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Opposition lawmaker Adasani suspends grilling, meets Amir

MP Muwaizri proposes amendment to election law

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani met HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah along with the National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem yesterday and announced the suspension of a grilling he was planning to file against the Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh. Adasani said after the meeting that the government has decided to take the measures required which was supposed to have been filed yesterday against Minister Al-Sabeeh.

The lawmaker however said he was still awaiting for the implementation of the government's promises regarding the issues in the suspended grilling. Adasani thanked the Amir and spoke about the external developments taking place around Kuwait. Speaker Al-Ghanem said that the grilling is a constitutional tool and not an aim as such

- adding that there are many ways to achieve reforms before resorting to filing a grilling.

He said an understanding was achieved between Adasani and Minister Al-Sabeeh over the issues in the grilling in a way to serve public interests. He said that the aim of the grilling will be achieved in the near future. Al-Ghanem said that the Assembly is scheduled to hold two special meetings on June 24 and 25 to be followed by two regular meetings on June 26 and 27.

Meanwhile, opposition MP Shuaib Al-Muwaizri yesterday submitted a draft law stipulating sweeping amendments to the election law by dividing Kuwait into two major constituencies each electing 25 MPs. Muwaizri said that the existing election law does not achieve social justice with regards to the number of voters in each of the five constituencies. He said that the Fifth Constituency has 155,000 voters and the Fourth has 140,000 - which

together have more votes than the remaining three constituencies: the Third (96,000), the First (86,000) while the Second has the least number with 62,000.

Still each of them has an equal number of lawmakers in the Assembly. If approved, a remote possibility, the law will dramatically boost the number of tribal legislators in the National Assembly. They currently occupy about half of the 50 seats. The present election law divides Kuwait into five electoral constituencies, each electing 10 lawmakers. Each voter is allowed to cast only one vote meaning a voter can elect only one candidate.

The law, amended in 2012, has triggered wide scale criticism and street protests. In his draft law, Shuaibi proposes to divide the country into two constituencies: the first comprising the governorates of the capital, Jahra and Farwaniya while the second comprises the governorates of Ahmadi, Mubarak Al-Kabeer and Hawally.

Amir congratulates citizens and expats

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah congratulated all citizens and expatriates on Eid Al-Fitr, said the Amiri Diwan yesterday. The Diwan, in a statement, also congratulated His Highness the Amir, His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister on the advent of the joyous occasion, praying to Allah Almighty to bestow peace and security on the Arab and Muslim nations. — KUNA



US, Mexico and Canada to host 2026 World Cup

MOSCOW: The 2026 World Cup will be held in the United States, Mexico and Canada after FIFA's Congress voted overwhelmingly yesterday to support the joint bid over Morocco, despite reluctance in some countries to choose North America while President Donald Trump was in office and souring US relations with its neighbors. Trump, who has called for a wall to be built on the US southern border with Mexico to stem illegal immigration and just days ago attacked Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau on trade issues, praised the outcome as the result of 'a great deal of hard work' on his Twitter feed.

Under Trump, relations between the

United States, Canada and Mexico have plumbed new lows thanks to a dispute over the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), a \$1.1 trillion trade pact that ties the three countries' economies together. The North Americans pledged their tournament would generate an \$11 billion profit, which would be a financial shot in the arm for soccer's world governing body FIFA which has been rocked by a corruption and bribery scandal in the last three years that ensnared top officials. Morocco, which has now failed in five bids to host the World Cup, said theirs would make \$5 billion.

Although it will be the first World Cup to be hosted by three nations, the vast majority of matches will be held in the United States. As part of the bid, Trump pledged that those travelling to the United States for the tournament would not be subject to stringent visa restrictions.

Continued on Page 24



MOSCOW: FIFA president Gianni Infantino (right) addresses the United 2026 bid (Canada-Mexico-US) officials, following the announcement of the 2026 World Cup host during the 68th FIFA Congress at the Expocentre yesterday. — AFP

Farewell Ramadan

Ramadan Kareem

By Teresa Leshar

Although the hardship of Ramadan is about to end and festivities of Eid are about to begin, there will be sadness in every devout Muslim's heart that Ramadan has passed. Barely having had their last breakfast at sunset, they will immediately start looking forward to the next Ramadan and counting the months and weeks until it comes again.

They will begin to greet one another with the phrase 'Aasakom min awadah' which means, 'May you repeat it.' Some people may tell their head in confusion and wonder why would anyone look forward to a month of daily 16-hour fasts in 45 degree temperatures? What is so special about Ramadan? First of all, Ramadan is an opportunity to express your devotion to Allah. Everything on the earth was created for us, according to many verses in the Quran - (2:29).

Many use their time and the earth's resources to satisfy themselves through acquiring things, entertaining themselves and seeking sensual pleasures. Doing so is not necessarily forbidden but it shouldn't be the goal of one's life. So why were we created? Allah gave us life and He hopes that we will voluntarily give it back to him through worship and submission to His will.

Almost everything we do in life has some sort of return for us, even if it is done purely for Allah's sake. For example, when we give charity, others benefit and we feel their happiness too. But fasting in Ramadan is a chance to show our devotion to our Lord, because nobody benefits from the fast. Nobody even knows if you are fasting, so this expression of faith is purely for Allah.

Another reason many people are sad to bid Ramadan farewell is because the atmosphere of intensified worship and charity will pass, and mundane duties and distractions will creep back into our lives. We will miss Ramadan for the brotherhood and sisterhood that is so apparent as Muslims join together in one great project, which is fasting for a month while striving to accomplish the most good and expressing our gratitude and reliance through frequent prayer and supplication. Everyone will miss this immense opportunity to draw closer to Allah.

I will miss Ramadan and all the lessons it teaches me. I have learned so much about myself and about how my body can adjust to extreme circumstances, and about how dedicated I can be when I am striving to accomplish something important. I will miss the feeling of lightness when my stomach is empty and my head is clear when I am naturally drawn to thoughts of God and His abundant blessings.

I will miss the joy of breaking fast, and the camaraderie of fellow fasters who gathered for the meal. I will miss the extra attention to the Quran, and joining other worshippers in the night to pray. The moments of Ramadan have slipped away quickly, and the opportunity to demonstrate such devotion in solidarity with all Muslims worldwide has passed. Farewell, Ramadan, we will miss you. As we start counting the days until your return, stay in our memories and inspire us to carry on with our worship through fasting, reading Quran and praying late at night. Be with us, Ramadan, throughout the coming year.

Courtesy of the TIES Center, whose mission is to empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

Qatar extends \$500 million aid package to Jordan

AMMAN: Qatar has extended a \$500 million aid package to Jordan that includes investments, project finance and job opportunities for Jordanians, an official source in Amman said yesterday. Two days ago, Qatar's Gulf neighbors Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates - with which it is embroiled in a diplomatic row - and Kuwait pledged \$2.5 billion to help Jordan.

The kingdom's cash-strapped economy has been hit by regional turmoil and IMF-driven austerity measures trig-

gered a wave of protests over price hikes and subsidy cuts this month that brought down the government. Jordan's economy has struggled to grow in the last few years under chronic deficits as private foreign capital and aid flows have slipped.

The Qatari package includes opening 10,000 jobs for Jordanians in the wealthy Gulf state alongside project finance and job-generating investments in the kingdom, the source said. Yesterday's pledge was delivered by Qatar's Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani who met King Abdullah in Amman, the source added. The UAE and Saudi Arabia, together with Bahrain and Egypt, imposed a boycott on Qatar in June 2017, severing diplomatic and transport ties and accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies that and says the pressure is aimed at stripping it of its sovereignty. — Reuters



AMMAN: Jordan's King Abdullah II (right) receives Qatar's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Mohammed Bin Abdulrahman Al Thani in the capital Amman. — AFP

Eid exodus: Asia Muslims on the move to celebrate

JAKARTA: Millions of Asia's Muslims were on the move yesterday as they headed for home towns to celebrate with relatives the Eid Al-Fitr holiday marking the end of the holy fasting month of Ramadan. From Karachi to Kuala Lumpur, highways, airports and train stations were jam-packed in an annual exodus that made Indonesia's usually traffic-clogged capital Jakarta look like a ghost town.

Some 70 percent of its residents - about eight million people-headed for other cities and villages across the vast archipelago, home to the world's biggest

Muslim-majority population. About 32 million Indonesians were estimated to be on the move this week, while some 50 million in Bangladesh were thought to be heading home. "This year some 11.5 million people will leave the capital Dhaka to go back to their villages to celebrate Eid," said Mozammel Hoque Chowdhury, general secretary of the Passengers Welfare Association.

Afghans, meanwhile, were hoping for a peaceful Eid after the Taliban announced their first ceasefire since the 2001 US invasion. The group agreed to stop attacking Afghan security forces for the first three days of the holiday, overlapping with the government's week-long halt to hostilities against the militants. In the capital Kabul, traffic was worse than usual as families defied the threat of suicide attacks ahead of the holiday to stock up on dried fruits, nuts, sweets and cookies.

Continued on Page 24



WEST JAVA: Passengers on their motorcycles board a ferry at the port in Merak yesterday, as Indonesians begin the mass exodus to their respective hometowns ahead of the Eid Al-Fitr festival. — AFP

Local



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 Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with State Minister for Housing Affairs and State Minister for Services Affairs Dr Jenan Mohsen Bushehri.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



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

Amir, Crown Prince meet top state officials

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Seif Palace yesterday. His Highness also

received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness then received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Premier

and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received State Minister for Housing Affairs and State Minister for Services Affairs Dr Jenan Mohsen Bushehri. — KUNA

Gulf Bank, Zajel distribute iftar meals across Kuwait

KUWAIT: In line with its corporate social responsibility program and community outreach during the holy month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank has collaborated with 'Zajel', a local organization that has been spearheading an initiative during this blessed month, to provide meals to those less fortunate across various locations around Kuwait. A large number of volunteers from Gulf Bank participated in preparing, distributing and delivering meals to those in need and thereby contributing to the wider wellbeing of the community.

Gulf Bank Human Resource General Manager Salma Al-Hajjaj said, "We are proud to be part of the wider community, and in this blessed month, we pride ourselves in knowing that our employees are

keen to volunteer and help bring joy by assisting to prepare and distribute meals to those that are in need.

This is one of the numerous events, activities, and initiatives that the Bank feels passionate about, and as such we always encourage our people to see the wider picture of our place within the local Kuwaiti environment." During Ramadan, Gulf Bank has led a number of initiatives which included distributing food boxes to families in need, visited a number of hospitals to celebrate girgian with children, sponsored a women's football tournament, in addition to producing a Ramadan TVC, which shows that however faint, the voice of goodness will always remain resilient.



Army releases military inmates to celebrate Eid

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Army Chief of General Staff Lieutenant General Mohammad Al-Khuder has issued a decision to release military personnel held for disciplinary charges, the defense ministry announced yesterday. The decision was made upon the directions of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah to allow military inmates celebrate Eid Al-Fitr holiday with their families, the ministry said in a press statement. — KUNA

Mexican Ambassador sends Eid greetings

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait Miguel Angel Isidro has the honor to extend his sincere felicitation and best wishes to His Highness the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness the Crown Prince, His Highness Prime Minister, the Government and the people of the State of Kuwait, on the occasion of the advent of Eid Al-Fitr, wishing the friendly people of Kuwait further prosperity and stability and for the kind and distinguished relations between the two friendly nations to be further enhanced.



Ambassador of Mexico to Kuwait Miguel Angel Isidro



AUB participates in KRCS campaign

KUWAIT: As part of its wide-ranging social responsibility program during the holy month of Ramadan, Ahli United Bank (AUB) has distributed food items to families in need, in cooperation with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), under their campaign 'Saed Tasa'ad', which translates to 'Help to make people happy'. KRCS initially launched this campaign, which will continue throughout the holy month of Ramadan, with the cooperation of and coordination with the Kuwaiti private sector. AUB's participation is an extension of the bank's efforts in supporting and promoting social programs that aim at enhancing living conditions for families in need and to bring happiness upon them during the holy month.

A team of volunteers from the bank's staff including Tareq Mahmood, AUB's Senior Deputy Chief Executive Officer, took part in the volunteering campaign. Commenting on the campaign, Sahar Dashti, AUB's Deputy General Manager responsible for the bank's corporate social responsibility program said "Our participation in the 'Help to make people happy' campaign in collaboration with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society is considered a

clear continuation to the wide variety of initiatives that AUB drives annually during the holy month of Ramadan, where the bank ensures that its social and human services are delivered across society in Kuwait."

Moreover, through this campaign, AUB aims to encourage its employees to participate in leading social initiatives while embedding the core values of social inclusion by taking part in similar activities that aim to serve the wider public, instill the true meaning of giving as well as activating their social roles.

Dashti added, "Our participation in the 'Help to make people happy' campaign and offering support to those in need during the holy month of Ramadan, reinforces our core values, ones which provide us with a good opportunity to fulfill our responsibilities towards others who are in need. Such experiences have proved that the power of giving is a strong force for good which can provide very positive results in improving individuals' well-being and happiness."

Furthermore, Dashti thanked the Kuwait Red Crescent Society for its untiring efforts towards launching the 'Help to make people happy' initiative which proved its strength and ability to reach families that are in need. AUB enjoys a strong and successful track record of working with the Kuwait Red Crescent Society across a wide range of social programs.

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Local

Woman, child killed, seven injured in Hasawi blaze

String of fires reported around Kuwait



KUWAIT: Firefighters are seen inside a Hasawi building after a deadly fire was extinguished there yesterday.



Firefighters tackle a blaze in Abdullah Port.



Firefighters battle a fire in Saad Al-Abdullah.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A woman and a baby girl were killed and seven others injured yesterday in a huge fire reported in Hasawi yesterday. Security sources said Kuwait Fire Service (KFS) operations received a report about the fire at 9:03 am. Arriving at the scene, firemen from Jleeb, Ardiya and Shuwaikh industrial area found the blaze was on the ground floor of a four-storey building where many pieces of furniture were stored randomly and were the cause behind trapping some tenants. Seven injured women were rescued, including two with serious injuries who were rushed to Ibn Sina Hospital, while another woman and the baby girl were found dead. Further investigations are still in progress to determine the cause of the fire. Commenting on the

incident, KFS warned against turning private residences into storage places.

Another fire broke out in shacks in Abdullah Port used as dormitories for laborers, said security sources, noting that the fire spread to rubbish heaps nearby. No casualties were reported. Meanwhile, a fire broke out in a house in Saad Al-Abdullah, said security sources, noting that firemen from Jahra rushed to the scene and found the fire was in a three-storey house. The blaze started on the ground floor and spread to a shed in the yard that had tires and gas cylinders. The fire was controlled. A fireman was injured and rushed to Jahra Hospital for treatment.

Separately, Kuwait Army said firefighters put out a fire in a workers' housing building in a camp used for arms and ammunition in Julai'a, southern Kuwait, on

Tuesday. No one was hurt. The fire erupted in the building which is used for workers of a contractor building an ammunition depot in the camp, the army said in a statement. Firefighters from the army, general fire department and interior ministry rushed to fight the blaze and succeeded in putting off the fire in a record time. The army said it was investigating the incident.

Breaking the fast

A citizen was arrested for breaking the fast in public, resisting arrest, attempting to run over a police agent and escaping a checkpoint. Case papers indicate that on approaching a checkpoint, a driver who had been smoking sped through the checkpoint, trying to run over some police agents. The suspect was chased

by three patrols and was finally stopped when his vehicle broke down. A case was filed.

Resisting arrest

Responding to a video circulating on social media showing some police patrol officers being assaulted, the Interior Ministry's relations and security media department explained that the video showed officers controlling an expat who had been resisting arrest and strongly denied that the expat assaulted the police. The department explained that a police patrol was dispatched to investigate a traffic accident in Shuwaikh industrial area between a citizen and a tow truck driver who initially refused to leave his truck, before he was arrested. Both parties settled things at the station and dropped charges.

MP warns over KPC reshuffles

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei warned he will not turn a blind eye to leaks from Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) to the press about the likelihood of the largest reshuffle and promotion process in the oil sector before the end of the current board of directors' tenure in September. "This poses a clear violation of the incoming CEO's right to select his executives and staff members with the help of the new board of directors according to his own vision on how to execute various projects and diversify profitable investment opportunities, instead losing billions because of the bad investments made by the current CEO," Tabtabaei explained, noting that allowing such reckless practices by the Prime Minister, who is the head of the Supreme Petroleum Council, would lead to wide gaps between both authorities as well as fierce conflicts amongst oil sector officials.

Tabtabaei stressed referring some senior officials to retirement and giving them

their indemnities, along with 'unconstitutional multimillion-dinar packages' to some of them instead of holding them accountable for the funds they had wasted, is an attempt to evade the investigation committee formed by the Cabinet.

Water desalination plants

As part of its efforts to increase water production and strategic reserves, the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) plans to build more water desalination plants, with eight projects to be executed until 2030, including five to be executed by the ministry and three by the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects. According to the plan, these projects target increasing water production by 742 million imperial gallons daily.

Housing projects

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare (PAHW) set four projects to be executed as part of its long-term future plan, said informed sources, noting that two of the projects will include 400 sq m units, the third will include 600 sq m units while the fourth will include 200 sq m units with a total of 149,330 units. According to the plan, PAHW plans to build a residential project 80 km south of Kuwait City and three more in the northern region.

Food bank continues to accept donations

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Kuwait Food Bank's deputy chairman Meshaal Al-Ansari said the bank's suhoor campaign, organized in collaboration with the Ministry of Interior (MoI), the civil defense and

volunteers, will continue till the end of Ramadan. Ansari thanked MoI and other major companies and institutions for their contributions to the campaign. Ansari urged donors to donate to the bank so that the "land of the humanitarian leader" can reach out to poor and needy people in Kuwait and elsewhere in the world. Ansari said donations are accepted 24/7 through SMS messages to 50487 for VIVA lines, 94122 for Zain lines, at the bank's headquarters in Adailiya or through the bank's website www.kuwaitfoodbank.org.

Ministry monitors prices during Eid

KUWAIT: Ministry of Commerce and Industry announced yesterday the formation of three inspecting teams to regulate and follow up on goods prices in all markets during Eid Al-Fitr. Each team includes 30 inspectors who cover all governorates in the country to ensure availability of various kinds of goods in all markets and control their prices coinciding with the upcoming Eid Al-Fitr, said the Control and Consumer Protection Sector at the Ministry in a statement.

The ministry is keen to prevent the exploitation of consumers and to ensure abiding market regulations and applicable laws in force, the statement added. The ministry called on consumers to report any commercial fraud or non-compliance with the rules and regulations in force through Hotline 135, stressing the continuation of the inspection campaigns and reception of complaints and taking appropriate action in accordance with the laws. — KUNA

'Financial disclosure forms handled properly'

KUWAIT: Kuwait's anti-corruption authority yesterday warned that failure to submit financial disclosure statements in a timely manner would be dealt with strictly and may result in legal action. "The anti-corruption authority is aware of information posted on social media revealing that a procedural error has shown that some

financial disclosure forms have not yet been submitted," its official spokesman Dr Mohammad Buzaber said in a statement. He revealed that the Kuwaiti anti-corruption body is following proper procedures to address this issue, pointing out that some financial disclosure statements were released past the deadline.— KUNA

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Ooredoo concludes eventful month of Ramadan



KUWAIT: Ooredoo management and staff pose for a group photo during the company's annual ghabqa.

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait concluded an eventful holy month of Ramadan with numerous activities that included charity drives in addition to announcing the launch of 5G mobile internet, reiterating its commitment towards its customers and the Kuwait community as a whole, and its leading position in supporting the government's 2035 Kuwait Vision.

The leading telecom provider will launch its activities with distributing iftar meals to hundreds of workers from its iftar tent, with its prime location on Soor Street opposite its head office. To better serve a wider range of beneficiaries, the company will utilize a special truck that will deliver meals to areas populated by underserved communities. The meal distribution drive is fully operated by Ooredoo's volunteer program members, after the great success of the program in the last years. The upper management at Ooredoo regularly participate in the activities, in addition to staff from the company's different departments and divisions.

The activities are fully operated by members of the award-winning Ooredoo Volunteer Program, which wit-

nesses the launch its 4th edition this year. The program, in collaboration with Spread the Passion non-profit organization, aims to enable youth and provide them with the necessary set of tools and skills before matching them with volunteer opportunities around Kuwait. The program attracted more than 300 participants this year, and has organized more than 120 activities since its inception four years ago.

Annual Ghabqa

Underscoring the importance of investing in staff internally, Ooredoo Kuwait held a special ghabqa for its staff in the Courtyard Hotel - Alraya Ballroom, embodying its values of caring, connecting, and challenging.

Holding this event comes to underscore the company's commitment to investing in and connecting with its staff, as the event was attended by hundreds of members of the Ooredoo Kuwait Family, including the Chairman of Ooredoo Group, Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Thani, the CEO of Ooredoo Group, Sheikh Saud bin Nasser Al Thani, and CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait Sheikh Mohammed

bin Abdullah Al Thani. Sounds of traditional Kuwait music performed by Al-Wadi Folklore Band kicked off the event, welcoming guests to the beat of folklore songs. The master of ceremonies who hosted the event, aspiring media figure Hashem Asad welcomed the guests and presented a fun-filled program of activities with draws on valuable prizes and competitions.

Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub offered a brief on the most important achievements throughout the year, followed by a speech by Chairman of Ooredoo Group, Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Thani, who thanked Ooredoo staff for their continuous efforts in embracing digitalization and achieving targets of expanding the breadth of offerings for different segments of customers. Ooredoo Kuwait CEO Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani followed with a speech in which he thanked the staff of Ooredoo and FASTelco, a company owned by Ooredoo, for their one-family spirit and for aligning their efforts to enrich the experience of customers.



CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani delivers a speech during the ghabqa.

Launching the Internet of the Future

Ooredoo Kuwait held a special event to demonstrate the power of its new 5G network which was announced earlier. The event was attended by media and social media influencers and was held at the company's head office in the heart of Kuwait City on Soor Street.

During the event, Ooredoo showcased the power of its new 5G network in comparison to the 4G network. The new network is projected to be released across Kuwait during the upcoming year. During the event, Ooredoo demonstrated the network's ability to operate video games comparing both networks, which require fast data speed, in addition to a live feed in 4K Full HD of drone footage of the event, and a speed test corner with devices equipped to utilize the new network capacity.

