 3,000 stranded after Laos dam collapse

Rescuers from China, Thailand arrive • Remoteness hampers relief operations

SEKONG, Laos: Rescue teams from China and Thailand headed yesterday into a remote part of landlocked Laos, where more than 3,000 people were stranded after a dam collapse sent a deluge of water across a swathe of villages, domestic media said. The Vientiane Times, citing district Governor Bounhom Phommavane, said about 19 people had been "found dead". While nearly 3,000 had been plucked to safety, more than that number were awaiting rescue, many on the rooftops of submerged homes.

A senior Lao government official told Reuters by telephone from the capital, Vientiane, that dozens were feared dead after the failure of the dam - a subsidiary structure under construction as part of a hydroelectric project - on Monday. "We will continue with rescue efforts today, but it's very difficult, the conditions are very difficult. Dozens of people are dead. It could be higher," said the official, who declined to be identified as he was not authorized to speak to the media.

A United Nations report on the disaster put the death toll at five, with 34 missing, 1,494 evacuated and 11,777 people in 357 villages affected. It said 20 houses were destroyed and more than 223 houses and 14 bridges damaged by the flooding. However, a government official said hundreds were reported missing after at

least seven villages were submerged in the Attapeu province, the southernmost part of the country. State media showed pictures of villagers, some with young children, stranded on roofs of submerged houses, and others trying to board wooden boats.

Remote location

Experts said the remoteness of the affected area could hamper relief operations. "The roads are very poor," Ian Baird, a professor of geography at the University of Wisconsin-Madison and a Laos expert, said by telephone. "People don't usually go in that area during the rainy season. There are mountains nearby that villagers might be able to get up on ... I don't think anybody really knows for sure." State media said a joint team of Lao and Chinese rescuers would reach Attapeu yesterday afternoon, and it showed a long line of cars with boats on trailers heading into the country from northeast Thailand. South Korea and Singapore have also offered to help in the rescue effort.

Laos, one of the world's few remaining communist states and one of Asia's poorest countries, has ambitions to become the "battery of Asia" through the construction of multiple dams. Its government depends almost entirely on outside developers to

build the dams under commercial concessions that involve the export of electricity to more developed neighbors, including power-hungry Thailand. Rights groups have repeatedly warned against the human and environmental cost of the dam drive, including damage to the already fragile ecosystem of the region's rivers. Attapeu is a largely agricultural province that borders Vietnam to the east and Cambodia to the south. The dam that collapsed was part of the \$1.2 billion Xe-Pian Xe-Namnoy power project, which involves Laotian, Thai and South Korean firms. Known as "Saddle Dam D", it was part of a network of two main dams and five subsidiary dams.

Monsoon rains

The project's main partner, South Korea's SK Engineering & Construction, said part of a small supply dam was washed away and the company was cooperating with the Laos government to help rescue villagers. The firm blamed the collapse on heavy rain. Laos and its neighbors are in the middle of the monsoon season that brings tropical storms and heavy rain. Lao state media also posted images of flash flooding, with buildings and roads under water, further north in Khammouane province.

An official at SK Engineering & Construction said fractures were discovered on the dam on Sunday and the company ordered the evacuation of 12 villages as soon as the danger became clear. Shares in major stakeholders of SK E&C fell on Wednesday. SK E&C's biggest shareholder, SK Holdings Co Ltd, was down 6.2 percent in its biggest daily percentage loss since Feb. 11, 2016. The second-biggest shareholder, SK Discovery Co Ltd, slid as much as 10 percent. Laos expert Baird said the collapse of the subsidiary dam was unlikely to affect others in the project. "The water's all out of the reservoir now and the water levels are already going down but I don't think they'll be able to fix it until the dry season," he said.

Hydropower dams on the Mekong River's lower mainstream pose a serious threat to the region, International Rivers, which works to stop destructive hydropower projects in Laos, said in April. Predicted impacts include a decrease of 30 to 40 percent in fisheries by 2040 as well as a drastic cut in food security and farm productivity, as well as greater poverty in much of the Lower Mekong Basin. Laos has finished building 11 dams, says Thai non-government group TERRA, with 11 more under construction and dozens planned. — Reuters

Deadly caste violence hits Indian state

MUMBAI: Violent protests by an Indian caste demanding reserved government jobs erupted in the western state of Maharashtra yesterday a day after deadly demonstrations, officials said. Protests have been mounting across the key state since Monday, when a Maratha community activist jumped to his death from a bridge in protest. Another activist killed himself with poison on Tuesday, the same day a police officer was killed in clashes during wider protests, reports said.

More than 30,000 police have been deployed across the region but the first trouble yesterday blew up in the city of Thane, near Mumbai. "Two incidents of stone-pelting and arson were reported near Thane and we have prevented further incidents by deploying our teams," Sukhada Narkar, a police spokesperson in Thane said. Maratha protests were held across the Mumbai, shutting many schools and colleges and delaying trains, officials added.

Maratha protestors have for years been pressing for more reserved jobs in the government and education. A rally by hundreds



MUMBAI: Indian members of the Maratha community in the state of Maharashtra shout slogans during a protest in Mumbai. — AFP

of thousands of protestors last year paralyzed Mumbai. Campaigns by groups like the Marathas in Maharashtra and Patidars in Gujarat to back their demands for more government jobs have claimed many lives in recent years. Maharashtra is a key agricultur-

al state but in recent years poor rains have led to crop failures. Many Marathas were among more than 2,500 farmers who committed suicide in the state in 2017, according to official figures. — AFP

Turkey approves new 'anti-terror' law to replace emergency

ANKARA: The Turkish parliament yesterday approved a new "anti-terror" law that strengthens the authorities' powers in detaining suspects and imposing public order after a two-year state of emergency ended last week, state news agency Anadolu reported. The new legislation allows authorities to control who can enter and exit an area for 15 days for reasons of security, while suspects can be held without charge for 48 hours or up to four days if there are multiple offences.

This period can be extended on two occasions under special circumstances. The law, which still needs to be signed by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, also says protests and marches in the open air must end before sunset while indoor gatherings can continue until midnight. Rights activists have expressed alarm over the law, accusing the government of essentially

formalizing the state of emergency under another name.

Human Rights Watch said it would "preserve many of the abusive powers granted to the president and executive" under the state of emergency. Officials repeatedly stress that Turkey is facing multiple terror threats from the Islamic State extremist group, outlawed Kurdish insurgents and the movement run by US-based Muslim preacher Fethullah Gulen which Ankara blames for the July 2016 failed coup. Turkey introduced the state of emergency five days after the attempted putsch, and renewed it seven times despite calls from Western allies to end the measure. Over 77,000 people were arrested under the emergency over alleged links to the Gulen movement, which Turkey officially calls the "Fethullah Terrorist Organization". Gulen denies any links to the coup bid and insists he leads a moderate Islamic group.

Critics including human rights activists accused Ankara of using the emergency to crack down on Erdogan's opponents. But the government said that the emergency was needed to handle the multiple threats while officials said over 150,000 suspensions and sackings from the public sector were necessary to handle the "virus" of Gulen inside the state. — AFP

International

How Iraq's agricultural heartland is dying of thirst

Farmers consider leaving land, join local militias

TAL ABU AL-DHAHER, Iraq: One day in June, a giant irrigation pump deep in the Mosul Dam Lake spluttered briefly into life. The successful test brought a rare moment of celebration for the facility's supervisor, Assem Abdel Rahman, and his small team of engineers from Iraq's Water Resources Ministry. The pump had lain idle since 2014, when Islamic State fighters swept into Nineveh, then a lush province capable of producing almost a quarter of Iraq's wheat.

When Iraqi forces and their allies drove out the militants three years later, the pump was out of action and the irrigation canals it supplied were in ruins. That June test showed there was hope for the pump, at least. "If you could have seen this area before, it was full of green as far as your eyes could see," said Abdel Rahman, gesturing towards the barren land. Getting the pump to work is only a beginning. This year the rains failed, too, and a new Turkish dam threatens to reduce flows from the Tigris River into the Mosul Dam Lake.

Nineveh is becoming a dust bowl, and farmers, who came home after Islamic State fled, say they feel abandoned by Iraq's leaders. Hani Habib Youhanna, a farmer from the Christian town of Qaraqosh, said he had poured his savings into planting wheat on his 125 hectares of land this year, but the crop was disastrous. "Support? There is no support from the government here at all. No irrigation, just nothing," he said. His complaints are echoed across a country overwhelmed by the cost of rebuilding from its war with Islamic State and struggling with water shortages that have led to street protests this year.

Much of the city of Mosul, 30 km to the northwest of Qaraqosh, is still rubble more than a year after the militants were expelled. In Iraq's long-neglected south, there have been angry demonstrations over water shortages. The government has promised to release funds to help. It estimates the total cost of Iraq's reconstruction at \$88 billion. Nineveh's farmers say for their time is running out. In interviews, a dozen farmers and grain traders said government wheat production forecasts for 2018 were hopelessly optimistic. Some farmers said they were considering leaving the land. Others have joined local militias to get a regular wage.

"If farmers are pushed to look for another way of life, all the choices will basically be bad, whether it is smuggling, turning to extremism and militancy or migration," said Fadel al-Zubi, the Iraq representative of the United Nations Food and

Agriculture Organization (FAO), based in Baghdad. Drought could be mitigated by irrigation but, critics say, Iraq's political leaders are too consumed by infighting to pay attention to the needs of farmers in places like Nineveh. Zainab al-Taayy, a member of the outgoing parliament's Committee on Agriculture, Water and Resources, said the Ministry of Water Resources was not doing enough to tackle water shortages. The ministry responded that it was working to clean up the water supply in Nineveh and dig wells to help farmers. Other critics say inefficiency and corruption are starving Nineveh of funds. Iraq ranks 169 out of 180 countries on Transparency International's corruption index. Another committee member, Sherouk al-Abaigy, said successive governments had failed to come up with a comprehensive water plan.

The ministry said the security situation across Iraq, where Islamic State still poses a threat, and a lack of funds were complicating its efforts, but it continued to work in Nineveh. It said its engineers were capable of implementing big projects and noted that Minister of Water Resources Hassan Janabi was a technocrat with a PhD in water management. As farmlands diminish, Iraq's wheat import bill will rise. That's extra spending the country can ill afford. This year, the state Grain Board expects to import around two million tonnes of wheat at a cost of around \$1.5 billion. The Farmers Union reckons the board may need to bring in an additional one million tonnes because of the poor harvest.

War and dictatorship

The pump in the Mosul Dam Lake sits at the start of the North Al-Jazeera irrigation system, built three decades ago on the order of Saddam Hussein. Abdel Rahman has worked there since the beginning. North Al-Jazeera was part of an ambitious irrigation project, the biggest at the time in the Arab world, that was to include a southern and eastern facility. Had it been completed, it would have watered 250,000 hectares of the Al Jazeera plain. But Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 led to UN sanctions, and foreign firms involved in the irrigation project, such as South Korea's HanYang Corporation, left Iraq. Plans for the east and south facilities were abandoned. Working as a stand-alone, the north pump provided thousands of farmers with a steady supply of water, enabling them to grow summer vegetables and winter grains. The irrigation

system reached 60,000 hectares of land, around a quarter of Nineveh's potentially fertile land.

When a US-led invasion toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003, the area where the pump is located was relatively unscathed. Some US troops even used it as a base because of its concealed location inside a hill. Abdel Rahman said. "When the Americans came here in 2003 and saw the control panel inside the hill, they joked, 'What is this, a nuclear station?'" he recalled. The panel, which is still on display in the control room, was replaced by two laptop computers in 2012.

In the summer of 2014, Islamic State fighters arrived, and Abdel Rahman fled to the safety of Erbil, in Kurdish northern Iraq. He said the militants tried to make the pump work but they didn't know what they were doing and damaged the equipment. Fighters looted cables from the station, and most of North Al-Jazeera's smaller subsidiary pumps, bridges and canals were wrecked in the battle for Nineveh that started in 2016. When that conflict subsided, another threat: The pump sits in territory also claimed by Iraq's Kurds. In Oct. 2017, Iraqi forces launched another offensive and took back control of the area.

When the fighting stopped, Abdel Rahman was eager to resume his work. But he found a scene of destruction. One hundred of the irrigation system's 280 canals are still out of commission, according to the United Nations. Many are filled with debris and explosives planted by the militants in an attempt to keep government forces at bay. Thirty of the 38 metal bridges have been blown up and 800 sections of elevated canal have been destroyed.

The UN set about fixing North Al-Jazeera with the help of international donors. The cost is estimated at over \$9 million, excluding repairs to a local factory that manufactured components for the pipes. Iraq's Ministry of Water Resources has cooperated with the UN on technical details but hasn't allocated any of its own funds to the effort. Ministry adviser Zafer Abdullah said the North Al-Jazeera project needed a large budget and the ministry was prioritizing "needs that touch people's everyday lives."

The first phase of repairs - demining, restoring power and fixing the main pumping station - is due to be completed by the end of 2018. The UN says more work will be needed to get water flowing to the subsidiary pumps and into the network of canals. "Within two years or so we hope to have it functional," said the FAO's Iraq representative



MOSUL: Iraqi farmers work in their farms north of Mosul, Iraq. — Reuters

Zubi. Farmers say they can't wait that long. When Islamic State fled, Nineveh's farmers began returning, hoping to rebuild their homes and livelihoods. Some, like Qaraqosh farmer Youhanna, who came home last year, are already giving up. "I'm not going to plant anything anymore. Where will I get the money from?" he said. Islamic State burned Youhanna's home and stole his equipment. He found his tractor in Mosul amongst a pile of goods looted by the militants.

Youhanna's teenage son lost three fingers when a mine exploded as they set about rebuilding their home. Like several other farmers, Youhanna now relies on a salary from a local militia. "I know that in terms of politics, it is all the same. Nothing will ever change here. But I support them because they are the ones who are supporting me now," he said. Another Qaraqosh farmer, Sami Nissan Yessi, said his equipment too had been ransacked and his barns burned. His prospects are poor. "My kids are in Germany and Canada. I returned with my wife and younger child. This is me, I'm a farmer. What will I do abroad?" he said.

Knowing there will be a long wait to restart the North Al-Jazeera project, some farmers have moved closer to the reservoir. Small-scale farmers planting summer vegetables have paid the govern-

ment to be allowed to connect pipes to the reservoir as makeshift irrigation systems. "What else can we do?" said Naif Mohammed Khalaf, a farmer who was planting tomatoes and watermelon on rented land.

Farmers say cumbersome government practices compound their problems. Farmers eligible for back payments for grains sold to the Trade Ministry since 2014 are checked to make sure they have no ties to Islamic State, delaying the release of money. Some farmers say they are still waiting for payments for 2014 crops. The head of the state Grain Board, Naem al-Maksousi, said only around five percent of farmers were still due money from 2014 because of the security checks.

Authorities have ruled that fertilizer distributed to farmers in Nineveh must be free of urea, a chemical used in explosives. Sometimes the government provides urea-free fertilizer, but often it simply adds dust to the urea fertilizer to make it safe. That also makes the fertilizer less effective, farmers say. And government fertilizer often arrives late. The Agriculture Ministry said it was sometimes late distributing fertilizer because of the security situation. It said it checked the quality of fertilizer it supplied and disputed that it was ineffective. — Reuters

News in brief

IS claims deadly Toronto attack

BEIRUT: The Islamic State group yesterday claimed responsibility for a weekend shooting that killed two people in Canada's Toronto. The group's propaganda agency Amaq said the attacker was "one of the soldiers of the Islamic State". "He carried out the attack in response to calls to target nationals of countries of the coalition" fighting IS in Syria and Iraq since 2014, it said. Faisal Hussain, 29, killed a 18-year-old woman and a 10-year-old girl in the shooting rampage on a Toronto street on Sunday evening, Canadian police said. He was found dead near the scene of the shooting after an exchange of gunfire with police. — AFP

Editor to become culture MP

MOSCOW: An ultra-conservative journalist and MP who once said only God or Stalin could save Russia is set to be appointed head of the country's culture committee in parliament's lower house, media said yesterday. The nomination of Elena Yampolskaya to the high-profile post has provoked a mixed reaction in the country's arts community. She was nominated by the ruling United Russia party meaning that parliament's lower house, the State Duma, is all but certain to vote her into the role. — AFP

Five charged over acid attack

LONDON: Five men aged from 22 to 41 were charged yesterday over a suspected acid attack on a three-year-old boy in Britain. The boy was taken to hospital with serious burns to his arm and face following the attack outside a store in Worcester, central England, on Saturday. He has since been discharged but the long-term implications of his injuries are not yet known. Three men from London, aged 26, 25 and 22, and two men from Wolverhampton aged 41 and 39, were charged with conspiracy to commit grievous bodily harm, West Mercia Police said. The men were due to appear at Kidderminster Magistrates' Court later Wednesday. — AFP

Bulgaria warns of floods

SOFIA: Bulgaria has warned its southern neighbors Greece and Turkey they could face floods as heavy rains are expected to swell the Arda and Maritsa rivers flowing into their territories. The alert came as Greek emergency services were struggling to deal with their worst wildfires in years. The Ivaylovgrad dam on the Arda in the eastern Rhodope Mountains would probably overflow in the next few days because of expected downpours, Bulgaria's foreign ministry said late on Tuesday. Sofia said it was expecting massive increases in water volumes in the flood-prone Maritsa near the Bulgarian town of Svilengrad on the Turkish border today. — Reuters

New Zealand to grant paid leave for domestic violence victims

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's parliament passed legislation yesterday granting paid leave to domestic violence victims, with supporters calling it a groundbreaking measure to help those trying to escape abusive relationships. Green Party lawmaker Jan Logie said granting victims 10 days of extra leave a year would allow them to "stop the violence and get help without worrying about losing their jobs". "This is a win for victims, a win for

employers, and a win for society," Logie said, describing the move as a "world first" after parliament approved the bill by 63 votes to 57.

It is the first western country to introduce nationwide paid domestic violence leave. The Philippines in 2004 granted 10 days of paid leave to those suffering domestic violence. Australia's Fair Work Commission in March voted to allow five days of unpaid leave for domestic abuse victims, but a labor union

Cambodian police ordered to prevent 'chaos' on election day

PHNOM PENH: Cambodian police were ordered yesterday to crack down on anyone causing "political chaos" during this weekend's general election that is set to extend Premier Hun Sen's 33-year rule. Cambodians will vote on Sunday without a credible opposition party for the first time, after a court dissolved the Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) late last year. The dissolution was accompanied by a crackdown on party members, many of whom fled the country or are in jail. The CNRP has called for a boycott of the poll.

An estimated 80,000 security personnel, including police, military police and soldiers, will be deployed to keep the peace on election day. But Phnom Penh police chief Chuon Sovann told an inspection parade of thousands of police to be prepared to act swiftly in case of any "obstruction" of the polls. Police must be ready "to prevent terrorism acts and political chaos", he said, adding

they must also act to "prevent the activities of the opposition and their allies inside and outside of the country who are trying to find a way to destroy election" or calling on people to protest.

Authorities have already accused some opposition members of calling for a "clean-finger" boycott campaign, referring to a refusal to dip fingers in ink used as a marker after voting. Analysts say Hun Sen fears a low turnout that could further damage the credibility of the election. Both the US and the EU have withdrawn funding for it but countries including China and Japan have offered support.

Rights activists said the deployment of large numbers of police and troops would intimidate voters. "The presence of police forces in and around voting stations, particularly if armed, adds to the existing atmosphere of fear and intimidation which has been paving the way to the elections," Chak Sopheap, executive director of the Cambodian Center for Human Rights, said. — AFP

Beheadings in Mozambique mark Islamist threat in new gas frontier

CHITOLO, Mozambique: Anastacio Talene Nakupenda woke to the sound of gunshots as a dozen men burst from dense forest to attack his remote Mozambican village, torching homes, stealing food and decapitating one of his neighbors. "I was left with nothing, completely naked," Nakupenda, a Catholic, said outside his partially rebuilt home in Chitolo, northern Mozambique, from where he had run for his life while five men armed with machetes set the mud and wood walls alight.

Initially dismissed as isolated acts of banditry, attacks like the one on Chitolo in March are increasing. An emerging pattern suggests the potential beginnings of an Islamist threat in Cabo Delgado - an impoverished province on the border with Tanzania where companies are developing one of the biggest gas finds in a decade. The group goes by the name Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama, or "followers of the prophetic tradition". In common with Boko Haram in Nigeria, it touts a radical form of Islam as an antidote to what it regards as corrupt, elitist rule that has broadened gaping inequality. Since October more than 100 people have been killed, often by decapitation, in 40 separate attacks, in villages up to 200 km apart, according to local news site Zitamar.

The targets are usually remote villages and attacks are carried out with machetes, though the occasional shooting and a recent use of a basic explosive device have been reported.

Researchers have found the Ahlu Sunnah Wa-Jama leadership has links to Islamist groups in Tanzania, Somalia, Kenya and the Great Lakes region where some also received training. Its capacity is limited so far, but it is rooted in conditions that mirror northeast Nigeria a decade ago when Boko Haram began recruiting young men angry with stark inequality and perceived religious discrimination. "It's similar to how Boko Haram started," said historian Joao Pereira, co-author of the most comprehensive study on the group. "All the conditions are there for this situation to worsen."

Huge gas reserves

While Boko Haram morphed from an anti-establishment movement into one of the world's deadliest Islamist groups that has killed more than 30,000 people, northern Mozambique's remoteness and a lack of funding for militants are brakes on the violence, security experts say. But it has been enough for the United States and Britain to advise against travelling to the region.

push to match the New Zealand proposal was rejected. Official data shows New Zealand has one of the highest domestic violence rates in the developed world, with family homicide rates more than twice those of Australia, Canada and Britain on a per capita basis.

Logie, part of a progressive coalition government elected last year, said intervention aimed at helping domestic violence victims often came too late. "We wait until things get really bad or someone gets killed and then we wring our hands," she said. Logie said the leave entitlement would give those seeking to escape violent relationships time to perform practical tasks such as attending court dates,

moving house and settling children in new schools.

The conservative opposition National Party opposed the legislation, saying it was well intentioned but could affect victims' chances of getting a job. "Employers will start to filter and look at whether or not they want to hire someone that may present a risk around domestic violence because ultimately it could impact on their business," National's justice spokesman Mark Mitchell told Newshub. New Zealand has a track record of being progressive on women's issues-in 1893 it became the first country to give women the right to vote. — AFP



PHNOM PENH: Cambodian police force stand in formation during inspection ceremony at the Olympic National stadium in Phnom Penh in preparation for the July 29 general election. — AFP

Several killings have been reported about 20 km outside the town of Palma, from where energy multinationals are developing massive gas discoveries in the Southern African country.

Some of the companies are taking precautions as they develop projects involving investments expected to total about \$50 billion, more than four times Mozambique's GDP. US firm Anadarko, which is building a liquefied natural gas (LNG) plant near Palma, placed staff under "lock-down" due to security fears, a security source said. Canada-based Wentworth Resources said it had limited access to its onshore license site because of the security situation. Exxon and ENI both said they are closely monitoring the situation.

The companies plan to develop the Coral offshore gas field which is expected to start production in 2024. A final investment decision on an onshore LNG plant is planned for 2019. It was in Cabo Delgado that the liberation struggle against the Portuguese began in the 1960s, with fighters trained and sneaking across from Tanzania. That victory, and the spoils of a 15-year civil war, enabled Frelimo, a party few Muslims feel represents them, to cement power.

However, the new group does not appear to be linked to sporadic attacks in recent years blamed on Frelimo's war-era opponents, Renamo. Muslims make up 20 percent of the total population but more than half of Cabo Delgado's 2.3 million people. The younger ones

are increasingly angered by what they regard as broken promises of jobs from the offshore gas discoveries on their doorstep.

Violence began in October, when around 30 people attacked a police station in the quiet fishing town of Mocimboa da Praia. Two policemen died and one was seriously wounded as gunfire raged through the night. Bullet holes can still be seen in the wall of the base and the neighbouring petrol station store. For most observers the incident came out of the blue, but locals say they had been warning authorities of radicalisation in their communities for the past two years.

'We're at war'

A heavy-handed military response has further fuelled resentment. Soldiers live out of camouflaged tents on the edge of vulnerable villages along the 200 km stretch from Macomia to Palma. At one military checkpoint, a soldier in crumbling footwear, said: "We're at war". Authorities have said they do not know the motivations or the identities of the people behind the attacks and are restricting media access to the area. Local religious leaders have been told not to speak to reporters.

To stem the unrest, authorities, which have so far cracked down, must repair ties with communities that have long felt ignored by a central government sitting 2,500 km away in the capital Maputo, experts say. — Reuters

International

France's Macron under fire over response to security aide scandal

Opposition lawmakers accuse govt of cover-up

PARIS: France's opposition lashed out at Emmanuel Macron yesterday over his response to revelations that his top security aide roughed up protesters, accusing the president of badly mishandling the worst scandal since he took office. After days of silence, Macron finally spoke out late Tuesday over the debacle surrounding disgraced ex-bodyguard Alexandre Benalla, who faces criminal charges after he was filmed scuffling with May Day protesters in Paris while wearing a police helmet.

"What happened on May 1 is terrible, serious, and for me it was a disappointment and a betrayal," Macron told lawmakers from his majority Republic on the Move (LREM) party. "The only person responsible for this affair is me," he said, in an angry intervention that appeared to take aim at parliament's grilling of his top aides as well as press coverage of the affair. "If they're looking for someone to hold responsible, he's right in front of you. They can come and get me."

Many politicians blasted Macron's apparent criticism of parliamentary interrogation of his staff, with far-left MP Alexis Corbiere accusing him of "swaggering" and Gerard Larcher of the rightwing Republicans describing the response as one of "amateurism and panic". Le Monde newspaper, which broke the story by publishing videos of Benalla hitting one protester and wrestling another, said Macron had spoken "before a loyal audience, where there was no possibility of contradicting him".

It deplored Macron's attack on media coverage of "Benallagate", which the president said was proof the

press "no longer looks for the truth"—comments more often heard from US President Donald Trump than the centrist French leader. Lawmakers say serious unanswered questions remain about Benalla, and have continued to call for Macron to address the nation.

The 26-year-old Benalla was not sacked or charged until the scandal broke last week—despite senior officials knowing about the May Day incident—and he reportedly enjoyed perks unusual for someone of his rank.

Approval ratings hit

Government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux, promising "deep changes", said the administration would deal with lessons from the scandal in September after the summer break, "once it has been clearly established what went wrong". Benalla was given a two-week suspension without pay days after the incident and removed from organizing the president's security during his trips. But the alleged assault of a young man was not reported to prosecutors, sparking allegations of a cover-up.

Several cabinet members and security chiefs were to appear before the panels yesterday, including a Senate hearing for presidential office director Patrick Strzoda. Strzoda had already told lawmakers Tuesday that he decided there were not enough elements to justify turning Benalla over to prosecutors, not least because no criminal complaint had been filed against him. Macron's chief of staff Alexis Kohler will appear before the Senate committee on Thursday.

“What happened on May 1 is terrible”



PARIS: This picture shows DOPC (Direction de l'Ordre Public et de la Circulation) Commissaire Philippe Mizerski, second left, holding a briefing next to Elysee Chief Security Officer Alexandre Benalla, right, wearing a police visor, on the place de la Contrescarpe in Paris during Labor Day protests. — AFP

The scandal comes 14 months after Macron was elected vowing to restore integrity to French politics, and polls suggest the 40-year-old's poll ratings—already low—have taken a further hit. An Ipsos poll published Tuesday found that 60 percent reported an unfavorable opinion of Macron, a record low. Benalla has been charged with assault and impersonating a police officer, while also illegally receiving police surveillance footage in a bid to claim his actions were justified.

Vincent Crase, an associate and security agent employed by the LREM who was also at the scene, has also been charged, as have three police officers. "The problem isn't Alexandre Benalla's misconduct but rather the structure that made it possible," said Bruno Cautres, a political scientist in Paris. "No matter the administrative or judicial consequences of this affair, it will mark a before and after for Emmanuel Macron." —AFP

Greek wildfires toll rises to 79

ATHENS: At least 79 people died in huge wildfires around Athens, Greek authorities said yesterday, as rescuers scoured scorched homes and burned-out cars for survivors of one of the deadliest fire outbreaks in Europe's modern history. Scores of locals and holiday-makers fled to the sea to try to escape the flames as they tore through towns near Athens stoked by 100-kilometre-per-hour wind gusts, devouring woodland and hundreds of buildings.

Greek media have described the disaster as a "national tragedy", while Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras cut short a visit to Bosnia and announced three days of national mourning. A fire service official said that searches to find those missing in the fires would continue on Wednesday, although there was still no official word on the number of people unaccounted for. Spokeswoman Stavroula Maliri said authorities knew of "79 dead", surpassing the 77 people killed in the previous deadliest fires in Greece, on the southern island of Evia in 2007.

"We've received numerous calls reporting people missing," Maliri said. When the fires broke out on Monday evening, terrified residents and tourists were overtaken by the flames in homes, on foot or in their cars. AFP



ATHENS: A woman tries to find her belongings underneath the debris of her burnt house following a wildfire at the village of Neos Voutzas, near Athens. — AFP

photographers saw the burnt bodies of people and dogs. The charred bodies of 26 people, including small children, were discovered at a villa at the seaside resort of Mati, 40 kilometers northeast of Athens, rescuers said.

"Mati no longer exists," said the mayor of nearby Rafina, Evangelos Bournous, adding that more than a thousand buildings and 300 cars had been damaged. Rescue teams on Wednesday were going house to house to search for survivors in Mati. "That's not

always possible because some houses are at risk of collapse," a civil defense worker said.

Volunteers were also doing the rounds to provide food to those whose houses survived relatively unscathed but which have experienced sporadic power cuts since the fire struck. "In 40 years here we've seen several fires each year" in the hills where Monday's blaze broke out said resident Andreas Matsios. "But we never imagined they would ever reach Mati." —AFP

Missing native American women: Anatomy of a crisis

LOS ANGELES: Ashley Loring, a member of the Blackfeet tribe in Montana, has been missing for a year, says a Facebook page dedicated to this student with fine features and an earnest face. Leesha Nightpipe, a Rosebud Sioux from Arizona, has been missing for a year and a half. She was a drug addict and fell in with the wrong people. Her sister Toni fears the worst. Then there is Carolyn DeFord, who has been looking for her mother, Leona Kinsey, for 18 years. "My mother went to the grocery store and never came back," says DeFord.