Supporting Youth

Continuing its support for youth, Ooredoo announced the continuation of its sponsorship of the Proteges youth development program for the third consecutive year, by sponsoring the 8th generation of students. The announcement was made during a press conference held at Ooredoo's head office in Kuwait City. It comes to underscore Ooredoo's deep-rooted belief in the mission of this unique program, which focuses on developing and training a cohort of 25 students between the ages of 16 - 24. This year's program is scheduled to include a visit to Swansea

University in the United Kingdom. To further support the students, Ooredoo Kuwait will provide SIM cards with roaming services to let them connect with their families and friends during the trip.

Investing Internally

Reinforcing the one-family spirit among its staff, Ooredoo Kuwait celebrated the Kuwaiti tradition of Grasih, a feast that precedes the Holy Month of Ramadan. Employees from different departments and sectors gathered to exchange greetings on the occasion of the commencement of Ramadan, reviving the annual Kuwaiti tradition. The company's different floors were adorned in traditional sadu colors, with decorations reminiscing of quotes by some of the prominent TV figures that became synonymous with Ramadan traditions in Kuwait, especially during the 70's and 80's, Kuwait's golden era of art and television, including characters portrayed by prominent actors Abdulhussein Abdulrida and Ali Al-Mufidi in Kuwaiti TV classic Darb al-Zalaq.

The company held an engaging competition between departments, where they were judged for being the best and most hospitable hosts. Employees from different departments competed in decorating their floors, presenting tradition Kuwait dishes and desserts. The Customer Care Department came in first, followed by the Technology Department in second place, and the Corporate Communications Department in third place.



Ooredoo staff pose with children.



(From left) Abdulmuhsen Al-Fahad, Nazem Al-Ghabra and Fatima Dashti.



Ooredoo's Ramadan iftar tent.



CEO of Ooredoo Group Sheikh Saud bin Nasser Al Thani, CEO of Ooredoo Kuwait Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Thani and Chairman of Ooredoo Group Sheikh Abdullah bin Mohammed Al Thani.



Ooredoo staff visit children in hospitals.



Ooredoo staff pose for a group picture.

Local



Share the gift of togetherness this Eid Al-Fitr with Four Seasons Hotel

Local media and influencers embrace the true Ramadan spirit at the 'Jawaher Tent'



KUWAIT: Marking its first Ramadan season this year as one of the featured hotels on Conde Nast Traveller Middle East Hot List 2018 of best hotels, Kuwait City's new landmark, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya invites guests to bring along loved ones this Eid Al-Fitr to enjoy spending time together, all in the comfort of luxurious Arabian Four Seasons hospitality, with the Family Getaway package and Eid Brunch package.

To make the most of the opportunity and to spend more time in each other's company, Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya is offering a Family Getaway package, whereby guests will receive 50 and off a second room for children aged 18 years and under, or a complimentary Superior Room when booking a suite, complete with a special room set-up and amenities in the children's room.

Gathering around the dining table, the traditional centre of Eid celebrations, promises to be an exceptional experience this year set against the backdrop of panoramic views over Kuwait City on the 21st floor of the Hotel where East meets West, at Dai Forni and

Sintoho restaurant. Celebrate Eid Al-Fitr in style with the delectable Eid Brunch package available upon your stay, as Executive Chef Sebastian Spriveri and his talented team prepare a feast of flavors, from zingy Asian bites to moreish pizzas fresh from wood-fired ovens.

Marking its first Ramadan festivities since opening its doors last year, the Hotel has introduced the exquisite 'Jawaher Tent', which has become the dynamic meeting point for iftar and ghabqa in the heart of Kuwait City. Featuring beautiful design details, an exciting menu including live cooking stations, performances by a band and an exceptional ambiance, the 'Jawaher Tent' is the ideal choice this Ramadan season. The Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait team took the opportunity to host a ghabqa for Kuwait's local media and influencers, as a means of showing gratitude and thanks for their ongoing support.

Commenting on the success of its 'Jawaher Tent', Didier Jardin said: "The Holy month of Ramadan and the success of our very first Ramadan Jawaher Tent, coincides with the prestigious recognition we have received by the Conde Nast Traveller Middle East maga-

zine with our very own Kuwait property featured on its Hot List 2018 of best hotels. It is a very proud moment for us at Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya and we look forward to our journey ahead".

"Every experience at the Four Seasons Hotel Kuwait at Burj Alshaya is a unique one and we were keen to reflect this in every element within this year's Ramadan tent, from the aesthetic that takes inspiration from our hotel's contemporary Arabian design, to the range of dishes carefully curated for our guests. We look forward to the last days of Ramadan, and even more so to the three days of Eid Al-Fitr, a chance for our guests to celebrate with each other, as well as with our warm and friendly team here at the Hotel," Jardin added.

In addition to the 'Jawaher Tent' this Ramadan, guests also have the option to dine at signature Italian restaurant Dai Forni, Al Bandar Lounge or Al Soor Lounge. Elements restaurants is closed throughout the holy month and will welcome guests once again on the first day of the Eid Al-Fitr holiday. Sintoho restaurant will be reopened on July 15, 2018.



Children share the joy of Eid

By Ben Garcia

Kuwait Times celebrates Ramadan in Kuwait with 30 days of the Icons of Ramadan. We highlight our favorite activities, events, symbols and foods that are popular during this holy month, along with Kuwait's Ramadan culture, history and traditions.

Ramadan brings families and communities together, which usually fosters a strong sense of belonging and connection. Families come together in this holy month to experience the best of friendship and togetherness, which is something they look forward to that cuts across cultures. They gather over a variety of dishes, play games and enjoy the company of one another. But children are more excited to get new toys and clothes. This is a tradition not only in Middle Eastern countries, but in the rest of the world too. In Kuwait, during Eid, parents buy something for their kids to enjoy the spirit of the festival marking the end of a month of fasting. All supermarkets and department stores have huge sales and promotions, because the best way to share your love on Eid is with presents for your loved ones.

Email us at local@kuwaittimes.com with your favorite symbols of Ramadan and Ramadan photos.

Christians and Muslims: From competition to collaboration

Dear Muslim brothers and sisters,

In his Providence, God the Almighty has granted you the opportunity to observe anew the fasting of Ramadan and to celebrate Eid Al-Fitr.

The Pontifical Council for Interreligious Dialogue appreciates the importance of this month and the great effort by the Muslims throughout the world to fast, pray and share the Almighty's gifts with the poor.

Mindful of the gifts prompted by Ramadan, we join you in thanking the Merciful God for his benevolence and generosity, and we extend to you our heartfelt best wishes.

The thoughts we would like to share with you on this occasion, dear Muslim brothers and sisters, concern a vital aspect of relations between Christmas and Muslims: the need to move from competition to collaboration.

A spirit of competition has too often marked past relations between Christians and Muslims, the negative consequences of which are evident: jealousy, recriminations and tensions. In some cases, these have led to violent confrontations, especially where religions has been instrumentalized, above all due to self-interest and political motives.

Such interreligious competition wounds the image of religions and their followers, and it fosters the view that religions are not sources of peace, but of tension and violence.

To prevent and overcome these negative consequences, it is important that we Christians and Muslims recall the religious and moral values that we share, while acknowledging our differences. By recognizing what we hold in common and by showing respect for our legitimate differences, we can more firmly establish a solid foundation for peaceful relations, moving from competition and confrontation to an effective cooperation for the common good. This particularly assist those most in need, and allows us to offer a credible witness to the Almighty's love for the whole of humanity.

We all have the right and the duty to witness to the All-Powerful One we worship, and to share our beliefs with others, while respecting their religion and religious sentiments.

So that we may further peaceful and fraternal relations, let us work together and honor each another. In this way we will give glory to the Almighty and promote harmony in society, which is becoming increasingly multi-ethnic, multi-religious and multi-cultural.

We conclude by renewing our best wishes for a fruitful fast and a joyful Eid, and assure you of our solidarity in prayer.

— Message from the Vatican for the holy month of Ramadan and Eid Al-Fitr



KUWAIT: Qatar Airways recently hosted a ghabqa for the media on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan.— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Militants lay siege to once sleepy villages

US Dems fighting for future in tough statehouse races



US President Donald Trump steps off of Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews after returning from a summit in Singapore with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un yesterday at Andrews Air Force Base in Maryland. — AFP

Trump: Summit ended North Korea threat

'Pyongyang-bound' president says world dodged 'nuclear catastrophe'

SEOUL: US President Donald Trump arrived home yesterday, insisting his historic summit with Kim Jong Un had ended North Korea's nuclear threat and the world could sleep safer. "There is no longer a Nuclear Threat from North Korea," Trump tweeted as Air Force One returned from Singapore. North Korean state TV, for its part, hailed Kim for "opening a new chapter" in relations with the US. Official media reported that Trump had accepted an invitation during Tuesday's summit to visit the North.

Critics have said the unprecedented encounter was more style than substance, producing a document short on details about the key issue of Pyongyang's atomic weapons. But in characteristically bullish tweets, Trump said everyone "can now feel much safer than the day I took office" and people could "sleep well tonight!" The first-ever meeting between sitting leaders of the two Cold War foes meant "the World has taken a big step back from potential Nuclear catastrophe!" he said in an earlier message. "No more rocket launches, nuclear testing or research! The hostages are back home with their families. Thank you to Chairman Kim, our day together was historic!"

In their joint statement Kim agreed to the "complete denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula" - a stock phrase favoured by Pyongyang that stopped short of longstanding US demands for North Korea to give up its atomic arsenal in

a "verifiable" and "irreversible" way. The North's official KCNA news agency described the summit as an "epoch-making meeting" that would help foster "a radical switchover in the most hostile (North Korea)-US relations". It said the two men "gladly accepted" mutual invitations to visit each other's countries. KCNA also asserted Trump had "expressed his intention" to lift sanctions against the North - something the US president had told a blockbuster press conference would happen "when we are sure that the nukes are no longer a factor". "The sanctions right now remain," he added. With the headline: "Meeting of the century opens new history in DPRK-US relations", the North's ruling Workers Party official daily Rodong Sinmun splashed no fewer than 33 pictures across four of its usual six pages.

One showed a smiling Kim shaking hands with Trump's hawkish National Security Advisor John Bolton, who has previously advocated military action against the North, which in turn has referred to him as "human scum". In Pyongyang, commuters crowded round the spread of images - the first they had seen of the summit, for most of them.

U Sung Tak, 79, said the future was looking "bright" because Kim was "leading the world's political trend on the Korean peninsula, steering the wheel of history".

Ordinary North Koreans consistently voice unequivocal support for the leadership when speaking to foreign media.

'War games'

Pyongyang has reason to feel confident after the meeting, where the leader of the world's most powerful democracy shook hands with the third generation of a dynastic dictatorship, standing as equals in front of their nations' flags. The spectacle was a major coup for an isolated and heavily sanctioned regime that has long craved international legitimacy. "Kim Jong Un got what he wanted at the Singapore Summit: the international prestige and respect of a one-on-one meeting with the American president, the legitimacy of North Korean flags hanging next to American flags in the background," said Paul Haenle, director of the Carnegie-Tsinghua Center. In his post-summit press conference, Trump made the surprise announcement that the US would halt joint military exercises with its security ally Seoul - something long sought by Pyongyang, which claims the drills are a rehearsal for invasion. The US stations 28,500 troops in security ally South Korea to protect it from its neighbor, which invaded in 1950 to try to reunify the peninsula by force. "We will be stopping the war games which will save us a tremendous amount of money," Trump told reporters, adding that "at some point" he wanted to withdraw US troops from the South.

Both Seoul and US military commanders in the South indicated they had no idea the announcement was coming.

Japan's Defense Minister Itsunori Onodera pointedly said the drills played a "vital role in East Asia's security".

Smiles and handshakes

Only a few months ago, Kim and Trump were swapping personal insults such as "dotard" and "little rocket man" and the North conducted its sixth and most powerful nuclear test, as well as firing missiles over Japan. Trump vowed to rain down "fire and fury" on Pyongyang if it threatened the US but instead in Singapore it was compliments that flowed, as the president described Kim as "talented" and said they had forged a "special bond". After a day filled with smiles and handshakes watched around the world, the US "committed to provide security guarantees" to North Korea. The Kremlin welcomed the summit as the start of direct dialogue and said such meetings "help reduce tensions on the peninsula". Victor Cha, a former US pointman on North Korea, said in an opinion piece in the New York Times: "Despite its many flaws, the Singapore summit represents the start of a diplomatic process that takes us away from the brink of war." But critics charged the summit legitimized Kim, whose regime has been accused of multiple human rights abuses, and said the summit was more about headlines than substantive progress. "It was a great photo-op. But the substance needs to be followed up," said Akira Kawasaki, from the ICAN anti-nuclear group. — AFP

Poverty forces Syrian refugee kids into work

TRIPOLI: When 13-year-old Mounir fled Syria for Lebanon with his family after surviving a rocket strike that nearly killed them, he thought he would be safe. In fact, he had swapped one form of danger for another - sexual harassment and verbal abuse. With his father unable to work for health reasons, Mounir had to earn money for his family selling sweets in the city of Tripoli - a job that kept him out on the streets until 11pm, making about 12,000 Lebanese pounds (\$8) a day. "It was very hostile - people used to call me the 'Syrian dog' and other things," Mounir - not his real name - told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "I would get really hurt, sometimes I would just sit and cry. It was humiliating."

Aid groups say more and more Syrian children like Mounir are having to work as poverty intensifies among the about 1 million refugees living in Lebanon - roughly a quarter of the country's population. The proportion of Syrian child refugees working in Lebanon has risen to 7 percent from 4 percent in late 2016, according to research by the Danish Refugee Council (DRC) released early to the Thomson

Reuters Foundation. "It is sad to say that it is only going to get worse," said Benedict Nixon, spokesman for the Council. "As long as households are not generating income, rates of child labour will continue to increase."

The United Nations and aid agencies warned last month that a "critical gap" in funding for Syrian refugees and host communities could lead to cuts in vital services. Globally, conflict and climate-induced disaster have driven more children into working in agriculture, which accounts for 71 percent of all child labor according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). "Households in Syrian refugee camps in Lebanon, for example, are prone to resort to child labour to ensure the survival of their family," the FAO said in a statement released on Tuesday to mark World Day Against Child Labour.

'Breaking point'

Tanya Chapuisat, spokeswoman for the UN children's agency UNICEF, said Syrian families in Lebanon often had no choice but to send their children to work. "Families are at their breaking point when it comes to debt, and so to be able to get their basic needs they are sending kids to work," she said. Mounir's mother Hasnaa says she feels intense guilt but has no choice but to send Mounir and his 17-year-old brother out to work rather, depriving them of an education. The rent alone on the small garage where the family lives is 280,000

Lebanese pounds a month. "It feels like nothing is enough. Everything we have goes into paying for rent," she said.

More than three quarters of the refugees in Lebanon are living below the poverty line and struggling to survive on less than \$4 per day, according to UNICEF, and less than half the Syrian children in the country attend school. Mounir knows his life is not like most 13-year-olds'. "A kid should be living a life of dignity and respect with no humiliation," he said.

Clutching his hands, he recalled the times when men on the street would approach him for sex. "They tried to do bad things. I would not accept," he said, as he stared down at the ground. "This has happened more than once to me on the street. They were all men. Of course I was scared of this. They would ask me to come with them and I would tell them I didn't want to go."

Even at 13, he said he was often the oldest on the streets, where children as young as five worked alongside him. Last month he found work closer to home at a barber shop, where he earns 30,000 Lebanese pounds a week sweeping and helping the owner - though he still works 10-hour days. His favorite subject at school before Syria's seven-year war cut his education short was maths, and he dreams of going back to learn how to read and write. "I want to become a mechanic. I like fixing things like motors," he said with a big, dimpled smile. — Reuters

Sadr and Amiri set to lead talks on new govt

BAGHDAD: Iraqi nationalist cleric Moqtada Al-Sadr and Iranian-backed militia chief Hadi Al-Amiri were set to lead talks yesterday to form a government in Baghdad after announcing an alliance of their political blocs. Sadr and Amiri's groupings won first and second place respectively in May's election, which has been beset by allegations of fraud and raised fears of bloodshed among Shiite paramilitary groups. They announced the alliance in the Shiite holy city of Najaf, an apparent attempt to project unity among leaders of the Muslim sect that has dominated since the fall of Saddam Hussein.

A week ago, an explosion killed at least 18 people and wounded more than 90 in Sadr's Baghdad stronghold of Sadr City district, in what the interior ministry called "a terrorist aggression on civilians". State television reported yesterday that the Supreme Judicial Council had issued arrest warrants for 20 people in connection with the blast. The Sadr-Amiri pact could ease fears of violence, which some have said could even spiral into intra-Shiite civil war. Amiri, widely described as Tehran's man in

Iraq, is one of the most powerful figures in the country. Iraq, a key ally of the United States and major oil producer, has 150,000 heavily armed mostly Shiite paramilitary fighters operating alongside state forces - some of them more loyal to their commanders and Iran than to the Iraqi state. Both Sadr and Iran seem to be taking a pragmatic approach as Iran seeks to maintain its deep influence in its most important Arab ally at a time when its wider Middle East interests are under threat.

Not only has US President Donald Trump pulled out of a global nuclear deal with Tehran and then embraced North Korea, increasing Iran's isolation; Tehran's allies in Yemen are also facing a major offensive from a Saudi-led coalition that could mark a turning point in the war. Sadr, who led violent campaigns against the US occupation that ended in 2011, has emerged as a nationalist opponent of powerful Shiite parties allied with neighboring Iran, and as a champion of the poor.

Tehran has skillfully manipulated Iraqi politics in the past, and the cleric has to tread carefully. But Sadr, who derives much of his legitimacy from his revered father, Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq Sadr, assassinated in 1999 by Saddam's agents, is a formidable and unpredictable operator. He also has street power, with a track record of mobilizing tens of thousands of supporters to protest against opponents and government policies. — Reuters

International

In Mosul, women desperate for news of the 'disappeared'

Some fear their men have fallen victim to cruel double jeopardy

MOSUL: Every Friday since Mosul was prised from the Islamic State group's clutches last July, women gather in the Iraqi city's Al-Minassa Square, desperate to learn the fate of husbands and sons. Dressed in black, with children in tow and brandishing photos, some fear their men have fallen victim to a cruel double jeopardy. They had been imprisoned by or forced to work for IS, only for Iraqi forces to suspect them of collaborating voluntarily with the militants - and lock them up. That is what some mothers and wives fear, faced with official silence.

"Instead of being free today and compensated, they are being kept behind bars," said 80-year-old Umm Abdullah, tormented by her son's disappearance. She fears her child will be falsely accused, 12 months since Iraqi forces expelled IS. When the militants seized Mosul in 2014 after a lightning offensive, men working in the security forces or in other state jobs who did not run away were left with nowhere to hide. Seen as representatives of an "apostate" state, many of them were forced to publicly repent and swear allegiance to IS. The women of Al-Minassa resemble the Mothers of the 'Plaza de Mayo' who relentlessly pursued justice for sons who vanished under Argentina's 1976 to 1983 junta.



Women resemble Mothers of the 'Plaza de Mayo'

used with other prisoners as human shields", she said. Soldiers then arrested him "because he didn't have identity papers and had grown a thick beard during his detention by IS", said the mother of six, fighting back tears.

When outgoing prime minister Haider Al-Abadi visited Mosul in March, the women tried to approach him and ask about their men, but bodyguards pushed them back. Security officials told AFP the families of all those arrested in Mosul have been informed. But Shaima said she has had no official word and resorted to other channels. She had "received information... he is detained" at Baghdad's Al-Muthana airport, along with suspected terrorists.

Abu Luay, a 56-year-old unemployed man, spends his time looking for his two sons, snatched from their home by IS fighters on Oct 4, 2016. The sons, Luay and Qusay, have never reappeared. After several months of investigating, "we're sure they're detained by security forces, but we don't know why", Abu Luay said.

Thrown In 'Abyss'

Not all those who had been held by IS survived the brutality of its rule. "Many of the disappeared were executed by IS and their bodies thrown in the 'Khafsa'", said human rights activist Sami Faisal, referring to an area that translates from Arabic as the "abyss". The site, a sinkhole that folklore says was left by a meteor, could be one of the biggest mass graves in Iraq, as it was an IS execution ground. Collating testimony from families, Faisal said he has compiled 1,820 names of men and women who have disappeared. Many on the list were



MOSUL: Iraqis hold up portraits of missing relatives who were held captive by Islamic State group fighters during a demonstration in the eastern part of this northern city on April 13, 2018. —AFP

soldiers, civil servants, journalists and activists from Mosul and the surrounding area.

A separate list of missing Yazidis comprises 3,111 names, although the number fluctuates as members of the minority re-emerge alive after having years enslaved by IS. Deciding when a person can be declared dead is an issue which the authorities are tackling. The Iraqi judiciary has ruled "two years without news of a person who has disappeared in a con-

text of terrorism sufficient to officially pronounce their death".

Mosul's mayor, Zoheir Al-Araji, said the justice ministry registers complaints by relatives of the disappeared. The cases go "to the government and security authorities to investigate their fate", he said. "But so far without results." Bereft of her two sons, Umm Luay tries to take some solace from photos and memories. —AFP

For Abiy, big reforms carry big risks

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia's new prime minister Abiy Ahmed has announced a flurry of reforms to reshape the nation but implementing them will be harder, analysts say. Last week alone, Abiy shook up the security services, ended a nationwide state of emergency and announced plans to liberalize the economy and resolve a two-decade-old conflict with Eritrea. Yet those moves represent dramatic shifts in the power balance within Africa's second-most populous country. It remains unclear how deep Abiy's support runs within the ruling Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF) for carrying them out.

And if the reforms are bungled, he

risks inflaming relations between the country's many ethnic groups. "There is political expectation on the part of the public for very quick change," said Awol Allo, an Ethiopian commentator who teaches law in Britain. "My worry is that he's moving too fast in a country without the institutional safeguards to implement these policies." Observers say that the EPRDF, in unchecked control of Ethiopia since 1991, was forced to shift course by anti-government protests, led by the country's two largest ethnicities, that started in late 2015 and left hundreds dead. The unrest prompted a 10-month state of emergency, declared in Oct 2016.

The upheaval was seen as one reason behind the February resignation of Abiy's predecessor, Hailemariam Desalegn, and the immediate imposition of a second emergency declaration that parliament repealed last week. Elevated by the ruling party to the prime minister's office in April, Abiy is the first leader from the largest ethnicity, the Oromo. Even though

he has been cast as a reformer, few expected him to move so fast.

1991 redux

Abiy last week reversed decades of policy, announcing key state-run industries - among them Ethiopian Airlines and Ethio Telecom, the country's only internet and telephone provider - would be opened up to foreign and private investors. In a still more surprising move, Abiy declared Ethiopia would respect a 2002 United Nations commission ruling that demarcated the country's border with Eritrea, setting the stage to end years of hostility between the two countries.