These three people are among the thousands of native American women who go missing each year in the United States. Last year, federal authorities recorded nearly 5,700 such cases. So far this year, there have been another 2,750. The problem is so serious that the US Senate held a national public awareness day on missing and murdered indigenous women on May 5, in memory of one Hanna Harris, a member of the Cheyenne tribe who went missing in 2013. She was later found dead, and had been raped.

Trauma in our DNA

The tragedy of another woman—Savannah Lafontaine, a member of the Spirit Lake tribe who at age 21, and eight

months pregnant, went missing in North Dakota and was later found eviscerated—gave rise to a bill aimed at improving data collection and investigative procedures for these cases. A film entitled "Wind River" that came out last year and the work of many artists have sought to draw attention to the crisis of violence plaguing women in native American communities.

"Very rarely are they found again alive and some are never found at all. It's mostly homicides. Also cases of trafficking," said Annita Lucchesi, a California cultural studies researcher who has launched a project to map the killings and disappearances of indigenous women. Lucchesi, a native American who was herself sexually assaulted, said she realized while pursuing her PhD that "there was no universal number anyone could agree on." So she made it her mission to gather as much data as she could.

Advocacy groups say currently available statistics underestimate the gravity of the situation because the actual number of cases reported to the police is far lower than the reality, mainly because of mistrust of the authorities. "It starts with historical trauma when they were killing our people during the Removal Act," said DeFord, referring to an 1830 law that allowed the government to negotiate with native Americans to be moved to federal territory west of the Mississippi river in exchange for their lands. This led to forced marches during which thousands of native Americans died. Later, indigenous peoples were interned and children were placed in boarding schools and forbidden to speak their language. —AFP

Pizza delivery man reunited with US family

NEW YORK: An Ecuadoran father of two has been reunited with his US family, nearly two months after he was arrested and earmarked for deportation while delivering pizza to a New York military base. A federal judge ordered his immediate release late Tuesday and for him to stay in the United States to exhaust an application for permanent residency, which he had already begun.

Pablo Villavicencio, 35, an undocumented migrant, was detained on June 1 at the Fort Hamilton Army Base in Brooklyn, after a military policeman was not satisfied with his New York identity card and a background check confirmed that he was not a legal resident. Immigration and Customs Enforcement were called and moved to deport him. He remained in custody until Tuesday when activists said he was back home with his family.

"Although he stayed in the United States unlawfully and is currently subject to a final order or removal, he has otherwise been a model citizen," Judge Paul Crotty wrote in the order. "He now has two children, both of whom are United States citizens. He has no criminal history. He has paid his taxes. And he has worked diligently to provide for his family," he added. The case sparked outrage among pro-immigration groups and Democrats, widening the gulf between the city and the federal government's determination to crack down on illegal immigration. —AFP

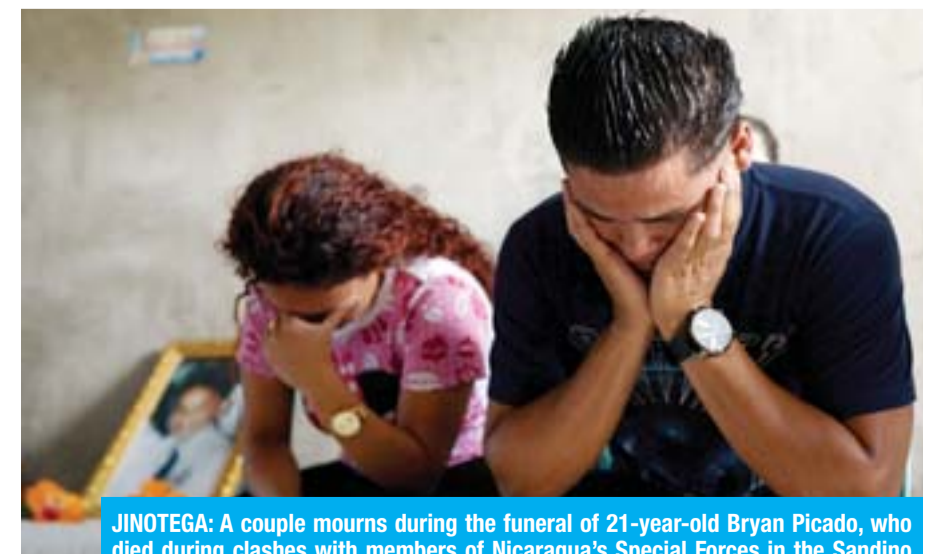
US warns Nicaragua as more killed in unrest

MANAGUA: The United States on Tuesday warned Nicaragua to halt violence against opposition groups as at least four more people were killed in unrest that has gripped the country for three months. US Vice President Mike Pence said it was "undeniable" that Nicaraguan President Daniel Ortega's government was behind the violence, despite his denials. Pence used Twitter to call on Ortega to "end the violence NOW" and bow to opposition demands to hold early elections. "The world is watching!" Pence added.

On Monday Ortega gave an interview to US television channel Fox News saying that he would not step down and would see through his current term to 2021. He also asserted that "the turmoil has stopped" in his country after offensives over the past couple of weeks against protest hubs, and he denied his security forces and coordinating paramilitaries were attacking peaceful demonstrators. Speaking on Venezuelan television, Ortega on Tuesday accused US senators in Miami of being behind a "conspiracy" to try to effect regime change in Cuba, Nicaragua and Venezuela.

Brazilian killed

According to a non-governmental rights group, the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights, Nicaragua's death toll stands at 301 since the turmoil started in mid-April. Other groups give higher figures. An AFP photographer in the city of Jinotega, north of the capital, saw funerals for two of three people locals said were killed by police and pro-government paramilitaries. Those killed included a boy, said the Nicaraguan Center for Human Rights. In Managua, a 32-year-old Brazilian medical student was fatally shot while driving home in the middle of



JINOTEGA: A couple mourns during the funeral of 21-year-old Bryan Picado, who died during clashes with members of Nicaragua's Special Forces in the Sandino neighborhood in Jinotega. — AFP

the night, one of her professors at the American University in the capital said.

Brazil's government expressed "profound outrage" at the killing. In a statement, it demanded the killers be brought to justice, and condemned the "disproportionate and lethal use of force, as well as the use of paramilitary groups in operations with security teams." Ortega, in his Fox News and Venezuela state television interview, spoke only of dozens of police officers killed in the violence. He also denied controlling paramilitaries acting against protesters.

Those assertions prompted Pence to tweet: "State-sponsored violence in Nicaragua is undeniable. Ortega's propaganda fools no one and changes nothing." In his interview with Venezuela's Telesur channel, Ortega said US senators in Miami were bankrolling "criminal gangs" in Nicaragua, with the help of extreme-right groups in the country to try to topple government. He also slammed a mooted US law, the Nicaraguan Investment Conditionality Act, which aimed to curb international loans to Nicaragua unless it can satisfy Washington that it is promoting democracy.

Stalled talks

US lawmakers are reportedly mulling a resolution condemning Nicaragua, and preparing possible additional sanctions on Ortega's government. The Organization of American States has also backed early elections as a way out of the crisis. But talks between Ortega's administration and the opposition, mediated by Catholic bishops in the country, have stalled for over a month, with the president refusing to bring forward polls.

Managua's archbishop, Cardinal Leopoldo Brenes, told AFP that the Church "is not an enemy" of Ortega's government, and urged the administration to "listen" to the people. He said that, while conditions were not right now to resume dialogue, "without talks there could be more deaths." For Nicaragua's 72-year-old president, a former leftwing guerrilla who has ruled over his poor nation for 22 of the past 39 years since his Sandinista rebels toppled a US-backed dictator, the unrest has been the worst he has faced since returning to power in 2007. —AFP

International

Myanmar claws through rubble for 27 buried in mine landslide

Miners flouted repeated warnings in their search for jade

YANGON: Authorities in Myanmar used excavators yesterday to hunt for 27 people buried for two days in a landslide, officials said, the latest disaster to hit a northern centre of the Southeast Asian nation's lucrative jade trade. Deadly landslides during Myanmar's rainy season from May to October frequently bury informal scavengers, or handpickers, who scour large piles of earth for jade, production of which stood at \$31 billion in 2014, advocacy group Global Witness says.

Small-scale miners who flouted repeated warnings in their search for jade at a defunct mining site were buried by muddy earth that slid off a cliff on Monday, said Kyaw Swar Aung, the administrator of Hpakant in Kachin state. "There were 4 inches of rain the night before it happened," he said, adding that no survivors or bodies had yet been pulled from the rubble. "Warnings had been issued twice not to do mining at that site."

Six backhoes were brought in on Tuesday to help with the search in the village of Ma Mone, said fire brigade official Aye Thein. "We could not perform the search when it happened, since we did not have the machinery," he said. Those trapped had come from nearby villages to pick through tailings for jade, he said. Experts say most of the stones are smuggled to neighboring China.

With only about 70,000 members, the mainly-Christian Rawang are one of Myanmar's smallest ethnic groups and live predominantly in the mountainous north, with many employed in the informal mining sector. With few regulations and little oversight in the hugely profitable sector—mostly fuelled by soaring Chinese demand—conditions are often dangerous, especially during the wet months.

"Before the rainy season, the people looking for jade were destroying the land. Now it is raining and the ground is not stable and very muddy," local resident Shwe Thein said yesterday. Dozens of people have been killed by landslides this year in the Hpakant region of Kachin state, where a major incident in November 2015 left more than 100 dead. Watchdog Global Witness estimated that the jade industry was worth some \$31 billion in 2014, a huge proportion of which did not reach state coffers.

Jade and other natural resources, including timber, gold and amber, help finance both sides in a decades-long conflict between ethnic Kachin rebels and the military as they battle to control the mines and the income they bring. Since a 17-year ceasefire broke down in 2011, more than 100,000 people have been displaced due to the fighting, many multiple times. Civilian leader



YANGON: This file photo shows a view of the Hpakant jade mining area. —AFP

Aung San Suu Kyi said on coming to power in 2016 that ending the country's myriad conflicts was her top priority but an ongoing peace process is yet to yield any significant results. —Agencies

“No survivors or bodies pulled out yet”

Japan's heat wave drives up food prices, prison inmate dies

TOKYO: Vegetable prices in Japan are spiking as much as 65 percent in the grip of a grueling heat wave, which drove temperatures yesterday to records in some areas hit by flooding and landslides, hampering clean-up and recovery efforts. As many as 65 people died in the week to July 22, up from 12 the previous week, government figures show, while a prisoner in his forties died of a heat stroke in central Miyoshi city, amid what medical experts called an "unprecedented" heat wave.

An agriculture ministry official in Tokyo, the capital, warned against "pretty severe price moves" for vegetables if predictions of more weeks of hot weather held up, resulting in less rain than usual. "It's up to the weather how prices will move from here," the official said. "But the Japan Meteorological Agency has predicted it will remain hot for a few more weeks, and that we will have less

rain than the average."

The most recent data showed the wholesale price of cabbage was 129 yen per kg in Tokyo on Monday, the ministry said, for example, an increase of 65 percent over the average late-July price of the past five years. Temperatures in Japan's western cities of Yamaguchi and Akiotacho reached record highs of 38.8 Celsius and 38.6 C, respectively, on Wednesday afternoon. In Takahashi, another western city and one of the areas hit hardest by this month's flooding, the mercury reached 38.7 C, just 0.3 degrees off an all-time high.

In Miyoshi, where the prisoner died after a heat stroke, the temperature on the floor of his cell was 34 degrees C shortly before 7 am on Tuesday. The room had no air-conditioning, like most in the prison. Authorities who found him unresponsive in his cell sent him to a hospital outside the prison, but he was soon pronounced dead, a prison official said. "It is truly regrettable that an inmate lost his life," Kiyoshi Kageyama, head of the prison, said in a statement. "We will do our utmost in maintaining (prisoners') health, including taking anti-heat stroke steps."

On the Tokyo stock market, shares in companies expected to benefit from a



TOKYO: A man wipes perspiration from his head in Tokyo as Japan suffers from a heat wave. —AFP

hot summer, such as ice-cream makers, have risen in recent trade. Shares in Imuraya Group, whose subsidiary sells popular vanilla and red-bean ice cream, were up nearly 10 percent on the month, while Ishigaki Foods, which sells barley tea, surged 50 percent over the same period. In neighboring South Korea, the

unremitting heat has killed at least 14 people this year, the Korea Centers for Diseases Control and Prevention said. The heat wave was at the level of a "special disaster", South Korean President Moon Jae-in said on Tuesday, as electricity use surged and vegetable prices rose. —Reuters

India plans to battle pollution staining the Taj Mahal

NEW DELHI: India has proposed a ban on plastics, polluting factories and construction around its 17th-century monument to love, the Taj Mahal, a government document showed, in a bid to stave off pollution that is turning the structure yellow and green. The white marble mausoleum is located around 210 km from the capital New Delhi in the northern city of Agra, which the World Health Organization rated in May as the world's eighth-most polluted.

In a draft document submitted to the Supreme Court on Tuesday, authorities in Uttar Pradesh state, where Agra is located, said they would ban all plastics, switch to electric and hydrogen vehicles, and boost the green cover within the precincts of the Taj, to fight pollution. "Replacing present-day lawns with tree cover as existed originally will increase the bio-

mass," the document read.

This step would reduce water consumption to maintain the surrounding garden and boost the water table, besides trapping dust to reduce pollution, the draft added. India's Supreme Court is driving the campaign to protect the country's most famous monument, built by the Mughal emperor Shah Jahan for his wife Mumtaz Mahal. The document was submitted after the justices, in a fit of anger during a hearing two weeks ago, demanded that authorities either restore the structure or tear it down.

One of the Seven Wonders of the World, the Taj Mahal is flanked by a garbage-strewn river and is often enveloped by dust and smog from belching smokestacks and vehicles. Environmentalists and historians have long warned about the risk of soot and fumes from factories and tanneries dulling the monument, which also faces attack from insects that stain its marble.

"There have been various studies, various plans, but they have not been implemented in right earnest in a coordinated



AGRA, India: A monkey looks for eatables on the polluted banks of the Yamuna river next to the historic Taj Mahal in Agra, India. —Reuters

manner," said Divay Gupta, an official of the non-profit Indian National Trust for Art and Cultural Heritage (INTACH). The draft proposes an integrated environmen-

tal and natural heritage management plan, with a special focus on checking air pollution, besides river and water management and conservation. —Reuters

Landslides kill five near Rohingya camps in Bangladesh

DHAKA: Landslides triggered by monsoon rains killed at least five children yesterday near camps on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border housing one million Rohingya refugees, police said. Aid agencies have been warning of the potential for catastrophe as heavy rains lash Cox's Bazar district, where many of the huge concentration of refugees live on exposed hillsides. The latest victims, who were not Rohingya refugees, died after three days of heavy rain set off a torrent of mud, according to police.

"Four children from the same family were sleeping when they were buried under a chunk of hill as it gave way early this morning," Cox's Bazar police station chief Fariduddin Khandaker said. Another six-year-old child died in the neighbouring town of Ramu, police added. The two towns

are close to Kutupalong, the world's largest refugee camp, where more than half a million Rohingya live in tarpaulin and bamboo shanties, mainly on hills where trees have been torn down to make way for the influx.

Rohingya have converged on Cox's Bazar after violence in Myanmar in recent years and some 700,000 have arrived since August last year when the Buddhist-dominated country's military launched a crackdown which the UN has said could constitute ethnic cleansing. Landslides have killed at least 18 people in the region since last month, including a Rohingya boy crushed to death by a collapsing mud wall at Kutupalong. Some 200,000 Rohingya who live on hills around the refugee camps are at risk in the monsoon rains, according to disaster relief officials.

Around 37,000 people have been moved to safer locations ahead of the monsoon, Bangladesh's refugee commissioner Mohammad Abul Kalam said. He said authorities and relief agencies were "on alert" after three days of non-stop rains raised the risk of tragedy. Last year, monsoon landslides in Cox's Bazar and the nearby Chittagong hill tracts killed at least 170 people. —AFP

Philippines: Asia's deadliest country for land activists

BANGKOK: Murders of land and environmental activists are surging in the Philippines, making it the deadliest country in Asia, according to campaigners who said the government has failed to provide protection. The Philippines-based rights group Karapatan recorded at least 63 killings of land and environmental activists last year, more than double the previous year. "There is a climate of impunity and a total lack of access to justice for victims," said the group's secretary general, Christina Palabay.

The actual number of victims may be "even higher", she said yesterday. The UK-based advocacy group Global Witness said this week that 48 land and environmental activists were killed in the Philippines in 2017, making the country second only to Brazil which topped its survey of

22 countries with 57 murders. Global Witness blamed the rising death toll in the Philippines on "a president who is brazenly anti-human rights, the militarization of communities, and the failure of government bodies to provide protection for at-risk activists."

President Rodrigo Duterte's spokesman did not respond to calls and an email seeking comment. Activists say killings have surged amidst a government crackdown on rural communities. Almost half of the murders of activists were linked to fights against large agricultural businesses, as farmers and indigenous people were forced from their land to make way for plantations of banana and coffee, according to Global Witness. "The priority is business; this administration does not care about people," said Joan Carling, an adviser to the United Nations on indigenous rights.

"There is not even an acknowledgement by the government of the increasingly dangerous climate for defenders. We fear the situation will only get worse," she said. Carling is named in a petition - along with more than 600 others, including activists and a UN special rapporteur - that the government submitted to a Manila court, seeking to designate them as "terrorists". —Reuters

Acting NZ PM calls on Australia to change flag

WELLINGTON: New Zealand's Acting Prime Minister Winston Peters has called on Australia to change its flag, accusing its neighbor of copying New Zealand's own design - a jab at a time of testy relations between the normally close allies. The two countries have been exchanging barbs over Australia's so-called character test, which has resulted in a rise in the number of New Zealanders being deported from the country.

"We had a flag which we had for a long time - copied by Australia and they should actually change their flag," Peters said on Television New Zealand, when an interviewer referenced a failed local 2015 referendum to change their own flag. Peters is acting leader while Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern is on maternity leave. A spokesman for Australia's Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull did not immediately respond to requests for comment.

Both nations' flags feature the Union Jack - a nod to their British colonial past - as well as the Southern Cross cluster of stars set against a blue backdrop. The only difference is New Zealand's design features four red stars, while Australia's is adorned by six white ones - a similarity that often causes confusion over the identify of the flags.

New Zealand formally adopted its flag in 1903, while Australia did not take up its current design until 1952, though it used a similar design with a red backdrop as early as 1901. Around that time, New Zealand opted against becoming an Australian state; however visa arrangements allow citizens to easily travel and work in either country. Squabbles over the origins of national icons regularly break out between nationals of the two countries, which normally share a good-hearted cultural and sporting rivalry.

However Peters' comments underscore a genuine escalation of political strains. "It is the latest twist in trans-Tasman crankiness," said Ian Hall, professor of international relations, Griffith University in the Australian state of Queensland. New Zealand's Justice Minister Andrew Little last week accused Australia of "venal" politics and breaching human rights over a steep rise in deportations of long-term Australian residents who are New Zealand citizens. —Reuters

Analysis

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Reunited family's next challenge: Fight for asylum

Maria Marroquin Perdomo fretted as she waited with her 11-year-old son, Abisai, in the New Orleans International Airport. A day earlier, the mother and son had been reunited in Texas after being separated by U.S. immigration officials for more than a month, an ordeal that followed a harrowing journey from Honduras. Now they awaited another reunion: With the father Abisai had not seen in person since he was an infant. "Maybe he didn't come," Perdomo said.

Then the boy spotted his father and sprinted toward him. His mother moved more tentatively. For days, she had been consumed by a range of emotions: joy and relief at finding her son; anxiety over whether his father truly wanted her with him after a long estrangement; guilt over the horrors Abisai had suffered; and fear over how her asylum case would play out amid a sweeping US immigration crackdown.

Such anxieties are common as the administration of US President Donald Trump scrambles to return as many as 2,500 immigrant children to their parents by a court-ordered deadline of July 26. The joyful reunions are by no means happy endings. Even as some of the parents get glimpses of the lives they had hoped for in America, they face new challenges in avoiding deportation and keeping their families together.

For Perdomo, that will mean trying to convince an immigration judge she fled Honduras for one of the specific reasons outlined in asylum laws. Making that case got much harder last month with an appellate decision issued by Attorney General Jeff Sessions that immigration attorneys say disallowed some of the asylum justifications most often cited by Central Americans, including fear of unchecked domestic or gang violence.

Perdomo has passed a first hurdle, convincing an asylum officer that she has a "credible fear" of returning home. That determination was based on her account of how two policemen pistol-whipped her, invaded her home and tried to extort money, according to a transcript of her credible fear interview reviewed by Reuters.

Most immigrants who pass that first test, however, are not ultimately allowed to remain in the United States, and Hondurans have a particularly low success rate. Between 2007 and 2017, just 16 percent of the Hondurans whose cases were decided in immigration court received asylum or other permission to stay, according to a Reuters analysis of data from the Executive Office for Immigration Review.

Sessions, in his June 11 decision, sharply narrowed the circumstances under which immigrants can use violence at home as grounds for US asylum. To qualify, applicants now need to show either that the government condoned the violence or that they were targeted because of their membership in a "socially distinct" group, based on characteristics such as race or religion. He also instructed immigration judges and asylum officers to view illegal border-crossing as a "serious adverse factor" in deciding a case and to consider whether applicants could have escaped danger by relocating within their own countries.

Perdomo's case faces long odds in court, said David Ware, a New Orleans immigration attorney. "It's hard to put her in a distinct group," he said. "The sad thing about Central American immigrants is that they are fleeing what amount to failed states with high levels of criminality." Texas attorney Jodi Goodwin, who helped reunite Perdomo with her son, said she is already seeing an increase in asylum applicants failing to pass their initial credible-fear interviews. "Sessions did what he could to gut asylum law," she said.

The Department of Justice declined to comment on whether Sessions aimed to make asylum claims more difficult for Central Americans or whether recently reunited families now face a tougher fight against deportation. In a speech on the day he issued his decision, Sessions said that "the asylum system is being abused to the detriment of the rule of law, sound public policy, and public safety." His decision, he said, restored "sound principles of asylum."

A knock on the door

The basis of Perdomo's asylum application, described under oath in her credible-fear interview, is an attack she says occurred on May 20. Two uniformed Honduran national police officers pushed their way into her home and demanded money, she said. One of them hit her with a gun. Later, after they left, the telephone rang and a voice told her to have the cash in 24 hours or die, according to the transcript of her account to authorities.

Perdomo had long been separated from Abisai's father, Edward Montes Lopez, but he kept in touch with their children through phone calls, emails and video-chat. Together they decided Maria should flee with their youngest, Abisai, to New Orleans. They could not afford to move the whole family, and Perdomo's other five children were older teenagers or adults. Montes Lopez borrowed \$3,000 from friends among the several dozen other Hondurans he worked with as a welder for a New Orleans shipbuilder to help pay for their journey. Two days after the police officers threatened them, the mother and son started their journey north, traveling for 15 days by van, bus and truck, she said. — Reuters

DEADLY WILDFIRES IN GREECE



Power to the pupils: Solar panels keep Kenya kids in school

From a mile away, the roof of Mihingoni Primary School glitters in Kenya's midday sun. The effect, though, comes not from the roof but from what is on it: a sparkling array of solar panels. Mihingoni is one of eight mostly off-grid primary schools in the southeastern coastal county of Kilifi that have been fitted with a solar array. The key task of the 800-watt panels is to power tablet computers that pupils use under the government's strategy to integrate e-learning into primary education.

Last year more than 1 million of the devices were distributed to primary school students across the country - among them Mihingoni's pupils. But tablets require electricity, which many rural schools lack. Mihingoni primary is connected to the national grid, but power is expensive, and only its computer room has electricity, limiting charging of the devices.

But "since the solar panels were fitted (in January), pupils can have access to their tablets any time, and the cost of power has considerably gone down," said Kuchanja Karisa, headmaster of the school, about 35 km north of the coastal city of Mombasa. In his impoverished area, he said, access to electricity boosts access to education, not least because the cost of power is factored into school fees. "Poverty levels in this area are high, and any slight increase or decrease in school fees affects school attendance," he said.

Power hurdle

The panels are part of a project run by two British-based organizations to provide solar power to primary schools and clinics in remote, off-grid communities. The OVO Foundation - the charitable arm of a green-leaning energy firm - provides funding, while Energy 4 Impact, a charity that works on accelerating access to energy, does the installation. The need is great: Thousands of Kenyan schools lack access to the national power grid.

Figures from the education ministry show the country had 29,460 primary schools as of 2014, of which nearly

Saltwater plant brings 'tasty tea' to Indian island

Each morning, Kamarunisa Poovummada sips her cup of tea while watching waves from the Arabian Sea crash around a water treatment plant opposite her house on Kavaratti island, off India's southwest coast. She links the taste of her perfectly brewed cup to the desalination plant that has brought potable water to the doorsteps of islanders, and almost erased the memory of the brackish tea she hurriedly swallowed down until a decade ago. "We first noticed the difference when we saw the golden color of the tea as we strained it into our cups," Poovummada recalled. "And then we tasted the tea and it was magical."

The "tasty" tea is celebrated daily by residents of Kavaratti, the capital of India's smallest Union Territory Lakshadweep, an archipelago of 36 islands, of which only 10 are inhabited. Surrounded by pristine beaches, lagoons and coral reefs, the islanders have for decades battled a shortage of clean water - a challenge facing many island inhabitants globally. Over the years, the sea's clear blue waters seeped into the islands' limited groundwater reserves, making every sip saline.

Limited land availability also resulted in groundwater sources being too close to sewage sumps, causing contamination and making water unsafe for drinking, cooking or even bathing. "The water system was a mess," said Hidayathulla Chekkillakam, who grew up on the island and is an employee of the public works department that runs the desalination plant. Different options were tried, from open wells to rainwater harvesting, he said - but they were either ineffective or too expensive. "Good drinking water was a prized commodity," he added.

Piped dreams

When Purnima Jalihal and her team from the Chennai-based National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT) first



Students at Mihingoni Primary School in Kenya's Kilifi County look at tablets charged with solar panels on June 19, 2018. — Reuters

22,000 were state schools. As of last December, about 24,000 primary schools were connected to the grid, according to Simon Gicharu who chairs the government's rural electrification program. A lack of power at unconnected schools, however, makes it difficult for students to take full advantage of tablets provided under the e-learning programme, Karisa said.

At Mihingoni, for example, pupils unable to access the computer lab to charge their tablets - which have an eight-hour battery life - ended up using them less, the headmaster said. At the school, students previously paid 1,500 Kenyan shillings (\$15) a year for electricity. But today, with the solar panels, there is a much lower fee - 500 shillings (\$5), which goes to pay for more grid power in the rainy season when the solar panels work less effectively. Cutting costs "has seen a sharp increase in the number of students who have since joined the school", Karisa said. In 2017, the school had about 50 pupils in each class, he said. Now it has 140, with the lower cost encouraging more parents to send their children to school. Annual fees at the school are about 700 shillings (\$7) per primary school student, apart from the energy supplement. "Every coin counts for area locals," Karisa said.

Scaling up

Fifty kilometres north is Mligodmani Primary School, which also had solar panels installed in January.

arrived on Kavaratti in 2004, they were armed with blueprints for a desalination plant and cartons of bottled water. They found themselves in the midst of a fragile ecosystem, with clear instructions from the island administration to "not destroy" anything. They were also warned about the tea, and soon found even a sip made them queasy. "The salinity in the water was unbearable, and the people knew it was not good for their health. But they had no choice," Jalihal said.

The project - and the fact it was headed by a woman - drew curious islanders to the site, where Jalihal's team had to improvise designs to ensure construction did not harm the ecosystem. "It was a struggle to get things going," the scientist said. "There was no infrastructure and we couldn't bring in heavy machinery. Everything had to be done manually." The team built floating structures and towed them into the sea, including an underwater pipeline. In less than a year, the water treatment plant was up and running, producing 100,000 litres of potable water a day.

Pipelines were laid along the streets, with a community tap set up every 25 m. And in 2005, the water supply started. "It was almost like a revolution," housewife Rabiyanath Begum told the Thomson Reuters Foundation as she watched her children play on the beach. "Tea is a part of our life. We drink it without milk and so the colour and taste are important. If the tea is good, it means the water is good," she said. Poovummada, Begum and the 11,200 residents of Kavaratti - a tiny island measuring just 5.8 km long and 1.6 km wide - neatly line up buckets around the water taps for an hour each day.

Tourist attraction

Abdul Latif is used to islanders visiting the plant to show it off to their children, and guests from the mainland. "It's almost like a tourist spot," the 43-year-old operator said, smiling. From walking visitors across the bridge to see the underwater pipeline to urging everyone to drink a glass of treated water, Latif has become a poster boy for the plant, which has withstood storms, including Cyclone Ockhi in 2017. "It rarely breaks down, and the real challenge is when big jellyfish get stuck in the underwater pumps," he said.

Built at a capital cost of about 50 million Indian rupees

Headmaster Ngala Kahindi Luwali told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that until the panels were available, his pupils had been unable to use tablets at all. "With the solar panels we have been able to catch up with other schools in urban areas that have already incorporated e-learning," he said. "Pupils are enthusiastic with e-learning since it's a new method of teaching."

The panels power not only the tablets, but projectors and a television - none of which the school previously had been able to use. The array also provides lighting to the school's boarding facilities, where students once relied on costly and polluting paraffin lanterns.

Gaby Sethi, who heads the OVO Foundation, said she believes providing access to clean electricity in parts of the world without power can help people get ahead. "We think we can have a significant impact on people and children's lives if we're electrifying schools and health clinics," she said. Under the project, the panels and installation are free, with the schools paying for ongoing maintenance costs, Karisa said.

Gabriel Katana, the county's head of education and information and communications technology, said the local government wants to see solar panels installed to power hospitals and other social amenities too. "In the future we will ... purchase solar pumps to use in irrigating food to be grown in the schools to feed the pupils," he said. The ambition is to use solar power for all of the county's primary school needs - not just powering information technology, he said.

Challenges remain

Relying on solar panels has some drawbacks, however - including that they can be less effective in rainy and cold seasons, said Mihingoni Primary School's Karisa. At those times, the school has to revert back to using kerosene for lighting and grid power for electricity, he said. Daniel Kuria, who manages Energy 4 Impact's solar program in Kenya, agreed there is a need for a solar array that generates sufficient power in the rainy season. Mihingoni primary will get an improved battery system to store solar power and help bridge the gap, he said. For now, the solar panels - and lower school fees as a result - are helping keep students in school, Karisa said. Parents "can use the flimsiest of excuses to keep their children home, so it's important to have cheap, reliable energy, like solar, that will not expense the parents," he said. — Reuters



Hidayathulla Chekkillakam, a government employee, inspects the desalination plant on Kavaratti island, the capital of India's Lakshadweep islands, on May 6, 2018. — Reuters

(\$727,400) with government funding, the plant technology is robust, environmentally friendly and requires little effort to operate and maintain, Jalihal said. Developed by the NIOT, it utilizes the temperature difference between sea-surface water and deep-sea water to evaporate the warmer water at low pressure and condense the vapour with the colder water to obtain fresh water.

Buoyed by its success, the NIOT set up two plants on Agatti and Minicoy islands in 2011, providing more than 15,000 residents with clean water. Construction of six more desalination plants is now underway on other inhabited islands. Only one other water treatment plant in India, off the coast of Chennai city, uses the same home-grown technology. Others purify water with reverse osmosis, a costlier imported method. Latif and his team work shifts to keep the motors of the plant running, to supply nine litres of water per day for each resident, including three for drinking and five for cooking. "We discourage people from using it for a bath or washing clothes because we don't want even a precious drop wasted," said Chekkillakam. "Everyone understands because we have seen how quickly clean water sources dry up or get contaminated." — Reuters

Business

THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2018

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Ooredoo reports revenue of KD 341m for H1 2018

Customer base up by 2% to reach 26 million



KUWAIT: National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P "Ooredoo" announced yesterday its financial results for the first half ended 30 June 2018: Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented:

"On Group level Ooredoo continues to see good demand for its products and services, which resulted in a 2 percent increase in our customer base to more than 26 million as at 30 June 2018, despite challenging market conditions. We remain committed to enriching the lives of our customers through innovative products and reliable connectivity.

All our operations displayed robust revenue growth with the exception of Algeria. Group EBITDA and Net Profit were also adversely affected by margin compression in Kuwait and the challenging conditions in the Algerian market.

In Algeria revenue decreased to KD 116 million due to challenging market conditions. We sustained our mobile data leadership and continued to deploy the 4G network across the country.

Kuwait experienced a significant increase in the 1H 2018 revenues to KD 128 million mainly driven by handset sales, up 21 percent compared with the same period last year. I am pleased to report that our focus on digitization is gaining momentum as we continue to grow our B2B service offering in a highly competitive marketplace. In Tunisia we maintained our market leadership position, particularly in the mobile data space. During 1H 2018 our customer base increased by 5 percent, driving up local currency revenue by 8 percent.



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

In Palestine, our West Bank customers continue to enjoy high quality data services via our 3G network. Wataniya Mobile customer numbers were up more than 50 percent also due to the service launch in Gaza in October 2017 while revenue was up by 19 percent year on year. In the Maldives we continued to grow our customer base as well as revenues."

Review of operations

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:

Ooredoo - Kuwait

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait reached to 2.4 million in 1H 2018, representing a 5 percent increase compared to the same period in 2017. Revenues for 1H 2018 were KD 127.6 million, an increase of 21 percent

compared to KD 105.2 million for the same period in 2017. Higher handset sales led to an increase in revenue, while at the same time negatively impacting margins. EBITDA was KD 24.3 million in 1H 2018, lower than KD 27.0 million in 1H 2017.

Ooredoo - Tunisia

Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia reached 8.4 million in 1H 2018, an increase of 5 percent compared to the same period in 2017. Revenues slightly increased to KD 63.7 million in 1H 2018, compared to KD 62.2 million for the same period in 2017. In local currency terms revenues were up by 8 percent. EBITDA was KD 24.2 million compared to KD 23.3 million for the same period in 2017.

Ooredoo - Algeria

Business in Algeria was negatively impacted by the devaluation of the Algerian dinar, intense price competition and a weak economic environment. Customer numbers of Ooredoo Algeria declined by 3 percent to 13.6 million in 1H 2018, compared with the same period in 2017. Revenues also decreased to KD 115.7 million in 1H 2018, compared to KD 145.5 million for the same period in 2017. EBITDA was KD 46.0 million in 1H 2018, down from KD 65.1 million in 1H 2017.

Wataniya - Palestine

Wataniya Mobile made good progress in the first six months of the year, with the launch of the 3G network in the West Bank in January 2018. Customer numbers increased by 58 percent to 1.2 million also benefiting from the Gaza launch in October 2017. Revenue increased to KD 15 million, up by 19 percent compared to KD 12.6 million for the same period in 2017. EBITDA stood at KD 3.3 million in line with 1H 2017.

Ooredoo - Maldives

Ooredoo Maldives reported a 6 percent increase in revenue in 1H 2018 to KD 19.2 million, compared to KD 18.2 million for the same period in 2017. EBITDA was KD 9.9 million in 1H 2018, compared to KD 10.4 million for the same period in 2017. Ooredoo Maldives now serves a total of 430k customers, 6 percent increase compared to the same period in 2017.

Financial highlights

- Consolidated customer base increased by 2 percent to reach 26.1 million in 1H 2018, compared to 25.6 million in 1H 2017.
- Revenue decreased by 1 percent to KD 341.4 million in 1H of 2018, compared to KD 343.8 million for the same period in 2017.
- EBITDA was KD 107.6 million in 1H 2018, compared to KD 128.9 million for the same period in 2017.
- Net Profit Attributable to NMTC was KD 12.2 million in 1H 2018, compared to KD 23.3 million for the same period in 2017. The decrease was mainly caused by a lower Algerian contribution due to a weak economic environment, currency devaluation and price competition.
- The consolidated earnings per share was 24 fils in 1H 2018, compared to 46 fils per share earned for the same period last year.

Trump set for tense trade talks with EU's Juncker

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump was hosting European Commission chief Jean-Claude Juncker yesterday for what was set to be a tense face-to-face, with efforts to resolve a festering trade dispute between the two key economies seemingly deadlocked.

Speaking ahead of the White House talks, Juncker admitted he was "not very optimistic," while Trump kicked off the day with a combative series of tweets vowing "no weakness" in the multiple fights he has launched with America's trade partners.

"I know Mr Trump pretty well," Juncker told German public broadcaster ZDF. "I have met him frequently and know how to deal with him." "We are here to explain ourselves and explore ways to avoid a trade war," he said, stressing that the EU is "not in the dock—we don't need to defend ourselves."

Juncker also renewed a promise of immediate retaliatory measures should Trump make good on a threat to slap new tariffs on EU car imports. Trump crowed Tuesday that his latest threat had brought Europe to the negotiating table.

But at home, Trump is facing increasing criticism as consumers, farmers and businesses take a hit from the retaliation to the raft of US tariffs on steel, aluminum, and tens of billions of dollars in products from China that he has imposed in recent weeks.

EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmstrom, who is accompanying Juncker, expressed some optimism that a solution could still be found, but also said the EU is drawing up a list of \$20 billion in US products to be targeted for retaliation if the trip fails.

"We hope that this won't happen and that we can reach a solution," Malmstrom told the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter (DN). She said the

"long list" of American goods would include machinery, agricultural and high-tech products, among others.

'We are ready': Juncker

While Juncker is set to make a last effort to talk Trump out of the auto tariffs, which would hit Germany's dominant car-makers hard, he warned on ZDF that if the US moved ahead, "we are in a position to respond appropriately right away."

Brussels has already retaliated against the steel and aluminum tariffs, imposing punitive duties on more than \$3 billion of US goods, including blue jeans, bourbon and motorcycles, as well as orange juice, rice and corn.

Canada, Mexico and China—the main target of Trump's trade offensive—have also hit back with steep duties on US goods, and have filed complaints against Washington at the World Trade Organization.

While the US claims the retaliation is "illegal," the Trump administration has acknowledged it is doing damage to American farmers, and on announced it will provide up to \$12 billion in aid to farmers hurt by trade tariffs.

Growing Republican backlash

Tweeting about the trade standoff on Tuesday, Trump repeated his call to remove all tariffs and trade barriers. "Both the US and the EU drop all Tariffs, Barriers and Subsidies!" he wrote. "Hope they do it, we are ready - but they won't!"

Early yesterday, Trump hit back against his critics in a further series of tweets: "Every time I see a weak politician asking to stop Trade talks or the use of Tariffs to counter unfair Tariffs, I wonder, what can they be thinking? Are we just going to continue and let our farmers and country get ripped off? Lost \$817 Billion on Trade last year. No weakness!" — AFP

Qatar's recovery to gain traction; oil, non-oil sector output expands

Economic growth to benefit from higher gas output

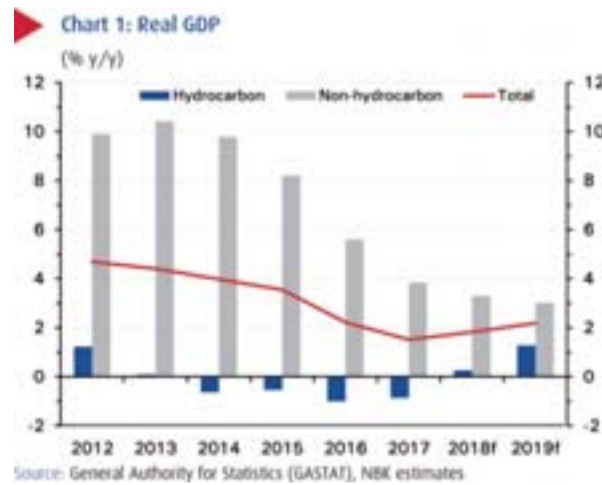
KUWAIT: Qatar's economic growth is expected to edge up slightly in 2018 to 1.7 percent y/y, following last year's growth of 1.5 percent y/y, before accelerating to 2.2 percent y/y in 2019. Economic activity will benefit from output gains in both the hydrocarbon (+0.3 percent y/y) and non-hydrocarbon sectors (+3.3 percent y/y), with the former witnessing an expansion in crude and LNG production and the latter benefitting from the government's \$200 billion infrastructure spending program.

Non-oil growth is expected to taper, however, with the government's investment program reaching an advanced phase; only four years remain for many of the high-profile infrastructure projects, such as the metro, light rail system and stadia, to be completed in time for the World Cup in 2022.

The \$7.4 billion Hamad Port, which Qatar plans to develop into a regional transport hub and with which the country hopes to bypass trade sanctions, was officially inaugurated at the end of 2017, leaving only a handful of projects left for the authorities to eke out future output gains. Attention, therefore, has turned back to gas/LNG production. In the short term, the delayed 1.4 billion cubic feet per day (bcf/d) Barzan gas facility should finally come on line in 4Q18, supplying additional volumes of gas and condensates, while in the medium term, the authorities' intention to expand liquefaction capacity by 30 percent to 100 million tons per annum (mtpa) will significantly boost growth in the hydrocarbon sector. Amid intensifying competition from Australia and the US, Qatar intends to maintain its position as the world's largest LNG exporter.

Weathering the embargo

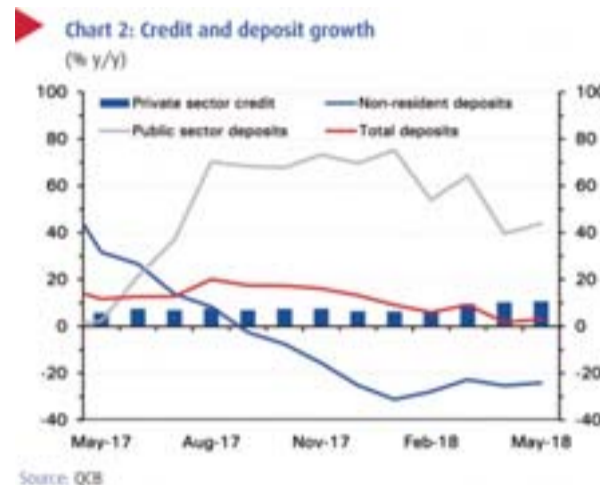
Qatar appears to be weathering the trade embargo imposed by Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Bahrain as well as Egypt. It has rerouted passenger and trade flows and stabilized capital outflows that accelerated in the months following the severing of diplomatic ties.



Bank deposit growth, at 3.0 percent y/y in May, appears to be slowly increasing, having benefitted from \$30bn in public sector liquidity injections (+75 percent y/y at its height in January 2018) to offset the more than \$21bn in private and non-resident deposits that were withdrawn from the banking system. And these have yet to recover to pre-crisis levels, remaining down y/y at -5.3 percent and -24.1 percent in May, respectively.

Inflation slowing

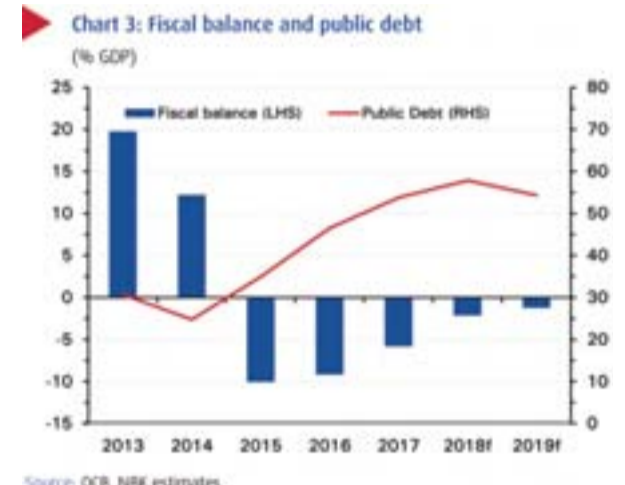
Private sector credit growth, in contrast, is proving robust. Growth has accelerated every month this year, reaching 10.7 percent y/y in May, led by a broad-based uptick in demand for credit from the consumption, general trade, services and real estate sectors. And this is despite a general rise in the cost of borrowing, although the QCB has only raised its benchmark QMR lending and repo rates once, by 25 bps, to 2.5 percent and 5 percent, respectively, since the beginning of 2017. Interbank rates, are around 2.6 percent.



Inflation fell to 0.1 percent y/y in June, weighed down by continued weakness in the real estate sector, with housing and utility costs (22 percent of the CPI basket) declining 4.3 percent y/y in the same month. June's headline rate came down despite the authorities hiking domestic fuel prices in May. The moderation in population growth, a trend which appeared to quicken in the wake of the diplomatic dispute, (+1.4 percent y/y in June), has also been a factor in the slowdown in demand. Inflation is not likely to exceed 0.7 percent in 2018 (avg.).

Fiscal deficit to narrow

Qatar's public finances appear to be on a sounder footing following the government's fiscal consolidation efforts (cuts to subsidies, merging of ministries etc.), which brought public expenditures down by 12 percent in 2017, and the rise in oil and gas prices. The fiscal deficit should continue to narrow to 1.2 percent of GDP by 2019, helped by firmer energy prices and additional non-hydrocarbon revenue streams, such as VAT, which



should be implemented next year.

The deficit has been financed primarily by domestic debt, although Qatar returned to the international bond markets in April with a successful \$12bn bond sale. Meanwhile, QCB international reserves appear to have recovered to \$24.7 billion in May; around \$20bn was tapped in 2017 to stem the capital outflows. Public debt is expected to peak at 57.8 percent of GDP this year, before falling to 54.3 percent of GDP in 2019.

The benchmark Qatar Exchange (QE) index has performed well so far in 2018, up by 9.6 percent at 9,341 by 13 July. The market has been buoyed by FTSE inflows and MSCI flows as well as generally positive sentiment linked to higher energy prices and Qatar's ability to withstand the GCC boycott. Indeed, this resilience was recently echoed by Moody's, which changed the outlook on the government's long-term issuer ratings from negative to stable and affirmed its rating at Aa3. Moody's cited Qatar's strong net foreign asset position, its high per capita income and large natural gas reserves as supporting factors.

Eyeing Trump, China, S Africa call for trade cooperation at BRICS summit

JOHANNESBURG: China and South Africa urged fellow BRICS governments yesterday to fight protectionism and promote multilateral global trade in the face of tariff threats by US President Donald Trump that threaten global trade. Trump's warnings have given Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa fresh impetus to enhance trade cooperation, and officials at a three-day summit that kicked off in Johannesburg yesterday found a collective voice championing global trade.

The meeting of presidents from the trade bloc is the first since Trump's administration launched a push to rebalance trade multilateralism that Trump has deemed unfair, relationships which the United States once championed.

"It is our sincere obligation to showcase our commitment towards the multilateral trading system, to safeguard the existence of the WTO (World Trade Organization) and also show our clear and strong position against any unilateral action and protection-

ism," Zhang Shaogang, Director General in the Ministry of Commerce of China, told the summit of BRICS member states.

"Trade and investment cooperation is the propeller for overarching BRICS cooperation. We need to make our cooperation more pragmatic and institutionalized."

South African Trade Minister Rob Davies said Africa's most industrialized economy was being hurt in collateral damage. "All of us in BRICS agree that this moment in the global economy requires us to strengthen our partnership," Davies said.

"This moment is characterized by unilateralism, by a move towards discriminatory policies on tariffs above WTO boundaries applied to some and not to others."

Last week Trump said he was ready to impose tariffs on all \$500 billion of imported goods from rival economic superpower China. But even South Africa - a tiny exporter of steel, aluminum and automobiles to the United States - is facing barriers. The United States did not grant South Africa an exemption from tariffs of 25 percent on steel and 10 percent on aluminum, proclaimed by Trump in March. Davies said 7,000 South Africans work in jobs affected by the metals tariffs and that an effort to secure an exemption from the US government had been unsuccessful.

He said South Africa was also aware of a threat to impose tariffs on auto imports into the United States. "We have argued against that formally, and also I have met with US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross to make our point," Davies said.



JOHANNESBURG: Interpreters translate address from speakers on the first day of the 10th BRICS summit at Sandton Convention Center, in Sandton district of Johannesburg yesterday. —AFP

He said South African poultry import concessions from which US suppliers benefited were linked to the preferential terms South Africa currently receives for auto imports into the United States.

The BRICS summit was to be officially launched by South African President Cyril Ramaphosa at 1300 GMT. Other BRICS leaders, including Chinese President Xi Jinping, who oversees the world's second-largest economy, will also speak at the event. Russian President Vladimir Putin is expected to arrive in South Africa today. —Reuters

Boeing earnings up, but reports higher costs on tanker

NEW YORK: Boeing reported a jump in second-quarter profits yesterday on higher commercial airplane deliveries but said costs on a closely-watched Air Force tanker contract had risen again.

The US aerospace giant reported net income of \$2.2 billion, up 25.6 percent. Revenues rose 5.2 percent to \$24.3 billion. Boeing set aside \$418 million in additional funds for the KC-46 tanker, an Air Force plane that has repeatedly suffered cost overruns.

The latest cost increases were for incorporating changes into test and early-build aircraft and for additional expenses in late stage testing and certification. Boeing said it expects to deliver the first tanker to the Air Force in October.

Boeing's commercial plane business prospered on an uptick in deliveries, as well as higher profit margins compared with the year-ago period as it has increased production rates on its most popular offerings.

Boeing has benefitted from a multi-year surge in commercial jet demand as US carriers refresh their fleets and airlines in developing and emerging countries boost orders. —AFP

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Business

EU threatens US with \$20bn tit-for-tat tariffs

China's Xi says 'no winner' in any trade war

STOCKHOLM: The EU is mulling tit-for-tat tariffs of around \$20 billion on US products if Washington goes ahead with its threat of new tolls on European cars, the bloc's trade commissioner said yesterday.

"We hope that this won't happen and that we can reach a solution. If not, then the European Commission will prepare a long list on American goods. It would amount to around \$20 billion," Cecilia Malmstrom told the Swedish daily Dagens Nyheter (DN). She said the US goods would include machinery, agricultural and high-tech products, among others.

Her comments came as US President Donald Trump was set to meet with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in the US capital for talks over a festering trade dispute between the two key economies.

Trump, who has threatened to impose tariffs on European autos and auto parts, said it was his tough stance that brought the European leader to the bargaining table.

Juncker, who reiterated that Brussels would retaliate if Trump goes through with the measures, told German public broadcaster ZDF yesterday that the EU is "not in the dock—we don't need to defend ourselves." "We don't know any other strategy than dialogue," said Malmstrom, who is currently in Washington with Juncker.

"We will explain that the EU is not a foe but a friend and an ally. We and the US share same view that the World Trade Organization must modernize," she told DN.

Trump is facing increasing criticism as consumers, farmers and businesses are taking a hit from the retaliation to the raft of US tariffs on steel, aluminum, and tens of billions of dollars in products from China that he has imposed in recent weeks.

Republican Senator Ben Sasse, a frequent Trump critic, said the president's trade policies recalled a past of perilous economic instability.

Meanwhile, China's President Xi Jinping yesterday said that there would be "no winner" in any global trade war, in a direct warning to US President Donald Trump who has threatened to slap levies on all Chinese imports. "A trade war should be rejected because there will be no winner," Xi said at the opening of a BRICS summit of emerging economies in Johannesburg.

"Unilateralism and protectionism are mounting, dealing a severe blow to multilateralism and the multilateral trading regime," he said, without mentioning the United States by name.

"We are facing a choice between cooperation and confrontation, between opening up and closed-door policy and between mutual benefit and a beggar-thy-neighbor approach."

"The international community has again reached a new crossroads." Leaders of the BRICS emerging economies—Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa—are holding an annual three-day summit with attention focused on the threat of a US-led global trade war.

US President Donald Trump has said he is ready to impose tariffs on all \$500 billion of Chinese imports, complaining that China's trade surplus with the US is due to unfair currency manipulation. —AFP



JOHANNESBURG: China's President Xi Jinping addresses delegates at a Business Forum organised during the 10th BRICS (acronym for the grouping of the world's leading emerging economies, namely Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) summit yesterday at the Sandton Convention Centre in Johannesburg, South Africa. —AFP

Whirlpool, once a fan of US tariffs, now feels their pain

NEW YORK: In January, the Whirlpool company welcomed new US tariffs on washing machines. But less than seven months later, the big home-appliance maker has changed its tune, having fallen victim to the spreading trade war launched by President Donald Trump.

When the White House announced its first protectionist trade measures early this year, the CEO of the Michigan-based company, Marc Bitzer, greeted them as a "positive catalyst for Whirlpool."

Bitzer figured that the tariffs, for which he had vigorously campaigned, would slow the dynamic growth of two of Whirlpool's biggest rivals, giant South Korean companies LG and Samsung, which he and others accused of unfair competition. What Bitzer did not anticipate was that the trade measures would spread in March to other sectors, as the US president imposed additional tariffs of 10 percent on aluminum imports and 25 percent on steel. China was one of the first countries targeted, followed in June by the European Union, Canada and Mexico, which in turn took retaliatory measures.

As a result, prices for steel—the basic raw material Whirlpool uses in its appliances—have shot up. They are now 60 percent higher in the United States than in other countries, says the company, which manufactures washing machines, dryers and dishwashers in the US for domestic sale.

"Global steel costs have risen substantially," Bitzer said, "and in particular in the US they have reached unexplainable levels." Bitzer, whose smiles of January faded long ago, said the "uncertainty" surrounding tariffs "disrupts our supply chain."

Higher costs, weaker sales

That uncertainty is cutting into Whirlpool's profits—increasing its costs by an estimated \$350 million in 2018, a full \$50 million more than the estimate in January.

In this year's second quarter, the costs of materials—steel and resin—rose in three of the four main regions where Whirlpool does business—North America, Europe,



In this file photo, Whirlpool appliances are offered for sale alongside other brands at a Home Depot store in Chicago, Illinois. —AFP

Asia and the Middle East/Africa.

Not surprisingly, the group is bracing for weaker sales and profits this year, following a net loss of \$657 million in the second quarter. Whirlpool shares have lost 31 percent of their value on the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) since January, and the insurance premiums paid by its creditors to protect against an eventual default have reached their highest point since November 2016. "Increased tariffs on steel, due to the Trump administration's global trade war, are hurting Whirlpool, as steel is the main raw material for the company," noted an analyst from Zacks Equity Research.

'The right thing'

Steel represents more than half (52.8 percent) of the cost of manufacturing a washing machine, while labor constitutes only 10.1 percent of the cost, according to industry-market research firm IBISWorld.

To limit the damage to its bottom line, the company—like its main competitors—has increased prices, passing on a portion of its higher costs to consumers. In June, prices for washers and dryers were 20 percent higher than the year-earlier level, the biggest jump in 12 years, according to US Labor Department data. "We are standing firm in our price increases" even as sales have slowed, Bitzer said, adding that it was "the only right thing to do with such a cost inflation environment."

Whirlpool sales in the US slipped by 2.2 percent in the second quarter and by 12 percent in Europe and the Middle East/Africa, the company's two largest markets. —AFP

criticism. "The situation today requires that a new force with fresh breath be brought in," Rouhani said, according to the official Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA). "I hope that by choosing appropriate tactics and methods, we can witness good developments on monetary, economic and banking issues."

Ordinary Iranians have taken his government to task on social media, emphasizing the difficulties they face in making ends meet amid high unemployment, inflation and perceived graft.

IRIB news agency said Rouhani's cabinet had approved Abdolnaser Hemmati to replace Valiollah Seif as governor of the central bank. It did not explain why Seif was dismissed.

In May, the Trump administration slapped sanctions on Seif himself, accusing him of "moving millions of dollars" for Iran's Revolutionary Guards, the hardline elite security force that reports to Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, not Rouhani. Hemmati was formerly the managing director of Bank Melli and Sina Bank, IRIB said.

Under the 2015 deal reached under Trump's predecessor Barack Obama, Iran limited its disputed nuclear energy program in exchange for relief from international sanctions. But Trump denounced the deal as one-sided in Iran's favor and repudiated it, nudging Rouhani towards the position of Iranian hardliners.

Separately, Nobakht said that he had submitted his resignation but Rouhani had not accepted it, according to reports on the website of the Management and Planning Organization and IRNA.

IRNA quoted Mahmoud Vaezi, Rouhani's chief of staff, as saying that reports of Nobakht being replaced were untrue. —Reuters

June US new home sales hit 8-month low

WASHINGTON: Sales of new US homes fell to an eight-month low in June, pointing to a possible slump in the housing market, government data showed yesterday.

Prices also fell while supplies rose, according to the Commerce Department, a sign that demand could be cooling. The decline, which came with a downward revision for the May data, followed a string of downcast recent figures for home building and re-sales, suggesting the housing sector will contribute little to economic growth in the second quarter.

Sales of new single-family homes fell 5.3 percent from May to an annual rate of 631,000. Economists had instead been expecting a 0.6 percent increase.

Sales rose markedly in the Northeast, adding 36.8 percent, but fell in the rest of the country. The results were well within broad margins of error, however, and are subject to revision. Meanwhile, the median price fell 2.5 percent to \$302,100. The average price fell 0.5 percent to \$363,300.

With 301,000 new houses on the market, inventories were up 1.7 percent and represented a supply of 5.7 months at the current sales pace. Analysts say rising mortgage rates and elevated prices have dampened appetite among some would-be home owners. —AFP

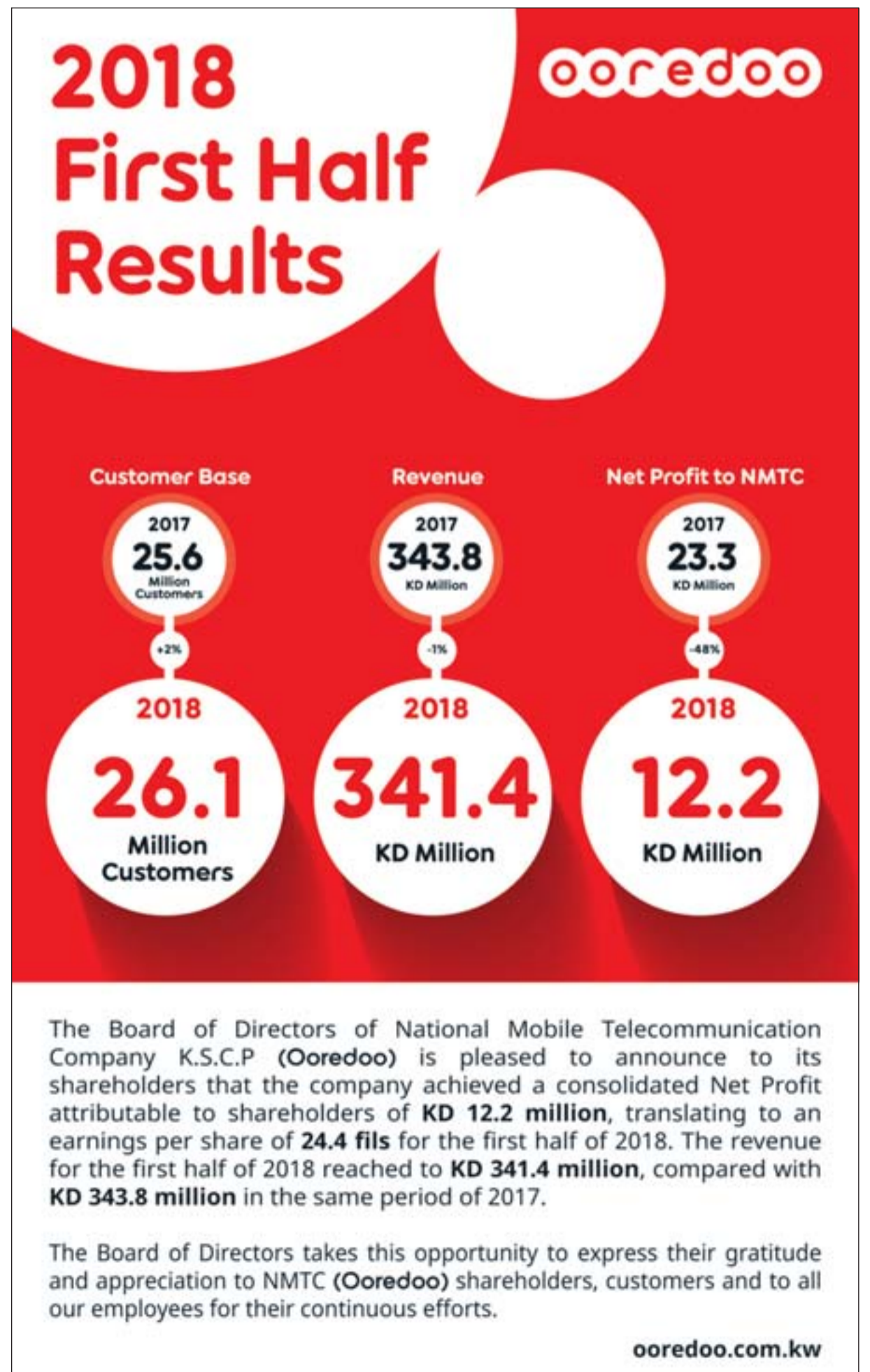
With economy faltering, Iran names new head of central bank

TEHRAN: Iran's cabinet approved a new governor for the central bank as the country, facing renewed US sanctions pressure, grapples with a faltering economy and a sliding currency that have stirred street protests.