The prime minister then removed Ethiopia's intelligence and military chiefs along with the national security advisor, the latest in a host of older government officials Abiy has shown the door to since taking over. "These people have been in the system for far too long and are by and large blamed by the public for the problems," Awol said. Longtime independent



Abiy Ahmed

Ethiopia researcher Rene Lefort compared Abiy's reforms to 1991, when the EPRDF, then a rebel army, stormed the capital Addis Ababa and removed the Derg military junta from power. "I expected some changes, but only step-by-step. But so fast, and so deep, that's astonishing," he said. —AFP

Skepticism in Greece, Macedonia against name deal

ATHENS: Greeks and Macedonians expressed skepticism yesterday over a proposed compromise deal to end a nearly three-decade name row between their countries which had blocked Skopje's bid to join the EU and NATO. The leaders of the neighboring countries hailed a "historic" agreement on Tuesday to rename the tiny Balkan nation the Republic of North Macedonia after months of intensive talks. However there was some backlash to the new name in both nations.

Greece's main opposition branded the deal a "national retreat", while Macedonia's nationalist President Gorge Ivanov stormed out of a meeting with the prime minister and foreign minister in protest. "President Ivanov interrupted the meeting and left refusing to talk about the benefits of this historic agreement on the

Macedonian future," Macedonia's government said. There was also reluctance in the capital Skopje. "We went too far, we allowed too much," said Suzana Turundzieva, a 46-year-old retail worker.

Greece has long objected to its northern neighbor being called Macedonia because it has its own northern province of the same name, which in ancient times was the cradle of Alexander the Great's empire, a point of pride to Greeks today. Ending the 27-year dispute would pave the way for Macedonia's bids to join the European Union and NATO, which - if successful - officials say would help stabilize the region. The breakthrough was quickly welcomed by the United Nations, NATO and the EU, with European Council president Donald Tusk tweeting: "Thanks to you the impossible is becoming possible."

'A trick'

However both governments face significant hurdles at home over the deal, with the countries' main opposition parties refusing to support it. Street protests have also been held in Greece and Macedonia against any compromise, and additional demonstrations are expected



THESSALONIKI, Greece: Dancers wearing traditional costumes perform in front of the statue of Alexander III of Macedonia, commonly known as Alexander the Great, on Tuesday. —AFP

in Greece in the coming days. Even Greeks who admit the row had gone on too long say the compromise was painful and could still leave their country empty-handed. "I agree with a heavy heart... because they had left the issue for 26

years and I guess that nothing better could have been done at this point," said technician Christos Nikolopoulos. "All this is a trick for the Balkans to become a protectorate of NATO," chafed Vassilis, a 20-year-old waiter. —AFP

Soapy massage

Thailand is a source, transit, and destination country for children trafficked for sexual exploitation. Thailand has more than 123,530 sex workers, according to a 2014 UNAIDS report. Of these, at least 40 percent are under 18, and a significant number are boys, according to rights groups. Children are trafficked into Thailand from Cambodia, Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam. Victims from Bangladesh, Pakistan, North Korea and China also transit through Thailand en route to the United States, western Europe and Russia, activists say.

"We are aware that there are boys also in the sex trade," said Krittat Uamson, deputy director of the justice ministry's human trafficking division in Bangkok. "But the majority of sex workers is girls and women, so our main focus is women." Globally, as many as 2 million children are sexually exploited annually, according to the United Nations children's agency UNICEF. A significant number are boys, campaigners say. —AFP

In Thai tourist spots, hidden world of male sex slavery

CHIANG MAI, Thailand: Young boys walk in pairs late in the evening at Chiang Mai's popular Tha Phae Gate, sauntering past tourists taking photos of the fort as locals hawk souvenirs. No one would connect the boys to the older, white men - and a pair of Chinese 40-somethings - seated under a tree, or to the young man with the mobile phone leaning on a parked motorbike. But for Aezandra Russell, founder of non-profit Urban Light, this scene - which unfolds every evening in one of the country's most popular tourist stops - sums up everything that is wrong with Thailand's approach to trafficking and slavery.

If no one passes muster, the men head to one of dozens of bars and karaoke lounges that offer boys for sex. The rates range from 2,000 baht (\$62) for an hour to 5,000 baht for longer, in a back room or in the client's hotel, Russell said. "Why does this not shock and enrage people as much as it does when it's girls?" said Russell, whose drop-in center is for boys in Chiang Mai's sex industry. "They are no less vulnerable and abused than girls who are trafficked into sex work. Yet it is much more hidden, so there's much less sympathy, and far fewer resources for boys," she said.

Erdogan, rivals woo Turkey's key Kurdish vote

DIYARBAKIR, Turkey: Turkey's Kurds are set to play a critical role in determining the outcome of elections this month, with their votes coveted not just by the main pro-Kurdish party but also President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his chief rival. Diyarbakir, the largest Kurdish-majority city in Turkey, has turned into an electoral battleground, even though the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) and its jailed presidential candidate Selahattin Demirtas are sure to leave rivals trailing. Over the last week both Erdogan and his main challenger, Muharrem Ince of the Republican People's Party (CHP), have made trips to Diyarbakir to sway the votes of a potentially skeptical electorate.

Kurds make up at least one fifth of Turkey's 80 million population, by far its largest ethnic minority. The Diyarbakir region is a stronghold of the HDP, which in Nov 2015 parliamentary elections won over 71 percent of the vote there and Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) just 22 percent. Every Kurdish vote will count in the June 24 snap parliamentary and presidential polls. But not all Kurds vote automatically for the HDP.

For the AKP to win an absolute majority in the next parliament will depend largely on whether the HDP breaks through the 10 percent overall threshold needed for seats. Although in the presidential race Demirtas will be the favored candidate of most Kurds, their votes will be crucial in helping Ince if he succeeds in forcing Erdogan into a run-off. The election is taking place against the background of ongoing troubles in the Kurdish-dominated southeast, where the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) has waged an insurgency since 1984 that has claimed tens of thousands of lives. And Demirtas, by far the HDP's most charismatic figure, is having to run his campaign from behind bars after being jailed in November 2016 on charges of links to the PKK.

'At the expense of Kurds'

Analysts say that the AKP faces an even greater struggle than usual to win Kurdish votes after allying itself with the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP) which is despised by many Kurds. "The AKP chose the MHP at the expense of the Kurds," said Mehmet Vural, president of the Dicle Social Research Centre. "This has irritated the Kurds in general, not just the HDP supporters but also those who vote AKP," he added.

Many Kurds were also dismayed by Ankara's bitter opposition to the Sept 2017 independence referendum in Iraqi Kurdistan, as well as the Turkish military operation in the Afrin region of Syria earlier this year to dislodge a Kurdish militia. At his rally in Diyarbakir on June 3, Erdogan told voters the area was enjoying "peace like never in the last 40 years" and launched a lacerating attack on the HDP, saying "we (the AKP) build but they destroy".

Winning votes in Diyarbakir is even tougher for the CHP, which in the Nov 2015 parliamentary polls took a mere two percent of the vote in the area. The party, which was set up by modern Turkey's founder Mustafa Kemal Ataturk, has historically shown little enthusiasm for the Kurdish cause. But Ince, who held a rally in the city on June 11 in Station Square, the identical spot to Erdogan, has made a clear effort to forge a rapprochement. One of the first acts of his campaign was to visit Demirtas in jail, a move that was roundly condemned by Erdogan. —AFP

International

US Democrats fighting for their future in tough statehouse races

Problem especially daunting in battleground states

TAMPA/NEW YORK: Democrats are making an all-out push to retake control of state legislatures across the United States this fall. But in the states most crucial to the party's future, they face grim odds, a Reuters analysis of election data has found. In many states, Democrats' only hope lies in flipping numerous districts that two years ago voted for Republicans in both the presidential and state legislative elections.

The problem is especially daunting for Democrats in battleground states where congressional district lines favoring Republicans were drawn after the 2010 census, Reuters' analysis found. Those lines will be redrawn after the next census in 2020, and in most states the party in power will control how districts are reshaped.

"When a single party has control of the process, the maps are less fair," said Michael Li, senior counsel at the non-partisan Brennan Center for Justice and author of a report examining how the party in power draws electoral maps to its partisan advantage, a contentious practice called gerrymandering. Large swing states, he notes, "are the ones where it is easiest to engineer an outsized advantage."

Currently, Republicans hold two-thirds of state legislative chambers and governorships. They completely control many crucial states, including Florida, Michigan and Ohio. This year, Democrats have announced a campaign to "flip everything," citing the importance of retaking state legislatures in advance of redistricting. Democratic Party groups and aligned political commit-

tees expect to spend tens of millions of dollars trying to win back legislative seats and governorships.

The effort, the party says, has importance beyond redistricting. States enact voting laws that can discourage turnout, and they have played a key role in promoting or resisting policies set by Republican President Donald Trump on issues such as abortion, gay rights and healthcare. "When we win back state legislatures, we can resist Trump's agenda and enact America's agenda," says Democratic US Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey, a rising star in his party, in a video promoting its efforts.

A numbers game

To assess the Democrats' chances, Reuters examined election data from 10 states where Republicans control legislatures considered key in redistricting: Florida, Georgia, Michigan, Minnesota, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, Texas, Virginia and Wisconsin. Republican-engineered boundaries in some of those states are responsible for much of the party's numerical advantage in the US House of Representatives, according to the Brennan Center. Many of the states also are pivotal in determining the

outcome of presidential elections.

Reuters analyzed 2016 election results from more than 1,500 legislative districts in the states to identify districts where voters backed Democrat Hillary Clinton over Trump in the presidential contest but also have Republican state representatives.

Both parties see such districts as having the potential to be flipped based on recent elections in Virginia and elsewhere, and are focusing considerable attention on them.

In most of the states, however, even if every one of the Clinton-supporting districts elected a Democratic state lawmaker in November, the legislature would still have a Republican majority. Of the states reviewed, only Minnesota has enough Clinton-won Republican districts to flip a legislative chamber if they all went for Democrats in November. Pennsylvania would fall one short. "The planets would have to align perfectly" for Democrats to retake control of the Pennsylvania House of Representatives, said Nathan Davidson, executive director of the chamber's Democratic campaign committee.

Elsewhere, the outlook is even more challenging. In

Ohio, for example, on top of flipping the seven Republican districts Clinton won in 2016, Democrats would need to convert at least 10 additional House seats in districts that went for Trump in the last election. Despite their public optimism, Democrats acknowledge the tough road ahead. "The path to a majority has to run through seats that Secretary Clinton did not win, that is the reality," said Jessica Post, executive director of the Democratic Legislative Campaign Committee, the party's national statehouse coordinator.

Factors beyond presidential performance may give Democrats more hope, she noted, such as past election patterns and voter enthusiasm. Even if Democrats cannot flip key legislatures this year, Post said the party aims to make significant gains for a better shot at clinching majorities in 2020 before redistricting. Democratic leaders also say a wave is possible given the party's recent special election wins in Trump territory and unexpectedly big gains last fall in Virginia, which unlike most places holds its statehouse elections in odd-numbered years. In that election, Democrats nearly erased a 2-to-1 Republican legislative majority.

But Virginia also demonstrated the party's hurdles. Of the 15 seats flipped in the state, only one was in a district that went for Trump. Democrats "are irrationally exuberant in their hopes this cycle," said Matt Walter, president of the Republican State Leadership Committee.

“The planets would have to align perfectly”

Top Nicaragua civic group calls strike



SAN JOSE: Costa Ricans demonstrate on Tuesday in solidarity with the students arrested and killed in recent protests against President Daniel Ortega. —AFP

MANAGUA: Nicaragua's top civic alliance called Tuesday for a nationwide 24-hour strike to protest "extreme conditions" under President Daniel Ortega, who has yet to decide on reviving talks over the crisis that has left at least 148 dead. The day-long strike is set to begin today at noon (1800 GMT) "in solidarity with the victims" of the two months of unrest, which has seen brutal clashes between anti-government activists and security forces loyal to Ortega.

"This is a national and peaceful civil strike that covers the entire country and all economic activities, except those related to the preservation of life and the coverage of basic services for the population," announced the National Alliance for Justice and Democracy, a key player in the now stalled crisis talks. The coalition also demanded an "immediate" decision from Ortega on the prospect of reviving negotiations mediated by Nicaragua's influential Catholic bishops.

The country has not heard from its leftist leader since last week, when he met with top clergy members, who presented him with a plan to expedite the poll and institute electoral and constitutional reforms - key activist demands. "Dialogue is the way to review the political system of Nicaragua from its root to achieve an authentic democracy and justice," the civic alliance said. The announcement comes after the country underwent a sharp escalation in violence in recent days, as police and pro-government paramilitaries attacked activists wielding slingshots and homemade mortars in an attempt to trample the uprising against Ortega. The din of rifle blasts and mortar explosions echoed overnight and into the morning throughout the streets of Managua, even after government security forces forcefully cleared the barricades.

Economic upheaval

Activists have erected the blockades on more than two thirds of the country's roads in a bid to fend off anti-riot forces and pressure Ortega into dialogue. But the makeshift roadblocks also have wreaked economic havoc: even in the unlikely scenario that the government "accepts an early negotiated exit" by the end of July, the Nicaraguan Foundation for Economic and Social Development (FUNIDES) estimates the country would post losses of \$404 million and bleed 20,000 jobs. —AFP

American Indians fear US-Mexico border wall will destroy culture

EL PASO, Texas: To the Ysleta del Sur Pueblo Indians, the water of the Rio Grande that divides the United States and Mexico sanctifies religious rites and purifies their hunts. Indian communities living miles away use the river to

send messages to fellow tribes downstream, tribal chief Jose Sierra told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "They go to the river and talk to the river, and the river sends it down," said Sierra, a barrel-chested man with long, greying hair and thick turquoise bracelets at his wrists. "They put messages in the river that come to us through the water."

But now tribal leaders fear a proposed border wall as envisioned by US President Donald Trump will sever access to the river, spoiling traditions and ruining ancient culture. The Ysleta and more than two dozen American Indian tribes - designated by US law as sovereign nations governing themselves - live along the 3,060 km border with Mexico, with some

vowing to fight the wall to defend tribal culture. Rene Lopez, a member of the Ysleta Traditional Council, said if the chief asked tribal members to knock down the wall, "we'll do it. That's how deeply it means to us."

For while Trump and his supporters say a security wall is necessary to stop drug smuggling and illegal immigrants from Mexico, Indian leaders say otherwise. "Back off, Trump. Let us be," said Sierra, whose ancestors settled in Texas in 1682 after being forced out of New Mexico during violent conflicts with Spanish settlers. But experts say the likelihood of stopping the wall with claims of Indian sovereignty or freedom of religion is unlikely, even though for some its impact could be dramatic.

Mozambique militants lay siege to once sleepy villages

MACOMIA, Mozambique: Until last week, Mozambique's northern district of Macomia was a remote and peaceful place, surrounded by dense tropical forests. Today, that tranquility has been brutally shattered and replaced by fear and suspicion. Macomia has become the latest target of a shadowy force that has terrorized the country's far north since last October, claiming more than 30 lives. In the coastal village of Naunde, seven people were hacked to death and 164 houses were set alight. Two days later, extremists attacked Namaluco, 20 km away, killing five.

"We do not sleep. We stay up at night to defend ourselves," said a villager, a homemade bow-and-arrow in hand. "If I hit an attacker with this arrow, he'll die immediately - the arrows are tipped with snake venom," he said, asking not to be named. The people of Macomia are now living lives tainted by fear. "It's hectic here. We don't know what to do," said Hassam Rabuna, a local leader of ruling party Frelimo.

Macomia is located in the predominantly Muslim province of Cabo Delgado, where

more than 30 people have died in machete and knife attacks since October, including 10 who were beheaded. Locals and authorities call the assailants Al-Shabaab, although the group has no known link to the notorious Somali Islamists of that name, nor has it issued any claim of responsibility or demands. According to academic researchers, the group wants to impose sharia law in the province.

It is believed the organization staged its first attack on a police station and military outpost in the town of Mocimboa da Praia. Two officers died and 14 attackers were killed. In the following weeks, at least 300 Muslims, including Tanzanians, were arrested, several mosques shuttered - and suspicion began to fall on the region like a leaden lid. "It's our children who are carrying out these attacks," said a shop security guard in the area. "They sold their houses and market stalls to move to the bush and start to kill innocent people. Someone promised them money."

Peasant farmers around Macomia district and its main town, which goes by the same name, have now begun to arm themselves with improvised weapons, including bows and arrows. Local authorities teach them to be vigilant, "to sharpen their surveillance," said Rabuna. "We are defenseless, we need weapons to defend ourselves," he added. The army has been deployed in force in an effort to smother the group's ability to act. Soldiers armed with assault rifles are guarding Macomia's only bank, its single fuel station and guest house, and the town's electricity substation.

Can 'land banks' help rebuild post-industrial US cities?

WASHINGTON: When Jamil Bey wanted to move back to the Pittsburgh neighborhood where he had grown up, he found the perfect house to buy. There was just one problem - a fall in property values on that street had left the owners trapped in negative equity. Unable to agree on a price that would allow the sellers to pay off their mortgage, Bey realized he would not be able to buy a house in his old neighborhood - and that the owners would be stuck with a property they did not want.

Across the United States, former manufacturing centers like Pittsburgh have experienced overwhelming population declines in recent decades, pushing down property prices and leaving homes empty and neglected. "For folks who have a connection to those neighborhoods because they grew up there, there's not a whole lot of quality properties to choose from," Bey told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "Even if you're looking for property to invest in, you can't fund new

construction because the property values in those neighborhoods are too low."

It took a trip to New York state for Bey to find a potential solution to the problem blighting his city - land banks, which have the power to search out vacant properties and work to return them to the market. "I was in Syracuse and realizing that the vacant lots looked well taken care of - planted, with cut grass and nicely maintained," he said. "And I was told, 'We have a land bank.'"

Many former industrial cities, particularly in the northeastern United States, have lost a quarter of their population or more since the 1950s, according to census data. Pittsburgh, once one of the largest and most prosperous cities in the country, has been among the hardest hit. Some neighborhoods there have suffered population declines of 80 percent and more, said Bey, setting up a cycle of decline that has blighted entire communities.

Recycling land

Bey is now vice chairman of the Pittsburgh Land Bank, which is set to start operating this summer, aiming to take on the growing numbers of abandoned properties in the city. He describes its remit as "recycling land" - working through entanglements of ownership, addressing tax issues and fixing up or tearing down structures with a view to getting vacant property back on the mar-



MACOMIA, Mozambique: Residents walk with their goods past a market on June 11, 2018. —AFP

Suspicions

Rumours of collaboration and summary justice abound, say local people. Some residents told AFP that villagers across the district have inexplicably disappeared since the beginning of the security operation or described instances of arbitrary detention. Among those detained were relatives of young people alleged to have joined the

jihadists, they say. Police in Cabo Delgado declined to comment on alleged mass arrests. "We believe that many innocent people were killed and buried in mass graves," said another local man. "The military is angry with the attacks and all people suspected of collaborating with the attackers by giving them food and information are detained and often disappear."



DEPEW, New York: Workers prepare to put together a single-family modular home in Feb 2017. Acquired at tax foreclosure auction, the original home was demolished to make way for new construction by the county land bank. —Reuters

ket or giving it over as a public space. Houses that have sat for long enough to become blighted are often saddled with significant tax arrears, reducing their appeal to investors.

Many land banks are able to short-circuit this process, clearing arrears before addressing regulatory violations to make the property appealing to new buyers. Land banks have existed in the United

States since the 1980s, but interest has spiked since the economic downturn of 2008-09, according to law professor Frank S Alexander. That created a wave of foreclosures in which "abandonment was occurring, particularly at the low end of the property spectrum," said Alexander, a leading authority on land banking who said the sector had seen "tremendous growth" as a result. —Reuters

Cut off from land

The Tohono O'odham people in southern Arizona live on a reservation that straddles the border and would be cut in two. "It would be just devastating," said Verlon Jose, vice chairman of the Tohono O'odham, told the Foundation. "Walls are not the answer to the issues that we face ... Walls have never solved problems, whether that's in terms of immigration, in terms of militarization." Border security could be boosted with more hi-tech tower systems that provide long-range surveillance, tracking and detection and by immigration reform allowing more migrants to work temporarily in the United States without having to sneak in, Jose said.

Native people globally have been blocked from sacred grounds, burial places and ancestral migration routes by borders and walls, said Christopher McLeod, director of the California-based Sacred Land Film Project who has documented sacred sites. A study by US geographer Reece Jones from the University of Hawaii found that in 1990 there were 15 border walls in the world - but now there are almost 70. "When people are cut off from their land, from their sacred lands and their ceremonies, then the culture dies. Their spiritual vitality is weakened," McLeod told the Foundation. "A border and a wall are not just symbols. They're very physical insults." —Reuters

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US shale firms miss out on \$70 oil after hedging at \$55

Many top US shale oil producers are missing out on the rally in oil prices to more than \$70 a barrel - because they sold their oil through futures contracts at about \$55 last year when that looked like a good deal. Now, it looks cheap. Those hedged bets will hold down revenues and further frustrate Wall Street investors, who have been disappointed by slow returns from the booming Permian Basin in west Texas. The top 25 shale producers will forego about \$1.7 billion in combined revenues in the second quarter with oil prices at about \$70, according to Denver-based consultancy PetroNerds. Many of those producers used hedges that guaranteed them between \$55 and \$58 a barrel.

Some west Texas producers face a second profit-limiting dynamic: They are forced to cut prices because the region's production is overwhelming its pipeline network, raising transportation costs. West Texas oil currently trades at a discount of \$9 to US benchmark futures, a spread that hit \$12 earlier in the month. Some firms earlier protected themselves from the widening gap with hedges against the discount.

But those that didn't - and also hedged against future prices at, for instance, at \$55 - have been forced to sell barrels at prices in the low-to-mid \$40s. Occidental Petroleum Corp, the biggest oil producer in the Permian, hedged using west Texas crude futures priced at about \$59 a barrel, according to first-quarter regulatory filings. The company did not hedge against the Midland differential. Occidental, which produces about 226,000 barrels per day (bpd) from the Permian, declined to comment on its hedging strategy. It could offset softer drilling revenues with better results from its pipeline unit, which benefits from the rising transportation costs.

Lost upside

Many firms sold their future output at prices in the \$50s last year, hoping to take advantage of short-term rallies to lock in guaranteed income to cover drilling and production costs. Those costs can be \$30 a barrel or less in west Texas, allowing the firms a healthy profit even as they protected themselves against future price slumps. But the cost of that protection is to forego the potential upside of higher prices.