The Tasnim news agency reported yesterday that the head of the Management and Planning Organization of Iran, Mohammad Baqer Nobakht, had also been replaced. But he said separately that President Hassan Rouhani had not accepted his resignation.

Rouhani, a pragmatist who reduced tensions with the West by striking a nuclear deal with world powers in 2015, is now facing a backlash from rival hardliners over Washington's pullout from the pact in May and reimposition of tough sanctions that seek to throttle Iran's economy including its lifeblood oil exports. Hardliners have pressed him to reshuffle his economic team to better shield the economy from US President Donald Trump's moves and tamp down public discontent, and senior government officials had suggested a shakeup was imminent.

The new appointment suggests Rouhani, who has mostly touted the moderate economic successes of his tenure since global sanctions were lifted under the nuclear deal, is conceding a need for change to defuse



Business

Qatar Airways, Myconian Hotels launch social media competition

Qatar Airways operates 4 weekly flights to Mykonos until 14 Oct 2018

DOHA: To celebrate Qatar Airways' recent launch of direct seasonal service to the popular Greek island of Mykonos, the award-winning airline and the Myconian Collection Hotels & Resorts are offering a chance to win two economy class round-trip tickets to Mykonos, as well as a luxurious three-night stay at Myconian Collection Hotels & Resorts.

Qatar Airways commenced direct seasonal service to the island of Mykonos on 30 May 2018, making it the third Greek destination on Qatar Airways' rapidly expanding network. Mykonos, an ideal destination for holidaymakers, is renowned for its breathtaking natural beauty and vibrant atmosphere. The Myconian Collection Hotels & Resorts is a family-owned group of nine luxury hotels, offering visitors to Mykonos a refined level of hospitality.

To enter, participants need to simply upload their favorite picture of Mykonos between 22 July and 2 August 2018 on Instagram or Facebook and tag @qatarairways and @myconiancollectionhotels, with the hashtags #MykonosTogether and #MyconianCollection. The winner will receive two Economy Class round-trip tickets from the winner's nearest Qatar Airways gateway to Mykonos, to be used in September 2018.

In addition to the round-trip tickets, the lucky winner will also receive a three-night accommodation package

for two people at the Myconian Collection Hotels & Resorts, where they may immerse themselves in magnificent Aegean views, sandy beaches with crystal clear waters, superb spas, and five-star gourmet restaurants.

Residents of countries eligible to participate in this global promotion include Lebanon, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Pakistan, Australia, Qatar, India, Sri Lanka, China and Malaysia.

Qatar Airways currently operates four weekly seasonal flights to Mykonos International Airport until 14 October 2018, with an Airbus A320, featuring 12 seats in Business Class and 132 seats in Economy Class.

The award-winning airline has received a record number of accolades recently, including 'World's Best Business Class' by the prestigious 2018 Skytrax World Airline Awards. The national carrier of the state of Qatar also won a raft of other major awards at the ceremony, including 'Best Airline in the Middle East', 'World's Best Business Class Seat' and 'World's Best First Class Airline Lounge'.

Qatar Airways currently operates a modern fleet of more than 200 aircraft via its home and hub, Hamad International Airport (HIA), to more than 150 destinations worldwide. Earlier this year, Qatar Airways revealed a host of forthcoming global destinations in line with its expedited expansion plans, including Tallinn, Estonia; Valletta, Malta; Langkawi, Malaysia and Da Nang, Vietnam.



Ryanair grounds flights over strike, warns of job cuts

DUBLIN: Irish no-frills airline Ryanair warned yesterday of more than 300 potential job cuts, slashing its Dublin-based fleet following a recent pilots' strike, and cancelled some 300 flights across Europe as its cabin crew begin a two-day work stoppage.

Europe's largest low-cost carrier said in a statement that it has issued 90 days' notice to more than 100 pilots and over 200 cabin crew under plans to slash its Dublin fleet from 30 to around 24 aircraft for this winter. The airline said there had been "a downturn in forward bookings and airfares in Ireland partly as a result of recent rolling strikes by Irish pilots" which "has had a negative effect on high fare bookings and forward airfares as consumer confidence in the reliability of our Irish flight schedules has been disturbed," it said.

The airline said that the overhaul was also partly driven by the "rapid growth" of Ryanair Sun, which is its profitable Polish charter airline. Ryanair Sun will now offer over 10 aircraft to Polish tour operators. That is double the five planes it offered for the summer 2018 season.

The group will begin redundancy consultations with affected staff, and will offer transfers to Poland to minimize redundancies. "We regret these base aircraft reductions at Dublin for winter 2018, but the board has decided to allocate more aircraft to those markets where we are enjoying strong growth (such as Poland)," said chief operating officer Peter Bellew.

"This will result in some aircraft reductions and job cuts in country markets where business has weakened, or forward bookings are being damaged by rolling strikes by Irish pilots."

Hundreds of flights cancelled

Ryanair, which flies in 37 countries and carried 130 million passengers last year, averted widespread strikes before Christmas by deciding to recognize trade unions for the first time in its 32-year history. But it has since struggled to reach agreement on terms with several of them. On Tuesday, dozens of Ryanair's Ireland-based pilots staged

their third 24-hour strike in an ongoing dispute over working arrangements including annual leave and promotions, leading to the cancellation of 16 flights affecting some 2,500 customers.

Ryanair's announcement of possible job cuts comes as cabin crew in Spain, Portugal, Belgium and Italy are striking on Wednesday and Thursday over pay and work conditions, leading to the cancellation of 600 flights over two days and affecting 100,000 passengers.

Ryanair apologized on Twitter to its 50,000 customers whose flights were cancelled yesterday due to the strike by "some" of its cabin crews. It said they had all been put on alternative flights or applied for full refunds. At Madrid airport striking cabin crew handed out bottles of water along with fliers to passengers explaining the reasons for their job action.

Unions want the airline to give contractors the same work conditions as its own employees. They are also seeking that Ryanair staff be employed according to the national legislation of the country they work in, rather than that of Ireland as is currently the case.

'Afraid of Ryanair'

Ryanair argues that since its planes fly under the Irish flag and most of its employees work onboard planes, its staff are covered by Irish law.

The company defends the overall package offered to staff, saying they could earn up to 40,000 euros per year, "more than double the 'living' wage". At Brussels airport 80-90 percent of Ryanair cabin crew took part in the strike, while in nearby Charleroi airport only 60 percent participated, said Lambert Yves of the CNE/LBC union.

He said Ryanair "pressured" staff to work by threatening people who were on holidays to come in or else face reduced hours. "Some people are afraid of Ryanair, that is why they don't strike," he told AFP. Ernesto Iglesias of Spain's USO union said more walkouts are likely "because we don't have any sign that Ryanair will reverse course, and we are not going to let them threaten or intimidate us." — AFP



BARAJAS: Passengers wait near the Ryanair check-in counters at Adolfo Suarez Madrid Barajas airport yesterday as the airline's cabin crew began a two-day strike. — AFP

Mimecast unveils second-annual state of email security report

DUBAI: Mimecast Limited (NASDAQ: MIME), a leading email and data security company, yesterday announced it has released its second-annual State of Email Security report. The report identifies the latest email-borne threats facing organizations of all sizes and industries globally.



Peter Bauer, CEO and founder of Mimecast

Cyberattacks are on the rise. In fact, more than 50 percent of organizations reported seeing the volume of phishing attacks increase over the last twelve months, while 40 percent said they saw the volume of impersonation attacks rise. Making cybersecurity a priority should start from the top, yet this isn't always the case: 20 percent of respondents said their C-level executive sent sensitive data in response to a phishing attack, and 49 percent admitted that their management and finance teams aren't knowledgeable enough to identify and stop an impersonation attempt. "Email-based attacks are constantly evolving and this research demonstrates the need for organizations to adopt a cyber-resilience strategy that goes beyond a defense-only approach. This is more than just an 'IT problem,'" said Peter Bauer, chief executive officer of Mimecast. "It requires an organization-wide effort that brings together many stakeholders, puts the right security solutions in place and empowers employees - from the C-suite to the reception desk - to be the last line of defense."

Mimecast conducted the research with Vanson Bourne on the state of organizations' cybersecurity, their expectations and needs and what attacks they've seen increase. Findings within the report are based on responses received from 800 IT decision makers and C-level executives globally and reveals attitudes, behaviors, confidence and preparedness levels of security professionals - and the C-suite - when it comes to dealing with these threats.

In China's Xiamen, real estate boom chokes consumption

XIAMEN, China/BEIJING: Yang Xiaodao, a 26-year-old civil servant in the Chinese city of Xiamen, says taking out a 30-year-mortgage on a two-bedroom apartment with her husband was the most regrettable decision of her life. Although their parents covered the 1.5 million yuan (\$226,778) down payment on the 2.9 million yuan flat, mortgage payments eat up more than 70 percent of the couple's combined income of about 10,000 yuan a month - average for the city.

"Our spending power has plummeted," Yang said. "We do not dare to have a kid. We do not dare to buy a car. We do not dare to travel."

Throughout China, home prices that are among the highest in the world relative to incomes have pushed millions of households to debt levels similar to those seen in the United States just before its housing crisis, according to a new study by the Institute for Advanced Research at the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics. Economists are sounding the alarm that such debt has started to crimp consumption, undermining Beijing's plan to lean on domestic demand to drive growth amid a heated trade dispute with the United States.

Wang Jun, chief economist at Zhongyuan Bank in Beijing, says slowing income growth and high household borrowing levels will limit how much consumers can boost economic growth in the short term. "Pressure from mortgages is impacting the amount of disposable income available to spend elsewhere," he said.

Xiamen, a prosperous coastal city in Fujian province, stands out: its 4 million residents are the most indebted of any large city in China, according to a Reuters analysis of central bank

data. Known for warm weather, seafood, and a laid-back lifestyle, Xiamen is the fourth-most-expensive real estate market in the country, despite incomes significantly lower than in cities with comparable home prices.

"An influx of property speculators from other cities in the province attracted to Xiamen's lifestyle drove property prices to record highs, causing panic buying among locals," said Wang Yanwu, an assistant professor at Xiamen University's School of Economics.

Rapid changes

Xiamen is now crowded with recently built high-rises, and the local government is promoting development in surrounding districts off the main island. The city's new home prices increased 53 percent from 2015 through June, or about 19 percent annually, the most among 70 cities tracked by China's National Bureau of Statistics. Disposable income growth in Xiamen averaged 8.4 percent in the same period.

Nationwide, new home prices have risen 20.7 percent since 2015, according to Reuters calculations based on official data. But in an alarming sign for homeowners like Yang, home sales in Xiamen slumped after new rules restricted purchases and prices of existing homes fell 4.8 percent in the year to June, compared with a 3.9 percent average increase for 70 large cities in the same period, according to Reuters calculations.

The affordability gap is wide in Xiamen: a 90-square-metre home costs on average 3 million yuan, or \$450,000, while per capita income in the city is about \$7,500 per year.

Even if buyers can afford a mortgage payment, at least 30 percent of the value of a home is often required up front. At the average price, that equals 60 years' worth of disposable income. A 28-year-old father of two, who wanted to be identified only by his surname, Huang, said his parents and in-laws provided his down payment of 2 million yuan last year. But, he added, an 8,000 yuan monthly mortgage leaves little to spend on anything else.

"I feel frustrated, exhausted and annoyed," Huang said. The ratio of household debt in Xiamen hit 98 percent of GDP at the end of 2017, much higher than the national level of 55 percent, and higher than the US household debt ratio of 79 percent of GDP, according to the

NBK announces winners of Al-Jawhara's weekly draw

KUWAIT: The National Bank of Kuwait announced the winners in the weekly draw of Al-Jawhara account, which also holds monthly and quarterly draws. The four winners for the month of July are, Latifah Dawoud Salman Al-Sabah, Sanaa Yousef Ahmad Al-Sultan, Zahrah Hussain Thiab Hussain and Hussain Ismael Jarkhy, each received a KD 5,000 prize.

Al-Jawhara account automatically allows the customers to enter the draws, giving them a chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000 monthly and a KD 250,000 grand prize quarterly. For every KD 50 deposited into an Al-Jawhara account, the account holder receives one chance in the draw. If no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the required period, customers will get an additional one extra chance for each KD 50 held in the account and double their chances of winning. The minimum required amount to open an Al-Jawhara account is KD 400, while the maximum amount that can be available is KD 500,000.

Since 2012, National Bank of Kuwait has rewarded loyal customers with Al-Jawhara weekly, monthly, and quarterly prizes, totally reaching up to KD 2,200,000 yearly. Customers can easily open an Al-Jawhara account by visiting NBK.com, or through the NBK Mobile Banking, or any NBK branch.

Al-Jawhara account provides customers with a free NBK Visa debit card, online access to their account through the website and Mobile Banking, 24/7 service through the NBK Call Center, in addition to the SMS Service.

Focused on sustaining its relationship with customers, NBK commits to offer diversified and innovative products and solutions, in addition to valuable rewards to customers.

Bank of International Settlements. And the ratio of household debt to household savings in Xiamen is a staggering 182 percent. "I am definitely worried" about economic growth in the second half of the year, said Zhongyuan's Wang. "There is a very good chance that consumption will continue to weaken."

Troubling numbers

Retail sales in Xiamen through the first five months of the year increased 9.2 percent versus a year ago, below the national rate of 9.5 percent and significantly slower than the 12.1 percent registered in the same period a year ago. More than half of large department stores and supermarkets in Xiamen saw a decline in revenue in the first quarter, data from the Xiamen statistics bureau showed.

And data for April showed spending in Xiamen on discretionary items, including cosmetics and jewelry, fell compared with the same period last year.

Throughout the country, per capita disposable income growth slowed to 6.6 percent in the first half of the year compared with 7 percent in the same period a year ago, according to statistics released on July 16. Debt is piling up in other cities too; in Shenzhen, household borrowing is 79 percent of GDP, and in Hangzhou it is 77 percent. A Reuters analysis based on central bank data shows residents in the coastal powerhouse cities that drive China's economy borrow the most, with the highest ratio of outstanding household debt to savings in the province of Fujian, where it hit 110 percent at the end of April, followed by Zhejiang and Guangdong.

The Shanghai University of Finance and Economics report estimated the ratio of household debt to disposable income in China was 78 percent at the end of 2017.

Based on current trends, that will top 100 percent by 2020 - on par with levels in the United States before the global financial crisis, according to the report. The ratio is already higher than the US pre-crisis levels in Fujian, Guangdong, and Zhejiang provinces, three of the richest in the country, according to the report. "We do not even dare to spend money," said Yang, the civil servant in Xiamen. "The mortgage has impacted the quality of life for two generations of our family." — Reuters

Technology

Red planet and 'blood moon' pair up to dazzle skygazers

The longest eclipse of the century will last for 103 minutes

PARIS: The longest "blood moon" eclipse this century will coincide with Mars' closest approach in 15 years to offer skygazers a thrilling astronomical double bill tomorrow, astronomers say.

For about half the world, the moon will be partly or fully in Earth's shadow from 1714 to 2328 GMT—six hours and 14 minutes in all. The period of complete eclipse—known as "totality", when the moon appears darkest—will last from 1930 to 2113 GMT.

"Totality will last for 103 minutes, making it the longest eclipse of the 21st century!" said the Royal Astronomical Society in London.

At the same time, Mars will hover near the moon in the night sky, easily visible with the naked eye. Our neighboring planet will appear unusually large and bright, a mere 57.7 million kilometers (35.9 million miles) from Earth on its elliptical orbit around the sun. "We have a rare and interesting conjunction of phenomena," Pascal Descamps, an astronomer with the Paris Observatory, told AFP.

"We should have a coppery red tint on the moon with Mars the 'Red Planet' just next to it, very bright and with a slight orange hue itself."

Amateur astronomers in the southern hemisphere will be best-placed to enjoy the spectacle, especially those in southern Africa, Australia, India and Madagascar, though it will also be partly visible in Europe and South America.

Celestial bodies align

A total lunar eclipse happens when Earth takes position in a straight line between the moon and sun, blotting out the direct sunlight that normally makes our satellite glow whitish-yellow.

The moon travels to a similar position every month, but the tilt of its orbit means it normally passes above or below the Earth's shadow—so most months we have a full moon without an eclipse.

When the three celestial bodies are perfectly lined up, however, the Earth's atmosphere scatters blue light from the sun while refracting or bending red light onto the moon, usually giving it a rosy blush.

This is what gives the phenomenon the name "blood moon", though Mark Bailey of the Armagh Observatory in Northern Ireland said the color can vary greatly. It depends partly on "how cloudy or transparent those parts of the Earth's atmosphere are which enable sunlight to reach the moon", he said. "During a very dark eclipse the moon may be almost invisible."

"Less dark eclipses may show the moon as dark grey or brown... as rust-colored, brick-red, or, if very bright, copper-red or orange." The long duration of this eclipse is partly due to the fact that the moon will make a near-central passage through Earth's umbra—the darkest, most central part of the shadow.

'Eerie and beautiful'

Our constant companion will also be at the farthest point on its orbit from Earth, making its movement across the sky slower from our perspective, thus spending longer in the dark. NASA, meanwhile, has called out social media hoaxers claiming that Mars will appear as big as the moon during the eclipse.

"If that were true, we'd be in big trouble given the gravitational pulls on Earth, Mars, and our moon!" the NASA website states. Mars will more likely appear as a very bright star, and viewers will need no protective eye gear. "All you have to do is dress warmly and go



LOS ANGELES: In this file photo taken on January 31, 2018 the "super blue blood moon" is seen over Los Angeles, California. —AFP

outside!" the Royal Astronomical Society advises.

"If you want a close-up view of the moon as it turns red, a pair of binoculars is helpful."

"All eclipses are spectacular," the society's Robert

Massey added. "In the middle of a lunar eclipse it can look as if a red planet has taken up residence near the Earth—they are both eerie and beautiful and I'll certainly be looking out for it!" —AFP

US claims largest dinosaur foot ever discovered

TAMPA: About 150 million years ago, a giant, long-necked dinosaur stomped on the ground in the Western US state of Wyoming and left behind what researchers said Tuesday is the largest dinosaur foot ever discovered. The foot bones, found beneath a series of tail bones, extend about three feet (one meter) wide and are believed to belong to a brachiosaur, from a group of extinct herbivores known as sauropods, said the findings in the journal *PeerJ*.

This is an "exceptionally large foot, bigger than the elements of all other known sauropod foot bones," lead author Anthony Maltese, of the Rocky Mountain Dinosaur Resource Center in Woodland Park, Colorado, told AFP in an email.

"I get asked often what's the biggest/longest/whatever superlative dinosaur that ever existed, and in this case I can actually provide an answer now," he said.

To give a sense of the creature's immense size, its thigh bone alone measured nearly 6.8 feet (2.07 meters).

That said, the Wyoming brachiosaur is not the largest dinosaur known to man—other excavations have turned up fossils from animals that were likely larger—but it is the biggest foot in evidence.

"There are tracks and other incomplete skeletons from Australia and Argentina that seem to be from even bigger animals, but those gigantic skeletons were found without the feet," said co-author Emanuel Tschopp, a postdoctoral fellow in the American Museum of Natural History's Division of Paleontology. "This beast was clearly one of the biggest that ever walked in North America." —AFP

2,700 scientists warn US-Mexico wall endangers wildlife

TAMPA: More than 1,000 species of animals would face serious threats to their survival if US President Donald Trump's proposed border wall with Mexico is built, scientists warned on Tuesday.

Iconic creatures such as the Peninsular Bighorn sheep, Mexican gray wolf and the Sonoran pronghorn antelope—all of which are already endangered—would see their populations dangerously fragmented by a wall, said the letter published in the journal *BioScience*. Jaguars (panthera onca) and ocelots (leopardus pardalis) would be among the species that would have "residual US populations" covering 7,800 square miles (20,000 square kilometers) or less, raising their risk of dying off completely in the United States.

More than 2,700 global scientists signed on to the letter by lead author Robert Peters of Defenders of Wildlife, a conservation group. The letter details threats to biodiversity along the 2,000-mile (3,200-kilometer) US-Mexico border, which Trump wants to wall off in an effort to stop the flow of illegal migrants.

"Fence and wall construction over the past decade and efforts by the Trump administration to complete a continuous border 'wall' threaten some of the continent's most biologically diverse regions," said the letter. —AFP

Caribbean islands plug into electric car revolution

BRIDGETOWN, Barbados: With her foot down to show off the acceleration of the zippy electric car, Joanna Edghill spins around the car park before plugging the vehicle into a charging point beneath rows of solar panels converting Caribbean rays into power for the grid.

In the five years since she and her husband started their company Megapower, it has sold 300 electric vehicles and set up 50 charging stations plus a handful of solar car-ports on the 21-mile-long (34 km) island of Barbados.

They are now expanding elsewhere in the Caribbean. "The main factor with islands is we don't have range anxiety. I can develop and roll out a charging network in Barbados where customers are never more than a few kilometers from a charging point," said Edghill, who previously worked in international development. "We have at least 220 days of pure sunlight every year, so why not take advantage of the resources that we do have here?"

Burdened by a costly dependence on imported fuel for energy, Barbados and many other Caribbean islands are considering boosting the number of electric vehicles on their roads.

But they face barriers, including high initial costs, stiff import duties on electric vehicles and a lack of regulatory support, say people working in the sector.

Globally, the number of electric vehicles topped 3 million in 2017, according to the International Energy Agency (IEA),

'Battery of Asia': Laos's controversial hydro ambitions

BANGKOK: Mountainous and landlocked Laos, known as the "Battery of Asia", is building dozens of dams at breakneck speed so it can sell energy to power-hungry neighbors as a fast track out of poverty.

But the communist country's ambitious power plans are highly controversial. Most energy is exported to neighboring countries Vietnam, Cambodia and China, with the lion's share going to Thailand—whose Bangkok mega-malls alone suck up huge amounts of power.

That leaves local communities with little of the revenue from projects that often require compulsory resettlement of hundreds of villages and reshape the landscape and river systems.

The dam collapse this week in southern Laos that left at least 26 dead and scores missing has shed light on the perils of the country's big bet on hydropower. Here are a few key questions: Why so many dams? With a vast river system, mineral-rich mines and a population of just six million, Laos is richer in natural resources than manpower.

As revenues from timber exports and gold and copper mines have tailed off, the country—and foreign investors—have ploughed billions of dollars into hydropower development, billed as a clean source of energy to electrify Laos and supply its power-hungry neighbors.

which predicts there will be 125 million in use by 2030.

That figure could go as high as 220 million if action to meet global climate targets and other sustainability goals becomes more ambitious, says the IEA.

More research, policies and incentives are needed to drive further uptake, it notes.

In Barbados, the island's electricity utility, government departments and private firms are among the customers buying the left-hand-drive electric cars and delivery vans Megapower imports from Britain, said Edghill. It has also built solar car-ports, which power charging points, for the Barbados arm of courier giant DHL and the government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines.

Megapower's other solar panels feed into the grid, offsetting the equivalent of the non-renewable power used by 400 electric cars.

"The Caribbean is ripe for the electrification of transportation," said Curtis Boodoo, assistant professor at the University of Trinidad and Tobago who also works on electric vehicles with the CARICOM regional group of 15 countries. "If you invest in electric vehicles, you are able to use your existing electrical infrastructure, and save the costs of the transportation fuel that you have to import."

Green buses

Pumping fuel into electricity generation is two to three times more efficient than putting it directly into car engines, he said, meaning more electric vehicles on the roads could help shave the region's hefty bills. For many Caribbean countries, over half the amount of fuel they import is used for transport. Barbados spent \$300 million last year on fuel imports, government data shows.

Crippled with public debt and dogged by rising oil prices, the island's new government

There are currently 46 operating hydropower plants with a capacity of 6,400 MW, with another 54 under construction and set to go online by 2020, according to the Laos News Agency.

If all goes to plan, Laos wants to generate a whopping 28,000 MW of power in just two years—almost enough to power all of Thailand for a year.

It has targeted graduating from a lower-middle income country by 2020, according to its World Bank classification, and raise its annual per capita GDP from \$2,457 today.

Where does the power go?

About 85 percent of all energy generated in Laos is exported, mostly to Thailand where two-thirds of it is sucked up in and around the sweaty capital Bangkok, according to the International Energy Agency. Almost 90 percent of Laos has access to electricity but supply can be patchy, especially in rural areas.

"Even if it could be enough... to power all the homes, it doesn't reach all the homes, so there is a gap there at the very least in terms of access," said Vanessa Lamb, geography lecturer at the University of Melbourne.

So who's making the money?

Laos's government is earning revenues by selling power to its neighbors. Although figures are not public, the World Bank says investments in the sector are not on par with how much goes towards the national budget.

The real rewards may still be decades away. Many contracts stipulate that



BRIDGETOWN, Barbados: Joanna Edghill, managing director of Megapower, poses for a portrait with one of her company's electric cars on June 5, 2018. —Reuters

wants to make its bus network electric, and eventually switch all government transport too.

Boodoo said increased state investment in electric buses would help upgrade transport systems, while cutting climate-changing emissions and paving the way for consumers to follow.

Plug-in vehicles could also "piggy-back" on a push to inject more power into the grid from renewables like solar, wind and hydro, said Devon Gardner, CARICOM's energy program manager.

Costs are high, however, and on some islands, import duties for electric vehicles are higher than on combustion-engine cars. Trinidad and Tobago has scrapped taxes and

import duties for most electric cars, but taxes elsewhere can add up to 100 percent depending on the model.

High purchase prices mean vehicles remain unaffordable for most Caribbean drivers.

A Nissan Leaf electric car, for example, costs about \$50,000 in Barbados, compared with \$30,000 in Britain. Heavily indebted Caribbean countries are torn between collecting much-needed revenue from car imports and supporting the roll-out of private electric vehicles, said Gardner.

"The Caribbean doesn't have the luxury of using some of the levers of incentives that were used by the richer, more developed countries," he said. —Reuters



An aerial view of the Nam Ngum hydropower dam, the first built in the nation

hydro plants—often built and operated by foreign firms, including those from China or Thailand—will be handed over to the Laos government in 20 or 30 years, according to Keith Barney, a lecturer at the Australian National University's College of Asia and the Pacific.

"Although there's been a lot of dam construction, the actual royalties and budget revenues—which are opaque—have not been that lucrative so far," he told AFP.

"They're coming down the line as these projects move toward their mature phases." Do local communities benefit? Most agree that so far, revenues have yet

to trickle down to village level. Unlike in some other countries, residents are not paid a percentage of the money earned from exporting power and may suffer from hydropower projects.

Villagers are routinely resettled to make way for plants and dams, and farmers have complained that diverting river water destroys farmland, while damming rivers interrupts fish flows.

An April report from the Mekong River Commission predicted that up to 40 percent of fish species in the Mekong River basin could be disrupted by dam-building in the region, a warning echoed by others. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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Travel

It's a shore thing: Nine lesser-known beach cities

Sydney, Rio and Barcelona aside, the beach is not usually synonymous with the city. But with so many amazing cities sprung near water, it is surprisingly easy to catch a suntan - or a few cheeky waves - while doing the urban crawl. Are skyscrapers and sandy shores equal in your eyes? Dip your toes into these lesser-known beach cities around the world.

Hang out in Hong Kong

Asia's financial hub is also a small island with lush mountain trails leading down to some lovely patches of sand, especially on the southern side. Repulse Bay is glamorous, with a high-end mall and restaurant strip overlooking calm waters, and a huge expanse

of sunbathing area, while Shek O and Big Wave Bay pick up impressive swells when a daifung swirls around the South China Sea. Once you're suitably fried, you can catch a minibus back to Soho for sundowners.



Pace the promenade in Porto, Portugal

The Costa Verde is a dramatically beautiful coastline in the north of Portugal. Huge Atlantic Ocean swells pound against rocky headlands and soft sand beaches, but in stylish Porto you'll find Praia do Carneiro, with its long promenade winding back towards the city's castle walls. The view may upend your state of saudade, a distinctly Portuguese sense of longing for past glories. The best cure is to sip some bubbly green wine beneath your umbrella and enjoy the city's understated northern charms.

Escape the norm in Essaouira, Morocco

Home to at least five music festivals, including the Gnaoua World Music Festival, Essaouira is skirted by flat, open sand beaches attracting elite kite-surfers and disoriented travelers in search of substance and a refreshing dip. Whitewashed, low-rise buildings, easy-going souks and seafood restaurants round out the exotic, windswept experience. If shopping, be on the hunt for lamps or unusual glass trinkets, but don't leave town without a stash of new tunes.



Have a child-friendly beach trip in Hobart, Australia

Perhaps Australia's least-known beach city, Hobart boasts a number of pristine bays nestled along the bends of the River Derwent. On the eastern side sit Howrah Beach and Bellerive Beach. Never busy, but more than a tad chilly in non-summer months, both beaches are fabulous for children and the gentle conditions suit sailing, or daydreaming of a passage to Antarctica. Sandy Bay and Long Beach are popular 'suburban' beaches in the Tasmanian capital.

Dip your toes into Dakar, Senegal

Plage de Ngor is the pick of the Senegalese capital's many fine beaches. You can shuck oysters at humble local cafes or Euro-Afrique bolt holes in between backstroking the calm strait from point to point. The weather is almost always beach-friendly; even the dry harmattan season in January and February encourages ticklish swimmers to wash off fast-moving clouds of dust. Ile de Gorée lies offshore as a grim reminder of the country's slave history. Surf's up a short drive south.



Show off your dance moves in Chicago, USA

The Windy City might not sound so appealing for a day on the beach, but Lake Michigan has a lot of edge and the locals here love to gather around it in the warmer months. The fitness set ply the paths year-round, but visit in summer when the party season kicks off and you too will laugh at the wild idea of outdoor frat-style dance parties in the city. Oakwood Beach is the current hotspot thanks to some popular music festivals and colorful murals, while 57th Street Beach is conveniently located near the city's impressive Museum of Science and Industry. Oak Street Beach on the 'Gold Coast' is famous for beach volleyball, while North Avenue Beach wins the kitsch award for a bathing house modeled like an ocean liner.



Watch the world go by in Wellington, New Zealand

Prone to Antarctic gusts, Wellington is not your typical summer getaway, but as the main criterion is a centrally located patch of sand leading to crystal clean water, New Zealand's capital is hard to ignore. Freyberg Beach lies a pleasant stroll east of the excellent Museum of New Zealand and buzzes in summer. You may not find more than a ripple in the waters around Oriental Bay, but choice activities include kayaking, swimming and building sand sculptures in the shape of the many ferries connecting the North and South Islands.

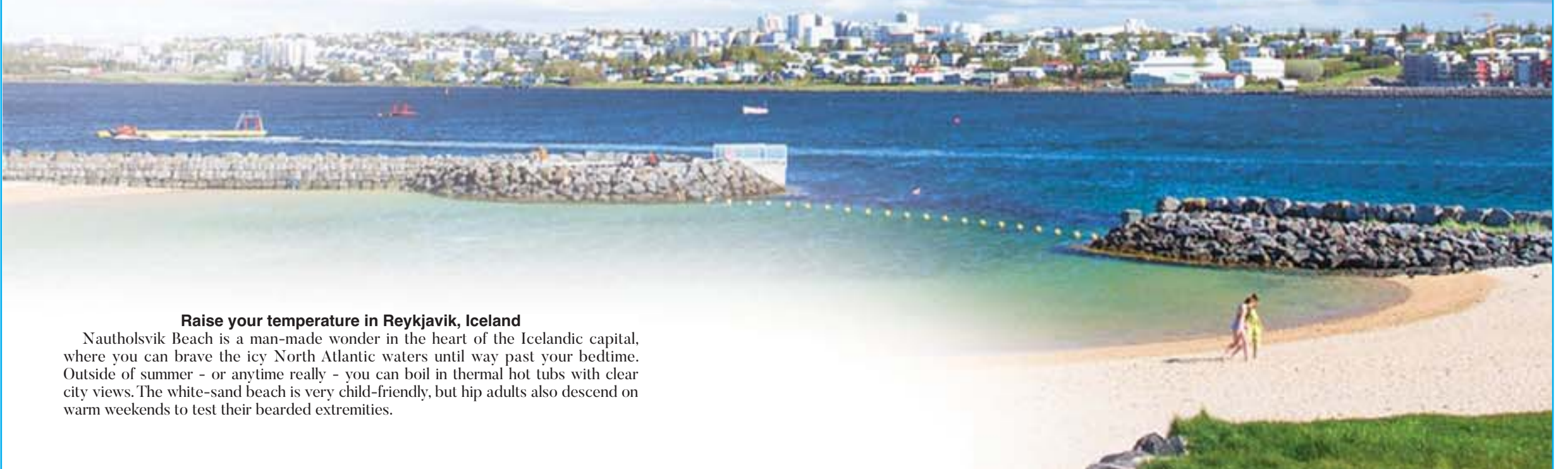
—www.lonelyplanet.com

Pamper yourself in Parnu, Estonia

At the convergence of the Parnu River and the Gulf of Riga lies this stylish Estonian city, known for its 19th-century spa culture and long, bayside promenade. The Baltic summer may be short, but its days are long and its residents will take what rays they can. Shirtless younger folk on parade mix with refined older tourists from the capital Tallinn, Russia and Finland. Parnu is synonymous with rejuvenation, whether you prefer resting in a picturesque wooden villa or up to your neck in a mud bath.

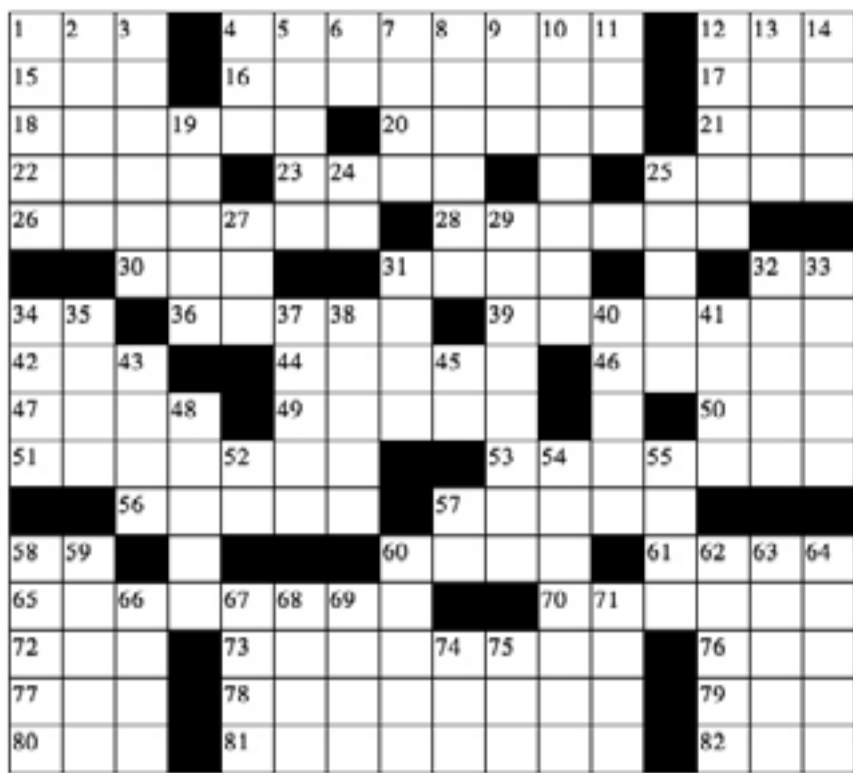
Raise your temperature in Reykjavik, Iceland

Nautholsvik Beach is a man-made wonder in the heart of the Icelandic capital, where you can brave the icy North Atlantic waters until way past your bedtime. Outside of summer - or anytime really - you can boil in thermal hot tubs with clear city views. The white-sand beach is very child-friendly, but hip adults also descend on warm weekends to test their bearded extremities.



Stars

CROSSWORD 1969



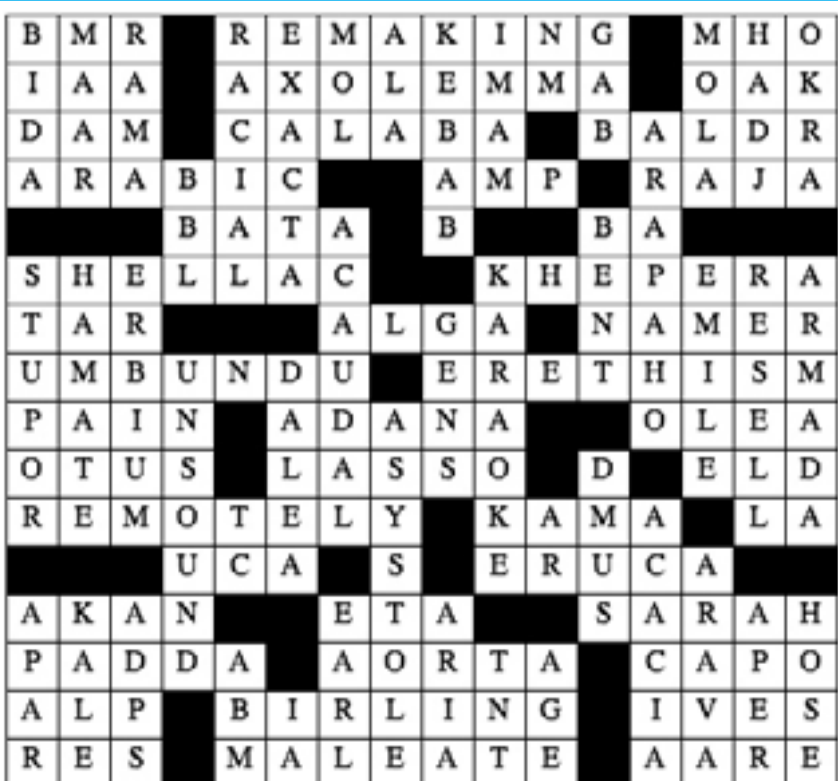
ACROSS

1. A doctor's degree in dental surgery.
4. The framework and covering of an airplane or rocket (excluding the engines).
12. An audiotape recording of sound.
15. (usually followed by 'to') Naturally disposed toward.
16. Saber-toothed tigers.
17. A flat wing-shaped process or wing-like part of an organism.
18. Affectedly trendy.
20. A yellow pungent volatile oil (trade name Agene) formerly used for bleaching and aging flour.
21. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
22. Greater than normal in degree or intensity or amount.
23. Go "ding dong", like a bell.
26. An official in a British hospital who looks after the social and material needs of the patients.
28. A port city in southwestern Iran.
30. (informal) Of the highest quality.
34. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
36. Sluggish tailless Australian arboreal marsupial with gray furry ears and coat.
39. (Greek mythology) God of the heavens.
42. Top part of an apron.
44. Found along western Atlantic coast.
46. Any plant of the genus Erica.
47. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
49. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
50. Airtight sealed metal container for food or drink or paint etc..
51. An island in Antigua and Barbuda.
53. A needle-like part or structure of a plant or animal or crystal.
56. Ash-colored or anemic looking from illness or emotion.
58. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
61. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
65. A card game played in casinos in which two or more punters gamble against the banker.
70. A nonmetallic bivalent element that is normally a colorless odorless tasteless nonflammable diatomic gas.
72. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
73. A city in southern Japan on Kyushu.
76. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
77. A fractional monetary unit of Japan and Indonesia and Cambodia.
78. A peninsula in southwestern Asia that forms the Asian part of Turkey.
79. The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
80. The organ of sight ('peeper' is an informal term for 'eye').
81. Any of two families of large herbivorous aquatic mammals with paddle-shaped tails and flipper-like forelimbs and no hind limbs.
82. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
4. The residue that remains when something is burned.
5. Any of a class of organic compounds that contain the divalent radical -CONHCO-.
6. A state in New England.
7. Open pastry filled with fruit or custard.
8. Popular music originating in the West Indies.
9. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.
10. United States anthropologist (born in England) who popularized anthropology (1905-).
11. The compass point midway between northeast and east.
12. (Mesopotamia) God of agriculture and earth.
13. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
14. An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
19. A block of wood used to prevent the sliding or rolling of a heavy object.
24. A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.
25. An imaginary elephant that appears in a series of French books for children.
27. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
29. Loud confused noise from many sources.
31. Denuded of leaves.
32. Having or localized centrally at a focus.
33. (Hindu) A manner of sitting (as in the practice of Yoga).
35. Fully developed or matured and ready to be eaten or used.
37. The address where a person lives.
38. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
40. Re-equip a factory or plant.
41. An intensive care unit designed with special equipment to care for premature or low-birth-weight or seriously ill newborn.
43. English monk and scholar (672-735).
45. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
48. Ratio of the hypotenuse to the opposite side.
52. A state in New England.
54. Evergreen shrubs with intricately twisted wiry stems that in summer are smothered in small yellow flowers.
55. A large and densely populated urban area.
57. A white trivalent metallic element.
59. Showing self-interest and shrewdness in dealing with others.
60. Supported and operated by the government of a state.
62. 100 agorot equal 1 shekel.
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
64. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
66. A stick that people can lean on to help them walk.
67. Type genus of the Anatidae.
68. (the feminine of raja) A Hindu princess or the wife of a raja.
69. Any culture medium that uses agar as the gelling agent.
71. A city of central China.
74. A male human offspring.
75. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).

DOWN

1. Russian country house.
2. A British doctorate.
3. The apical end of the style where pollen is deposited.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Your mind is sharp, and ideas are flowing. This is a great time for decisions as you are experiencing a sense of clarity. It is a great time to make decisions for you. You may take some time today to develop great understanding of your own situation. Where you are in life and everything that led you to this point seem to be of great importance to you at this time. You may truly value your situation today and find yourself placing more value on your close relationships as a result. You didn't walk this path alone. Support and love from others helped to get you where you are. This is something you are truly beginning to discover.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find yourself craving attention. You work hard, love hard, and want to be appreciated for your contributions. You may be feeling you are not receiving the admiration and recognition you deserve for the effort you put into helping and providing for those around you. This is a time you may need to focus on others instead of yourself. You may find that others express their gratitude and appreciation differently than you. You may not realize you are being provided all that you crave just not in the way you expected it. Take time to consider this to prevent high tensions and an exchange of words they may result otherwise.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today may find you feeling as you encounter a road block at every turn. Perhaps, today is not the day for big decisions. You may find yourself a bit frustrated and preferring a bit of isolation. You are simply not in the mood for people. You may feel as if you are not able to get your point across to anyone and may feel greatly misunderstood. You could find yourself at odds with those close to you and should remember to try and remain calm as conflict and confrontation seem to be seeking your company today. Today would be a great day for reorganizing and reflection to get yourself back where you want to be, Gemini. You may find you are able to develop a special bond today with one of your elders.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You may find yourself desiring a solid foundation and examining all aspects of your life to ensure this. You may find the desire to reduce the clutter, as you see it. To rid your life of all that is superficial. You may well find yourself not only cleaning out your closet but also cleaning out your emotional closet. Ridding your life of all the extras that are not conducive to your growth and success. This is a great time for reflection. Decide what led you to this point in your life. You may ask yourself if this is where you want to be and what direction you want to go. You may find the answers to these questions come to you clearly today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Change is the key word of the day. A change of plans, change of attitude, change in your perspective are all possible today. You may have a new outlook on life and all situations around you. Your old way of thinking and dealing with problems just doesn't seem to be working for you today. You may find yourself developing a new outlook on things and developing new coping skills. You have a great opportunity right in front of you to seize this change or remain in the same rut you have been in. You may find a new way of life and much happiness are right around the corner.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today finds you in a great mood. This is a great time to surround yourself with the ones you love and spend some special time together. You may find this feeds a longing desire you have to feel loved and needed. You feel as though you may be in touch with the real you. Those close to you seem to be so supportive of your decisions and the recent choices you have made in your life. This is a very good time for you filled with love, peace, and harmony. You feel more alive than you have felt in years and seem to be able to communicate on very deep and emotional levels with those closest to you. Not only are your needs being fulfilled but you are able to sense the needs of others around you and are doing an excellent job catering to those you care about. All this creates a great time of peace in your world.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You feel as though you can accomplish anything you set your mind to. You are driven and focused. You don't meet a stranger. People are drawn to you and you make friends easily. You are a people person. You may find yourself in a position where you are led to take step out of your comfort zone and take a chance on an emotional level that may lead to a great reward. You may still especially close to a love one today. You also may find that your being complemented on your possessions or talents. People seem to really be taking notice of you today, Libra. Let your light shine and enjoy the attention that is being showered upon you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A need for power and control is a driving force in your life now. Sexual needs and desires seemed to be a controlling factor in your life. You long to be in control of everyone and every aspect of your world. You may find that others see you as being more assertive than usual and are caught off guard by the change in you. You find you are curious and seeking answers to subjects and mysteries you find intriguing. Today could find you doing a bit of soul-searching trying to find answers to all that fascinate you about who you are, who you have become, and where life finds you today.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You seem to find great comfort in music today. Whether you play an instrument or just spend some time listening to your favorite tunes, this will bring a sense of peace over you and you may find yourself more productive because of it. You have a deep desire to acquire material possessions. A shopping trip may be in order to scratch this itch. Put off any decisions about your career for a later date. Your focus is lacking in this area and this is not a great time for you to make major decisions. You may find yourself in a more private mood and could greatly benefit from some time spent at home alone.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You are no stranger to hard work. You may feel you are really being noticed and admired. Others see how easy you make your accomplishments appear to happen and strive to be more like you. You are a hero in the eyes of your peers. This admiration and praise make you feel as if you are on top of the world. You are filled with love and pride. Today could find you spreading joy among your peers. You are in a wonderful mood and desire to make those close to you feel as good as you do. It may seem as if you leave a path of glitter everywhere you go.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You should be feeling successful and have no problem in solving any difficulties that should come up at this time. Good advice from a guide or older person could come your way expect a good day. All that has to do with your family and all things having to do with things from the past helps you recognize your need for security and a feeling of having attachments. The family, home, relatives and real property all could be playing a larger part in your life. It is essential to your wellbeing to know that you belong on a private, intimate, personal level, to be needed and to feel that it is okay to have need.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is the time for you to get yourself together. You may be feeling the need to get your affairs in order. This is a great time to rearrange your living situation. This could mean anything from a new place to just a revamp of the place you have. You can rearrange your furniture or just purchase some new things. Whichever way you chose, the change of scenery will be a much needed, pick me up, for you. You may find others admire your taste and find yourself being complimented by others today.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Types of Music 2

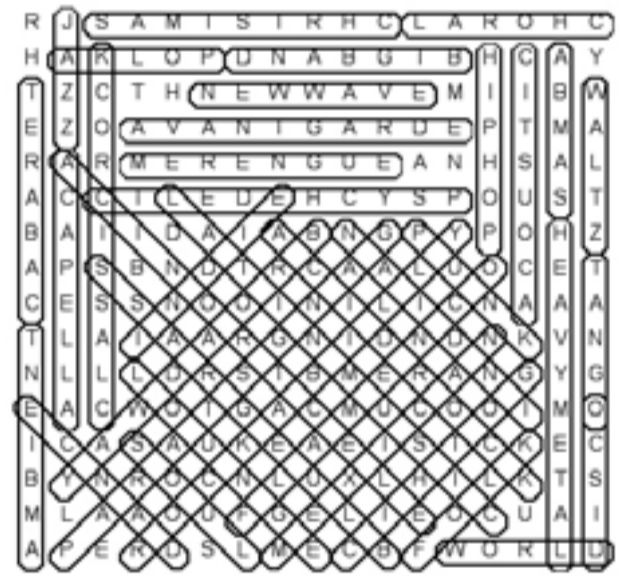
Find and circle all of the different types of music that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 15 letters spell an additional type of music.



- | | | | |
|-------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|
| ACID JAZZ | CLASSICAL COUNTRY | GYPSY IRISH | REGGAE |
| AFRICAN | DOO WOP | MAMBO | ROCK AND ROLL |
| ALTERNATIVE | ELEVATOR | MARIACHI | SALSA |
| BEBOP | EUROPOP | MIDDLE EASTERN | SWING |
| BLUES | EXPERIMENTAL | NEW AGE | TECHNO |
| BOLLYWOOD | FOLK ROCK | NEW ORLEANS | TRIP HOP |
| BOSSA NOVA | FUNK | OPERA | TROPICAL |
| BRAZILIAN | GOSPEL | POP MUSIC | URBAN |
| CELTIC | GRUNGE | PROGRESSIVE | ZYDECO |
| CHAMBER | | | |

Yesterday's Solution

Types of Music 1



- | | | | |
|-------------|--------------|-------------|-------------|
| 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 | MERINGUE | WALTZ |
| BROADWAY | GANGSTA RAP | MEXICAN | WORLD |
| CABARET | GOthic | NEW WAVE | |
| CHORAL | HEAVY METAL | POLKA | |

The hidden message is: RHYTHM AND BLUES

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JULY 26, 2013



Dancer Jonathan Eden from MOMIX performs a scene from 'Man Fan' (Botanica) during a dress rehearsal before opening night at the Joyce Theater in New York. MOMIX, the company of dance illusionists under the direction of Moses Pendleton is at The Joyce Theater in New York City from July 24 - August 12. — AFP

Zambian acrobats use circus to flip HIV 'juju' myths



A performance by acrobats from Circus Zambia at MTV London, United Kingdom. — Reuters photos

The Zambian slum of Chibolya is notorious for crime and drugs, but acrobat Gift Chansa wants to get the township's youth hooked on a very different high - circus.

Chansa is co-founder of Circus Zambia, the country's first social circus, which provides disadvantaged young people with education and job opportunities while teaching them everything from unicycling and fire-eating to tumbling and juggling. The circus also runs a "Clowns for Condoms" project to help tackle the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Zambia, where myths persist that the disease is linked to witchcraft. Set up in 2015, Circus Zambia has already gained international attention, performing in Britain, the United States, Japan, Belgium, the Netherlands and across Africa.

Chansa grew up in Chibolya, a poor Lusaka township which one Zambian journalist recently likened to Sodom and Gomorrah. It is an image the charismatic acrobat is keen to dispel. He says young people are discriminated against and refused jobs simply for mentioning they come from Chibolya. "When you grow up there, no one takes you seriously," Chansa told the Thomson Reuters Foundation during a tour of Britain this month.

"So we wanted to say, 'Look, not everybody is a criminal. There are young people coming up that are knowledgeable ... young people that are ready to take over the world'. And that's why we created the platform Circus Zambia." While in London, Chansa met Queen Elizabeth to receive the Queen's Young Leader Award which recognizes "exceptional people" from across the Commonwealth who are transforming lives in their communities and beyond.

The eldest of six children, Chansa never knew his father. He was raised by his mother and grandparents, who provided him with his distinctive name, calling him a "a gift to the family".

There were no parks, libraries or youth centers in the township so Chansa and his friends, including Circus Zambia co-founder Benard Kaumba, amused themselves with acrobatic contests in the street. In 2014, Chansa and Kaumba were invited to train at a circus school in northern China under a scheme sponsored by Beijing after their talents were spotted by a Chinese circus troupe visiting Lusaka.

Chansa, 27, and Kaumba, 28, say if they had not discovered circus they could have easily been dragged into a world of drink and drugs. "Things were hard for me. Circus kept me busy and helped me stay away from bad influences," said Kaumba, dressed in his brightly coloured African-print tumbling costume. "When you go back and see your friends, you see their life is just drugs," he added.



A performance by acrobats from Circus Zambia at MTV London, United Kingdom.

reeling off a list of illicit substances available on the streets of Chibolya. Today the circus boasts 15 performers and works with 80 children. It has new premises which include a library, class room and training room and is raising money to finish build-



Charles Malama performs an acrobatic trick at MTV London, United Kingdom.

ing a theatre.

Circus Zambia is part of a growing global movement of social circuses including Circus Kathmandu in Nepal, created by survivors of trafficking, and Circolombia in Colombia, which works with children from areas where gangs and drugs are rife. Through circus skills, marginalized young people learn self-esteem, discipline, trust and team-work as well as physical fitness and creative



Members of Circus Zambia (from left) Charles Malama, Gift Chansa, Benard Kaumba pose for a photo at MTV London, United Kingdom.

expression. Social circuses also use entertainment as a tool to engage communities on social or health issues such as alcohol abuse or HIV/AIDS.

Juju myths

Two years ago, Chansa watched a young friend die of HIV/AIDS after he refused medicine, believing he had been cursed. Chansa is now determined to help tackle widespread ignorance around an epidemic that has left one in six people in Lusaka HIV positive. "In Zambia it's



Circus Zambia co-founder Benard Kaumba performs at MTV London, United Kingdom.

hard to talk about sex, nobody talks about sex," said Chansa, who believes the HIV rate is even higher in Chibolya. "A lot of people will say (HIV/AIDS) is witchcraft, it's juju, and then they won't take their medicine - and then they die. We want to say it's not juju."

Last year Circus Zambia launched Clowns for Condoms, an initiative that uses circus to bust taboos around HIV, increase awareness and distribute condoms. Chansa says their colorful wigs and costumes help overcome barriers. "It's easy to attract people when you go into the community and people see you dressed as clowns," he said. "You can (talk to) them just there and then, so that's why we use circus." Chansa wants to expand Circus Zambia to other regions and ensure it has a secure future for the next generation of performers. He is also dreaming big for his own future. "I want to be a politician," Chansa said. "That's my ambition - because people don't understand what young people are going through, especially in communities like mine." — AFP

VOLUNTEERS FIND 560,000-YEAR-OLD MILK TOOTH IN FRANCE

French and Spanish volunteer archeologists have discovered a child's milk tooth dating back 560,000 years in the mountains of southern France—an "exceptional fossil", researchers said Tuesday. The fossil was discovered on Monday evening in the Arago Cave, a vast prehistoric grotto at Tautavel on the French side of the Pyrenees mountains bordering Spain. The site's laboratory confirmed the tooth belonged to a human sub-species, likely homo heidelbergensis, which shares features with both modern humans and our homo erectus ancestors.

"The tooth likely belonged to a child aged five or six, who still had their milk teeth but had used them a fair amount," said Tony Chevalier, a paleoanthropologist at the University of Perpignan and the research center in Tautavel. The tooth is estimated to date back 560,000 years—give or take 5,000 years—which would make it 100,000 years older than the famous Tautavel Man whose skull was found at the same site in 1971.

Researchers said the find was "exceptional" as human remains dating back to this period are extremely rare, although a few teeth from the era have been found previously at the Arago Cave.

Chevalier said the milk tooth—the first found at the site—would "teach us lots of things about man's behavior" at the time. Researchers have long grappled with the question of how people lived in the cave at Tautavel, where some 150 ancient human fossils have been found. They have yet to determine whether it was a temporary shelter where our ancestors stopped off for a hunting break, or whether families made it a more permanent home—a mystery the milk tooth could help solve. — AFP

Lifestyle | Gossip

Trent Reznor still misses David Bowie

Trent Reznor still thinks about David Bowie "all the time". The Nine Inch Nails singer knew his recent track 'God Break Down the Door' - on which he plays saxophone - would remind people of his late friend, who died of cancer in January 2016. He said: "The decision to do the Bowie-esque, croony vocal was just around initially without the intent of it ever going to the outside world. And Atticus spoke up and said, 'You gotta keep that.' I knew it would [remind people of Bowie]. I mean, I still think about that man all the time." And the 'Mr Self Destruct' rocker admitted the passing of

the musical icon felt almost like a member of his own family had died and explained how the deaths of certain people in the public eye is a huge loss to society. He said in an interview with Rolling Stone magazine: "Let's first talk about Anthony Bourdain. I never met him. But I liked the world with him in it better. I liked knowing he was out there in some fashion, especially in these times. That's a loss; culturally, we needed that voice. "With Bowie, I did know him to a degree. I certainly studied his work and continued to do so. "It felt like, 'Man, we weren't done. There's more to go. I needed you in the world.' It was like

a family member almost. "There are these people that you feel you can rely on out there - not for support necessarily, but it's good to know they're experiencing life as we're in semi-uncertain times and even when we aren't. I think about that a lot."



All Saints think Spice Girls sold out

All Saints have insisted they would never have followed Spice Girls' footsteps and sold out with "endorsements". The 'Never Ever' band - made up of Mel Blatt, Shaznay Lewis and sisters Nicole and Natalie Appleton - have taken aim at the 'Wannabe' hitmakers and admitted they wouldn't have felt comfortable with the same big money deals. Speaking to The Guardian newspaper, Mel said: "We turned down a lot of lucrative branding offers. The main problem I had with the Spice Girls was all the endorsements. "It's a way of life now, but they were kind of the first people to put their names on everything. When we were being compared to them I was like: 'No, no, no.' We write our own music and we're here to perform. We wanted to be a band, just a band." There were claims that the two groups were rivals

in the 1990s, with Spice Girls painted as an innocent flip-side to the heavy party-goers. However, Nic explained: "[The Spice Girls] were drinking with us at the Met Bar. Everybody [went out loads]; it was just focused on us. They were the good old days." That's not to say the quarter didn't drink, as Nat recalled an awkward hangover they were suffering on classic ITV music show CD:UK. She revealed: "I had a very embarrassing morning on CD:UK once. We were talking to Ant and Dec and we all had sunglasses on because we couldn't see. "We went to a commercial break and I had to go because I couldn't breathe, it was really bad, and I got this phone call from my mum being like: 'What's the matter with you!' Then they came back from the break and I wasn't there."

Christopher McQuarrie says he was an 'innocent bystander' in toxic fandom row

Christopher McQuarrie says he was an "innocent bystander" before being caught up in the row about toxic 'Star Wars' fandom. The 50-year-old filmmaker recently ruled out ever helming a 'Star Wars' movie after he was subjected to abuse purely because Rian Johnson - whose 'Star Wars: The Last Jedi' divided the franchise's fanbase - hailed Christopher as one of the industry's most accomplished screenwriters. After being attacked by internet trolls, Christopher tweeted: "My friend, after five minutes of this, I don't know why you're still on Twitter. "I would have loved to make a Star Wars film someday. I'm cured. (sic)" The director has now reflected on the situation, saying he can understand the passion of 'Star Wars' fans. Asked about the subject of toxic fandom by Collider, Christopher replied: "I can tell you from my limited experience - I got caught up as an innocent bystander in a bunch of 'Star Wars' stuff. "Look, movies are very emotional. They're extremely, extremely emotional. A movie like 'Star Wars' or movies like Marvel where you're dealing with comic books, this is stuff that's coming from their childhood. It's the same thing as campfire stories, and in some cases it's the very fabric of their growing up. It's something of which they're hugely protective." The acclaimed director explained that he had some previous experience of the situation, likening it to his 2000 directorial debut 'The Way of the Gun'. He said: "Going back to 'The Way of the Gun', what I did in 'The Way of the Gun' is I defied the expectations of the viewer; I subverted them right from the very beginning of the film. And I learned a valuable lesson which is that people tend to react quite extremely when you don't meet their expectations or when you don't tell them the story. "What I did in 'The Way of the Gun' was I was asking you to figure it out instead of telling you what I wanted you to feel. Mass audiences - I'm not saying everybody - but mass audiences tend to reject that sort of thing."