The second problem, with pipeline capacity, stems from surprisingly quick production growth that has pushed pipeline capacity to the limit several months before producers expected, said Michael Tran, global energy strategist at RBC Capital Markets. Producers in west Texas, the nation's largest oilfield, are now pumping more than 3.3 million bpd, compared with 2.4 million bpd a year ago. With storage brimming and pipelines full, producers have had to offer steep discounts to compensate for rising transport costs. The large gap between the US futures price and Permian Basin oil is called the Midland differential - named for the town at the center of the west Texas oilfield boom.

Until recently, firms had not hedged the discount because the price of Midland oil and US futures have historically tracked closely together. The market for such hedging is also less active, compared with futures hedging. But at the end of the first quarter, 14 shale companies had hedged against 100 million barrels of 2019's production in West Texas, compared with just 40 million barrels at the end of the fourth quarter, according to a Reuters analysis of US regulatory filings. "It's really becoming a more widely used phenomenon," said Ben Montalbano, PetroNerds co-founder, who said Midland hedging volume has increased tenfold in the last two years. Coming into this year, Cimarex Energy Co had hedged about 905,000 barrels of 2019 west Texas production at a 47-cent discount to US benchmark futures. That means if US oil futures trade at \$70 a barrel, Cimarex would sell oil at \$69.53 - as opposed to companies that didn't hedge, and are exposed to the entire Midland discount, now at \$9. In the first quarter, Cimarex increased its hedge against the differential to 3.1 million barrels, according to the firm's filings. About half of that, however, was hedged at a less favorable discount of \$4.83 per barrel - effectively selling oil at \$65 if futures are at \$70. Cimarex produced about 50,000 bpd in the Permian in the first quarter. The company did respond to a request for comment.

Pipeline problems

With major pipelines not expected to come online until next year and production increasing, analysts expect the Midland differential to remain high. Occidental, in a recent presentation, said it expects this gap to hit \$20 a barrel by the third quarter. "For the first time in three years, we have not had a pipeline to come on to alleviate the bottleneck," said Tran. Some firms, including Apache Corp and Pioneer Natural Resources, said they don't have to worry about the differential because they have reserved enough space on pipelines to transport their oil. Apache said it has started to hedge its Midland exposure for 2019. Pioneer does not have any such positions, said Rich Dealt, CFO. "Pioneer has firm transportation in place over the next few years to move nearly all of its Permian Basin oil production to the Gulf Coast for export or sale to refineries," Dealt said. — Reuters

Korean-Americans hopeful and wary of Trump-Kim summit

Korean-Americans in the Los Angeles area, which has the largest number of Koreans outside Asia, appeared cautiously optimistic on Tuesday following the historic summit between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. "It was a good meeting," said Yuri Kim as she stood outside the South Korean consulate in Koreatown, holding her two-year-old son in her arms. "It's just the beginning I hope." Kim, who immigrated to the United States four years ago, said she was hopeful the unprecedented summit between the two leaders will lead to the denuclearization of North Korea.

"I don't know much about him but he doesn't commit to big corporations because he's rich, he doesn't have a political background, he doesn't need to persuade his party," she said, referring to Trump. As to Kim Jong Un, she believes that since his meeting with his South Korean counterpart "he's trustable and consistent." Kwang Yoon, a 59-year-old engineer, said the summit marked a "first step" toward a lasting peace. "I'm excited but you can't solve everything in one time," he said. "If you don't (talk), you get into many misunderstandings." The encounter between Trump and Kim Jong Un led to a joint statement in which both countries pledged to pursue the denuclearization of the Korean Peninsula. Trump also said the US would halt military exercises with Seoul-something long sought by Pyongyang, which claims the drills are a rehearsal for invasion.

'I used to hope'

Sean, who was born in North Korea, said he has lived through many failed attempts at peace on the Korean Peninsula and was hopeful this latest bid would be successful. "I used to hope," said the 90-year-old, who refused to give his last name for fear of the regime in Pyongyang. He said he was pinning his hopes on the youthful age of the North Korean leader, who is in his mid-thirties and seems ready "to change his position." For Jeffrey Wang, who works as a cook at a restaurant in Koreatown, Monday's summit was a welcome development though he remains skeptical about the final outcome. "I don't trust Kim Jong Un, we don't trust North Korean people," he said. "We are at war."

North and South Korea remain technically at war after the 1950-53 conflict ended in an armistice that Seoul's then

Ex-spy or genteel diplomat? N Korea's choices for nuclear talks with Pompeo

Two of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's closest aides - a former military intelligence chief and the country's foreign minister - are being talked of as the most likely candidates to negotiate with US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on denuclearization. Whether Kim will plump for his hardline former spy chief Kim Yong Chol or genteel career diplomat, Foreign Minister Ri Yong Ho, could provide a clue on what approach Pyongyang will take at the talks, political analysts and experts on North Korea said. Kim Jong Un vowed in a joint statement at Tuesday's historic summit in Singapore with US President Donald Trump to work for denuclearization, and Trump promised security guarantees for North Korea in exchange.

They offered few details, and agreed to hold talks "at the earliest possible date" to implement the outcomes of the summit with Pompeo leading the US side. But the statement did not specify his North Korean counterpart by name, saying it would be a "relevant, high-level" official. That would restrict the possible candidates to a handful of men trusted by Kim within North Korea's highly opaque leadership circle. Both Kim Yong Chol and Ri accompanied Kim Jong Un to Singapore for the summit and were seated with him at the table during talks that included the two delegations.

Kim Yong Chol's centre-stage presence before and during the recent thaw between the two Koreas and Pyongyang and Washington indicate he is one of the most powerful, closest aides of the young leader. But he has chiefly dealt with inter-Korean relations, rather than nuclear issues, which have mostly been handled by the foreign ministry.

"The absence of the North Korean name in the joint statement, despite the role that Kim Yong Chol has played so far, could mean Kim Jong Un is agonizing over whether he should now charge diplomats to do the job," said Shin Beom-chul, a senior fellow at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies in Seoul.



Commuters read the latest edition of the Rodong Sinmun newspaper showing images of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un meeting with US President Donald Trump during their summit in Singapore, at a news stand on a subway platform of the Pyongyang metro yesterday. — AFP

leader refused to sign and divided the peninsula along the Demilitarized Zone. The conflict has also divided many families that have never been re-united. "It's very painful to have to live like that," Yoon said.

"I hope both Koreans can eventually live together. "It's one nation with the same language, the same culture, the same people." Born in 1928 in what is now North Korea, Sean fled to the South in 1947 with his parents at the age of 18 and settled in the United States in 1978. He said his older sister stayed behind in North Korea.

"She is probably dead," he said, matter-of-factly, adding that there was no way to communicate with her since they

were separated. "So many people have had the same experience," he sighed. "I feel terrible about North Korea," he added. "They have no freedom, they cannot even talk to each other. They cannot trust each other. "I don't know how they can change their policies, educate people." Roy Lee, 18, who was born in the US to Korean immigrants who own a restaurant, said he felt little concerned by the summit though he cared about the safety of his extended family in South Korea. "Uniting Korea would be a good thing but I don't really trust Kim Jong Un because he never talked about uniting Korea before Trump," he said. "And I feel that after Trump backs off, it will be the same thing again." — AFP

Spy chief or diplomat?

Kim Yong Chol, 72, is a four-star general, vice chairman of the Central Committee of the ruling Workers' Party, and director of the United Front Department, which is charge of inter-Korean ties. He visited Trump in Washington in late May, and has met Pompeo four times, twice in Pyongyang, once in New York and then during the summit.

"Kim should be the most likely partner of Pompeo, having worked with him before and knowing well about what Kim Jong Un wants," said Cheong Seong-chang, a North Korea leadership expert at the Sejong Institute south of Seoul. Kim Yong Chol has spent nearly 30 years in the intelligence community, including a stint as chief of the Reconnaissance General Bureau, North Korea's main spy agency. The United States and South Korea blacklisted him for supporting the North's weapons programs in 2010 and 2016, respectively. Seoul accused him of masterminding deadly attacks on a South Korean navy ship and an island in 2010. He was also linked by US intelligence to a devastating cyber attack on Sony Pictures in 2014. North Korea denied any involvement in any of the incidents. A hawkish army commander, he has steered a series of inter-Korean military talks since the late 1980s. He was "best at pressing and humiliating" his opponents during negotiations, according to a retired South Korean diplomat who met him. In 2014, he "stormed out of the room" during military talks when the South demanded an apology for the 2010 attacks, said former South Korean military officials involved in the meeting. "He's known as a hard-liner, as much as Pompeo in Washington, but both people are realists who can make a compromise if necessary," Cheong said.

Westernized, professional

In contrast, Ri Yong Ho is seen as a genteel, soft-spoken career diplomat who is polite and humorous but can also be tough with sharp debating skills. He called Trump "President Evil" at the UN General Assembly last year, but such rhetoric is usually out of character for him, according to former counterparts and colleagues. A fluent English speaker, the 62-year-old Ri has held a number of high-level posts dealing with the West, including as envoy to the now defunct six-party talks aimed at dismantling Pyongyang's nuclear programs.

Following a rare party congress in 2016, Ri was appointed foreign minister and promoted to the party's politburo, the opaque, all-powerful party organ where top state affairs are decided. It was the first time in two decades that a career diplomat was named to the politburo, Cheong said. "It would be reasonable for the foreign ministry that has professional expertise and experiences to take over nuclear talks," said Chun Yung-woo, a former South Korean representative to the



US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo disembarks from his plane as he arrives at Osan Air Base in Pyeongtaek yesterday. — AFP

six-party talks. "The summit's joint statement simply heralded the start of working-level negotiations, where all key, complex issues will be discussed, including the timeline of the North's dismantlement, its verification and corresponding US action."

Another potential negotiator is Ri Su Yong, a former foreign minister who is currently responsible for international affairs at the party. While serving as ambassador to Switzerland, the 78-year-old Ri oversaw the young Kim's European education, which helped him earn the trust of the leader, but he is seen as a long shot compared to the other two. A senior South Korean official, who spoke on condition of anonymity, said the candidate chosen could be a factor in the approach to the negotiations, but not in North Korea's position. "Whoever sits at the negotiating table, any solid, specific decision on denuclearization would be made by Kim Jong Un himself," he said. — Reuters

Business

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NARATHIWAT: Thai women look for shoes at a shop ahead of Eid Al-Fitr celebration on the last week of the holy month of Ramadan in the southern province of Narathiwat. —AFP

Iran supply gap to dominate OPEC

Trump accuses OPEC of driving up oil prices

PARIS: An oil production shortfall in Iran and Venezuela may force OPEC and Russia to decide later this month to open their taps, the International Energy Agency said yesterday. Even if the supply gap, triggered by the return of US sanctions on Iran and a major political crisis in Venezuela, is plugged, the oil market will likely remain vulnerable to disruption next year, the IEA warned.

US President Donald Trump in May announced he would pull out of a landmark 2015 nuclear agreement with Iran that had eased sanctions on the oil giant. Pumped further by global trade war fears, oil prices have since surged to multi-year highs, only to then fall back again somewhat, the IEA said.

Prices peaked in late May, scraping the \$80 per barrel level on the Brent futures contract and \$72.24 on the West Texas Intermediate. Barely recovered from the roller coaster ride of recent weeks, traders are holding their breath for the June 22 meeting of oil ministers from OPEC member states in Vienna. OPEC and Russia decided together in 2016 to cut their supply in order to push prices up following a crash in prices induced by a global crude production glut. But the Paris-based IEA,

echoing statements from oil producers as well as analyst comment in recent weeks, said there may be a change to the so-called Vienna agreement.

OPEC flows were already higher in May, led by Saudi Arabia, the IEA said, adding that the oil kingpin was still in compliance with the Vienna deal caps. Citing "people briefed on the discussions", Bloomberg yesterday said Saudi Arabia has floated several oil output hike plans to fellow cartel members. On the sidelines of the opening match of the World Cup Friday, President Vladimir Putin and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman will meet to discuss oil policy, Bloomberg added.

Lessons from history

However, as previous OPEC meetings have shown, it is impossible to accurately predict the outcome of the high stakes negotiations, with oil giants appearing to play on rumors to move the markets. Sounding a cautious note, the IEA said in its report: "We have looked at a scenario, not a forecast, showing that by the end of next year output from these two countries (Venezuela and Iran) could be 1.5 mb/d (million barrels

per day) lower than it is today." It added: "To make up for the losses, we estimate that Middle East OPEC countries could increase production in fairly short order by about 1.1 mb/d and there could be more output from Russia on top of the increase already built into our 2019 non-OPEC supply numbers."

The IEA nonetheless warned that whatever the outcome of the summit, "the market will be finely balanced next year, and vulnerable to prices rising higher in the event of further disruption". It added: "We support all efforts to minimize supply disruptions that, as history shows us, are not in the interests of either producers or consumers."

The IEA meanwhile revised upwards its estimate for 2018 non-OPEC growth to 2 mb/d, and to 1.7 mb/d in 2019. "The United States shows by far the biggest gain (about 75 percent of the total across 2018 and 2019), but recently this expansion has not been without stress," the report said, referring to a gap in recent weeks between the US and European oil futures contracts. The IEA report comes a day after OPEC warned of "considerable uncertainty as to world oil demand".

Trump accuses OPEC

US President Donald Trump yesterday accused the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries of driving up oil prices, in a fresh swipe at the cartel's agreement to cap production. "Oil prices are too high, OPEC is at it again. Not good!" he wrote on Twitter. Oil prices peaked in late May, hitting the \$80 per barrel ceiling on the Brent futures contract and \$72.24 on the West Texas Intermediate. Traders are holding their breath for the June 22 meeting of oil ministers from OPEC member states in Vienna. In April Saudi Energy Minister Khaled al-Faleh said the global market has the capacity to absorb higher oil prices—a remark that drew a swift reaction from Trump. "With record amounts of Oil all over the place, including the fully loaded ships at sea, Oil prices are artificially Very High! No good and will not be accepted!" Trump tweeted on April 20.

OPEC producers and non-OPEC countries struck a deal in 2016 to trim production by 1.8 million barrels per day to reduce a global glut of oil. The deal, which is due to run out at the end of 2018, has succeeded in boosting oil prices above \$70 a barrel from below \$30 a barrel in early 2016. —AFP

Family Business Council - Gulf welcomes a new chairman

KUWAIT: The Family Business Council - Gulf (FBCG), the leading membership organization for GCC family businesses, has announced the appointment of Omar K Alghanim as its new Chairman of the Board of Directors. Omar K Alghanim will succeed HE Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Ghurair, the founder of the organization who served as Chairman of the board since April 2013. HE Al Ghurair will continue to sit on the board to support the organization and provide advisory support on the strategic direction.

Commenting on the announcement HE Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Ghurair said: "We are proud of the Family Business Council - Gulf's accomplishments over the last five years. With the support of the Board of Directors and FBCG founding members, we have built an organization capable of effectively addressing the challenges of GCC family businesses."

HE Al Ghurair added: "With a clear vision in place, an exciting future lies ahead for the organization. We welcome our new Chairman to continue this journey, and we wish him all the best in shaping the future of FBCG." Omar K Alghanim, CEO of Alghanim Industries and Chairman of Gulf Bank, has served as a board member of FBCG, and



New Chairman of FBCG, Omar Alghanim speaking to the audience.



Omar K Alghanim alongside Abdulaziz Al Ghurair.

has been part of the executive committee of the board since the organization's establishment in 2013.

Omar K Alghanim, Chairman-elect of FBCG Board of Directors, said: "I am honored to have been selected by the FBCG Board of Directors to serve as Chairman, and to work alongside these talented and visionary industry leaders. His Excellency Abdulaziz Abdullah Al Ghurair has left behind a strong and long-lasting legacy, for which we are all grateful. His dedication and leadership has played an instrumental role in successfully launching a productive platform for GCC family businesses. Moving forward, I know we can continue to count on his guidance and support."

Omar K Alghanim added: "We've accomplished a lot

over the past 5 years and we'll be building on these successes as we move ahead. But family businesses represent a significant part of the GCC economy and if our work has taught us anything, it's that there are real challenges. To succeed in our mandate, we will maintain a sharp focus on continuity, collaboration, knowledge sharing and fostering strategic relationships among our members." FBCG champions the prosperity and governance of GCC family businesses and their future generations to continue to serve the GCC economy and society. Key activities of the council are community building to facilitate productive exchange between family businesses, next generation education and development, and family business research and publication.

GBK extends best wishes for Eid Al Fitr

KUWAIT: As per the approved guidelines set by the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), all Gulf Bank branches and its head office will be closed on both Sunday and Monday, 17 and 18 June, and will resume its regular working hours on Tuesday, 19 June 2018. Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank Mr Ahmed Al Ameer said: "Our customers will continue to be served round-the-clock through its dedicated Customer Contact Center, which is reachable by dialing 1805805. On behalf of the bank, I would like to express my appreciation and gratitude to our Customer Contact Center team who spare no effort to ensure our customers are well served and their queries are immediately answered"

Moreover, Gulf Bank's Interactive Teller Machines (ITMs) will be available during the Eid holidays from 10am till 3:30pm in Jabriya, Adan, Fahaaheel (Al Ghanim Electronics), and AlSalam (South Surra). Clients can also place any query using the newly launched WhatsApp service on 65805805 or access the Bank's online portal, (www.e-gulfbank.com) to find out more about the latest products and services; or download the Mobile Banking App's (App store/Android) to monitor accounts and conduct self-service banking transactions, or view its social media channels.



Ahmed Al Ameer

NBK Economic Update

Consumer spending softens in May but remains strong

KUWAIT: NBK's consumer spending index is a monthly indicator developed by the Economic Research Department to track domestic private consumption expenditure behavior. This is the first broad monthly consumer spending index in Kuwait. The May index is the first to be publicly released, following several months of testing.

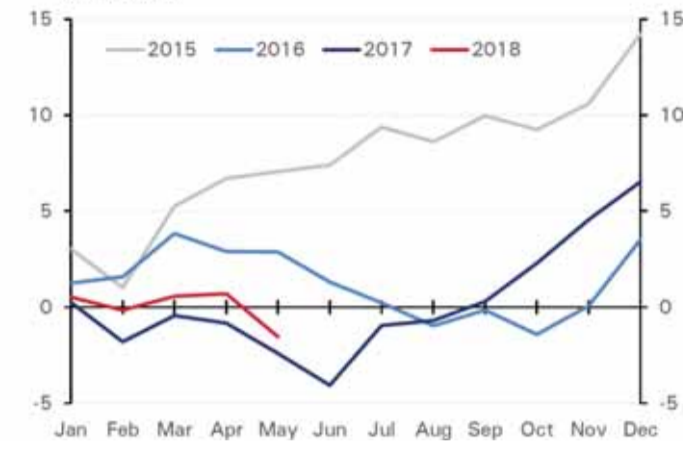
Seasonal factors weighed on consumer spending in May, with softer numbers observed across the board. However, conditions remained strong compared to 2017, with NBK's consumer spending index rising 7.5% year-on-year (y/y), supported by firmer oil prices, improving consumer confidence, and steady employment. Momentum is expected to remain robust throughout 2018.

Spending on durables retreated by 4.2% month-on-month (m/m), pulled down by softer auto sales and furniture purchases ahead of the summer season. The slowdown also coincided with the first two weeks of the holy month of Ramadan, during which the consumption of durables is usually

Chart 1: NBK PCE index (2014=100)



Chart 2: NBK PCE index year-to-date (% change)



subdued. The durables index, however, maintained a good pace of growth relative to last year, settling at a strong 8.9% y/y in May.

Similarly, consumption of services and non-durables slipped in May, by 0.2% m/m and 3.9% m/m, respectively. The declines were also impacted by the start of the holy month (mid-May), as well as the end of the academic year. The services sector continued to register strong growth compared to 2017, with its index up 10.6% y/y in May, while the non-durables index eased to 0.3% y/y, its slowest pace since December. Consumer spending is projected to remain healthy through 2018. However, uncertainty over the future income and employment prospects of expats - following higher expected service and utility fees, as well as the state's efforts to reduce expat employment - may weigh down on consumer spending. Meanwhile, spending by Kuwaiti nationals is expected to remain strong, thanks to low inflation, healthy employment, and higher public spending.

Italy, trade worries bite into German growth forecast

BERLIN: The DIW economic institute has slashed its growth forecast for Germany due to an unexpectedly weak start to 2018 and risks from abroad including concerns about Italy's new government and the escalating trade conflict with the United States. Italy's coalition government comprises anti-establishment parties with a brief to shake up EU institutions while US President Donald Trump has threatened allies with hefty tariffs on car imports in addition to unilaterally imposed metal duties.

The Berlin-based DIW think-tank said it cut its gross domestic product growth forecast for Europe's largest economy by 0.5 percentage points to 1.9 percent this year, and by 0.2 percentage points to 1.7 percent in 2019. "Uncertainty arises mainly from growing concerns about some European countries, mainly Italy, and the possibility of an escalating trade conflict between the United States and the rest of the world," DIW said.

The uncertain business outlook is causing companies worldwide to scale back investments and this is putting the brakes on German export growth, DIW added. "The situation in Italy is causing the fear of a resurgence of the euro zone debt crisis," DIW head Marcel Fratzscher said. "It's a wake-up call for politicians in Europe, especially for the German government, to finally lean into the reform debate for a more crisis-prone Europe. "The proposals and options are on the table, now it's time for action. European nations have to put up a united front, also against Trump and his protectionism," Fratzscher said.

France and Germany, the euro zone's two biggest economies, want to agree a roadmap for European Union reforms by June 19 in order to present later to EU leaders at the June 27-28 summit. French President Emmanuel Macron wants a fund set up that

would help countries facing an economic shock and smooth out divergences among members' economies. But German Chancellor Angela Merkel has been reluctant to commit to anything that could see the transfer of taxpayer funds to other countries, including in the form of a deposit insurance scheme for banks.

Wait-and-see approach

The Economy Ministry said in its monthly report yesterday that Germany's economic upswing was losing some momentum, with the growth outlook clouded by the festering trade dispute and risks linked to Italy's new coalition government. "This is expressing itself in the real economy through a wait-and-see approach, especially when it comes to investments," the ministry added.