HAMILTON MOVIE NOT EXPECTED UNTIL 2020

A movie of the hit stage show 'Hamilton' is not expected to arrive until 2020. The production has been a huge success on Broadway, but a 2016 recording of the musical, which was created by Lin-Manuel Miranda, won't be seen for two more years, with the makers seemingly keen to maximize their earnings from the stage show. Studios are currently bidding for the rights to distribute the movie, according to the Wall Street Journal newspaper, which claims that a \$50 million price tag has been placed on the film. The show - which opened on Broadway in 2015 - is about the founding father, Alexander Hamilton, and it features a mix of different musical genres, including hip-hop, R&B, pop and soul. Lin-Manuel originally starred in the musical but left the production shortly before it was recorded for the movie. Meanwhile, Lin-Manuel previously admitted that despite creating the musical, he has a very realistic view of America's founding fathers, who also included the likes of Thomas Jefferson and Benjamin Franklin. He shared: "I think the notion of our founders being these perfect men who got these stone tablets from the sky that became our Constitution and Bill of Rights is bull****. They did a remarkable thing in sticking the landing from revolution to government. That's the hardest thing to do. "You can go across the ocean to France, where they totally it up and then got stuck in a cycle of revolution and tyranny. So that's not nothing. But that being said, there's compromise in our founding documents. There's compromise between North and South. There's compromise between manufacture and agriculture. "The same fights we have over the role of our government now and the size of our government now are the fights they were having." — Bang Showbiz



Arcade Fire reveal Bruce Springsteen advice

Bruce Springsteen told Arcade Fire to build an audience in Spain to give them an escape when audiences turned on them in the US. The 'Reflektor' band's latest album 'Everything Now' was met with a backlash from critics and fans, and Will Butler - who completes the lineup with older brother Win and his wife Regine Chassagne, Richard Reed Parry, Tim Kingsbury and Jeremy Gara - has revealed the piece of advice they received from the Boss himself in case something like this happened. Speaking on 'Kyle Meredith With...', he said: "Bruce Springsteen actually told us once, 'Just make sure that you can always play shows in Spain.' "Because there will come a time when people hate you for like a decade and you can just disappear and go play shows in Spain where people love you. "And you'll be in Spain, and you can eat delicious food. And then 10 years after people will realize that you're really great and you can go back to America." Regarding the critical response to the record - which was released last year and met with what Butler described as "louder opposing chatter" - the band admit some fault with the expectations that had been built up for their fifth LP. Addressing the intricate and drawn-out promotional campaign, the musician added: "[Reviewers] approached it with more baggage. Baggage that we created, so it was kind of our fault." The release came after the band cut ties with Maverick Management's Scott Rodger after 13 years working together, and at the time he praised the innovative multi-instrumentalists for their impact on the music industry in a touching statement announcing that they have parted ways. He said: "It's been the greatest pleasure of my professional career working and collaborating with Arcade Fire and everyone on their team. "They are by far the most important band of their generation and have produced some of the most inspiring music of any time. "It's with the deepest love and respect that I wish the band all the very best in their future endeavors and very much look forward to seeing what they come up with next."



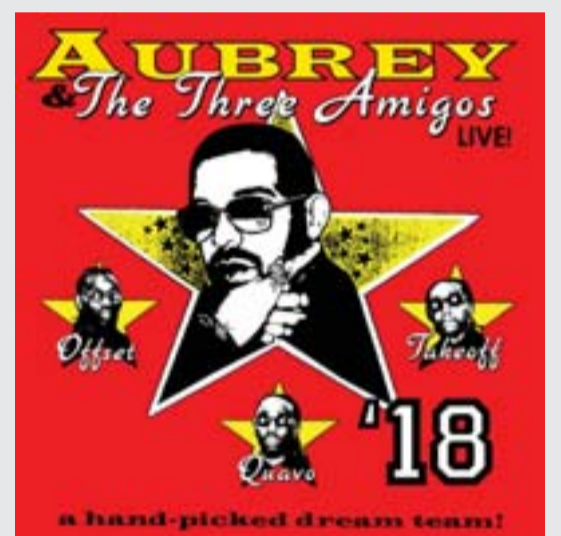
Alexandra Daddario to star in Can You Keep a Secret? adaptation

Alexandra Daddario is set to star in and executive produce a film adaptation of the best-selling novel 'Can You Keep a Secret?'. The 32-year-old actress - who previously appeared in 'Baywatch' and 'San Andreas' - has been cast in the role of Emma Corrigan in the adaptation of Sophie Kinsella's novel, which is being directed by Elise Duran. In the movie, Alexandra's character finds herself in the midst of a turbulent plane journey and assumes she's about to die. As a result, she decides to spill all of her secrets to the handsome stranger sitting next to her. However, as it turns out, she's actually revealed her secrets to Jack Harper, her firm's elusive CEO, who subsequently arrives at her office. The movie is being adapted by Peter Hutchings, and Claude Dal Farra, Brice Dal Farra, and Brian Keady are serving as the producers, according to Deadline. In recent years, Alexandra has often starred as the love interest in her movies and TV shows. But the actress previously insisted she's comfortable being "considered sexy". She explained: "It's kind of cool to be considered sexy. It's not something that I ever expected to happen for me. It wasn't something that I tried to do, so I embrace it, to a certain extent, especially when it's part of the joke, which it was in 'Baywatch'. "In 'True Detective', the scene that I did naked was done for a point. It wasn't gratuitous. It was done to shockingly show you the philandering nature of Woody Harrelson's character, when you thought he was a good guy. "In 'Baywatch', it's part of the joke, but at the same time, it's also just fun. It was like, 'Wow, look, I'm a 'Baywatch' babe!'"



Drake and Migos push back tour

Drake and Migos have pushed back their tour following Offset's arrest. The 31-year-old rapper and the hip hop trio - made up of Takeoff, Quavo and Offset - have postponed their 'The Aubrey and the Three Amigos Tour' by 15 days to ensure they can deliver a "high standard" on the road. A rep for Drake said: "In order to deliver the high standard tour experience our fans expect and deserve, we have made the necessary decision to slightly adjust the beginning of



'The Aubrey & the Three Amigos Tour' schedule.' Their run of shows was due to begin today in Salt Lake City, Utah, but the first gig will now be in Kansas City, Missouri, on August 10. A number of performances have been rescheduled, but their planned show in Chicago on August 20 has been axed, but those who bought tickets for original dates are entitled to a refund. Offset - who is married to Cardi B, who welcomed their baby daughter Kulture earlier this month - was arrested for gun and drug possession last week after police officers said they witnessed him performing an improper lane change. But his lawyer Drew Findling believes he was "targeted" by police. He said: "It's a common theme. We're talking about a young, African-American man driving a shiny, beautiful luxury car and clad in designer clothes and watches and jewelry. "Unfortunately people in his genre become a target for law enforcement who think that lifestyle is connected to some illegal activity ... and that is a sad statement." Cardi is also said to believe Offset was "targeted" for being a "rich, successful black rapper". A source told TMZ: "She thinks he was pulled over for doing nothing more than being a rich, successful black rapper. "She doesn't think he broke any laws because he doesn't own any firearms. It was a targeted attack from the hip-hop cops."



Lifestyle | Features

Singer **Demi Lovato** awake after suspected overdose

US pop singer Demi Lovato, who has spoken openly about her history of drug and alcohol abuse, is awake after she was taken to a Los Angeles hospital on Tuesday suffering from a suspected overdose, according to media reports. Lovato, 25, a Grammy-nominated recording artist, was "okay and stable, reported People magazine, quoting an unidentified source. "Demi is awake and with her family who want to express thanks to everyone for the love, prayers, and support," Lovato's representative told entertainment magazine Variety in a statement. Representatives for Lovato did not respond to a request for comment.

Entertainment news website TMZ, quoting law enforcement sources, reported that Lovato was found unconscious at her home and was treated with Narcan, an emergency antidote for suspected opioid and drug overdoses. Los Angeles police said they had responded to a medical emergency on Tuesday involving a woman

on the Hollywood Hills street where Lovato reportedly has a home but declined to identify the person. City fire department spokeswoman Margaret Stewart said a 25-year-old woman was transported to a local hospital from that location.

Lovato released a song last month called "Sober" in which she sang: "Momma, I'm so sorry, I'm not sober anymore. And daddy, please forgive me for the drinks spilled on the floor. To the ones who never left me, We've been down this road before, I'm so sorry, I'm not sober anymore." The New Mexico-born performer rose to fame on Disney Channel shows "Camp Rock" and "Sonny with a Chance" 10 years ago and forged a pop career with hits like "Skyscraper" and "Sorry Not Sorry." In a 2017 YouTube documentary, "Simply Complicated," Lovato spoke about years of substance abuse, eating disorders, and drinking, saying she first started using cocaine when she was 17.

She entered rehab at the age of 18, where she was diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Lovato, who has some 69 million followers on Instagram, was in the midst of a US tour and was due to perform in Atlantic City, New Jersey, today. Her hospitalization became the top trending item on Twitter on Tuesday, with fans and celebrities expressing concern and support. Country singer Brad Paisley tweeted: "Addiction is a terrible disease. There is no one more honest or brave than this woman." — Reuters



In this file photo Demi Lovato attends the 2017 Time 100 Gala at Jazz at Lincoln Center in New York City. — AFP



In this file photo actor Jim Cummings attends the Los Angeles Premiere of "Winnie The Pooh" at Walt Disney Studios on in Burbank, California. — AFP



(From left) In this file photo Rabbit, Winnie The Pooh, Eeyore and Tigger pose for photos as Winnie The Pooh receives a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in front of the El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



In this file photo Winnie The Pooh receives a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in front of the El Capitan Theatre on in Los Angeles, California.

Cosby is 'sexually violent predator'

Pennsylvania state advisory board recommended that Bill Cosby be deemed a "sexually violent predator," requiring that the convicted comedian undergo counseling as well as register as a sex offender for life, prosecutors said on Tuesday. The 81-year-old entertainer, known as "America's Dad" for his role in the 1980s TV hit "The Cosby Show," was found guilty in April of drugging and sexually assaulting a former friend at his Philadelphia-area home in 2004.

The victim, Andrea Constand, was one of dozens of women who have accused the comedian of a string of sexual assaults dating back decades. Hers was the only accusation recent enough to be criminally prosecuted. In a court filing on Tuesday, Montgomery County District Attorney Kevin Steele asked Judge Steven O'Neill to schedule a hearing to determine whether to accept the recommendation of the state's sexual offender assessment board.



File photo shows Actor and comedian Bill Cosby departs the courthouse after he was found guilty in his sexual assault retrial. — AP

Disney invests in bear market with 'Christopher Robin'

"Sometimes the smallest things take the most room in your heart," a wise little bear once remarked—and Jim Cummings has put his heart and soul into playing Winnie the Pooh for three decades. The 65-year-old American voice actor has been playing the Disney character based on the stories of English novelist AA Milne since "The New Adventures of Winnie the Pooh" in 1988. After more than a dozen movies and various other television and video game appearances, Cummings plays Pooh and his bouncy feline friend Tigger in their first live-action outing, the upcoming "Christopher Robin."

"These guys are extremely special. Everybody says, 'Who's your favorite? Who's your all-time favorite?' First of all, I don't have 'a' favorite but, if I had two, it would be Pooh and Tigger," Cummings said. "They're kind of in their own class, their own category. They're on their own shelf and everybody else isn't." Disney's history with A.A. Milne's characters dates back to 1966 when the studio released the animated short "Winnie the Pooh and the Honey Tree," featuring the character Christopher Robin, based on the author's son. In the new live action adventure, the young boy who embarked on countless adventures in the Hundred Acre Wood with his band of spirited and lovable stuffed animals, has grown up and lost his way.

It is up to his childhood friends to venture into the world of humans and help Christopher Robin remember the loving and playful boy who is still inside. Starring Ewan McGregor ("Fargo") and Hayley Atwell ("Agent Carter") as Christopher Robin and his wife Evelyn, Marc Forster's version of the fuzzy, ursine joy bundle hits US theaters on Friday of next week. Born and raised in Youngstown, Ohio, Cummings spent Saturday mornings as a child riveted to the television, mimicking his favorite cartoon characters and dreaming that one day he would voice them himself.

The recipient of two Daytime Emmy nominations for his television work, his many movie credits include "Shrek," "Who Framed Roger Rabbit"—and most of the Disney animated movies you can think of. Cummings has appeared in almost 400 roles—from family favorites like Sonic the Hedgehog, Captain Caveman and the Tasmanian Devil to Marvel characters Iron Man, Ghost and Thanos—but he enjoys relative anonymity. "When I was a kid I wanted to be facially famous. I joke around and say, 'Well anybody could win an Oscar or an Emmy if they use their face,' Cummings laughs. "But I don't mind it. My friend calls me a stealth celebrity. So, okay—I'll take it."

'Stealth celebrity'

'Timeless quality'

Asked how he accounts for his longevity, Cummings jokes that his secret is "blackmail—I just have the goods on everyone." In reality he speaks of every role with passion. "I'm as happy as I could be. The first job I got was Lionel the Lion in Dumbo's circus in 1985. And then the first movie I did was 'Who Framed Roger Rabbit'—another famous Disney movie," Cummings said. "I don't have my shirt anymore but I've got the picture of me with my Mouseketeers shirt on."

And I had my Zorro hat and I still have my Davy Crockett hat from the 1950s." AA Milne's characters, who first appeared in print in 1926, owe their own staying power to the fact that they've never relied on being cutting-edge, says Cummings. "They're not really attached to a fad. It's not like they're Transformers," he told AFP. "If robots who turn into a lunchbox go out of style, Pooh and the gang will still be there." — AFP

Venice Film Festival to host Netflix movies

From westerns to the space race and the latest offerings from Oscar-winning directors, this year's Venice Film Festival will present a rich line-up of premieres, including a host of Netflix movies and an unfinished Orson Welles work, the organizers said. The 75th edition of the world's oldest film festival kicks off in late August, with some 20 movies competing for the Golden Lion Award.

Unlike May's Cannes Film Festival, which Netflix Inc pulled out of after organizers banned its films from competition for its refusal to release them in cinemas, the Venice event will show several movies by the streaming platform. "There are many Netflix films this year, five or six," festival director Alberto Barbera told a news conference on Wednesday, adding that lots of filmmakers were now turning to new platforms to produce and distribute movies.

Among the Netflix distributed films in competition are the Coen brothers' western "The Ballad of Buster Scruggs" and black and white family drama "Roma" by Oscar winner Alfonso Cuaron. "Jason Bourne" director Paul Greengrass will present his Netflix-distributed work "22 July" — about the aftermath of the 2011 massacre of 77 people in Norway by far-right militant Anders Breivik. The organizers of the 11-day festival, which usually offers a first peak at Oscar contenders, have already announced space drama "First Man",

chronicling Neil Armstrong's mission to become the first man to walk on the moon, as the opening film.

Romantic musical drama

Highly anticipated western dark comedy "The Sisters Brothers" by Jacques Audiard, and Yorgos Lanthimos' period piece "The Favourite" with Oscar winner Emma Stone and new "The Crown" actress Olivia Colman are also in competition. Other contenders include "Peterloo" about the 1819 massacre in Manchester by Mike Leigh, "Napszallta" (Sunset) by Laszlo Nemes, who directed the Oscar winning "Son of Saul" and "Werk Ohne Autor" by Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck. A film about Vincent van Gogh, "At Eternity's Gate", and "What You Gonna Do When The World's On Fire?" about a black community in the southern United States last summer will also vie for the top prize.

Out of competition, a remake of romantic musical drama "A Star is Born" starring Bradley Cooper and Lady Gaga as well as crime film "Dragged Across Concrete", starring Mel Gibson and Vince Vaughn will screen. Netflix is also bringing Orson Welles' unfinished "The Other Side of the Wind" to the festival out of competition. The film about movie director making a comeback was first shot in the 1970s and recently completed. Organizers have also said veteran British actress Vanessa Redgrave will be presented with the Golden Lion for Lifetime Achievement honor. — Reuters

GEORGIA LAWMAKER RESIGNS

Georgia state lawmaker who yelled racial slurs and dropped his pants on a prank cable TV show after being told it would intimidate terrorists offered a terse resignation letter to the speaker of the Georgia House of Representatives late Tuesday. Fellow Republicans had called on state Representative Jason Spencer to resign after his appearance on shock comedian Sacha Baron Cohen's "Who is America?" where he slurred African-Americans, Middle Easterners and Asians at the urging of a character played by Cohen.

The series, in which a disguised Cohen interviews subjects who do not realize they are working with a comedian, also features a congressman supporting the idea of arming children as young as three to stop school shootings and former Vice President Dick Cheney signing a jug described as a "waterboarding kit." In the episode that Spencer appeared in, a disguised Cohen presented himself as an Israeli anti-terrorist expert. After airing Sunday night, the video went viral on the internet.

"This email/letter is to serve as an official resignation notice to your office that I will be resigning my post effective July 31, 2018," Spencer said in a statement to Georgia House Speaker David Ralston, who had called for Spencer to step down. Ralston's office provided the statement to Reuters. Spencer had lost a primary election and was going to leave the office, which he has held since 2010, after the November general election. Spencer apologized in comments to the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, adding, "Sacha Baron Cohen and his associates took advantage of my paralyzing fear that my family would be attacked." Cohen has for years used disguises and various characters to catch celebrities, politicians and ordinary people saying offensive things. — Reuters



One Direction mark eighth anniversary



One Direction have thanked fans for their continued support as they celebrate eight years as a band. The 'History' hitmakers - Harry Styles, Louis Tomlinson, Niall Horan, Liam Payne and former member Zayn Malik - were formed by Simon Cowell on "The X Factor" in 2010, and went on an indefinite break five years later. However, on Monday their Twitter profile came alive with the band tweeting the lyrics to their hit songs with the hashtag #8YearsOfOneDirection. Liam wrote: #8YearsOfOneDirection what an incredible 8 years it's been with my brothers! Thank you to all the fans that are still supporting and following our journeys. Love LP [sic]

Whilst Louis added to his own Twitter account how he couldn't believe how time has flown by, writing: #8YearsOfOneDirection Where has the time gone!? Thank you so much to every single person who's ever supported us. Big love! [sic] And Niall said: #8YearsOfOneDirection Wow! 8 years of amazing memories with the lads. Thank you so much for standing by us for all this time. [sic]

Many of their fans - who are known as Directioners - have speculated that the social media celebration could lead to the "What Makes You Beautiful" group reuniting. Since announcing their hiatus in 2015, all members have launched solo careers. Liam previously said that if they ever decide to reunite in the future, it would be likely they'd all perform one another's solo songs. He said: "For me the only way One Direction could better themselves from going to playing stadiums - like where else do you play? - is to manage to be, you know, like 'The Avengers', like we're successful on our own. "Like if Iron Man wants to go and deal with someone, he just deals with them. "He doesn't call up Hulk and be like 'oh, whatever' unless he really needs him. "So my thing is, why aren't we like that? "Like, we should go and boss it on our own and then when we do the show it can be like 'yeah, yeah, just sit down there boys, I'll sing a bit of 'Slow Hands', you know what I mean? Imagine that?" — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features

SUPERSTAR PASTRY CHEF'S 'FOODPORN' HAS INSTAGRAM DROOLING

When Cedric Grolet takes out his pastry knife, millions of mouths water. The young Frenchman, named the top patissier on the planet last month by "The World's 50 Best Restaurants" list, is an Instagram superstar. Videos of him slicing through the exquisite fake fruit he creates to reveal their tastebud-teasing interiors get millions of views on social media. Millions more drool over images of his glossy



Le Meurice's pastry chef Cedric Grolet poses during a photo session at the luxury five-star Le Meurice Hotel in Paris.

hyper-realistic pears, apricots, lemons, peaches and even tomatoes, with Vogue-a magazine not known for its championing of high-calorie desserts-saying they "leave you wanting to lick the screen". "His fans cry, fall into his arms and demand autographs" and selfies, said the usually sober French daily Le Monde.

His work is pure "food porn", it declared, with only a select few getting the chance to consummate their desire every day at the top Paris hotel where he works. With high tea at Le Meurice featuring his cakes sometimes booked weeks in advance, Grolet opened a tiny boutique there in March. Its shelves empty within hours every day. His Rubik's cube cake-which pivots just like the real thing-has become a cult on the fashionable Parisian dinner circuit, although at 170 euros (\$200) for a cake for six, only those with the deep pockets can afford it. Grolet has even made a blue, white and red version to celebrate France's World Cup win earlier this month. Like the members of the French football team, he is something of a working-class hero.

Eating with our eyes

The son of a hairdresser and truck driver from a small town near Saint-Etienne in central France, his moment of revelation came when he was only 13. "A farmer gave me a basket of strawberries for helping him pick his crop and I made a strawberry tart with them for my grandfather," who ran a small hotel nearby, he told AFP. It went down so well that Grolet left school early to apprentice himself to the village baker. "I would make bread all night so that I would be allowed to make the desserts at 11 in the morning. My reward was to be able to slice the apples and cover the tarts in strawberries."

of the year and hailed by macaroon guru Pierre Herme as "one of the most talented patissiers of his generation".

'Naked patisserie'

Grolet followed Adam to the exclusive Le Meurice, which is owned by the Sultan of Brunei. He now works there as pastry chef under celebrity cook Alain Ducasse, who urged him to "work even more on taste". "Visual beauty attracts the customer, but it is the taste that makes them come back," said Grolet, who as a millennial himself knows that Generation Y eats with its eyes. The fact that his creations are not

'His fans cry, fall into his arms and demand autographs'

He later studied fine patisserie and began winning prizes before leaving to make his name in Paris aged 20. There he worked for the French gourmet food and delicatessen chain Fauchon, which eventually sent him to Beijing to help train its staff there. It was also at Fauchon that he worked alongside Christophe Adam in its research laboratory, developing new recipes. "It was every patissier's dream," he said, "trying new things every day." Like Adam, who has since founded L'Éclair de Génie, a chain in France and Japan, Grolet has been crowned French patissier

overly sweet has also endeared him to the calorie-conscious beautiful people who queue every day outside his mini-boutique, the first of what Grolet hopes will be a handful across the world.

He began perfecting his extraordinarily delicate fruit six years ago, with their highly worked lifelike skins made from chocolate, with a mousse or marmalade interior made from the real fruit. "The idea was to do away with the biscuit, the eggs, all the things whose taste doesn't really do anything and to concentrate on the taste of the fruit," Grolet told AFP. It is what he calls "naked patisserie". His tarts have a similar hyper-natural edge, with fruit as finely cut as flower petals. With more than a million followers on Instagram alone, Grolet is almost as savvy with his smartphone as his with his blowtorch. "Making cakes is one thing but you have to know how to communicate. You cannot imagine how many photos I take before posting one," he told AFP. And not being in the country does not stop him creating. He keeps in constant contact with his laboratory at Le Meurice through WhatsApp. "I draw and work even when I am on the plane, sending back everything that is in my head, and pictures of everything that I loved eating," said the self-confessed "hyperactive" glotrotter. — AFP



In this file photo Le Meurice's pastry chef Cedric Grolet poses during a photo session at the luxury five-star Le Meurice Hotel in Paris. — AFP photos



Wannabe ninjas plague Japan town after viral mix-up

A Japanese city has been left fighting off wannabe ninjas after a news report on local labor shortages that suggested it wanted to hire the traditional assassins went viral. The western city of Iga was featured in a report by American radio station NPR this month about Japan's depopulation and labor shortage problems. The report said Iga was trying to capitalize on its history as home to ninjas by building a new museum focused on the warriors, but was struggling to hire staff, including ninja performers. In its reporting, NPR said ninja performers in Japan can earn anywhere between \$23-85,000 a year. But a number of copycat reports by other media or viral sites went with less nuanced headlines such as: "This town in Japan will pay you an \$85,000 salary to train as a ninja".

By Wednesday, at least 115 aspiring assassins had contacted the city

and its local tourism association, puzzled Iga officials said. Would-be warriors from at least 14 countries had been in touch, they added. "Iga didn't put out information about 'a lack of ninjas in Iga' or the 'annual income of ninjas', that is currently reported by some news sites on the Internet," the city said on its website. In a statement issued in Japanese, English and three other languages, the city tried to squelch the hopes of applicants, adding: "Please be careful about fake news." "We are just puzzled," Motoyoshi Shimai, a city official, told AFP. "So far, neither the city nor ninja performing groups here have any plans to recruit ninja performers."

The official said the city's mayor had expressed "surprise at how big the impact of the word ninja is." But the viral mix-up could end up being a boon for Iga, which might not be hiring ninjas, but is hoping its association with the feudal fighters will draw more tourists. It already hosts one ninja museum, boasting a house rigged with hidden ladders, false doors and an underfloor sword box. Visitors can watch a ninja performance or rent ninja costumes. And they can even join a one-day ninja training program—just don't ask about job openings. — AFP



A girl performs with hanging hoops during a training session at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Arts School "DAAS" where children learn circus skills and arts in old Cairo, Egypt. — Reuters photos



A boy performs during a training session at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Arts School "DAAS".



A boy performs during a training session at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Arts School "DAAS".

Egyptian art school helps poor children swing into a better future

Underprivileged children in an ancient neighborhood in Cairo are getting the chance to trapeze into a brighter future. The Al-Darb Al-Ahmar arts school, named after the more than 700-year-old neighborhood where it is located, hopes that teaching children performing and circus arts they will also learn valuable life skills.

The area has long been known for its mosques from the Fatimid and Mamluk eras of 1,000-or-so years ago, and in more recent years unofficial settlements have taken root, with many small workshops and factories that are often dependent on child labor. Dozens of children

have enrolled since the school opened in 2012, performing locally and in festivals around the country, and some going on to pursue a career in the performing arts, said Adel Al-Bahdaly, a coach at the school.

The children learn to sing, act, and play music, but for 14-year-old Atoota, a student at the school for the past six years, there was more to take away than dance routines. "I benefited a lot. I learned how not to be shy around people, and to have the confidence to speak to them and share ideas," she said. — Reuters



Egyptian girls perform with hoops during a training session at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Arts School "DAAS".



A boy stretches during a training session at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Arts School "DAAS".



Girls perform during a training session at Al-Darb Al-Ahmar Arts School "DAAS".

Classifieds

Thursday, July 26, 2018

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate 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 12 - 32 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 25/07/2018 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	36 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	31 °C		
ABDALY	47 °C	30 °C		
BUBYAN	--- °C	--- °C		
JAHRA	48 °C	34 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	30 °C		
SALMIYAH	40 °C	33 °C		
AHMADI	40 °C	36 °C		
NUWAISIB	45 °C	33 °C		
WAFRA	47 °C	32 °C		
SALMY	45 °C	29 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	07/26	Very hot + rising dust + clouds	48 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Friday	07/27	Hot and Dusty	45 °C	36 °C	NW	25 - 65 km/h
Saturday	07/28	Very hot + rising dust over open areas	47 °C	35 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h
Sunday	07/29	Very hot + rising dust over open areas	48 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:33
Sunrise	05:04
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:30
Sunset	18:45
Isha	20:13

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	26 %
MIN. RH	10 %
MAX. Wind	S 36 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

REQUIRED

Manager for Central Food Market and Consumer Goods

- Had experience and knowledge in Kuwaiti market for 10 years.
- Ability to plan, develop the market with Internal & External agencies deals for food.
- Knowledge of using computer applications.

foodkwmarket@gmail.com

REQUIRED

Agricultural Resident Engineer in Kuwait

- Experience in the Cultivation of Green houses and Fields to produce vegetables in it.
- Has a productive experience in Kuwait or Gulf for more than 10 years.
- Ability to plan, know the full seasonal production.

farminkuwait@gmail.com

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sayed Salibhai Sayed Jaffar D/o Jaffar Ali, holder of Indian Passport No.

K2086240, Civil ID No. 256061602493, hereby change my name to Saleha Jaffer Ali Sayed. (C 5409) 23-7-2018

Airlines		
Kuwait Airways		171
Jazeera Airways		177
Wataniya Airways		22 066 536
American Airlines		22087425
		22087426
Jet Airways		22924455
FlyDubai		22414400
Qatar Airways		22423888
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



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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 26/7/2018				Departure Flights on Thursday 26/7/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
FEQ	441	Asyut	00:05	MSC	502	Alexandria	00:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:50	FEG	344	Sohag	01:05
KAC	102	London	00:50	MSC	406	Sohag	01:05
GEL	616	Baku	01:00	KAC	417	Manila	01:45
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	THY	773	Istanbul	01:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	SAI	442	Lahore	01:50
JZR	539	Cairo	01:35	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	677	Dubai	02:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	WAN	351	Luxor	02:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	GEL	613	Dubai	02:30
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	JZR	502	Luxor	02:30
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:45
RJA	267	Beirut	02:10	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
WAN	714	AGP	02:45	JZR	122	Bahrain	03:20
JZR	607	Kochi	02:55	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
RBG	242	Sohag	03:05	THY	769	Istanbul	03:35
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	JZR	142	Doha	03:45
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	RBG	216	Sohag	03:45
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	MSC	404	Asyut	04:05
MSC	403	Asyut	03:05	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
JZR	553D	Alexandria	03:05	MSR	607	Cairo	04:05
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:25	PGT	831	Istanbul	04:25
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	540	Cairo	04:40
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JAI	571	Mumbai	05:00
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
KAC	152	Istanbul	04:15	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15
JZR	609	Hyderabad	04:30	JZR	528	Asyut	05:20
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:35
THY	1414	Jeddah	05:05	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	JZR	1542	Cairo	06:40
KAC	544	Cairo	05:20	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
JZR	603	Mumbai	05:25	RJA	643	Amman	07:00
KAC	332	Chennai	05:30	JZR	164	Dubai	07:15
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	KAC	356	Mashhad	07:15
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	JZR	343	Paris	07:20
KAC	362	Colombo	06:00	WAN	133	Doha	07:20
BAW	157	London	06:10	RBG	550	Alexandria	07:30
JZR	123	Bahrain	06:15	KAC	173	Munich	07:35
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:40
KAC	803	Dhaka	06:25	KAC	193	TXZ	08:00
QTR	8511	Doha	06:35	JZR	238	Amman	08:00
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	JZR	778	Jeddah	08:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	QTR	8512	Beirut	08:00
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	WAN	713	AGP	08:10
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	BAW	156	London	08:20
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	07:05	KAC	177	Vienna	08:30
JZR	143	Doha	07:20	KAC	054	Dubai	08:35
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	791	Madinah	09:00
WAN	352	Luxor	08:00	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	KAC	117	New York	09:05
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	WAN	415	Beirut	09:10
IRA	673	Ahwaz	08:35	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
JZR	503	Luxor	08:35	IRA	672	Ahwaz	09:35
KAD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KAC	561	Amman	09:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:05	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:45
SAW	703	Damascus	09:30	JZR	534	Cairo	09:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	482	Istanbul	09:55
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	101	London	10:00
SYR	341	Damascus	10:00	KAC	515	Tehran	10:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC	541	Cairo	10:00
THY	1516	TXZ	10:05	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	10:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	797	Taif	10:05
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:10
WAN	134	Doha	11:00	KAC	155	Doha	10:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	SAW	704	Damascus	10:30
JZR	529	Asyut	11:05	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
JZR	165	Dubai	11:35	FDB	056	Doha	10:40
AHY	5101	Baku	11:55	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:20	SYR	342	Damascus	11:00
SAW	709	Latakia	12:30	IAW	158	Al Najaf	11:00
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	THY	1415	TXZ	11:05
UAE	854	Dubai	12:45	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
ABY	121	Sharjah	12:55	JZR	776	Jeddah	12:05
JZR	239	Amman	13:00				
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00				
JZR	1543	Cairo	13:05				
JZR	357	Mashhad	13:05				

Pakistan locked in tight election between Khan and Sharif's party

At least 31 killed in suicide blast at polling station

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan was locked in a close and tense election race yesterday, pitting cricket hero Imran Khan against the party of jailed ex-Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in a process marred by a suicide bomb that killed 31 people near a polling station. Neither Khan nor Sharif's party appeared likely to win a clear majority in the too-close-to-call election, with results likely to be known by around 2 am local time today. The outcome could lead to a weak coalition government at a time when Pakistan urgently needs to address a foreign currency crisis and may need to go to the International Monetary Fund (IMF) for a second bailout in five years. About 106 million people were registered to vote in polls that closed at 6 pm (1300 GMT).

Khan has emerged as a slight favorite in national opinion polls, but the divisive race is likely to come down to Punjab, the country's most populous province, where Sharif's party has clung to its lead in recent surveys. The election will be only the second civilian transfer of power in Pakistan's 71-year history. But campaigning has been plagued by allegations the powerful armed forces have been trying to tilt the race in Khan's favor after falling out with the outgoing ruling party of Sharif, who was jailed on corruption charges this month.

Sharif's party had called for voting to be extended by an hour, saying people were still lining up and could be turned away without casting ballots, but election officials denied the request. About 371,000 soldiers have been stationed at polling stations across the country, nearly five times the number deployed at the last election in 2013.

Anti-corruption crusader

Whichever party wins, it will face a mounting and urgent in-tray, from a brewing economic crisis to worsening relations with on-off ally the United States to deepening cross-country water shortages. An anti-corruption crusader, Khan has promised an "Islamic welfare state" and cast his populist campaign as a battle to topple a

predatory political elite hindering development in the impoverished mostly-Muslim nation of 208 million people, where the illiteracy rate hovers above 40 percent. "This is the most important election in Pakistan's history," Khan, 65, said after casting his vote in the capital, Islamabad. "I ask everyone today - be a citizen, cherish this country, worry about this country, use your vote."

Khan has staunchly denied allegations by Sharif's Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) party that he is getting help from the military, which has ruled Pakistan for about half of its history and still sets key security and foreign policy in the nuclear-armed nation. The army has also dismissed allegations of meddling in the election.

Struggle to win

Khan's Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party has inched ahead of PML-N in recent national polls, but even if it gets the most votes, it will likely struggle to win a majority of the 272 elected seats in the National Assembly, raising the prospect of weeks of haggling to form a messy coalition government. Such a delay could further imperil Pakistan's economy, with a looming currency crisis expected to force the new government to turn to the IMF for Pakistan's second bailout since 2013. PTI has not ruled out seeking succor from China, Islamabad's closest ally.

Sharif's PML-N has sought to turn the vote into a referendum on Pakistan's democracy, and has said it was campaigning to protect the "sanctity of the vote", a reference to a history of political interference by the military. The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), which has been overtaken by Khan's PTI as the main challenger to PML-N, has also alleged intimidation by spy agencies. Sharif's PML-N has been touting its delivery of mega infrastructure projects, especially roads and power stations that helped hugely reduce electricity blackouts, as proof the country is on the path to prosperity.

"If we get the opportunity, we will change the destiny of Pakistan," said Shehbaz Sharif, brother of Nawaz and

regime and allied fighters.

The militants still hold some territory in Syria's south, including in Sweida and another isolated but larger patch in neighboring Daraa province, to the west. That pocket is held by Jaish Khaled bin al-Walid, a jihadist faction whose 1,000 fighters have pledged allegiance to IS. After ousting mainstream rebels from most of the south, President Bashar Al-Assad's troops and his Russian allies are now closing in on the IS pocket in Daraa. SANA said the attacks on Sweida were an attempt to relieve pressure "on IS remnants facing their inevitable end in the western Daraa countryside."

Yesterday, Russia-backed regime forces pressed their heavy bombardment of IS territory in Daraa. At least 41 civilians have been killed in air strikes on the jihadist holdout since July 19, while clashes have killed 49 regime fighters and 67 militants, says the Observatory. Syria's south is ostensibly protected from fighting by a ceasefire brokered by world powers last year, but violence has risen dramatically in recent weeks. Last month, Assad's forces launched a lightning assault that battered rebel areas in the south and brought most of Daraa province under his control.

They then moved on to Quneitra, the neighboring province which borders the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights. On Tuesday, a Syrian military source accused Israel of firing at one of its warplanes as it carried out operations against militants in Quneitra. Israel's army earlier said it had shot down a Syrian fighter jet that had infiltrated Israeli airspace, risking another escalation around the sensitive buffer zone. The Damascus regime has long accused Israel of backing IS, which overran large parts of Syria and neighboring Iraq in 2014 but has since lost most of that territory. More than 350,000 people have been killed and millions displaced since Syria's war started in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. — AFP

with information about what lies beneath the surface."

A team of researchers led by Roberto Orosei of the Istituto Nazionale di Astrofisica in Bologna, Italy, surveyed a region called Planum Australe, located in the southern ice cap of Mars, from May 2012 until Dec 2015. A total of 29 sets of radar samplings showed a "very sharp change in its associated radar signal," allowing scientists to map the outlines of the lake. "The radar profile of this area is similar to that of lakes of liquid water found beneath the Antarctic and Greenland ice sheets on Earth, suggesting that there is a subglacial lake at this location on Mars," said the report. Researchers said they are not sure how far down it goes, but may be around one meter deep.

"This is the first body of water it has detected, so it is very exciting," David Stillman, a senior research scientist in the Department of Space Studies at Southwest Research Institute in Texas, told AFP in an email. However, Stillman, who was not involved in the research, said another spacecraft, or other instruments, need to be able to confirm the discovery. He noted that a higher-frequency radar instrument made by the Italian space agency, SHARAD, on board the Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter launched in 2005, has been unable to detect sub-surface water.

"It is strange that SHARAD cannot confirm this discovery. In fact, SHARAD cannot penetrate through the ice here and no one understands why it can't," Stillman said. "This suggests that something strange is going on here. Thus, I'm skeptical about this discovery." But researchers are excited about the potential for future finds, because if liquid water could be found at Mars' south pole, it might be elsewhere too. "There's nothing special about this location other than the MARSIS radar on the Mars Express spacecraft is most sensitive to that region meaning there are likely similar water deposits below the ground all across Mars," said Duffy. — AFP



ISLAMABAD: Pakistan's cricketer-turned politician Imran Khan of the Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf speaks to the media after casting his vote at a polling station yesterday. — AFP

the PML-N president, as he cast his vote in Lahore. "We will bring an end to unemployment, eradicate poverty and promote education", PML-N's campaign was reinvigorated by the return to Pakistan of Nawaz Sharif, 68, who was earlier this month convicted and sentenced in absentia to 10 years in prison over the purchase of upscale London apartments using offshore companies in the mid-1990s. He has denied any wrongdoing.

Wednesday's voting was marred by a suicide bombing that killed 31 people near a polling station in Quetta, capital of the southwestern province of Baluchistan. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attack. Earlier this month, a suicide bomber killed 149 people at an election rally in the town of Mastung in Baluchistan province. That attack was also claimed by Islamic State militants. — Reuters

IS kills more than 180 in...

Continued from Page 1

attacks in Syria, Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman said. He said regime forces eventually ousted IS from several villages its fighters had seized and put an end to the attacks. "Some residents who fled the attacks on their villages are returning and finding people dead in their homes," Abdel Rahman said. At least 38 IS fighters were also killed, including the suicide attackers.

State media confirmed the attacks had killed and wounded people in Sweida city and villages to the north and east but did not give a specific toll. Omar, a resident of Sweida city, told AFP explosions began rocking the city around 5:30 am local time (0230 GMT). "The blast was sudden and unexpected. Never in its history has Sweida seen such a tough day," he told AFP. State news agency SANA published images from the city of the attack's aftermath, showing a victim's remains sprawled on a staircase near a damaged wall. Abandoned shoes lay in the middle of the road among fruit that had spilled out of cantons.

The UN's humanitarian coordinator in Syria Ali Al-Zaatar condemned the "terrorist bombing in Sweida city," saying all civilians should be protected. Government ally Russia said the IS attacks "confirm the need for energetic and coordinated efforts by the international community to eradicate this universal evil from Syrian territory". Pro-government forces ousted IS from urban centers in eastern Syria last year, but surprise IS raids in recent months have killed dozens of

Massive liquid water lake found on...

Continued from Page 1

Being able to access water sources could also help humans survive on a future crewed mission to Earth's neighboring planet. This particular lake, however, would be neither swimmable nor drinkable, and lies almost 1.5 km beneath the icy surface in a harsh and frigid environment. Whether microbial forms of life could lie within is a matter of debate. Some experts are skeptical of the possibility since the lake is so cold and briny, and mixed with a heavy dose of dissolved Martian salts and minerals. The temperature is likely below the freezing point of pure water, but can remain liquid due to the presence of magnesium, calcium, and sodium.

"This is a discovery of extraordinary significance, and is bound to heighten speculation about the presence of living organisms on the Red Planet," said Fred Watson of the Australian Astronomical Observatory. "Caution needs to be exercised, however, as the concentration of salts needed to keep the water liquid could be fatal for any microbial life similar to Earth's," added Watson, who was not involved in the research.

The discovery was made using a radar instrument on board the European Space Agency's Mars Express orbiter, which launched in 2003. The tool is called the Mars Advanced Radar for Subsurface and Ionosphere Sounding (MARSIS), and was designed to find subsurface water by sending radar pulses that penetrate the surface and ice caps. MARSIS "then measures how the radio waves propagate and reflect back to the spacecraft," said the study. These reflections "provide scientists



BEIRUT: Activists gather in downtown Beirut on Tuesday to protest against a recent wave of interrogations by Lebanese security forces of people making political comments on social media. The banners in Arabic read "against oppression". — AFP

Lebanon questions activists over...

Continued from Page 1

Multi-confessional Lebanon is seen to be a relatively open-minded country compared to the rest of the Middle East region. The tiny Mediterranean state's constitution protects freedom of opinion, written and oral, and of the press. Its penal code, however, punishes libel and defamation of officials. Security apparatuses are "arbitrarily" drawing from those articles when bringing in Lebanese over their social media posts, according to Haidar. The questioned individuals end up accused, for example, of insulting the president, insulting religion or "inciting sectarian strife", she said.

Bassam Khawaja, Lebanon researcher at Human Rights Watch, agreed there was a worrying trend. "For the past two years we've seen a troubling pattern of escalating retaliation against criticism of authorities in Lebanon," he said. "People are being arrested and interrogated for peaceful Facebook posts in a country where the laws still technically provide up to three years in prison for defamation, with serious implications for freedom of expression," he said.

In a Facebook post on Friday directed at the country's president, 25-year-old Elie El-Khoury listed a series of complaints. "The people, your excellency, pay: The highest telephone and internet bills in the world and get the worst service," he wrote. "Unfortunately, your excellency, you are not up to our expectations because you

turned the country into a family home," he said, referring to members of the Aoun family who are in government, like his son-in-law Foreign Minister Gebran Bassil.

Following Khoury's post, the cyber crimes bureau called him in for questioning. When his lawyer intervened, they rescinded their request without giving any explanation. "I wrote the post to express my pain and how fed up all young men and women are," he told AFP. "There aren't any jobs or any decent salaries." "I'm 25 and I want to buy a flat, I can't," said the graduate in business administration, who is preparing for a PhD. "I didn't insult anyone in my post," he said.

In recent years, Lebanon has struggled to stave off an economic meltdown while tackling a series of political crises. Aoun was elected president in 2016 after a two-year political vacuum. In May, the country held its first parliamentary elections in nine years - but Prime Minister Saad Hariri has still been unable to form a new government. In less than two years, Beirut's Skeyes Center for Media and Cultural Freedom has recorded at least 35 violations against journalists, intellectuals and activists.

This "intimidation does not come out of nowhere. It has been an increasing pattern over the past two years," Skeyes communication officer Jad Shahrour said. On Friday, as he left his home near Beirut, journalist and activist Mohammad Awad was dragged in by the General Security Agency for questioning. "They didn't tell me if I was being called in over a comment or a specific article I had written," he said. Awad was released after he signed a "promise not to oppose the three presidents" - the president, premier and parliament speaker - "and the heads of religious sects" in Lebanon, he said. — AFP

Global brands cut ties with blogger...

Continued from Page 1

"How can you have a servant at home who keeps their own passport with them?" Qattan said in the video in Arabic, which led online critics to call her a racist who was encouraging modern slavery. "What's worse is they have one day off every week."

Chelsea BEAUTIQUE, which sells eye and brow products in London's upmarket Harvey Nichols store, also took down an online video where Qattan used its products. A spokesman told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that the company never had a direct partnership with Qattan. He referred to a statement on Twitter saying, "We believe that decent working conditions should be provided to everyone and such behavior does not represent our brand's core beliefs". Qattan defended her initial remarks in an Instagram post on Monday, saying "the passport of any expat employee should be in the possession of the employer to protect the employer's interest", adding that "we are all equal humans". — Reuters

Sports

Athletics rally from eight-run deficit to beat Rangers in 10th

Giants edge Mariners 4-3 on ninth-inning error

TEXAS: Khris Davis capped a furious comeback with his fourth homer in the past three days, a three-run shot in the 10th inning that gave the Oakland Athletics an improbable 13-10 victory over the Texas Rangers on Tuesday in Arlington, Texas. The win was Oakland's fourth straight and 25th in its last 32 games. The A's trailed 10-2 in the seventh inning, eventually drawing even on a Stephen Piscotty home run leading off the ninth. Davis' homer in the 10th, his 25th of the season, came after Nick Martini had singled and Jed Lowrie had walked with one out off the Rangers' seventh pitcher, Austin Bibens-Dirkx (2-3). Thanks in large part to Elvis Andrus' first career grand slam in a six-run sixth inning, the Rangers took a 10-2 lead before the A's roared back. Andrus finished with a career-high-tying five RBIs.

Pirates 9, Indians 4

Starling Marte finished 2-for-5 with a home run and three RBIs, and Pittsburgh won its 11th game in a row with a rout at Cleveland. The 11-game winning streak represents Pittsburgh's longest run since Sept. 12-22, 1996. The Pirates have won 13 of 14 games, with their second loss coming a week before the All-Star Game. Marte pushed his hitting streak to 17 games, which is a career high and the longest active streak in the majors. Edwin Encarnacion went 2-for-3 with a solo homer to lead the Indians, who have lost three in a row.

Cardinals 4, Reds 2 (11 innings)

Dexter Fowler smacked a two-run homer to right field in the 11th inning, sending St. Louis to victory at Cincinnati. Fowler's blast capped a game that saw Cardinals rookie left-hander Austin Gomber pitch 6 1/3 no-hit innings before surrendering a 2-0 lead. For the second consecutive night, Reds third baseman Eugenio Suarez tied the game with a late home run. Gomber was making his first major league start. He was recalled from Triple-A Memphis to take the roster spot of rookie right-hander Daniel Ponce-deleón, who pitched seven no-hit innings in his major league debut Monday night.

Phillies 7, Dodgers 4 (16 innings)

Trevor Plouffe hit a walk-off, three-run home run in the 16th inning to lift host Philadelphia past Los Angeles. Plouffe's first homer of the year came off position player Enrique Hernandez, one of 18 total pitchers used by both teams. Nick Williams and Jorge Alfaro also homered for the Phillies, who played their longest game since Aug. 24, 2013, when they lost 12-7 in 18 innings to the Arizona Diamondbacks. Tuesday's contest lasted 5 hours, 55 minutes.

Yankees 4, Rays 0

Masahiro Tanaka pitched a three-hitter as New York blanked Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg, Fla. Tanaka (8-2) turned in his best outing of the season despite returning from a hamstring injury just two weeks ago. He struck out nine, walked one, faced two above the minimum and threw 74 of 105 pitches for strikes. Tanaka's outing helped the Yankees halt a five-game losing streak to the Rays and capped a busy day for New York, which placed embattled catcher Gary Sanchez on the disabled list (groin) before the game

and acquired left-handed reliever Zach Britton from the Baltimore Orioles for three prospects after.

Orioles 7, Red Sox 6

Jonathan Schoop and Tim Beckham each homered and drove in three runs as Baltimore defeated visiting Boston. The Orioles snapped a four-game losing streak with the victory, their first since last week's All-Star break and the trade of shortstop Manny Machado to the Los Angeles Dodgers. JD Martinez hit two of the Red Sox's four home runs, retaking the major league lead at 31 for the season.

Astros 8, Rockies 2 (10 innings)

Tony Kemp hit a tiebreaking single, and George Springer added a two-run homer as Houston rode a six-run 10th inning to victory over Colorado in Denver. Pinch hitter Kyle Tucker followed Kemp's hit with his first career triple, plating Max Stassi and Kemp to extend the Houston lead to 5-2. Springer followed with his 17th home run to left-center field, concluding the scoring off Rockies closer Wade Davis (0-3), who allowed five runs. Colorado, which had won 12 of 15 games, pulled even with a two-run seventh inning against Astros All-Star Gerrit Cole, who struck out nine in 6 2/3 innings.

Brewers 5, Nationals 4 (10 innings)

Tyler Saladino hit a sacrifice fly to score Lorenzo Cain in the bottom of the 10th inning as host Milwaukee edged Washington. Cain was 4-for-5 and Christian Yelich was 3-for-4 with a two-run homer for the Brewers, who defeated the Nationals for the second consecutive night.

Adam Eaton drilled a three-run homer and Ryan Zimmerman was 3-for-4 with an RBI for Washington, which has dropped five of its past seven games. Nationals star Bryce Harper was a late scratch from the starting lineup due to a stomach illness. He struck out as a pinch hitter in the seventh inning.

Diamondbacks 5, Cubs 1

Clay Buchholz, returning from the disabled list after recovering from an oblique injury, pitched 6 2/3 solid innings, leading Arizona to a win at Chicago. In his first game since June 24, Buchholz (3-1) allowed six hits, two walks and one run, striking out five and lowering his ERA to 2.38. Steven Souza Jr. went 3-for-3 with an RBI and a walk for Arizona. Cubs third baseman Kris Bryant did not play due to discomfort in his left shoulder, and he might not play Wednesday, either. Bryant was on the disabled list from June 23 to July 11 due to a similar injury, inflammation of his left shoulder.

Marlins 9, Braves 3

JT Realmuto homered and drove in four runs, and Starlin Castro added a three-run blast to lead host Miami past Atlanta. Realmuto hit his 13th homer of the season, a two-run shot, in the first inning. He added a sacrifice fly in the third and an RBI fielder's choice in the fifth. The Marlins broke the game open with a five-run fifth inning that featured Castro's eighth homer of the season.

White Sox 4, Angels 2

Carlos Rodon took a no-hitter into the sixth



ARLINGTON: Khris Davis #2 of the Oakland Athletics hits a three-run home run in the top of the tenth inning to beat the Texas Rangers at Globe Life Park in Arlington. — AFP

inning, and Jeanmar Gomez pitched out of a bases-loaded jam in the eighth, delivering Chicago a victory over Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. Rodon carried a 4-0 lead into the bottom of the eighth. Ian Kinsler doubled leading off and Kole Calhoun walked with two outs, prompting the White Sox to call upon Juan Minaya from the bullpen. Minaya faced three batters and couldn't get any of them out. The Angels broke the shutout on a double by David Fletcher, and after Simmons was hit by a pitch, Los Angeles pulled within 4-2 when Mike Trout drew a bases-loaded walk. Gomez then came on to get Justin Upton to pop out with the bases still loaded to retain the two-run lead.

Giants 4, Mariners 3

San Francisco scored an unearned run in the ninth inning off closer Edwin Diaz, the major league saves leader, to defeat host Seattle. With one out, Steven Duggar grounded a single to right field. Pinch hitter Alen Hanson then grounded out to Diaz (0-3), with Duggar advancing to second. Pinch hitter Pablo Sandoval hit a slow roller to second baseman Dee Gordon, who tried to field the ball and flip it to first baseman Ryon Healy. But the ball got past Healy, allowing Duggar to score from second. Left-hander Tony Watson (3-3) got the victory, and Will Smith pitched the ninth for his fourth save.

Twins 5, Blue Jays 0

Jose Berrios struck out nine in seven innings, Eduardo Escobar hit a three-run homer, and visiting

Minnesota defeated Toronto. The Twins also took advantage of a dropped fly ball to score twice in the sixth. Berrios (10-7) held the Blue Jays to four hits and one walk in winning for the second time in his last three starts. Toronto's Lourdes Gurriel Jr had two singles for his seventh straight multi-hit game.

Mets 6, Padres 3

Zack Wheeler continued a strong July audition as a potential trade chip for New York by tossing seven solid innings to earn the win over visiting San Diego. By winning the middle game of the three-game series after a Monday loss, the Mets gave themselves a chance to snap their series victory drought at 17 - one shy of the team record, set in 1982 - in the finale. The Padres have lost eight of their past 10 games. Wheeler (4-6) allowed two runs on four hits and one walk while striking out three. The 28-year-old retired the final 12 batters he faced following Wil Myers' two-run single in the third inning.

Royals 5, Tigers 4

Burch Smith won for the first time in nearly five years, and Kansas City finally solved Jordan Zimmermann to edge visiting Detroit. Smith (1-1) tossed a season-high 6 1/3 innings and gave up two runs on one hit while striking out six. His only other career victory came on Sept. 15, 2013, against Atlanta while pitching for San Diego. Zimmermann (4-2) came in with a 4-0 record and 1.48 ERA in seven career outings against Kansas City. He allowed four runs on seven hits in five innings. — Reuters

'INFINITI Ultimate' test drive: Chance to drive real F1 car

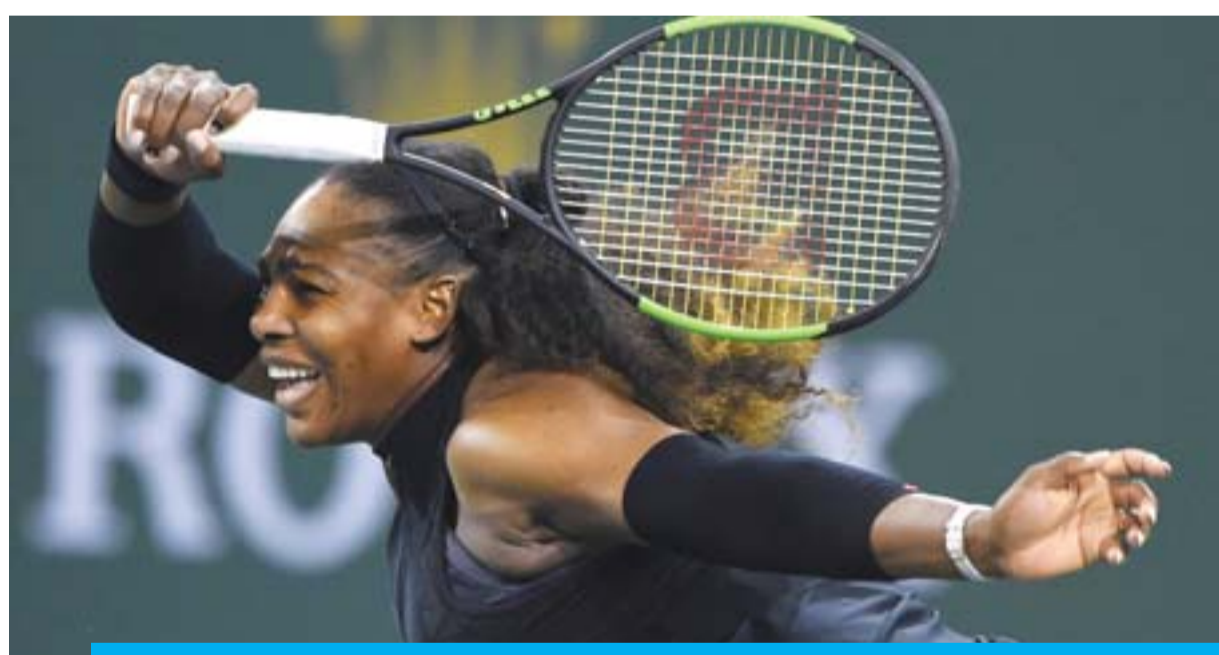
DUBAI: This September will see four lucky INFINITI prize-winners realize a lifelong dream, when they get the chance to test drive a real Renault Sport Formula One team car. As the official technical partner to the Renault Sport Formula One team, INFINITI will put four skilled UAE drivers behind the wheel of a real F1 race car at the Paul Ricard circuit, host to the 2018 Formula One (tm) French Grand Prix, as part of its global Ultimate Test Drive campaign.

The Ultimate Test Drive is open to all new UAE customers who confirm, with deposits, their order of the all-new INFINITI QX50 between the 19th of July and the 19th of August. The winners - two customers of Dubai dealerships and two of Abu Dhabi ones - will be selected on the 20th of August. During the unique experience - taking place from 3rd through the 5th of September - participants will receive one-on-one expert driving tuition from the Renault Sport Formula One Team. They will be prepared, both physically and mentally, in various race vehicles before they are

cleared for the breathtaking experience - to get behind the wheel of an F1 car.

"There is nothing quite like the thrill of driving an actual Formula One car," said Markus Leithe, Managing Director Middle East at INFINITI Motor Company. "As such, we are very excited to offer our new INFINITI QX50 customers the opportunity to get closer to the racing action than ever before." The all new INFINITI QX50 was unveiled in the region earlier this month, and it fully embodies INFINITI's unique premium character. With world-first technologies, stand-out design and the highly-innovative VC-Turbo engine, this car is one of the most exciting vehicles we've unveiled in the UAE in the past year. I encourage all INFINITI fans to make an early reservation for their QX50 and try their luck at winning the thrill of a lifetime."

The Ultimate Test Drive prize includes flights, local accommodation, exclusive F1 driving sessions, a passenger ride in an official Renault Sport Formula One Car, as well as a debrief and data analysis with the Renault Sport Formula One Team engineers. To qualify for the experience, the guests must meet the following requirements: (1) Hold a full, valid and clean driving license for at least three years. (2) Height between 5ft 2ins and 6ft 3ins / 1.75m and 1.92m. (3) Maximum weight 15 stone / 95 kilograms. (4) Maximum shoe size Euro 45 / US 12. (5) No pre-existing medical conditions. (6) Strong understanding of the English language.



Serena Williams

Serena Williams says she is 'victim of discrimination'

NEW YORK: Serena Williams has accused anti-doping authorities of "discrimination" because of the frequency with which she has been selected for random drug tests. The 23-time Grand Slam winner had previously described her treatment by the US Anti-Doping Agency (USADA) as shocking and raised questions about the number of times she had been tested this year. Williams expressed her frustration again on Tuesday after a visit from doping officials. "...and it's that time of the day to get "randomly" drug tested and only test Serena," the 36-year-old wrote on Twitter. "Out of all the players it's been proven I'm the one getting tested the most. Discrimination? I think so. At least I'll be keeping the sport clean." A report published by website Deadspin in June revealed Williams had already been tested on five occasions in 2018 while other American players had been tested once or not at all. Williams, who gave birth to daughter Olympia 10 months ago, is working her way back on tour and her remarkable run to the Wimbledon final ensured she returned to the world's top 30 in the

WTA rankings this month.

Youzhny's career

In another development, veteran Russian tennis star Mikhail Youzhny said on Tuesday that he would retire from the ATP Tour following the St. Petersburg Open tournament in mid-September. The 36-year-old from Moscow made the announcement after winning his first round match at the Atlanta Open 6-2, 6-0 over American Emil Reinberg. "The time is over," the former world No 8 said. The 10-time ATP singles title winner said he is looking forward to competing in a final grand slam at the US Open late next month, then wrap things up at the St. Petersburg Open which begins September 17. "I was so nervous this evening because I can announce I finish my tennis career after US Open and one more tournament. I will play my club tournament and this will be my last tournament." Youzhny, who is ranked 105th in the world, still has some work to do at the Atlanta Open. He advances to the second round for a clash with German seventh seed Mischa Zverev with the winner likely meeting top seed John Isner in the quarter-finals. Youzhny crushed Reinberg in just 73 minutes, winning a perfect 17 of 17 points on his first serve and breaking the American's serve five times. Youzhny competed in several Olympics and also won nine doubles titles. His best result in a grand slam was reaching the semi-finals of the US Open twice in 2010 and 2006 where he upset second seeded Rafael Nadal in the quarter-finals. — Agencies

Sports

Liverpool spent big after we raised the bar: Man City boss

Klopp hands Sturridge Liverpool lifeline

NEW YORK: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said he is unsurprised that Liverpool have spent heavily in the transfer window after his side raised the bar in the Premier League last season. Jurgen Klopp's Liverpool have used the funds raised from selling Philippe Coutinho to Barcelona in January to launch a spending spree that included paying a world record fee for a goalkeeper to sign Brazil's Alisson last week. The have also added Naby Keita and Fabinho to the midfield and boosted their attacking options with the signing of Swiss winger Xherdan Shaqiri.