The economic upswing is nevertheless set to continue because private consumption remains bullish and exports are still robust due to Germany's highly diversified portfolio of manufacturing products and export markets, the ministry added. Economy Minister Peter Altmaier said on Tuesday the government was sticking to its most recent growth forecasts of 2.3 percent for this year and 2.1 percent for 2019 despite increased trade tensions that surfaced at the Group of Seven summit at weekend in Canada. If the trade conflict between the United States and other countries intensifies, it could negatively impact the global economy and there are indications this is already happening, the head of the World Trade Organization said in an interview. Asked if there was a risk for the global economy, WTO Director-General Roberto Azevedo told German business daily Handelsblatt: "Absolutely. If the trade dispute escalates, there's the risk of a global downturn and we're already seeing signs that this downward process has already started." — AFP

World stocks capped by trade war concerns, central banks

LONDON: World stocks hovered near one-month highs yesterday as an expected US interest rate rise and risks of a fresh outbreak of trade tensions between China and the United States overshadowed a generally benign political and economic backdrop. Wall Street appeared set for a modestly firmer open, potentially building on the previous session's gains, which were fuelled by buoyant mergers and acquisitions activity among media and telecoms firms.

European shares rose too as global company earnings have been revised up, according to Thomson Reuters I/B/E/S. However, assets such as Chinese stocks, European autos and the Mexican peso are under pressure from the risk of protectionist measures from the United States which is preparing to unveil more tariffs of \$50 billion worth of Chinese goods.

And the US Federal Reserve, the European Central Bank and the Bank of Japan all hold policy meetings this week, with the Fed expected to announce its second rate rise of 2018. Equity markets are "marking time and finding it difficult to make upward progress despite reasonably good economic data", said Andrew Milligan, head of global strategy at Aberdeen Standard Investments.

"We are entering three days of important central bank decisions. Markets have pretty much priced what (the banks) will do and it is clear we are in a monetary policy tightening cycle." These issues eroded slim gains made around Tuesday's summit between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The meeting has soothed some geo-political fears, as a joint statement pledged to work towards the "denuclearization" of the Korean Peninsula.

MSCI's all-country share index was flat, recovering slightly from deeper losses caused by a half percent fall in non-Japan Asian equities. European stocks too were 0.3 percent higher after a weak start, led by a 1.4 percent rise in the tech index and an 80 percent leap in Dutch fintech firm Adyen on its first day of trading. An



index of auto stocks lagged, however, with gains of 0.2 percent.

Milligan downplayed the impact of US trade measures on global commerce but noted "the direction of travel is not positive, which is why equities are not making as much progress and investor sentiment is not more positive." Investors see trade wars as the biggest market risk, a closely watched survey from Bank of America Merrill Lynch (BAML) showed. It showed investors bullish on equities but still holding high levels of cash in portfolios—a clear sign of wariness. In a reminder of the danger of trade disputes, shares in Chinese telecommunications giant ZTE Corp fell as much as 41.5 percent, wiping \$3 billion off its market value, as it resumed trade after agreeing to pay up to \$1.4 billion in penalties to the US government.

Its Shenzhen shares fell by their 10 percent limit, dragging down mainland Chinese shares around 1 percent. The Mexican and Canadian currencies, remained under pressure from trade war fears, the former hitting 16-month lows against the US dollar.

Policy shifts

Investors see central bank policy mistakes as the second-biggest risk for markets, the BAML poll showed. Projections from the Fed's March meeting suggest a benchmark rate of 2.1 percent at end of 2018. That implies a total of three rate rises this year. But some reckon four increases are possible. "The focus is on how many times the Fed will

raise rates this year and next and how much beyond the levels it considers as neutral to the economy, or what they call the longer-run rates," said Shuji Shirota, head of macro economic strategy group at HSBC Securities in Tokyo.

As the Fed meeting approached, the dollar traded flat against a basket of currencies giving up some earlier gains but stayed near three-week highs versus the yen. It firmed sharply against some emerging currencies—the Turkish lira fell one percent towards recent record lows. The euro eased off last week's three-week high of \$1.1840 but remained underpinned by expectations the ECB will mention plans to wind up its stimulus and even hint at the timing of its first interest rate rise when it meets today.

However, Italian bond yields fell further with two-year yields down 14 bps to below 1 percent after EU affairs minister Paolo Savona, considered a eurosceptic, said the euro was "indispensable". Such comments have soothed worries about Italy's euro membership, but analysts say the government's high-spending plans could boost yields again once the relief rally ebbs. "In the longer term, they need to do something different to bring the deficit under control, not just pay lip service towards the euro," Commerzbank strategist Christoph Rieger said. Britain's pound and bond yields slipped as data showing subdued inflation checked expectations for an interest rate rise this year. — Reuters



LONDON: Chief executive of Pimlico Plumbers, Charlie Mullins speaks to the media outside the Supreme Court. — AFP

UK top court makes landmark ruling on 'gig economy' plumber

LONDON: Britain's Supreme Court yesterday ruled that a plumber employed in the so-called gig economy had "worker" status in a landmark case that could have major implications for the booming sector. The country's highest court decided unanimously that Gary Smith was a "worker" for Pimlico Plumbers for nearly six years from 2005, even though his contract described him as a "self-employed operative".

"Although the contract did provide him with elements of operational and financial independence, Mr Smith's services to the company's customers were marketed through the company," said judge Nicholas Wilson, in rejecting the appeal by Pimlico Plumbers. The ruling allows Smith to pursue a claim of unfair dismissal after he suffered a heart attack, and opens up the whole gig economy to claims by those on flexible contracts that they should also receive benefits afforded to those with worker status, including annual leave.

The case follows a similar ruling in November, when an employment tribunal said that drivers for US ride-hailing company Uber were workers, not self-employed. Uber is appealing the ruling, with the case now likely to go to the Court of Appeal. Smith argues that he was unfairly dismissed after trying to reduce his hours following a 2011 heart attack, but Pimlico Plumbers responded that he was self-employed, therefore had no right to make a claim.

A lower court earlier ruled that Smith was a worker because he was required to use the firm's van and was obliged to do a minimum number of hours a week, a decision upheld by the Supreme Court. Pimlico Plumbers chief executive Charlie Mullins called the decision "terrible". "They had an opportunity to rectify our out-of-date employment rights and they bottled it," he said outside court. "The case is not over. I will be talking to my lawyers about where we go from here. It was a terrible decision." — AFP

Greece says decisions on new bond issue after Eurogroup

BRUSSELS: The Greek Government could discuss the timing of a possible new bond issue after next week's meeting of euro zone finance ministers which is expected to decide on debt relief measures for Athens, the economy minister said. Heavily indebted Greece, shut out of bond markets in 2010, has gone to the markets twice over the last 12 months in a bid to build a cash buffer that could reassure investors after its third bailout programme ends in August.

"All our efforts are focused on the Eurogroup of the 21st (of June) where we expect to have an agreement on debt relief," Greece's Alternate

Minister of Economy and Development, Alexis Charitisis, told a news conference yesterday in Brussels. Asked whether Greece could issue new bonds before the end of its bailout programme, he said: "Any other discussions happen after the 21st". The Eurogroup of euro zone finance ministers will discuss possible new debt relief measures for Greece the meeting in Luxembourg. EU officials have repeatedly said next week's meeting will be crucial to seal Greece's financial future, as decisions will need to be made on the use of about 40 billion euros (\$47 billion) that are still unspent under the 86-billion-euro euro

zone-funded bailout programme which expires on Aug. 20. Officials are considering several options to reduce debt servicing costs for Athens, including an extension of maturities and grace periods of up to 15 years on some 130 billion euros of loans issued to Greece under the second bailout. They are also considering a buy-out of expensive loans worth more than 20 billion euros from the International Monetary Fund and euro zone central banks due over the next decade. They would be replaced with cheaper loans from the European Stability Mechanism, the euro zone bailout fund. In exchange for accepting strict oversight of the implementation of structural reforms, including on tax and pensions, Greece could also get next week new loans of about 11 billion euros, a senior Eurogroup official said yesterday. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	302.590
Canadian Dollar	233.615
Sterling Pound	406.055
Euro	358.270
Swiss Frank	300.630
Bahrain Dinar	804.700
UAE Dirhams	82.785
Qatari Riyals	84.020
Saudi Riyals	81.585
Jordanian Dinar	428.065
Egyptian Pound	16.968
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.902
Indian Rupees	4.488
Pakistani Rupees	2.526
Bangladesh Taka	3.622
Philippines Peso	5.750
Cyprus pound	18.005
Japanese Yen	3.740
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.808
Malaysian Ringgit	76.740
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	47.720
Thai Bhat	10.420
Turkish Lira	67.210

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL		
Europe			Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017
British Pound	0.397409	0.411309	Japanese Yen	0.002654
Czech Korune	0.005808	0.015108	Korean Won	0.000269
Danish Krone	0.043634	0.048634	Malaysian Ringgit	0.072255
Euro	0.347959	0.361659	Nepalese Rupee	0.002657
Georgian Lari	0.122260	0.122260	Pakistan Rupee	0.001951
Hungarian 0.001019	0.001209		Philippine Peso	0.005590
Norwegian Krone	0.033542	0.038742	Singapore Dollar	0.221200
Romanian Leu	0.059267	0.076117	Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001607
Russian ruble	0.004790	0.004790	Taiwan	0.010012
Slovakia	0.009037	0.019037	Thai Baht	0.009132
Swedish Krona	0.030951	0.035951		
Swiss Franc	0.299991	0.310991	Arab	
			Bahraini Dinar	0.796958
Australasia			Egyptian Pound	0.014301
Australian Dollar	0.220849	0.232849	Iranian Rial	0.000084
New Zealand Dollar	0.205857	0.215357	Iraqi Dinar	0.000196
			Jordanian Dinar	0.422825
America			Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000
Canadian Dollar	0.226961	0.2365961	Lebanese Pound	0.000150
US Dollars	0.298950	0.303350	Moroccan Dirhams	0.020511
US Dollars Mint	0.299450	0.303350	Omani Riyal	0.780825
			Qatar Riyal	0.078950
Asia			Saudi Riyal	0.079727
Bangladesh Taka	0.003142	0.003943	Syrian Pound	0.001284
Chinese Yuan	0.045890	0.049390	Tunisian Dinar	0.113337
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036522	0.039272	Turkish Lira	0.060834
Indian Rupee	0.003958	0.004730	UAE Dirhams	0.081084
			Yemeni Riyal	0.000985

Business

KAMCO Oil Market Report

Oil prices remain range bound with all eyes on OPEC meeting

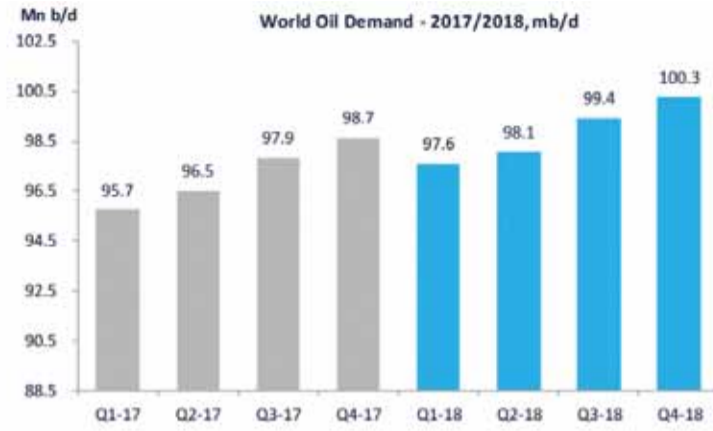
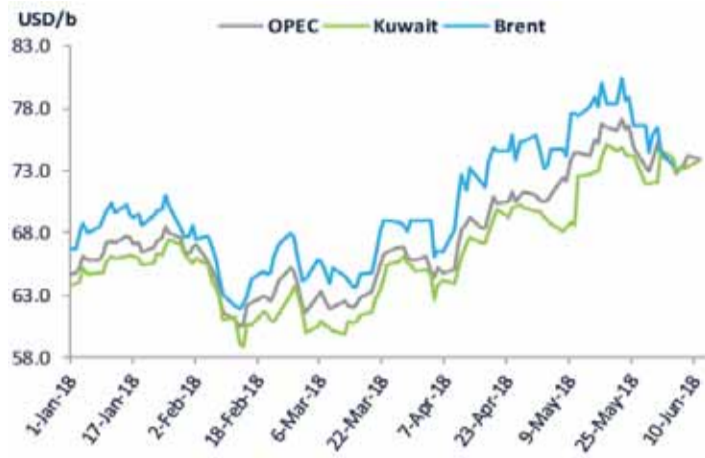
KUWAIT: Oil prices remained elevated above the USD 70/b mark but receded from multi-year high levels on speculations that Saudi Arabia and Russia may raise output by as much as 1 mb/d to fill the output gap created by a decline in oil production in Venezuela and the proposed sanctions on Iran. However, although the production rate did witness a surge by the aforementioned producers, the increase was not large enough as was being speculated by the market resulting in a pause in oil price decline.

According to Bloomberg data, Saudi Arabia raised oil production rate by 110 tb/d during May-18 while a Russian news agency reported that the country's production had hit 11.1 mb/d in early June-18. OPEC's monthly report also pointed to a largely flat production during May-18 with an increase in production by Saudi Arabia, Algeria and Iraq offset by declining production by Nigeria, Venezuela and Libya. The much touted drop in Iranian oil production was not visible during the month as the country's production increased marginally during the month.

The oil market also saw a decline in volatility in the past week with all eyes now on the OPEC meeting to be held next week. Analysts would be looking on whether the group decides to raise production before the official deadline which ends in 2018, although there has been no indication from any of the producers in this regard. In addition, there should also be cues on the future course of the agreement beyond the current pact when the countries decide to gradually lift production rates or whether the agreement would take a completely new form.

The start of June-18 also witnessed several developments on the international geopolitical front. The G7 meet saw participating countries disagreeing on trade that could affect economic activity and oil demand. However, these concerns were brushed off after the successful meeting between the US President and his North Korean counterpart, sending positive signals across markets. In addition, interest rate decisions by the US Fed and the ECB this week would be keenly looked at by oil watchers as a change in strategy by the ECB and rising rates in the US have long term implications for currency including the USD in addition to oil prices.

Meanwhile, supply side concerns continued to haunt the oil market as US EIA reported a surprise weekly climb in domestic oil inventories, including the most recent API report that pointed to an inventory increase of 830 tb/d. According to EIA report, domestic US crude



production increased by 31 tb/d to a weekly record of 10.8 mb/d during the week ended 1-Jun-18. Furthermore, according to data from Baker Hughes, oil rig count in the US increased for the third consecutive week adding one rig and taking the count to 862 oil rigs, the highest level since March-15. US drillers have added oil rigs in nine out of the past ten weeks with the most recent increase coming despite an oil price decline of 8% from the recent peak.

Oil Prices

Spot Brent crude closed above USD 80/b on two trading sessions last month but failed to sustain the momentum. Prices declined by almost 8% from the recent peaks on speculations of oversupply in the oil market, given speculations that Saudi Arabia and Russia may decide to raise production. A number of recent reports have highlighted the pressure on OPEC+ producers to raise output coming from the US and Russia followed by denials from members from within the OPEC, although no official comment has been made on the subject by relevant producers. Average OPEC crude prices during May-18 increased by 8.3%, the biggest monthly increase since November-17. The increase in Kuwait crude was in line with OPEC crude increase at 8.3% while Brent crude price increased at a slightly lower pace of 7.3%.

Meanwhile, the EIA, in its latest Short Term Energy Outlook, raised US crude output forecast for the current year from 10.72 mb/d to 10.79 mb/d, in line with the level seen recently, with higher price forecast for WTI and Brent at USD 64.53/b and USD 71.06/b, respectively. IEA also released its first demand outlook for 2019 and expects a growth of 1.4 mb/d, backed by economic growth and stable oil prices. The agency raised their non-OPEC

supply forecast to 2 mb/d and expect a growth of 1.7 mb/d next year with 75% growth coming due to higher US production. IEA said that oil demand in 2018 was characterized by strong growth in 1H-18, partly due to colder weather conditions in the Northern Hemisphere that would be partly offset by an expected slowdown during 2H-18.

The increase in US crude was also reflected in the capital expenditure figures forecasted by Rystad Energy in its latest report. According to the report, non-OPEC capex (including exploration) increased by 6% in 2017 after declining by more than a quarter in the previous two years. For 2018, capex is expected to reach USD 290 Bn, a y-o-y increase of USD 14 Bn or 5%. Investments in North American tight oil, primarily in US, is expected to see the strongest growth of 17% in 2018 and is estimated to reach USD 110 Bn.

March-18 recorded positive growth including a higher industrial production index that resulted in higher diesel demand, positive trucking activities, positive housing start index as well as rising jet fuel demand. Vehicle sales were the only indicator that showed a declining trend with a fall of 12% for the month of March-18, although gasoline demand remained positive. Preliminary data for April-18 and May-18 also showed continued rise in oil demand in the US.

On the other hand, Mexico and Canada recorded a softer demand trend based on the latest available data, that offset the overall OECD Americas oil demand numbers. In OECD Europe, data for April-18 showed positive momentum after a marginal decline in March-18. Oil requirements showed solid growth in the European Big 4 countries based on preliminary data for April-18, with UK being the only country to show a decline. Overall,

Q1-18 oil demand in the region remained upbeat backed by continuing strong industrial activity in Germany, France, the UK, Turkey and Spain.

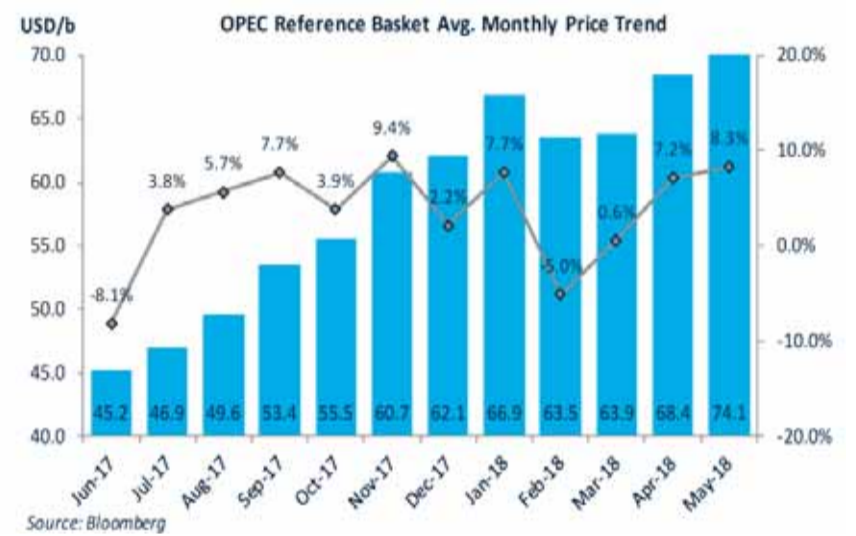
In the non-OECD group, there was an upward revision to demand data for Other Asia and China for Q1-18 and Q2-18 that was offset by downward revisions in Latin America and the Middle East. China continued to show strong demand trends in April-18, while reduction in subsidy and substitution programs in the Middle East affected demand for oil in the region.

World oil demand growth estimates for 2017 was kept unchanged at 1.65 mb/d and is estimated to have averaged at 97.2 mb/d. Demand expectations for 2018 was also kept unchanged from previous month and is expected to grow at the same pace as in 2017 by 1.65 mb/d to average at 98.85 mb/d. Nevertheless,

there were internal adjustments in demand figures by individual countries with upward revisions in the OECD region by around 0.02 mb/d offset by downward revisions of an equivalent quantity in the non-OECD region.

The upward revision in the OECD came after better-than-expected demand data from the US led by new ethane capacity additions during Q1-18 that led to higher petrochemical feedstock demand, especially light distillates. This resulted in an overall increase in OECD Americas demand by 0.07 mb/d during the quarter. Oil demand data for the US continues to show positive trend. Almost all the indicators for the month of March-18 recorded positive growth including a higher industrial production index that resulted in higher diesel demand, positive trucking activities, positive housing start index as well as rising jet fuel demand. Vehicle sales were the only indicator that showed a declining trend with a fall of 12% for the month of March-18, although gasoline demand remained positive. Preliminary data for April-18 and May-18 also showed continued rise in oil demand in the US.

On the other hand, Mexico and Canada recorded a softer demand trend based on the latest available data, that offset the overall OECD Americas oil demand numbers. In OECD Europe, data for April-18 showed positive momentum after a marginal decline in March-18. Oil requirements showed solid growth in the European Big 4 countries based on preliminary data for April-18, with UK being the only country to show a decline. Overall, Q1-18 oil demand in the region remained upbeat backed by continuing strong industrial activity in Germany, France, the UK, Turkey and Spain.



Investors challenge WPP over Sorrell's departure

LONDON: The world's biggest advertising agency WPP faced a shareholder revolt over its handling of the departure of former CEO Martin Sorrell after large votes against the chairman and the company remuneration report. The most famous advertising executive in the world, Sorrell quit the marketing giant he built from scratch following an allegation of personal misconduct in April.

Nearly 30 percent of WPP shareholders failed to back its executive pay proposal yesterday,

while almost 17 percent of shareholder votes declined to support the re-election of Roberto Quarta as chairman. Sorrell was allowed to leave with share awards worth millions of pounds intact and without a non-compete clause, rekindling arguments that have dogged previous annual meetings - that WPP paid Sorrell too much and did not prepare for his departure. Neither Sorrell nor the company have revealed the nature of the complaint, but Sorrell

- who has already launched a new venture - has denied any wrongdoing. Quarta said at the beginning of the group's annual meeting that the process the board followed in response to the allegation against Sorrell was robust from a governance and legal perspective.

He said share awards due in future to Sorrell pre-dated the current board's involvement and that he accepted that some investors found the situation unsatisfactory. "I know that questions remain, but there is simply nothing further we can legally disclose," Quarta said. Quarta told investors that the hunt for a new chief executive was well advanced and moving ahead rapidly. Shares in WPP traded up 0.7 percent at 1142 GMT, slightly ahead of Britain's bluechip index

which was trading 0.4 percent higher. WPP is the world's largest ad group, employing more than 200,000 staff in agencies including JWT, Ogilvy and Finsbury to serve clients such as Ford, Vodafone and P&G. In a trading update published to coincide with the annual meeting, WPP reported four-month net sales which were marginally up, an improvement on the 0.1 percent fall in net sales in the first quarter. The group has been hit by the might of Google and Facebook in online advertising, the advance of consultants like Accenture in the sector and by pressures on big ad spenders such as P&G and Unilever which have all hit the bottom line.

It is not the first time investors have expressed opposition to WPP's pay proposals. Sorrell has

earned around 200 million pounds (\$268 million) in the last five years alone, and in 2016, a third of WPP's investors refused to back his 70 million pound pay package. Sorrell's last award scheme could potentially pay out 20 million pounds, but it is expected to come in well below that due to the recent underperformance of the group.

Quarta has said the two chief operating officers running the company, Mark Read and Andrew Scott, are reviewing the strategy, sparking speculation that the group could sell assets such as its market research arm. His departure has led to speculation that WPP could even be broken up but the three executives running the business have said that does not make sense. — AFP

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Business

Honda Alghanim displays youth cars CRV and CIVIC at the Scientific Center

Renowned for their high-value and dependability

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment to further improve its outreach to the youth and offer them the best-in-class cars that meet their lifestyles and fulfill their aspirations, Honda Alghanim collaborated with the Scientific Center during Kuwait's premiere of "Solo: A Star Wars Story", displaying two of its cars, Honda CRV and Honda Civic, at the IMAX theater entrance.

Renowned for their high-value and dependability that earned them Kuwaiti customers' trust, the Honda CRV and Civic were put on show during the event. The Honda CRV is widely acknowledged as one of the best SUVs combining sheer elegance, state-of-the-art specifications, and powerful performance, thereby becoming a practical and smart choice for youths looking to invest on their vehicles. As for the Honda Civic, the car has acquired in Kuwait a long-standing trust built over the years turning it to the first vehicle that comes across customers' mind, especially the next generation, when searching for a modern car offering an exciting drive, elevated features, and advanced safety levels.

Honda Alghanim's participation in the movie's premiere stems from the company's continuous interest in reaching all different categories of youths, learning about their various interests and lifestyles, and thus presenting them with cars that meet their tastes ranging from sedans to four-wheel drives. Furthermore, the



company offers all latest specifications and modern technologies that promise to meet their expectations and confer the uniqueness and innovation that characterize their generation.

Acclaimed by youths looking for thrill, excitement, and action movies, the "Solo: A Star Wars Story" premiere gathered fans of all ages of the Star Wars series,

which took place at Kuwait's largest IMAX screen, located at The Scientific Center. With 300-square-meter screen, the country's only IMAX laser projection system, and a 12 channel sound system, fans experienced "Solo" unlike anywhere else in Kuwait.

The premiere was attended by movie fans and Star Wars fans alike, and included a limited collection display



including signed light sabers from the actors who played Luke Skywalker, Darth Vader, and Darth Maul. Alghanim Motors, the exclusive distributor of Honda automobiles, motorcycles, power products, and marine products in Kuwait, is committed to providing customers with flexible payment solutions and efficient and cost-effective services.



VIVA strikes deal with OSN to provide WAWO

KUWAIT: VIVA Kuwait, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, has signed a partnership agreement with OSN - the MENA region's leading entertainment network - to provide its customers with access to WAWO, the video streaming entertainment platform, powered by OSN. Under the deal, VIVA Kuwait customers are eligible for a one-month free trial to WAWO when they sign up by texting the word "WAWO" to 55664 and follow the instructions on their phone. After the one-month free trial has expired customers will automatically remain subscribed to WAWO for KD3 a month unless they opt out.

Available on mobile devices and tablets (iOS/Android), Samsung and LG Smart TVs, PCs and laptops through the WAWO app, website - wawo.com, and Chromecast, WAWO combines a unique blend of live and On Demand TV, including English and Arabic family and kids shows, hit TV series, blockbuster movies and sports, which can be viewed anytime, anywhere, with no annual contract.

Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director of VIVA Kuwait, said: "Our partnership with OSN is part of our continued focus and commitment of providing relevance and value to our customers. Augmented by our customers' trust in us, VIVA in cooperation with OSN strives to create innovative solutions that address the needs of customers."

Francesco Perta, VP Telecom Partnerships, OSN, said: "Our partnership with VIVA Kuwait for WAWO is testament to both companies' shared values of providing customers with great entertainment and unbeatable value. Subscribing to WAWO is just a text message away and we are confident that once customers join they will be hooked on WAWO's mix of live and On Demand TV, un-missable movies, series and sporting action which can be enjoyed across multiple devices anytime, anywhere."

Since its launch WAWO has gone from strength to strength, boosting world-class content from OSN's exclusive partnerships with major entertainment studios like HBO, Disney, Nickelodeon, DreamWorks, NBC Universal and Paramount. With WAWO customers can access hit Western series such as Game of Thrones and Westworld and un-missable Arabic series featuring top Arabic stars from across the region.

WAWO also offers 26 live TV channels and the ability to watch shows On Demand. Also the home of ASLL, the region's first licensing ecosystem for content creators to produce and broadcast their original work, WAWO offers more than 40 hours of Arabic and English short-form content, made in the Middle East. With such a vast array of exclusive content available for customers to browse and enjoy at their convenience, WAWO offers great entertainment and unbeatable value.

KIB successfully closes a US\$ 250m Syndicated Murabaha Financing Facility

KUWAIT: KIB has successfully closed a US\$ 250 million 3-year Syndicated Murabaha Financing Facility with a consortium of international and local banks, which was over-subscribed. Standard Chartered Bank was the sole Coordinating Bank, while First Abu Dhabi Bank acted as the Investment Agent Bank for the facility.

Commenting on the successful closure of the transaction, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of KIB, said: "The strong participation by various banks in this syndicated facility is a testament of our solid position, reaffirming KIB's reputation and trust within the international financial arena. We are proud of the confidence that is placed in our ability and expertise to tap the capital markets with competitive deals. The resources garnered through the deal are in line with the Bank's strategy to diversify its funding sources required for pursuing our asset growth plans."

On this occasion, Mohamed El Saka, Deputy Chief Executive Officer & Acting Chief Executive Officer of KIB said: "The competitive terms of this financing is a clear indication of the high confidence and strong reputation KIB enjoys in the banking industry across the region. The success of this syndication is a definite endorsement of KIB's strong track record, financial posi-

tion and growth prospects. Due to strong market appetite, the facility was significantly oversubscribed but we decided to cap it at US\$ 250 Million. This new facility will support KIB's strategic objectives to strengthen and confirm our position as a leading Islamic bank in Kuwait. We would like to thank all banks who participated in this deal for their trust and continued support and look forward to further strengthening our relationship."



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah



Huawei's AI chipsets for a faster smartphone experience

KUWAIT: For 30 years, Huawei embraced innovation to build a digital world with a connected population. Believing in the power of research and development, the company invested its R&D capabilities to drive innovations and pave the way for an intelligent future.

Huawei marked the beginning of a new era of smartphone development when it introduced Mate 10 Pro that brought to the future to life with the first ever truly intelligent device. Powered by an AI processor, the Mate 10 Series smartphones, launched in 2017, are a testament to the company's groundbreaking innovations. Featuring Kirin 970, the smartphone offers an unparalleled performance, taking the "Born Fast, Stay Fast" to a new dimension. This intelligent smartphone also optimizes its own performance by predicting its most efficient mode to deliver the ultimate power and speed.

In-house chipsets for a smoother user experience

A smartphone's chipset is the "core" or engine that keeps it running efficiently and safely over its lifetime, and offers a better Android experience for users. Aiming at offering users a smoother and faster smartphone experience, Huawei leveraged its R&D capabilities to design its own chipsets; doing so gives the company full control of both the hardware and the software in its smartphones. Huawei's pursuit of perfection is also reflected in its uncompromising insistence on product innovation. The Kirin970 chipset, powering the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series is an engine that still purrs like new even 18 months after purchase.

AI-powered chipsets that learn users' behaviors

Unlike any other smartphones, the HUAWEI Mate 10 series is intelligent as it comes with the world's first artificial intelligence processor to offer us a faster, stronger and

seamless experience. Upon their release, the HUAWEI Mate 10 Series smartphones were hailed as the first smartphones with an AI chip. The AI Kirin 970 powering the smartphones helped learn users' behaviors, capture gallery-like photographs and intelligently manage battery consumption.

An intelligent phone that offers you a seamless multi-tasking experience

We live in the age of multi-tasking, and as digital natives, we're all wired to multi-task. In just one day, we can switch to social apps around 21 times a day and to email around 74 times. Sporting the Kirin 970, the most powerful chip ever made by Huawei, the Huawei Mate 10 Series delivers incredibly fast and brings amazing features to the business table. It's the multi-tasking partner that brings you an unparalleled experience.

Higher Benchmark for smartphone photography

The AI-powered Kirin 970 raises the bar of smartphone photography from the stage of "visible" and "clear" to "intelligent." With AI, the chipset enables smartphones to sense the real world and identify the surrounding environment, human faces and objects. The Kirin 970 brings users a new dual camera experience by adopting the latest dual camera technology, with upgraded visual features.

Huawei Mate Series empowers you

HUAWEI Mate Series' ability to understand behaviors empowers it to operate at peak performance levels. By knowing how apps are used, when they're used and what the system needs to do to run them at efficiency, Huawei reduced abnormal app launch rates by 80 percent. Not only does Huawei Mate 10 Series ensure your new phone is unparalleled in terms of speed at day one; it also ensures smooth performance over the lifespan of your device. Finally, to prove that its AI processor is capable of performing machine learning tasks, Huawei transformed a Porsche Panamera into a driverless vehicle that understands its surroundings. Huawei has used technology already available in its smartphones to demonstrate its superior functionality and ability to stand up to even the most advanced technologies.

Burgan Bank working hours during holidays

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank yesterday announced that its airport branch will continue its operations during the upcoming Eid Al Fitr holiday. The branch will be open from 8:00 am to 10:30 pm, in its continuous efforts to

conveniently provide services to its clients during public holidays. In addition, the Avenues branch will also be open to customers on Sunday and Monday 17-18 June 2018 from 10:00 am to 1:00 pm and from 5:00 pm to 8:00 pm. The contact center will also be at customers' service over the clock at 1804080, as well as many alternative channels to ensure customers enjoy services throughout the holiday period. On this occasion, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the public on the coming of Eid Al Fitr.

KFH continues to serve customers through airport branch

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announced that it is ready to fulfill its commitments towards its customers during the holiday. The bank will continue to offer a plethora of services for its customers in Kuwait and overseas through its website that offers over 150 eservices, in addition to the alternative channels, XTM and the 24/7 branch at the Kuwait International Airport.

XTM service allows customers to conduct their transactions and perform many banking services in minutes in a very modern way using advanced tools through visual and audio communication options; conference call with KFH staff who are always available and ready to answer all customers' questions. This service is available 24/7 at Avenues mall and Al Fayhaa Branch.



Moreover, the Call Center will be ready to receive calls from clients throughout the day, and will work relentlessly to overcome any problems that might face clients in Kuwait and overseas. In addition, KFH continues to offer its IVR service on 1803333 that is available throughout the day. Clients can call to make account transactions, ask for financial transaction, pay bills, purchase cards to recharge cell phone, and other services.

Further, clients can take advantage of KFH's ATM machines (Shamel) that are available at most of the branches in vital locations. KFH offers Mobi Baitok vehicles that serve as mobile branches that allow people to deposit and withdraw cash in addition to other banking transactions. KFH has additional technical privileges, such as allowing customers to conduct several banking transactions through smart phones on kfonline application.



Technology

Cloud play on the horizon in changing video game world

Microsoft has a powerful platform for hosting computing in the cloud

LOS ANGELES: Console makers long at the center of the video game universe are adapting to an exploding constellation of ways to play, with the cloud looming on the horizon. Microsoft, Nintendo, and Sony remained stars, with rival Xbox, PlayStation, and Switch gaming hardware respectively, at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) show floor that opened in Los Angeles on Tuesday.

But the premier industry gathering was very much focused on games themselves, and the idea they can be played as a service hosted in the internet cloud using an array of devices from smartphones to personal computers. The annual E3 event "occurs against a backdrop of disruption in the console market," according to IHS Markit games technology research director Piers Harding-Rolls.

"As the market becomes more digitally enabled and service based, console companies and publishers are starting to map out their longer-term strategies including the building out of subscription cloud gaming services," Harding-Rolls said. Companies interested in cloud gaming see it as a way to reach broader audiences, adding to console businesses instead of taking away from them, according to the analyst. "I see consoles being around for the foreseeable future," Harding-Rolls said.



Video game world shifts to Microsoft's strengths

play," Xbox team leader Phil Spencer said at an E3 briefing. The Redmond, Washington-based technology veteran has also invested heavily in machine learning, naming its Cortana digital assistant after an artificial intelligence character in blockbuster Xbox video game "Halo."

Spencer also said that Microsoft is working on a cloud service for streaming console-quality games to internet-linked devices. "If you agree that the eventual future of games consumption is through cloud gaming services, then those companies with a strong position in cloud are likely to be best placed to benefit from the transition," Harding-Rolls said. "In this context, Microsoft's cloud division gives the company a natural advantage when trying to build a profitable business."

Sony and Microsoft have each put out word they are working on next-generation consoles, but planned capabilities have yet to be revealed. PlayStation 4 has dominated the current console generation, briskly outselling Xbox One. But if the video game world shifts to Microsoft's strengths, its new competition in play could become cloud and AI titans such as Amazon, Google, Tencent, and Alibaba, according to Harding-Rolls.

Learning from mobile

The video game industry is seeing its biggest investment ever, with the three big consoles "very healthy," according to Electronic Software Association chief executive Michael Gallagher. The ESA trade group organizes E3, with 60,000 industry insiders and gamers from some 100 countries expected to attend the three-day gathering. Video game industry revenue worldwide tallied about \$116 billion last year, according to the ESA.



LOS ANGELES: Game enthusiasts and industry personnel gather outside of the Microsoft Theater for the 'Xbox' experience during the Electronic Entertainment Expo E3. —AFP

Console makers have been taking lessons from mobile games, building online communities of players who provide feedback; stream play; subscribe to services, and spend money on digital content such as dance moves or funky clothing for characters. "Mobile has been a fantastic growth point for the industry," Gallagher said. Console video game titan Bethesda is unabashedly bridging the divide between console and mobile play with versions of blockbusters "Fallout" and "Elder Scrolls" for play on smartphones or tablets.

"I can't wait to play it," Gallagher said of "Elder Scrolls: Blades" that will be available free for iPhones

or Android-powered mobile devices when it is released later this year. Another sign of console-quality play making its way to mobile devices came in the form of telecom giant AT&T showing off ultra high-speed 5G wireless data capabilities on the E3 show floor. Super-fast internet service is seen as key to rich, seamless game play. "Exponential increases in computing power, storage and speed will lead to the streaming of realistic, systemic, densely populated and persistent game worlds to any screen," said Yves Guillemot, chief executive of French video game powerhouse Ubisoft. —AFP

London hopes for bright tech future despite Brexit

LONDON: London has a bright tech future post-Brexit working closely with other European capitals but the government should open up more to immigration, London Mayor Sadiq Khan said. Launching London Tech Week, dubbed Europe's largest festival of technology and innovation by its organisers, Khan said in an interview that London must "collaborate" with other European hubs regardless of Britain's future exit from the European Union.

Almost three weeks after French President Emmanuel Macron hosted talks with 60 tech leaders during a Paris sector fair, including Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, London Tech Week is delivering more than 200 demonstrations spread out across the capital and bringing together 50,000 participants.

"One of the things about London's future is that we have to work closely with our partners across Europe," Khan told AFP on the sidelines of this week's event. "I love Paris, I love Berlin, love Barcelona, love Frankfurt, other cities across Europe... We shouldn't see each other as competitors, always competing. Of course sometimes we do compete but also we should be collaborating, working closer together," the mayor added.

London 'open to talent'

He said London would remain a welcoming destination despite Brexit, in order to continue a long tradition of attracting talent. "London's openness will always be one of our strengths, our diversity and so if you live in France or live in Germany or live in Poland or live in Italy or live in Spain, or around the world, and you want to fulfill your potential we'll still going to be a welcoming place," he said.

In a note of caution, however, Khan called for changes to Britain's visa rules. "The visa route for non-EU is very clunky.... But also we've got to make it easier for talented people from the EU to come to London." As part of London Tech Week, the government on Wednesday announced the creation of 1,600 new jobs



LONDON: London Mayor Sadiq Khan (C) attends the launch event of London Tech Week, at the Francis Crick Institute. —AFP

and £2.3 billion (\$3.1 billion, 2.6 billion euros) of investment into the UK technological economy from the private sector.

"The measures we are announcing... will allow innovative British start-ups to invest in their future, and in the UK, by hiring more skilled people, expanding their business and exporting their expertise across the world," Prime Minister Theresa May said in a statement. The government also plans to create a so-called Start-Up Visa for entrepreneurs. "This will replace a visa route which was exclusively for graduates, opening it up to talented business founders," the statement added.

According to May's Conservative government, British tech businesses last year attracted \$7.8 billion compared with France and Germany's combined total

of \$6.0 billion and almost double the UK amount in 2016. "London has always been a place open to talent. For one thousand years, even before the European Union," Khan said. "That's not going to change. You can come here to study, to be a tourist, to work, to invest."

Khan, who backed Britain remaining in the EU in the 2016 referendum, is hopeful that the country can ride potential Brexit storms. A post-Brexit transition period to allow companies and people to adapt has been agreed with the EU in principle until 2020 and Khan said it could extend even further. "The good news is that the transition period is quite a long way off... We're not going to fall off a cliff edge in March 2019, it will go on to at least December 2020 and maybe longer," he said. —AFP

found that the top 10 account holders held 5.96 percent of the bitcoins. Experts cautioned that the statistics should be taken with a pinch of salt, however, as several individuals could be behind a single account and one person could hold several accounts.

'Whales' with power?

In a 24-hour period between Monday and Tuesday, the 100 biggest bitcoin transactions out of 200,000 accounted for 24 percent of the money volumes—an unimaginable level of concentration compared to other markets. "In the currency market for example it's such a huge market with so many transactions in a day that a pure actor can't have any influence on a market," Craig Erlam, an analyst for Oanda, a currency trading platform, told AFP.

Big bitcoin players, by contrast, can hold a lot of sway over the market. To try and prevent excessive falls in the value of the currency, observers believe that the "whales" may be checking with each other first before putting in major orders, leading to suspicions of fraud in this unregulated market. US authorities in May opened a criminal investigation into possible market manipulation of bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies, suspecting traders of "spoofing"—putting in false orders and quickly withdrawing them to move the currency. But Aaron Brown, former director of AQR Capital Management, who runs a bitcoin fund, said the role of "whales" is being exaggerated.



He admitted that a coordinated sale of bitcoin by the biggest accounts could cause the value of the currency to plunge but said that the risk was theoretical and that major historical investors in the currency have a strong sense of community. Since the end of 2017, the concentration of bitcoins has decreased, according to a study by Chainalysis, a think tank.

Several long-term investors have sold their bitcoins and a new type of player has entered the scene—speculators, who tend to hold fewer bitcoins but carry out more transactions. "The supply of bitcoin available for trading has increased by 57 percent since December 2017," the Chainalysis study found. —AFP

Dixons Carphone suffers cyber attack on customer data

LONDON: British mobile phone and electrical retailer Dixons Carphone has become the victim of a major cyber attack for the second time in three years after discovering unauthorized access to its payment card data. Shares in Dixons Carphone, which issued a profit warning last month, fell as much as 6.4 percent yesterday, taking year-on-year losses to 37 percent. "We have taken action to close off this access and have no evidence it is continuing. We have no evidence to date of any fraudulent use of the data as result of these incidents," the company said.

It said an investigation, which started last week, indicated there was an attempt, going back to July last year, to compromise data on 5.9 million credit cards in one of the processing systems of Currys PC World and Dixons Travel stores. It said 5.8 million of these cards had chip and pin protection and the data accessed contained neither pin codes, card verification values nor any authentication data that would enable cardholder identification or purchases to be made.

However, it said 105,000 non-EU issued payment cards which do not have chip and pin protection had been compromised. Dixons Carphone said it had immediately notified the relevant card companies so that they could protect customers. It said it had found no evidence of any fraud on these cards as a result of this incident.

The group said it had also found that 1.2 million records containing non-financial personal data, such as names, addresses or email addresses, had been accessed. It said there was no evidence of fraud here either. Dixons Carphone informed Britain's data protection regulator the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO), as well as the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and the police.

The ICO said it was liaising with the National Cyber Security Centre, the FCA and other agencies to determine the impact on customers. The group's Carphone Warehouse division suffered a data breach in 2015 and in February this year was fined a record matching 400,000 pounds (\$533,240) by the ICO. It paid 320,000 pounds as there was a 20 percent reduction for early payment. It said since the 2015 attack it had worked extensively with cyber security experts to upgrade its security systems. In 2016 the ICO fined broadband provider TalkTalk 400,000 pounds for security failings that allowed hackers to launch a cyber-attack in 2015.

'Disappointed and sorry'

"We are extremely disappointed and sorry for any upset this may cause," Dixons Carphone CEO Alex Baldock said. "The protection of our data has to be at the heart of our business, and we've fallen short here." Baldock joined Dixons Carphone in April and last month the group warned on profits and said it would have to close shops, wiping more than 500 million pounds off its stock market value. Russ Mould, investment director at AJ Bell, said the cyber attack could undermine consumer confidence in the retailer. —Reuters

Bitcoin 'whales' pulling cryptocurrency strings

LONDON: Bitcoin, the star of the cryptocurrency world, is widely seen as a free-wheeling tool as open as the internet itself. But analysts have cast doubt on the veracity of that perception, highlighting that the bulk of bitcoin is in fact heavily concentrated in the hands of a powerful few. Some 1,000 bitcoin holders-out of a total 11 million-hold some 35.4 percent of currency, according to BitInfoCharts.

These bitcoin "whales"—a word popularly used for big money players in financial markets—"literally control the currency," said Bob McDowall, an expert in cryptocurrencies. They can "dictate monetary policy, which is normally the function of a central bank or a government", he said. Unlike central bank-issued denominations, virtual currencies are produced, or "mined," by banks of computers solving complex algorithms and freely traded online.

The other key difference with typical currencies is that the number of bitcoin in existence can never exceed 21 million. There are currently some 17 million bitcoins in circulation. Bitcoin's surge in value from a few cents to a peak in December 2017 of \$19,500 turned some of its first investors into billionaires. The BitInfoCharts study also

Health

Bend it like Modi: Indian PM trots and treads in fitness video

Experts warn Indians against exercising outdoors in New Delhi

NEW DELHI: Narendra Modi, whose supporters boast of his physical prowess and indifference to sleep, has shared the secrets to his morning fitness regimen in a video where the Indian premier thrusts a staff, walks backwards and flexes over a boulder. Modi spruiked the "refreshing and rejuvenating" benefits of his exercise workout in a video posted online yesterday that also included a meditative stroll over a special path "inspired" by nature. It follows a trend of homemade motivational fitness videos from prominent Indians, including adored cricket captain Virat Kohli, trying to tackle obesity and poor health in the country of 1.25 billion.

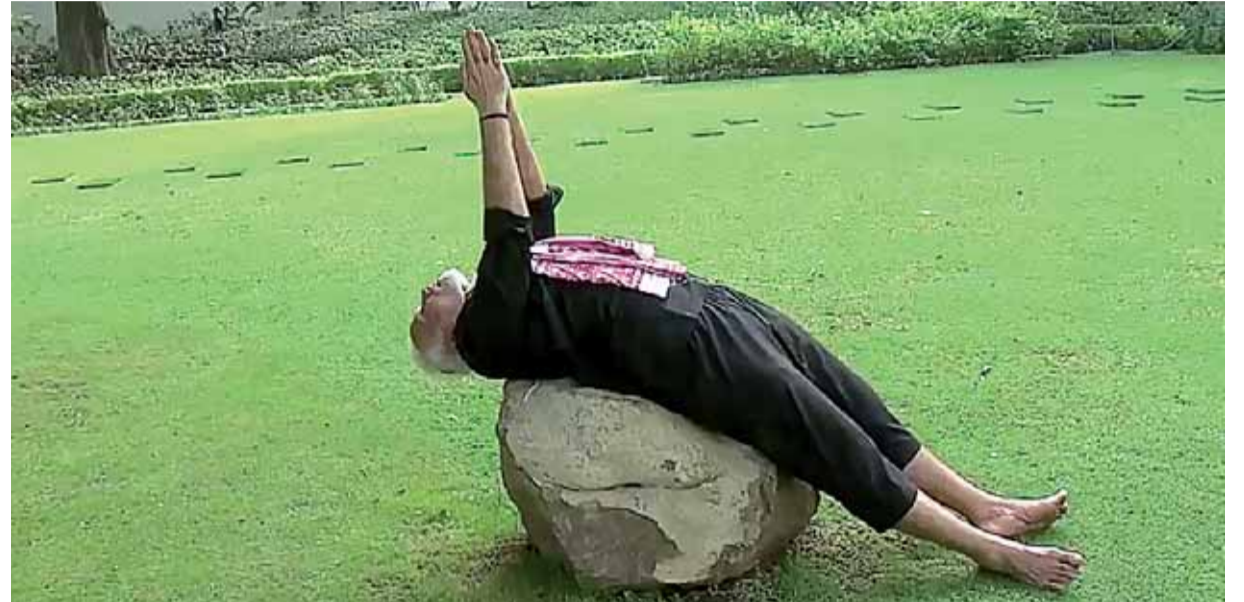
In the latest addition Modi, 67, implores Indians to follow his example in a two minute clip shot in the lush garden of his New Delhi residence. "Apart from yoga, I walk on a track inspired by the Panchtatvas or five elements of nature—Prithvi (earth), Jal (water), Agni (fire), Vayu (air), Aakash (sky)." Modi says in the video viewed nearly 200,000 times within hours of being posted. "This is extremely refreshing and rejuvenating. I also practise breathing exercises."

In one clip Modi, clad in a black tracksuit, walks backwards over a treaded lawn with his hands clasped in a prayer pose, before stretching over a large boulder. He then proceeds to a specially-designed path around

a large tree, balancing on its edges before walking over pebbles, wood and water, as he pumps a wooden staff from side to side. The teetotal vegetarian then stands before a Buddha statue in his garden, breathing through one nostril. Later he sits on a rock, sharply taking quick breaths in a meditative pose.

The sexagenarian premier claims he operates on little sleep and his devotees have bragged on his impressive physique, including most notably a rumoured 56-inch chest. A passionate yoga enthusiast, Modi has also touted the benefits of the ancient Indian practice via a cartoon avatar of himself performing sun salutations and downward dogs. Government ministers were quick to heap praise on Modi for his "unparalleled energy levels". But others were less impressed.

"Majority of middle-class citizens live amidst #stink from open defecation by #slumdweller & smoke from waste burning & fuelwood," posted one Twitter user, Naresh Minocha. Despite the tranquility depicted in Modi's backyard, experts often warn Indians against exercising outdoors in New Delhi and other major cities due to terrible air quality. Levels of harmful airborne pollutants in the capital reached 14 times the World Health Organization safe level on Wednesday, according to the US Embassy website, as Modi's video went viral. —AFP



NEW DELHI: This screenshot taken from a video posted on India Prime Minister twitter handle, shows Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi performing Yoga following a fitness challenge in New Delhi. —AFP

Raccoon conquers skyscraper; Americans breathe easier

WASHINGTON: America breathed a sigh of relief yesterday after a scruffy brown raccoon was captured following a perilous climb up a 23-storey building in the northern state of Minnesota. Thousands of Twitter users followed the escapades of the raccoon on Tuesday as it slowly inched up the side of the UBS Plaza building in St. Paul, Minnesota. Minnesota Public Radio reporters and occupants of the building posted pictures and updates on the animal-dubbed the #MPRRaccoon-as it scaled the rough surface of the sky-

scraper in true Spider-Man style. A local television station provided a livestream of the anxiety-producing journey of the animal, which apparently had been scared by construction workers at the building's base. Hollywood director James Gunn offered to donate \$1,000 to charity to anyone who saved the raccoon. "I can't handle this," Gunn, the director of the two "Guardians of the Galaxy" movies, tweeted. "Poor dude." (The "Guardians" movies, incidentally, feature a brash, devil-may-care character known as Rocket Raccoon.)

The Minnesota raccoon paused at several points on narrow window ledges during its climb, even taking naps before continuing onward. Well after midnight—when most Americans had gone to sleep—the raccoon reached the roof and was captured in a trap set up by wildlife control officials. Building managers tweeted a picture of the raccoon in a cage Wednesday morning. "After a delicious meal of soft cat food, #mprraccoon has been caught and will be picked up by Wildlife Management. Goodbye friend!" it said. —AFP

WHO chief says Ebola outbreak in DR Congo 'not over'

KINSHASA: WHO chief Tedros Adhanom on Tuesday called for tighter monitoring as he wrapped up a visit to Ebola-hit DR Congo, saying the outbreak was far from over despite the number of cases stabilizing in recent weeks. The outbreak—the ninth in the Democratic Republic of Congo since 1976 — was declared on May 8 and has claimed 27 lives. "On the basis of statistics, we can say that the situation has stabilized but the war is not over, we must reinforce vigilance and surveil-

lance," he said at the end of a three-day assessment visit. "One case in an urban setting can set off an outbreak," he warned.

His comments come after the WHO and NGOs since May 21 began helping DRC immunize front-line workers with a vaccine that has shown to be highly effective in trials, though it still awaits regulatory approval. The WHO chief said more than 2,000 people had been vaccinated in the Ebola-hit Equateur province in the sprawling country's north west. In Mbandaka, a city of 1.2 million people, "there have been no new cases since May 12," he said, adding that there were no new cases since May 13 at Bikoro—about 100 kilometers away—where the outbreak was first detected. On Thursday the WHO gave a total of 59 confirmed, probable and suspected Ebola cases, of which 27 people had died with one new case confirmed on June 6. —AFP

CLINIC PAGE



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What's On

Escape for a memorable Eid-Al-Fitr at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa

Enjoy a memorable staycation in the luxurious surroundings of Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel and Spa this Eid-Al-Fitr. Kuwait's idyllic resort strives to exceed guests' expectations at every moment and is offering an extensive range of activities to ensure the entire family members capitalize on a unique holiday experience.

Garden Cafe is the place to be for a stunning Eid celebration. The family-friendly restaurant will host a special brunch on all three days of Eid featuring irresistible treats and special creations for mini guests including cotton candy, chocolate favorites and more.

Take a moment to think of yourself and visit the Hotel's award-winning Talise Spa, with a diverse menu of treatments, using the latest products from the world's most respected high-end health and wellness brands. There's no need to feel guilty as the children are well entertained. Sinbad's Kids Club offers the perfect escape where they can interact with others in a range of fun games and activities, both indoor and outdoor, while those aged 7 to 14 can revel in their own specially tailored the Scene Teens Club, featuring a special gaming zone or relax in the private movie theater. The resort offers additional activities such as kids' yoga and pool Zumba, board games, tug-of-war, flag race, kite flying, volleyball, basketball, tennis, nail spa, arts and crafts with many more games planned for every day fun!



Essam El-Hadary, goalkeeper and captain of the Egyptian National Football team (left) and Hector Raul Cuper, the Argentinian coach of the National Egyptian football team.



Alternatively, maximize the quality time altogether and hit the resort's unique private beach for some non-motorized water sports action such as kayaking, diving, snorkeling and sunset cruises for all family members.

Sponsored by VISA, the Worldwide Partner of FIFA World Cup TM, the idyllic resort will also be screening

all the action from the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia in Garden Cafe Tent and Arabesque Cafe with special football-themed promotions.

"Eid-Al-Fitr is a special time for families to gather, get away from everything, relax and have fun. As leaders of luxury hospitality, we recognize that and we

strive to create unique experiences for all our guests. We look forward to making this Eid particularly memorable for all our guests," said General Manager, Savino Leone. He added: "We also have the addition of being able to screen live all the football action to our guests and our venues will surely be popular."



Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah, AHC Chairman with Monjed Salha, the General Manager of ibis Kuwait Salmiya.



New Nestle Fitness recipe further supports women's nutritional needs

Nestle Middle East is raising Whole Grain content to over 50 percent while adding nutritious oats and more B-vitamins to its popular Nestle FITNESS Cereal, to support women's specific nutritional needs and help them to #keepgoing.

The new recipe also involves a further 9 percent reduction in sugar, coming three years after the launch of another reformulation that already reduced sugar by up to 30 percent without

adding artificial sweeteners, all while maintaining great taste and fortification with iron, calcium and folate, among other micronutrients for a nutritious start to the day.

"This nutrition revolution started with our kids' cereal recipes launched in 2012 and continues with perpetual efforts to further reduce sugar in all our products and address evolving nutritional recommendations and consumer tastes," said Olivier Degiorgis, Head of Nestle

Breakfast Cereals Business in the Middle East.

The move is in line with Nestle commitments to society to "Help reduce the risk of under-nutrition through micronutrient fortification," further "Reduce salt, sugar, and saturated fats in our products," and "Increase vegetables, fibre-rich grains, pulses, nuts and seeds in our products." The new products are available in Chocolate, Honey and Almond, Fruits, or Original Cereal variants.

ibis Kuwait Salmiya hosts Ramadan ghabqa event

Action Real Estate Company (AREC) and Action Hotels Company (AHC) hosted Ghabqa gathering at the Olivo Restaurant - ibis Kuwait Salmiya hotel, under the patronage of Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah. The memorable evening during the holy month of Ramadan, was graced by the presence of Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah. The event was attended by the Senior Management of AREC & AHC represented by Rawaf Ibrahim Bourisli - the General Manager as well as all subsidiaries companies.

The Management Team of Ibis Hotel welcomed the esteemed guests to the venue, where the head chef and his team had prepared an assortment of traditional Ramadan favorites, with a flair of specialty cuisine and in-house secret recipes. The event also marked the 10th anniversary celebration of ibis Kuwait

Salmiya hotel, the first international economy hotel in Kuwait which opened in March 2008. Ibis Hotel Salmiya represents a whole new chapter in the hospitality industry in Kuwait with the introduction of the business class hotel in the market adding great value and innovation within the industry and economy in general.

Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah, thanked the invitees for their attendance and wished all a blessed Ramadan, and also recognized the contribution of great people behind the success of many enterprises.

Monjed Salha, the General Manager of ibis Kuwait Salmiya, remarked that "the hotel have always delivered exceptional service to all guests in the past decade and will continue to be one of the most preferred hotel in the city, offering great hospitality."



Rawaf Ibrahim Bourisli, AREC General Manager cut the cake with AREC management team and Monjed Salha, General Manager of ibis Kuwait Salmiya.

Paintball ready for adventure lovers in Eid

Paintball Company, which specializes in peaceful war games, announced that it has completed the development and modernization of its facilities, including provision of a new tools and equipment for the first time in Kuwait. Ahmad Sinjab, the marketing and sales manager of the company, said in a press statement that the company's modernization and development included gun games and toys that are modern, exciting, environmentally friendly and harmless. The company also aims to provide new and renewable services to meet the needs of people seeking interesting and exciting peaceful games. He added that the 'Paintball' are games that combine excitement and the art of shooting and hunting by special military game weapons that launch colored balls.

Sinjab added that the stadiums were equipped with standards that match the style of global paintball stadiums. New castles were installed around all sides of the stadiums to protect the player, also increasing the number of referees to referee the matches between the competitors. Also, we provided trainers to train customers on playing skills and competition. As well as the addition of new air tools with higher features and better in terms of speed and accuracy so that the player can



control them easily. In addition to the multiplicity of air weapons to suit all age groups from the age of 7 years and above, referring to the allocation of playgrounds for families to exercise family members in this kind of competitive games. Also, he added that the company is ready to receive enthusiasts and lovers of adventures during the days of Eid Al-Fitr and battle and competitive rounds in the stadiums with modern equipment, which allow players to discover their talents and their own abilities and strive to win over competitors on the battlefield.

Sinjab said that "what is impressive in such games is that they need intellectual skills through which players can plan and use their skills in dribbling and trick to defeat the

opposing team and win. This is where participants come together as a team whose members agree on a plan to beat the opposing team." He invited adventure enthusiasts to the competition in the company's stadiums alongside the Kuwait Towers.

Sinjab says that Paintball, the leader company in competitive and unique games in Kuwait, has proved to be an ideal place for individuals and groups to discover their own skills and ability to plan, compete and face many challenges to win the game in a lively and stimulating environment that makes competition interesting. Paintball Company has confirmed its readiness to receive an increasing numbers of adventure seekers through games that people of all ages can share with each other.

Al-Sayer celebrate girgian at Kuwait palliative care

Al-Sayer celebrated special occasion of girgian with children and their families at Kuwait Palliative Care in an atmosphere filled with happiness. Al-Sayer and FirstStep volunteers visited Kuwait Palliative Care Centre, with an aim to share the joy and blessings of Ramadan with the patients who suffer from chronic and non-curable diseases. The event delighted the children and their families by distributing girgian gifts and engaged them by organizing many fun activities including games, live performance, traditional dancing, face painting and henna sessions. According to Eng Nehad Ali, Deputy Group Manager



Corporate Excellence "During the holy month of Ramadan we are encouraging the spirit of social giving by sharing time and attention to the well-deserved to create positivity among the children, parents and elderly citizens who are in their critical period of life time."

"In line with the Kuwaiti heritage, Al-Sayer is keen to organize CSR initiatives to support the various sectors of the society to set a good example by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural, social and health initiatives to enhance the bonding between individuals and society" added Ali.

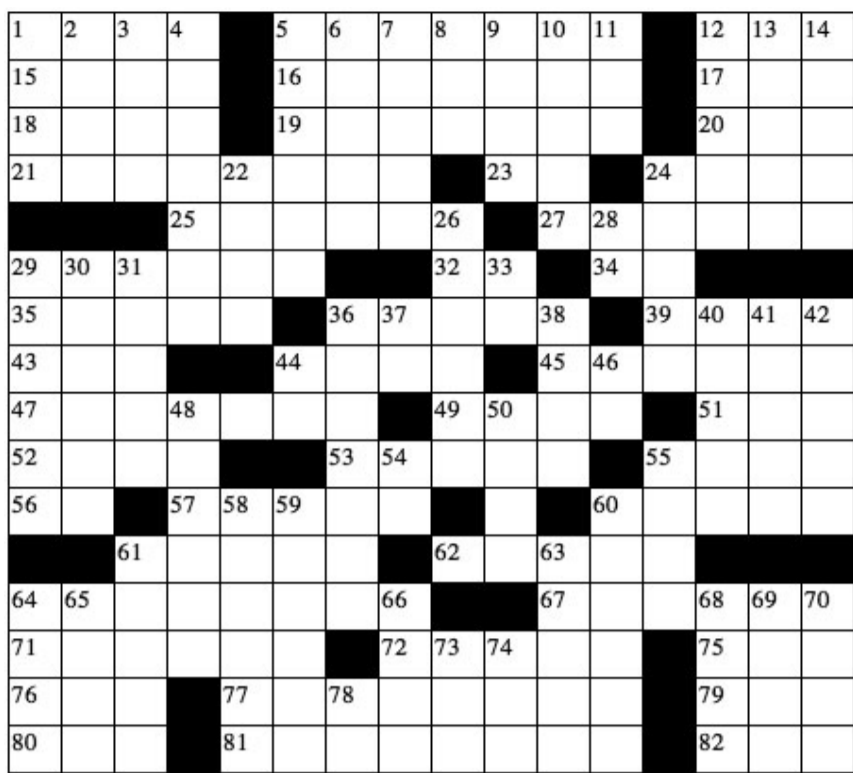
Graduation



Congratulations Tamer Nassr Tamer on your success. I'm proud of your achievement. Good luck.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1935



ACROSS

- 1. Informal terms for clothing.
5. Someone who expresses contempt or indignation by uttering a snorting sound.
12. The quantity contained in a keg.
15. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
16. Small tree or shrub of New Zealand having a profusion of axillary clusters of honey-scented paper-white flowers and whose bark is used for cordage.
17. 100 avos equal 1 pataca.
18. Amphetamine used in the form of a crystalline hydrochloride.
19. Uttered in a monotonous cadence or rhythm as in chanting.
20. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.
21. Covered with or as if with a glossy and usually brightly colored coating.
23. The district occupied entirely by the city of Washington.
25. A permanent council of the United Nations.
27. Chinese Taoist sect claiming to follow the teaching of Lao-tzu but also incorporating pantheism and sorcery.
29. (Judaism) A Jewish festival (traditionally 8 days) celebrating the exodus of the Israelites from Egypt.
32. A radioactive element of the actinoid series.
34. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity.
35. Take away the weapons from.
39. (Greek mythology) Greek god of war.
43. Government agency created in 1974 to license and regulate nuclear power plants.
45. The capital of Bahrain.
47. Tropical American insectivorous bird having a long sharp bill and iridescent green or bronze plumage.
49. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
51. A sharp hand gesture (resembling a blow).
52. Highly excited.
53. Realistic Norwegian author who wrote plays on social and political themes (1828-1906).
56. A light strong brittle gray toxic bivalent metallic element.
57. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
62. The capital and chief port and largest city of Senegal.
64. A city in northwestern Mexico near the California border.
67. A gradual decline (in size or strength or power or number).
71. A port city in southwestern Iran.
72. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
75. The cry made by sheep.
76. Mythical bird of prey having enormous size and strength.
77. A recognition of meritorious service.
79. A run that is the result of the batter's performance.
80. (prefix) Opposite or opposing or neutralizing.
81. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
82. Of a dull grayish brown to brownish gray color.

- 6. The fifth of the seven canonical hours.
7. Be or do something to a greater degree.
8. The 17th letter of the Greek alphabet.
9. Have a tendency or disposition to do or be something.
10. Upright in position or posture.
11. Having any of numerous bright or strong colors reminiscent of the color of blood or cherries or tomatoes or rubies.
12. A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
13. United States anatomist who identified four pituitary hormones and discovered vitamin E (1882-1971).
14. (Jewish folklore) An artificially created human being that is given life by supernatural means.
22. Electronic warfare undertaken to insure effective friendly use of the electromagnetic spectrum in spite of the enemy's use of electronic warfare.
24. Antipsychotic drug (trade name Mobern) used in the treatment of schizophrenia.
26. Soft decayed area in a tooth.
28. A public promotion of some product or service.
30. Put into a rage.
31. United States anarchist (born in Italy) who with Bartolomeo Vanzetti was convicted of murder and in spite of world-wide protest was executed (1891-1927).
33. Being one hundred more than three hundred.
36. Trade name for an oral contraceptive containing norethindrone and mestranol.
37. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
38. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
40. The seventh month of the Moslem calendar.
41. (computer science) A system of world-wide electronic communication in which a computer user can compose a message at one terminal that is generated at the recipient's terminal when he logs in.
42. Dark somewhat brownish black n l.
44. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
46. An associate degree in nursing.
48. A lizard of the family Agamidae.
50. A Russian river.
54. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
55. An aggressive remark directed at a person like a missile and intended to have a telling effect.
58. Leave a camp.
59. A genus of orb-weaving spiders including common garden spiders and barn spiders.
60. An esoteric or occult matter that is traditionally secret.
61. Marked by strict and particular and complete accordance with fact.
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
65. Very dark black.
66. (computer science) A graphic symbol (usually a simple picture) that denotes a program or a command or a data file or a concept in a graphical user interface.
68. A United Nations agency created to assist developing nations by loans guaranteed by member governments.
69. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
70. A quantity that is added.
73. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
74. Being one more than two.
78. A form of address for a man.

DOWN

- 1. A (usually) large and scholarly book.
2. Affording unobstructed entrance and exit.
3. Footwear usually with wooden soles.
4. (slang) A batch of things that go together.
5. The second great battle of the American Civil War (1862).

Yesterday's Solution

Grid for Yesterday's Solution crossword puzzle.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Even though you may be feeling fiercely independent today you may want to remember to keep an open mind and be receptive to the input of others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today may be one of those days you feel as if your spinning your wheels. You may feel as if you are in constant motion and emotionally stressed but no closer to your goal than when you started.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today your focus seems drawn to your desire for love. You are in a very creative mood and this is a great time to express that. Whether wood working or maybe even slinging some paint on a canvas, the brighter the better.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Love and expressing all the deep emotions you have for others becomes very important to you. You may be feeling a need to be needed. Never doubt that you are.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today finds you open to the feelings and opinions of others. You may be more willing than usual to hear others out who have a total different approach to life.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Today may be a great day to mend fences and break barriers. Seeing things more clearly and realizing you are more sensitive today could bring great opportunity to work through some issues with someone close to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may find that you are entering a phase where your needs and focus seem to change. You find yourself in a very loving mood. This may be nothing more than a newfound love for life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

What a great day to be alive! You are just that. Full of life and energy. You may find others are drawn to you today. You may feel much support for your ideas.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may be feeling a desire to be needed. A need to be loved and to love in return. Someone may turn to you today with problem and trust you with very private information about their life.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Let no one dull your shine today. You are on fire. Today finds you flirty, flashy, and confident. Others are drawn to you. You may be yearning to develop a close relationship with someone special.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Feeding off of emotions of those close to you, rather than your own may hinder your creativity. Avoid confrontation and pursue that which sets your soul on fire.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Just because it is easy doesn't make it right in your eyes. You may find yourself in a situation and asked to do something that would be beneficial to you in your workplace, but it goes against your beliefs.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Pizza

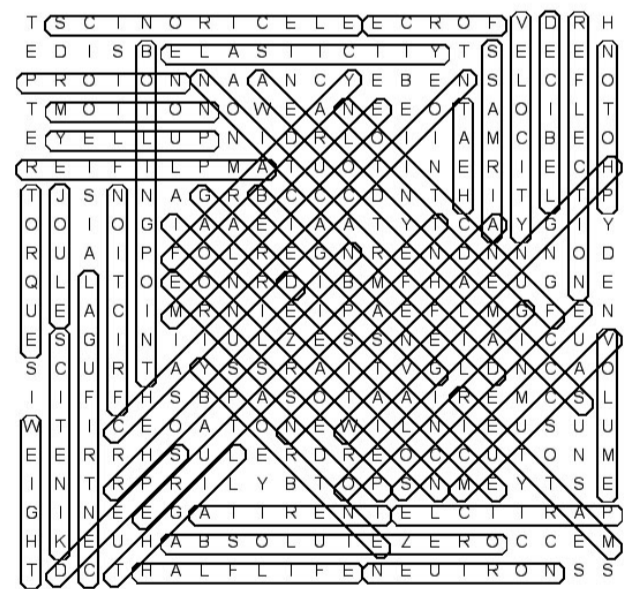
Find and circle all of the pizza ingredients and toppings that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell four additional pizza toppings.

Wordsearch grid for Pizza puzzle.

- ARTICHOKE HEARTS
ASIAGO
ASPARAGUS
BACON
BANANA PEPPERS
BASIL
BELL PEPPERS
BLACK OLIVES
BROCCOLI
CRUST
EGGPLANT
FETA
GARLIC
GOAT CHEESE
GOUDA
GREEN OLIVES
GROUND BEEF
HAM
JALAPENOS
MONTEREY JACK
MOZZARELLA
MUSHROOMS
OLIVE OIL
ONIONS
OYSTERS
PARMESAN
PEPPERONI
PROVOLONE
RICOTTA
SALAMI
SAUSAGE
SHRIMP
SPINACH
TOMATO SAUCE
TOMATOES
ZUCCHINI

Yesterday's Solution

Physics 2



- ABSOLUTE ZERO
ADHESION
AERODYNAMICS
AIR MASS
AMPLIFIER
BIG BANG
BOILING POINT
CENTRIFUGAL FUNCTION
CHAIN REACTION
DECIBEL
DIFFRACTION
DISTANCE
DRAG
ELASTICITY
ELECTRONICS
ENTROPY
FARADAY
FORCE
FRICITION
GALILEO
HALF LIFE
HEAT
INERTIA
IONIZATION
JOULE
KINETICS
LIGHT
MATTER
MOLECULE
MOTION
NEUTRON
NIELS BOHR
PARTICLE
PHOTON
PRESSURE
PROTON
PULLEY
REFLECTION
SCIENCE
SPEED
TEMPERATURE
TORQUE
VACUUM
VELOCITY
VOLUME
WAVELENGTH
WEIGHT

The hidden message is: THE DISTANCE BETWEEN INSANITY AND GENIUS IS MEASURED ONLY BY SUCCESS

Daily SuDoku

4x4 grid for Daily SuDoku puzzle.

Yesterday's Solution

4x4 grid for Yesterday's Solution SuDoku puzzle.

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JUNE 14, 2018



Pakistani residents shop at a market during holy month of Ramadan in Lahore. Muslims around the world are preparing to celebrate the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, which marks the end of the fasting month of Ramadan. — AFP

Grande's engagement ring from Davidson cost almost \$100,000

Ariana Grande's "big" engagement ring from Pete Davidson came with an extra big price tag. According to TMZ, Grande's ring was custom-made by Manhattan-based jeweler Greg Yuna and it cost Davidson \$93,000 thanks to its size and VVS1 clarity. The jeweler seemingly confirmed that he crafted the ring by posting the news on his Instagram story yesterday.

The pear-shaped diamond is surrounded by halo of smaller diamonds and is set on a diamond platinum band. Grande appears to have been

wearing the sparkler since her appearance at iHeartRadio's Wango Tango concert on June 2 in Los Angeles. Davidson was behind-the-scenes at the event supporting his now fiancée as news of their relationship began to surface - and he raved about her "lit" set. According to this Twitter bio, Yuna, who also goes by Mr Flawless, "runs" Manhattan's Diamond District. His clients include rapper 50 Cent and NFL star Victor Cruz. "I don't like gaudy," the jeweler said in a 2015 interview with the New York Post, adding, "I don't skimp out. I handpick the stones. I know

what it costs to do something right."

And he definitely didn't "skimp out" on the pop star's impressive new bling. The "No Tears Left to Cry" singer, 24, and the 24-year-old Saturday Night Live star surprised just about everyone with their engagement news Monday, as Davidson popped the question after only a few weeks of dating. The couple - who began dating shortly after Grande's breakup from rapper Mac Miller in May - have been using social media to express their affection for one another. Davidson also confirmed that he had split from his longtime girlfriend Cazzie David in mid-May.

"It's a recent engagement," a source close to the couple told PEOPLE. "They're just two people who found love quickly and make each other happy all the time. They both started talking about it this past weekend. It's nothing they've been hiding." The couple is currently celebrating their whirlwind engagement in Disneyland, and we wouldn't be surprised if Grande has a little extra security to protect her new bling. — people.com



This combination of pictures shows Singer Ariana Grande and Pete Davidson. — AFP

Demi Moore replaces Sharon Stone in Corporate Animals



Demi Moore

Demi Moore has joined the cast of 'Corporate Animals'. The 55-year-old actress will star alongside the likes of Jessica Williams and Ed Helms in the upcoming comedy film, which is being directed by Patrick Brice. Demi will play the role of Lucy, the CEO of America's leading supplier of edible cutlery, according to Deadline. In the movie, Lucy asks her staff to attend a corporate team-building caving weekend in New Mexico, where they find themselves in the midst of a disaster when they're trapped underground. The group face the arduous task of keeping themselves alive while also dealing with sexual tension and even cannibalism.

Originally, the role was going to be played by Sharon Stone, but she was forced to withdraw from the project due to scheduling reasons. Despite being one of the world's best known actresses, Demi has never taken any formal classes and she previ-

ously admitted to harboring insecurities about her talent. She shared: "I was too afraid. I thought that if an acting teacher had said to me, 'You know what, you're not good,' I would not have gone any further. It was easier for me to justify going to an audition and getting rejected, maybe because they wanted somebody blonde, maybe because I wasn't experienced enough. "I could live with that more easily." However, Demi revealed that the 1990 drama movie 'Ghost' proved to be a turning point in her career. She said: "It wasn't until [director] Jerry Zucker gave me the chance in 'Ghost', by believing in me and thinking I had it in me, that I broke through my own limitations and started to access what I had deep down and had covered up. "Not that I don't need reassurance and don't want people to give me that pat on the back. — Bang Showbiz

Preach! Indonesia's got Ramadan talent

It's a make or break moment for Indonesian high schooler Puteri Ara and her hijab-clad friends as they rap about religious tolerance to a cheering TV studio audience. Can they beat a rival boy band singing about god's glory or the all-girl group calling on viewers to idolise the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) instead of Korean pop stars? It's all up to the judges on Ramadan reality television—a ratings bonanza watched by millions across the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation during the month-long fasting celebration. "Muslims who are fasting have to be ready to stand with those who don't fast," belts out 16-year-old Ara.

"This is my country. It's built upon different religions but we're united in peace." Part talent show and part sermon, the show Syiar Anak Negeri (The Country's Children Preach) is one of a string of similar programs played during Ramadan that feature kids as young as three competing for TV stardom. They compete for prizes including tickets to Islam's holiest city Makkah, cash of up to 100 million Rupiah (about \$7,200) and university scholarships. Ara's band has worked tirelessly on a set that meshes rap with beatbox and nasheed-vocal music sung a cappella or backed by percussion instruments.

A celebrity-studded panel of judges, which also includes members of the religious affairs ministry and Indonesia's top Muslim cleric body, decides who goes on to the next round. The show featuring Ara's group was the brainchild of producer Ferdi Setiawan, who wanted to help keep young people

away from the clutches of drinking, drugs—and radicalism. "Through this program we're hoping they'll develop a positive spirit and values," Setiawan said of the participants. "And we're sure that when they return to their respective hometowns they'll become preachers at school, their neighborhood or at least at home."

'Troubling preachers'

Indonesia's reputation for religious tolerance was once again tested last month by a series of church bombings that killed a dozen Christian parishioners during Sunday services. The country has long struggled with Islamist militancy, including the 2002 Bali bombings that killed over 200 people—mostly foreign tourists—in its worst-ever terror attack. But the church killings by two suicide bomber families reignited fears about Indonesia's lurch toward religious conservatism, which has handed hardline groups unprecedented political power.

Spotting this shift, TV producers have tapped a growing demand for religion-inspired shows and marketed them to huge audiences during Ramadan, pushing once-dominant soap operas and prank TV shows to the sidelines. But the renewed focus on religion has also opened the door to fire-brand clerics who have taken to the airwaves to preach intolerance toward women, minority groups and non-Muslims.—AFP



This photograph shows high school teens performing live on the television show 'Syiar Anak Negeri' in Jakarta. — AFP

Lifestyle | Features

The 'Black Panther' actor who is an undocumented 'Dreamer'

On the hit sitcom "The Good Place," Bambadjan Bamba plays an eternal being in the afterlife. In reality, the Ivorian actor is living in limbo in the United States as an undocumented immigrant. The 36-year-old Bamba, who most recently appeared in "Black Panther," is one of 700,000 "Dreamers"-immigrants brought illegally to America as children who were protected by the Obama-era Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program.

"For a while, I wanted to share my story but I was paralyzed in fear," he said in an interview with AFP as he picked up a human rights award in Los Angeles from the American Civil Liberties Union. "I just didn't want to ruffle any feathers. I didn't want to put my career on the line, and even my family on the line." Bamba's family fled political instability in the west African state of Ivory Coast in 1993 and he arrived in the US when he was 10. Bamba then spent his teenage years between New York's South Bronx and Richmond, Virginia. The young French speaker learned English quickly and got into New York's Conservatory for Dramatic Arts, driving taxis to pay the fees.

It was during the college applications process, when Bamba was thinking about financial aid, that his parents revealed they had no legal status in the United States. They were eventually granted political asylum, but

Bamba was 21 by then-too old to share the new rights they had won.

'A lot of fear'

Despite his undocumented status, the aspiring star began picking up acting jobs and has appeared in more than two dozen television shows such as "Law and Order," "ER" and "Grey's Anatomy." In 2016, he secured a recurring part as a human rights activist and secret celestial torturer in NBC sitcom "The Good Place," and has since appeared in small roles in two comic book blockbusters—"Black Panther" and "Suicide Squad." Like thousands in his situation, Bamba felt like his world had collapsed when President Donald Trump canceled the DACA program last year, leaving Dreamers vulnerable to deportation at any moment.

The court system has ordered that the scheme continue, but the uncertainty surrounding their status remains. "It has really been volatile. There's so much uncertainty in our communities. There's a lot of fear and we don't know what's going to happen next," he told AFP. "Most of us have families, degrees, have careers, have made our lives here, and we really don't know what's going to happen month to month." Bamba had told very few people of his citizenship status but decided to speak out in an interview



This photograph shows high school teens performing live on the television show 'Syjar Anak Negeri' in Jakarta. — AFP

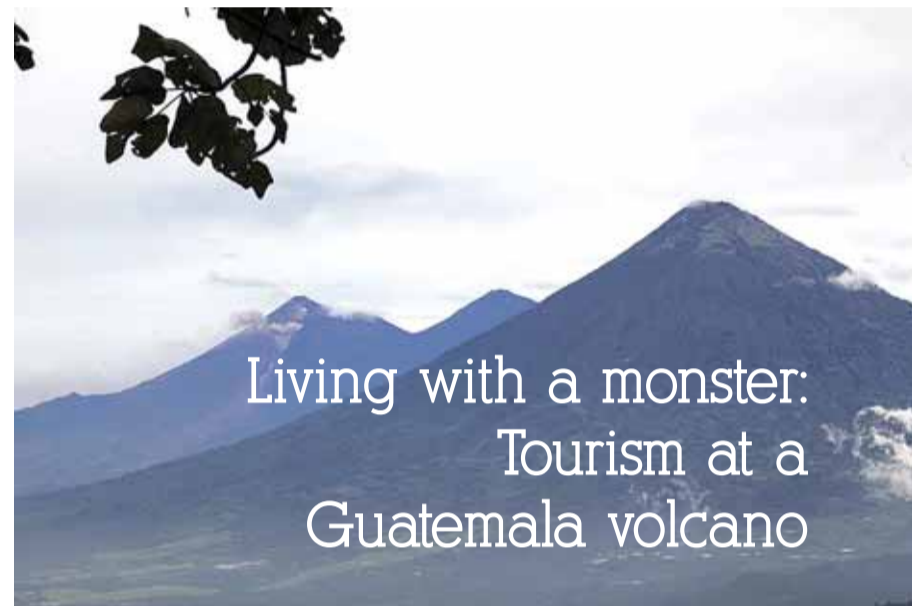
with the Los Angeles Times in November of last year.

"I have a wife and a daughter. She's one-and-a-half years old. Back in November, that really spurred my decision," Bamba told AFP. "I looked at her and I wanted her to know her father stood for something and stood for her, especially right now when families are being torn apart at the border."

Black cloud

Bamba says friends and colleagues have been incredibly supportive since he "came out," and his fears that it would nix his career turned out to be unfounded. He told the LA Times his biggest worry was being hauled off set by immigration officials during a shoot. He works a lot in Canada or elsewhere abroad but always worries about getting back into the United States. The Republican-led Congress failed earlier this year to pass immigration reform proposals, including one championed by Trump that would have resolved the legal status of 1.8 million migrants.

Lawmakers are working on a new solution that would include measures to boost border security and reform legal immigration but, for the time being, the uncertainty is a black cloud hanging over the Dreamers. "I'm still being vocal but, to my surprise-I guess this was a little naive of me-I thought we would have a solution by now, I thought we would have a Dream Act passed by now," said Bamba. "I thought, with the government shutdowns and all those things that happened, that we would have something on the table. So the fact that we don't have anything helps me know that the fight continues and that I have to continue to do my part." — AFP

Living with a monster:
Tourism at a
Guatemala volcano

A view of the volcanoes, Fuego, left, Acatenango, center, and Agua, right, from a point on the climb to the Pacaya Volcano in San Francisco de Sales, Guatemala. — AP photos

Tourists reached out to feel the heat from the still-smoldering lava, tossed sticks to see them burst into flames or watched a guide toast marshmallows on hot rocks as they hiked on Guatemala's Pacaya volcano, which days earlier had spewed lava. From the peak of Pacaya they had a clear view of the nearby Volcano of Fire, which erupted June 3, emitting a fast-moving avalanche of super-heated muck that killed at least 110 people and left about 200 missing. "We don't worry about the lava, we worry about the crater" from which explosive eruptions come, said Sazo.

Each day, Quezada gets reports from residents who have hiked up the mountain earlier in the day about where it is safe to take tour groups. Going to the summit and peering into the crater is no longer allowed. "If there is a change in the volcano, a change in its activity, we return immediately," he said. Tourists come to Pacaya for the altitude, cool weather, stunning views and singular experience of seeing the force of nature.

The altitude - the volcanos are the only geographic features rising off the steamy plains - is one reason why many people live in villages like San Francisco de Sales. It is perfect for growing coffee, but after a plant disease wiped out coffee trees, people recently began planting avocados. "Coffee is no longer profitable after we got coffee rust," said farmer Roberto Mijango. "We're only getting paid \$18 for a 100-pound (46-kilogram) sack of coffee berries. The fertilizer costs more than that."

But the 3- and 4-year-old avocado trees won't bear enough fruit to support the farmers for another few years. So without the tourism income, the villages around Pacaya would be impoverished. Samuel Dandoy, a tourist from a town in Belgium near the French border, stood near the top of Pacaya on Friday looking at the lava flow. "I really came for the volcanos in Guatemala," said Dandoy. "I feel amazed. It's really impressive." Dandoy and his traveling companion, Camille Bourbeau of Montreal, lived through the ash that fell on Antigua from the Volcano of Fire. The two joined relief efforts, making sandwiches and distributing them to victims and rescuers. "I couldn't just sit there, I had to do something," said Bourbeau. "I volunteered a bit. I made sandwiches for them. I went to give the supplies that were donated, so I felt I tried to help." — AP



A local guide sits on a rock as he observes tourists in the vicinity of solidified lava flow, on the summit of the Pacaya Volcano.

Residents who depend on Pacaya for their livelihood have learned to respect and read the volcano, like park maintenance worker Juan Francisco Alfaro, who lives in the nearby hamlet of Patrocinio. "We are always alert. You don't wait, you go" if there is an explosive eruption, Alfaro said. Many carefully watch the color of the plumes coming from the crater: White is OK, but black means danger. "We have a lot of respect for it," Alfaro said. "One sees what happened to San Miguel Los Lotes," which was destroyed by the Volcano of Fire eruption.

Jose Quezada, who has guided tours for 18 years, estimates half the people in San Francisco de Sales earn a living from volcano tourism. "Over time, we have learned to live with the volcano," he said. "You don't fool around with the volcano."



Tourists ride horses to the summit of the Pacaya volcano in San Francisco de Sales, Guatemala.

CANOEING IN THE
WILDERNESS OF MINNESOTA'S
BOUNDARY WATERS

Owners of the bistros and terrace cafes that are integral to the Paris way of life want the "je ne sais quoi" of their establishments to be recognized as both of global value and endangered. They have launched a campaign to be named by the United Nations' cultural agency as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding." UNESCO has given that status to traditions as varied as a Mongolian camel-coaxing ritual, Iranian sailboat building and the sung prayers of indigenous Peruvians. Every paddle stroke sprinkled water drops, reflecting the setting sun like sparklers across the black, glacier-carved lake.

Just a few hours earlier, I had been portaging on an ankle-deep muddy trail with that 55-pound (25-kilo) canoe balanced over my head, shielding me from a chilly downpour. That contrast is the essence of the wilderness experience in Minnesota's Boundary Waters. The physical effort required to explore its off-the-grid remoteness - including carrying a canoe solo on slippery, rocky trails - makes every worry evaporate like steam off woolen socks strung over a campfire.



Photo shows lily pads on the glossy surface of Lake One in Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

And once your only concerns become basic - keeping chipmunks away from the breakfast oatmeal or securing tarps against the wind whooshing through the woods - you have nothing to do but soak in the beauty.

Boldly north

Covering over one million acres along the Minnesota-Canada border, the Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness protects more than a thousand lakes, rocky islets, and towering evergreen forests that are usually ice-free from May into October.

There are plenty of walleyes, pikes and loons along its 1,200 miles (1,930 kilometers) of lily pad-lined canoe trails - but no electricity, no motors (except on a few big entry lakes), and no cell phone or Wi-Fi signals in the vast majority of the wilderness. If you want those, or a shower, bed and restaurant meals, there are plenty of nearby spartan-to-five-star lakeside cabins and lodges. Deep inside the wilderness, the luxury is the silence, quieting everything to the same stillness of the glossy lake surfaces that mirror the bursts of stars or the spindly pine trees. Even planes cannot fly below 4,000 feet (1,219 meters) here.



Photo shows a visitor to Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness getting ready to put the 16.5-foot canoe back in the water after carrying it overhead across a portage to Parent Lake.

Into the wilderness

My first canoeing and camping four-day trip in the Boundary Waters came as I was interviewing for jobs after finishing my Ph.D. I don't believe that I ever looked at any object with as much loathing as I did the payphone outside the outfitters' office when we got back to civilization.

Sure, bathing with soap and shampoo would be nice - but couldn't we just turn the canoe around for a few more disconnected days? I have since returned for half a dozen trips, either in late May or mid-to-late September, enjoying everything from sunbathing on the rocks to paddling through snow flurries, often on the same trip.

My favorite route is the demanding loop from Sawbill Lake up several creeks and bogs to vast, islet-studded Cherokee Lake, and back down the Temperance River. The 23-mile (37-kilometer) route crosses 12 lakes, which means 14 portages with sturdy Duluth packs (nearly square in shape, designed to fit in the bottom of a canoe) and 16.5-foot (5-meter) canoes on forest trails connecting lakes and bypassing rapids.

The longest portage on this route is 240 rods, or about three-quarters of a mile (1.2 kilometers) at one rod per canoe length. Try hiking that carrying a pack bulging with food for eight people for a long weekend. I'd rather carry the canoe, even though that requires some fancy limbo dancing under branches.

Prep time

Sawbill is also one of the most popular of the Boundary Waters' dozens of entry points, so reserve a permit in advance if you're traveling overnight from May through September. Only a few are granted per day, to groups of

nine people or four canoes maximum. You must pick up the permit at the designated US.

Forest Service station or outfitter, first watching a wilderness instruction video that includes how to chase away black bears by banging pots. (I've seen moose in the wilderness, but bears only en route from the car.) Topographic maps are essential to navigate. They indicate the otherwise unmarked portages and the more than 2,000 primitive lakeshore campsites, which provide a clearing for tents, a fire grate and, hidden away, a latrine.

You can't reserve them, but once you reach one, nobody else can stay there other than you and your group. Aside from the glimpse of a yellow or red canoe in the distance, a quick hello at a portage, or a plume of campfire smoke in the evening, it's hard to notice any human presence.

People's choice

Yet people have shaped this area's history, from the Native Americans and fur traders who first carved out its portages hundreds of years ago to the legislators who designated its federal wilderness status. Earlier this spring, mining leases nearby were renewed, stirring heated controversy. That fragility makes the Boundary Waters' soothing moments all the more precious, like watching the moon rise from a rocky outcrop amid the throbbing of the loons' haunting call - and that of paddle-sore muscles. The grub of summer sausage, Hamburger Helper and gorp isn't gourmet, and sleeping bags don't come with thread counts. But to really get away might just be the ultimate splurge. — AP



Photo shows canoeists paddling in the misty solitude of the pine forest-fringed lakes in Minnesota's Boundary Waters Canoe Area Wilderness.

Lifestyle | Features



A young boxer wraps his hands during a training session.

Forced to move out of Grenfell Tower after a devastating fire a year ago on Thursday, the famous Dale Youth boxing club has become an unlikely sanctuary for those affected. The club, which has produced two world champions in George Groves and James DeGale, is operating temporarily out of a multi-storey car park in west London near the site of the blaze. "Everyone has a close attachment to the Tower," Joe Sweeney, a trainer at the club for the past three years, told AFP on a recent visit to the gym's new spartan and sombre surroundings.

The fire spread quickly through the 24-storey apartment block in the early hours of June 14 last year, killing 71 people. The state-of-the-art gym, which has also produced more than 100 national champions, was on the first floor of the tower. "People lost their lives and homes. The gym being destroyed is an afterthought and of secondary importance," Sweeney, 34, said, as around 30 enthusiastic boys sparred and gave punchbags—some as heavy as 200 pounds (91 kilos) — a pounding.

“