Guardiola, who has also spent vast sums on his team since joining City in 2016 and won the league last season with a record 100 points, did not criticize Klopp's approach ahead of a friendly between the two clubs in New York. "Every club, do what they believe, and I understand it," he told a news conference on Tuesday. "When Liverpool believe they need to spend on these players, it's because they believe it's for the best for them... Last season we increased the levels of the Premier League - 100 points. The level is here, now we try to take the level, every team tries to do better and better."

City's record-breaking points tally was 19 more than second-placed Manchester United and 25 more than Liverpool, who finished fourth. City's rivals have strengthened their squads in the close season, but Guardiola is satisfied with his group of players after signing forward Riyad Mahrez from Leicester City for a club-record fee reported to be 60 million pounds (\$79 million). "We are going to decide but at this moment, we are good enough," the Spaniard added. "We have players in each position. We

will see in the last days whether we will sign one player or wait." Guardiola's side will kick off their league campaign against Arsenal on Aug 12.

A 'decisive player'

Klopp says Daniel Sturridge can be a "decisive player" for Liverpool after impressive displays from the injury-plagued striker in pre-season matches. Sturridge, 28, went to West Brom on loan in January but was injured early on and managed just six appearances. With 12 months left on his contract it appeared Sturridge's Anfield career was over but he has looked sharp in his five friendly games and Klopp, who became frustrated by the player's unavailability last season, is prepared to hand him a lifeline. "We're not in doubt-and nobody was ever in doubt-about his quality," the Liverpool manager told liverpoolfc.com. "In this moment he looks really good to be honest. That's cool for him and cool for us. (It's) a very important moment for him. I am in talks with him, what he feels."

"I don't want to make him the most physically strong player in the squad or whatever. The most physically strong player in the squad cannot play football like Daniel Sturridge and he has no possibility to be that, to be the marathon man of the team, but he can be a very decisive player." Sturridge could be in line to start the Premier League campaign at home to West Ham on August 12, with Roberto Firmino and new goalkeeper and fellow Brazil international Alisson now rejoining the squad at next week's training camp in France. Liverpool are currently taking part in the International Champions Cup in the United States. — Agencies



CHARLOTTE: Liverpool's Daniel Sturridge (right) vies for the ball with Borussia Dortmund's Sergio Gomez during the 2018 International Champions Cup at Bank of America Stadium in Charlotte, North Carolina. — AFP

For Masterful Bubba, golf's a family affair

WASHINGTON: Two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson hasn't let golf stand in the way of life's simple joys, his roles as husband and father outweighing that of being a major winner. The fact that he failed to make the cut at last week's British Open is unlikely to trouble the 39-year-old American left-hander, a three-time US PGA winner this year. His focus is less on golfing success than on his family, whom he likes to drive to tournaments in his motor home so wife Angie, son Caleb and daughter Dakota can join him on the journey. "Having a team that loves me, getting an RV (recreational vehicle), camper, whatever you call it. So our kids now have bunk beds, we love it," Watson said.

Gerry Lester Watson Jr. grew up in the rural south in Florida's western panhandle and still lives in the area near Pensacola, where he owns an ice cream shop, a car dealership and a piece of baseball's minor-league Pensacola Blue Wahoos. Watson's high-profile purchases include the former Isleworth mansion of Tiger Woods and the "General Lee" car from "The Dukes of Hazzard" television show for \$110,000 in 2012. Watson won the 2012 and 2014 Masters, his first major title coming in a playoff win over South Africa's Louis Oosthuizen. Two years later, Watson won the green jacket by three strokes from playing partner Jordan Spieth and Jonas Blixt of Sweden. His career has had its downturns. He struggled this year with a health issue he has not revealed, but victory at Riviera in February showed his return to form and a March WGC Match-Play triumph proved endurance was not an issue. "It was a slow start to the year, but I knew I was headed in the right direction," Watson said. "Getting trophies is always a pleasure. The goal was always to get the next trophy. So trying to move forward and looking forward to what's ahead, and hopefully get to the Ryder Cup and play well there."

Family first

Watson is winless in three Ryder Cup appearances ahead of this year's event in France in September, going 3-8 overall in matches for US teams in 2010, 2012 and 2014. "I've never won a Ryder Cup, so making the Ryder Cup team and trying to win a Ryder Cup as a player would be another tournament victory to me, would be a major championship to me just because I've never done it," Watson said. "You'd rather do it at home, but it would be fun anywhere you can get a victory." No US team has won a Ryder Cup in Europe since 1993.

Asked recently where he saw himself in six months, just after the Ryder Cup concludes, Watson put his family first. "I see myself being an improved father, teaching my kids things now that they're starting school. My little man is reading bedtime stories to us," Watson said. "The golf part, it doesn't matter. He could care less if I win or lose. He would rather me not play so I could be home playing toys with him." Watson has 12 career US PGA titles, the most recent coming last month when he took his third Travelers Championship crown. "My whole dream was to get 10 wins. I didn't think it was possible to get 10 wins," Watson said. "Then I got 10 wins and now I've got two more."

Watson shared eighth at the Rio Olympics and wouldn't mind another medal chance at Tokyo in 2020. "It was the best experience of my life to watch all the other events, and then the golf tournament got in the way," Watson said. "I'd love to do it again." Family life might end Watson's career long before his skills fade. "My motivation is to quit before I keep winning because I want to be there for my family," Watson said. "My son asked me in the bunk bed, 'Dad, when are you going to retire?' because he wants to spend more time with me." — AFP

Daly warms up for the Senior British Open in bare feet

CRAIL: John Daly has warmed up for this week's Senior British Open at St Andrews by playing barefoot on the nearby Balmorie Links at Crail on Scotland's east coast. The double major-winner recently underwent surgery on his injured right knee, but despite missing both the US Senior Open and last week's British Open at Carnoustie, Daly has declared himself fit to take his place when the Senior Open gets underway at the 'home of golf' today.

Daly, 52, had bone marrow removed from his right hip and inserted in his knee after he injured himself jumping away from an out-of-control car that struck his motorhome during US Masters week at Augusta in April. "The knee is so much better and I am going to play this week," the American told AFP in an exclusive interview on Tuesday. "My doctor did a great job taking bone marrow from my right hip. He put me to sleep and injected the bone marrow into my knee. I'm going to continue wearing the stretch support on my knee but I feel I should be fine for four rounds."

'Driving it well'

Daly added: "The good thing is St Andrews is not a tough walking course, unlike some of the other courses where they play The Open, so that should help. I played a full 18 holes at Crail on Monday and it felt

Erdogan accused of using Ozil saga to push Euro bid

BERLIN: German politicians yesterday accused Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of using Mesut Ozil's controversial retirement from international football to boost Turkey's bid to host Euro 2024 - and weaken Germany's. On Sunday, Ozil, 29, dropped a bombshell by announcing he will not play for Germany again and accused Reinhard Grindel, the president of the German FA (DFB), of racism. On Monday, Erdogan backed Ozil's stance, but senior voices in Berlin accused the Turkish leader of trying to undermine Germany's bid to host the Euro 2024 finals.

Erdogan has waded into the debate over Ozil's decision "precisely when the DFB needs the necessary trust of the other UEFA member federations", according to Wolfgang Bosbach, a former member of parliament in Angela Merkel's CDU party. "Is it really a coincidence?" Germany and Turkey are the only nations bidding to host the European championships in six years' time with a decision expected on September 27 by UEFA. Paul Ziemiak, a senior figure in Germany's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party, denounced Turkish interference in German affairs. "No matter how one stands over the photo of Ozil and Ilkay Gundogan and the current debate: President Erdogan should stop interfering in Germany," he told Bild.

'Two hearts'

Both Arsenal star Ozil and Manchester City midfielder Gundogan found themselves at the centre of a political storm in May when they met Erdogan in London, especially as Gundogan presented him with a City football shirt signed "to my president". The footballers' loyalty to Germany came into question and they were booed by German fans in pre-World Cup friendlies. The saga overshadowed Germany's disastrous World Cup campaign in Russia when the former holders exited after the group stage.

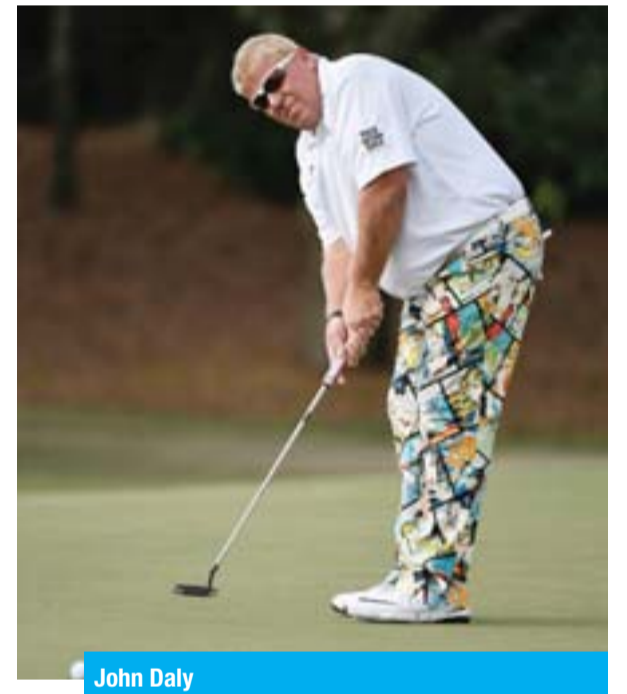
Gundogan insists the meeting with Erdogan in May was not politically motivated, but Ozil only broke his

really good. I was driving it well and it was good to get the feel of playing links golf as Crail was a great warm-up for the week." Daly arrived at Crail without his golf clubs and shoes, both delayed in transit from the United States, so he used the clubs of his manager Simon Hurd, a former member of the European Tour.

However, it didn't deter the 1991 USPGA and 1995 British Open champion, with Daly managing four birdies in the 10 holes he played bare feet at the 232-year-old Crail course. Daly's fiancée Anna arrived at the club at 4:45pm local time (1545 GMT) with his clubs and shoes. She was rushed out to the 11th tee by David Snodgrass, the assistant professional at Crail, and Daly was able to complete his round properly shod and playing with his own clubs. Daly withdrew after two rounds of the Senior Players Championship in Illinois earlier this month and he was particularly saddened by his absence from Carnoustie.

"I really missed not playing last week and while I've never played Carnoustie well, I did miss playing The Open," said Daly. "I've only missed three Open Championships since 1992, so that's what made it tough having to sit out the week." "And with the conditions the way they were, and with the ball running so far on those fairways, I do feel like I could have done well," explained Daly, a renowned long-hitter, of a tournament where Francesco Molinari became the first Italian major winner. Daly, who beat Molinari's compatriot Costantino Rocca in a play-off to win the 1995 Open at St Andrews, added: "It's why I'm looking forward so much to this week. I've played in five Open Championships at St Andrews and to be going back this week for the Senior Open is pretty special."

Meanwhile Daly was delighted by the way Molinari, who shot a two-under par 69 on Sunday, despite the



John Daly

pressure of playing the final round alongside Tiger Woods, won at Carnoustie. "I just thought it was an awesome victory and he's going to be a great Open champion," he said. "I've met him a few times and while he's a very quietly-spoken person he's been making a hell of a noise of late having been on a roll for some seven weeks now. Winning (the European PGA) at Wentworth was pretty good but the manner he won the (US PGA) Quicken Loans was very impressive." — AFP

Former NFL Network employee sues over sexual harassment

LOS ANGELES: Former NFL stars Eric Davis and Michael Irvin were accused of sexual harassment in a lawsuit filed by a former NFL Network makeup artist on Tuesday in Los Angeles Superior Court. Erin McParland is suing NFL Enterprises (the league offshoot that operates NFL Network), Davis and other potential defendants, according to Pro Football Talk. McParland maintains she was "subjected to ongoing and continuing sexual harassment by current and former on-air talent and other employees," according to the suit.

The suit also alleges, "On the set of Defendant NFL's television show 'GameDay,' former on-air talent on NFL Network, Michael Irvin, made inappropriate gestures and comments to Plaintiff. Irvin once grabbed Plaintiff's waist against Plaintiff's wishes while Plaintiff was 'powdering (Irvin) on set during a commercial break' in front of other staff members and network personnel, '(m)ortifying' Plaintiff. Plaintiff went out of her way to avoid Irvin during this exchange and reminded Irvin to 'not touch' Plaintiff every time Plaintiff was forced by Defendant to interact with Irvin." One of McParland's lawyers, Matt McNicholas, told USA Today Sports that his client suffered through months of sexual harassment before finally going to human resources. "She didn't want to rock the boat," McNicholas said. "There was an overall environment-which I guess isn't hard to imagine when you're dealing with former high-octane athletes-that was what you might see in a locker room or a fraternity."

The allegations follow a lawsuit filed in December by another former NFL Network makeup artist, Jami Cantor. She accused numerous former co-workers of sexual harassment, and NFL Network suspended Marshall Faulk, Ike Taylor and Heath Evans as a result. Donovan McNabb and Davis were suspended by their then-employer, ESPN, after Cantor accused them of harassing her while they were at NFL Network. While McParland's suit calls Irvin a former NFL Network employee, he was still listed as part of the network's talent as of Tuesday, according to USA Today Sports.—Reuters



SINGAPORE: Arsenal player Mesut Ozil (center) attends training session with team mates during their pre-season tour for the International Champions Cup match in Singapore yesterday. —AFP

two months of silence on Sunday by turning his back on his international career after 92 appearances, 23 goals and 40 assists. In a three-part statement posted on Twitter and Instagram, Ozil lamented a lack of support from DFB chief Grindel, saying: "I have two hearts, one German and one Turkish." "In the eyes of Grindel and his supporters, I am German when we win, but I am an immigrant when we lose." The DFB refuted the allegations of racism, but Erdogan praised Ozil, who was born in Gelsenkirchen to Turkish parents.

"His attitude in the statement is completely patriotic, it is absolutely praiseworthy behavior," said the Turkish leader. Meanwhile, the pressure is growing on Grindel, who is currently on holiday, to resign over the Ozil fiasco. "Grindel, in his holiday resort, should look at himself and self-critically question whether he still has the necessary authority for the presidential office-or actually represents a threat to the Euro (2024) application," said Bild, Germany's biggest selling newspaper, in a commentary piece. "Even if he considers it unfair - the DFB would support a resignation. And yet it would be a dignified resignation." — AFP

Sports

Barcelona snatch Malcom from under AS Roma's nose

Barca outbid Roma for Bordeaux forward; Italian club eye legal options

MADRID: Barcelona have swooped to sign Brazilian forward Malcom on a five-year deal from Girondins Bordeaux for an initial 41 million euros (\$47.89 million) in a surprise move after AS Roma had struck a deal with the French club. The 21-year-old was set to join the Italians this week but media reports in Spain and Italy said Spanish champions Barca's 11th hour offer had changed Malcom's mind and he has become their third signing of the transfer window. "This is a unique feeling, a unique feeling," he said at Barca's Nou Camp offices on Tuesday. "I'm delighted. It's a dream I've had since childhood. I'm part of the best club in the world and I hope to give the fans a lot of joy."

In an interview on Roma's website <http://www.asroma.com/en/news/2018/7/monchi-explains-how-malcom-saga-unfolded>, Sporting Director Monchi explained that after the Serie A club had reached an initial agreement with Bordeaux on Monday Barcelona entered the bidding, leading Roma to submit an improved offer for the player. Bordeaux then met with Malcom's representatives on Tuesday to discuss the transfer which is when Roma pulled out, with the club looking to see if they have a case for legal action. "After that meeting, I was surprised to be told that the agents and Bordeaux wanted another improved offer, as Barcelona were still pushing for a

deal," Monchi said.

"I told them enough, because we did not want to enter an auction: we could not continue like that, and yesterday we had only raised our offer because of the willingness and desire of our president. So that was how everything ended. "Now, within the club, we are looking at our options and seeing if we have a legal case. It is true that nothing was signed, but there are many messages with the agents and their president that are at least worth being assessed." Media reports said Malcom's change of destination came after Barca's move for fellow Brazilian forward Willian broke down when they were unable to agree a transfer fee with Chelsea, leading them to turn to Bordeaux's fleet-footed wide forward.

"The Brazilian will undergo a medical and then directly join the FC Barcelona US Tour," read a statement from the Spanish champions, whose deal for the player includes an extra one million euros in variables. Malcom joined Bordeaux from Brazilian side Corinthians in January 2016 and scored 23 goals in 96 games for the club. He is Barca's second Brazilian signing of the transfer window after midfielder Arthur, 21, joined from Gremio. Barcelona also signed 23-year-old French defender Clement Lenglet from Sevilla earlier this month.—Reuters



BARCELONA: Barcelona's new Brazilian forward Malcom gives thumbs up at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. Spanish champions Barcelona announced they have signed Brazilian winger Malcom from French side Bordeaux on a five-year deal for 41 million euros.—AFP

Bridge too far? Cech fights for Arsenal's spot

SINGAPORE: Petr Cech said yesterday he was prepared to fight for his place as Arsenal's first-choice goalkeeper and denied any contact with Chelsea over a return to Stamford Bridge. The 36-year-old veteran's spot has come into question after a patchy season last year, and following new manager Unai Emery's signing of Bernd Leno from Bayer Leverkusen.

But Cech, who lost his position at Chelsea to Thibaut Courtois, said it was not the first time he had faced competition for the number one jersey. "It happened many times during my career so that's the way it goes," said the Czech, ahead of today's pre-season friendly against Atletico Madrid in Singapore. "The only thing you can do is work hard and force your way through to the starting line-up... especially in football, there is no sentiment about it—you just do your job and you see."

British media have linked Cech with a fresh stint at Chelsea, whose Belgian 'keeper Courtois—the Golden Gloves winner at the World Cup in Russia—is reportedly a target for Real Madrid. But Cech, whose Arsenal contract runs for another year, said there had been no contact from Chelsea over a possible move. "I have a contract with Arsenal. I am concentrating on this season, on the competition between the goalkeepers because we have plenty of options," he said. "I'm doing my best to show to the manager that I can be in the starting line-up when the season starts. That's my aim and as for the speculation, I don't really follow it."—AFP



Petr Cech

Spanish football boss dismisses allegations

LAS ROZAS DE MADRID: Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales dismissed allegations that he tried to finance work on his house through the union of players he chaired as "falsehoods". Radio Cadena SER, which first reported the story, said Monday that 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 (\$140,000) to an architect 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.

"I don't discuss falsehoods," Rubiales told reporters when asked about the report on the sidelines of a meeting of the RFEF in Las Rozas de Madrid on the outskirts of the Spanish capital attended by FIFA president Gianni Infantino and UEFA head Aleksander Ceferin. "I am truly... satisfied with the behaviour which I have had throughout my life," added Rubiales as he stood flanked by Infantino who asked reporters to concentrate on "football".

"I have been suffering falsehoods for a while but my path is that of work and the truth and the rest honestly does not worry me, they are issues which are in the courts." The AFE said Monday in a statement that it had "not financed any personal work for Luis Rubiales".



LAS ROZAS: Spanish Football Federation (RFEF) president Luis Rubiales (center) poses with FIFA president Gianni Infantino (right) and UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin on the sidelines of the RFEF general assembly at its headquarters in Las Rozas, northwest of Madrid, on July 24, 2018.—AFP

Daily newspaper El Mundo reported Tuesday that the architect who carried out the work for Rubiales had also filed a complaint over his debt to her, and because he allegedly hit her in a taxi. Rubiales, 40, took over at

the RFEF from Angel Maria Villar, who was implicated in a corruption case, and played a key part in the sacking of Spain coach Julen Lopetegui on the eve of the World Cup last month.—AFP

Spain teams at the 2010 World Cup and the 2012 European Championship but earned the most recent of his 41 caps for the nation in a friendly in November 2016. Mata was excluded from Spain's squad for this year's World Cup but is hopeful of turning his fortunes around under former Barcelona boss Enrique.

"I was disappointed not to go (to the World Cup)," Mata told ESPN. "But then after that, I was hoping for them to win... "Now, things have changed. We have a new manager again, Luis Enrique... I'm again excited about the possibility of coming back. I obviously want to come back and try to play as many games as I can with the national team." Mata

believes the emergence of a new generation along with the presence of experienced players will propel Spain to new heights in the future.

"I'm really excited about it and I think the future, it can be still bright for Spain, because we have young players coming that, as I said, they have the level to compete," he added. "We have some senior players that we have been there for some years and we have the experience so I think it's a good mix and hopefully it can be a good future for Spanish football." Mata is one of few senior United players currently participating in the club's pre-season tour of the United States, where manager Jose Mourinho's team will face AC Milan in the International Champions Cup today.—Reuters

Briefs

Fabri signs for Fulham

LONDON: Fulham have signed Spanish goalkeeper Fabri from Turkish club Besiktas for an undisclosed fee on a three-year deal, the English Premier League club said Tuesday. London side Fulham also hold an option to keep the 30-year-old at Craven Cottage for an additional 12 months. "I'm delighted to be at an historic club like Fulham, the oldest club in London. I'm very happy to have the opportunity to be in the Premier League with Fulham," Fabri told the club's website. "Everything is very positive for me and I want to take the opportunity to make the most of this goal of being in the Premier League," he added. Fabri started his career with Deportivo La Coruna, where he worked with Jose Sambade Carreira, now Fulham's goalkeeping coach, and played for several other Spanish clubs in Real Valladolid, Recreativo de Huelva, and Real Betis.—AFP

No panic from Pochettino

LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's lack of activity in the transfer window is no cause for concern and the club will not be rushed into spending for the sake of it, manager Mauricio Pochettino has said. While Tottenham have tied down several key players to long-term contracts they are one of only two Premier League teams, alongside Burnley, who have yet to add to their squads. "We're working hard trying to improve the squad," Pochettino told reporters. "The market has only started to move very quickly after the World Cup. Be sure that we are going to do some movement but like always, we're working hard - no rash decisions.—Reuters

Boateng poised for PSG

BERLIN: Bayern Munich centre-back Jerome Boateng could join Paris Saint-Germain providing the price is right, the German giants' chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge suggested yesterday. "There is no direct contact between the clubs at the moment, but there is contact between the agents. Jerome has two," Rummenigge said in Philadelphia on Bayern's tour of the USA. "Now, we have to wait and see if we can find a base at the end of the day to get together and need to find a compensation that is acceptable to both sides," Rummenigge added. PSG's German coach Thomas Tuchel reportedly met with Boateng before the World Cup in May, according to magazine Sport Bild. However, Bayern chairman Uli Hoeness said no formal approach has yet been made.—AFP

Martins joins Atletico Madrid

MADRID: Portugal winger Gelson Martins signed for Atletico Madrid yesterday as a free agent on a six-year deal after leaving troubled Portuguese side Sporting. "We have been watching him over the last year and we saw him in the Europa League," Atletico manager Diego Simeone told reporters in Singapore yesterday. "He will bring us added strength on the right hand side of the attack and can even play in an attacking trio." Martins rescinded his contract with Sporting last month, one of nine players to quit the Lisbon club after an attack in May on a training camp by fans in which Dutch forward Bas Dost was injured and the dressing room was vandalized. The incidents came at the end of a tumultuous campaign for Sporting who finished third in the Primeira Liga and reached the Europa League quarter-finals where they lost 2-1 on aggregate to eventual winners Atletico.—Reuters

Smith continues return

SYDNEY: Former Australia captain Steve Smith will continue his return to competitive cricket in the Caribbean Premier League (CPL) next month after signing up to replace Shakib Al Hasan in the Twenty20 league. The 29-year-old batsman has already played in the Global T20 Canada League since being handed a 12-month ban from international and state cricket for his part in the ball-tampering scandal that rocked the game earlier this year. Still the number one ranked test batsman in the world, Smith replaces Shakib in the Barbados Tridents side after the Bangladeshi all-rounder became "unavailable" for the tournament, organizers said.—Reuters

Man United's Mata keen to end Spain exile

MANCHESTER: Manchester United midfielder Juan Mata is optimistic of reviving his international career with Spain following the appointment of Luis Enrique as the national team's new manager earlier this month. The 30-year-old was part of the victorious

25 Athletics rally from eight-run deficit to beat Rangers in 10th



25 Serena Williams says she is 'victim of discrimination'



27 Barcelona snatch Malcom from under AS Roma's nose



Quintana wins Tour's 17th stage

Thomas extends Tour de France lead



HAUTES-PYRENEES: Colombia's Nairo Quintana rides during a one-man breakaway in the Portet pass of the 17th stage of the 105th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, between Bagnères-de-Luchon and Saint-Lary-Soulan Col du Portet yesterday. —AFP

SAINT-LARY-SOULAN: Colombian Nairo Quintana won the 17th stage of the Tour de France, a 65-km mountain trek from Bagnères-de-Luchon as Geraint Thomas took a big step towards overall victory yesterday. Quintana attacked at the foot of the last climb up to the Col du Portet to beat Ireland's Dan Martin by 28 seconds. Meanwhile, Britain's Thomas moved a step closer to winning the Tour de France after pushing Sky teammate Chris Froome down the standings on a 17th stage won by Quintana yesterday. Thomas held an overnight lead of 1min 39sec on compatriot Froome, but took it to 2:31 after the four-time champion crossed the finish 1:36 behind Quintana and nearly a minute off Thomas.

Ireland's Dan Martin (UAE) finished second on the stage at 28secs behind Quintana, with Thomas third at 47 and

Slovenian Primoz Roglic (Lotto-Jumbo) in fourth at 52. Froome's failure to stay with Thomas in the final few kilometres of the 16 km climb to the finish of the Col du Portet amid a series of attacks by rivals means the Kenyan-born Briton is in danger of finishing off the podium.

'Lucky escape'

Dutch rival Tom Dumoulin, the 2017 Giro d'Italia champion, finished behind Thomas but well ahead of Froome to move up to second place. Welshman Thomas will start today's 18th stage, a mainly flat 171 km ride from Trie-sur-Blaise to Pau with a 1:59 lead on Sunweb team leader Dumoulin, with Froome in third. Friday's stage is the final day in the mountains, but has a downhill finish in Laruns. The final podium placings will be decided by the penultimate-stage time

trial, over 31 km, on Saturday.

Belgian Philippe Gilbert's Tour de France campaign is in the balance after he was taken to hospital for further scans following a spectacular crash into a ravine on stage 16. Quick-Step veteran Gilbert was 57.2 km from the finish and in the lead of the 218km-long 16th stage on Tuesday when he negotiated a bend badly and flew headfirst over a wall. Although he was helped back onto his bike to finish the stage, won by French teammate Julian Alaphilippe, Gilbert emerged from the X-ray truck suffering from his endeavors.

"He has been taken to hospital in Toulouse for further scans," a Quick-Step spokesman told AFP. The race medical report said the former world champion had suffered "damage to his left knee". Quick-Step bosses panicked when Gilbert went over the wall—it was on the

same descent, albeit several kilometers below, that Italian Fabio Casartelli died in a horrible crash in 1995.

Negotiating a left-hand bend at speed, Gilbert failed to brake in time, skidded and was sent flying head first over a parapet to land on rocks several meters below. Television pictures showed officials helping him to climb back out and onto the road, where he jumped gingerly back on his bike to finish the race. "I'm happy to be here," Gilbert said. "We played it well. I attacked to put a little bit of pressure on our group, I wanted to help Julian. "Tactically, we did well, but I crashed and it was all my fault. I simply took the wrong line. "I fell onto rocks and, when I landed, I thought I'd been broken apart. I've had a lucky escape." The race ends Sunday on the Champs Elysees in Paris.—Agencies

UAE, Palestine added to Asian Games football

KUALA LUMPUR: The United Arab Emirates and Palestine were yesterday officially added to the football tournament at the Asian Games after they were accidentally omitted from the original draw. The Asian Football Confederation (AFC) conducted a limited re-draw at their headquarters in Kuala Lumpur to include the two sides alongside 24 others taking part in football at the Games, which begin next month. AFC secretary-general Windsor John said Games organizers failed to pass the names of UAE and Palestine to his body for the initial draw, even though both teams had attempted to register.

John said he was not sure what caused the problem, adding "it could be some computer glitch, it could be some communication breakdown". He stressed the AFC was not running the competition, and was conducting the draw on behalf of the Olympic Council of Asia and the Indonesian organizing committee. Eris Herryanto, secretary-general of the Indonesian committee, told AFP the two sides had not properly followed the registration procedures. "They did something wrong. For example, if they registered one person more than they should have had, that won't go into the system," he said.

Palestine was placed in Group A with Indonesia, Hong Kong, Laos and Taiwan. The UAE was placed in Group E with South Korea, Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia and Bahrain. It was the latest problem to hit the run-up to the Games, which are being held in Palembang and the capital Jakarta from August 18-September 2. At the weekend irate Indonesian football fans ripped plastic seats from the stands and hurled them onto a pitch at a stadium in Palembang scheduled to host matches at the Games. Indonesia has been scrambling to prepare venues, finish building work, widen roads and ease traffic congestion. About 11,000 athletes and 5,000 officials from 45 Asian countries will take part in the world's biggest multi-sports event after the Olympics.—AFP

Kuwait Football Association holds draws for new season

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association (KFA) held draws for competitions of 2018-19 season, which includes two-level VIVA league, and Cups of His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince. The season would start with a clash between Kuwait SC (last season's league champion) and Qadsia SC, His Highness the Crown Prince Cup winner on August 18. VIVA league would start on August 26 - featuring 15 teams divided into premier league and regular league.

The premier league includes 10 teams, each plays two legs. Premier league teams are Qadsia, Arabi,

Kuwait, Tadamon, Al-Jahra, Salmiya, Kazma, Al-Nasr, Fahaheel and Al-Shabab. Regular league teams are Burqan, Yarmouk, Sulaibikhat, Khaitan and Sahel. The 9th and 10th positions in the premier league will be relegated automatically, while first and the second places of the league will be promoted to the premier league. Meanwhile, KFA held the draw for His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Cups, which would begin next April. Fifteen teams will play in the knock-out games - divided into two groups, each chaired by Qadsia SC and Kuwait SC.

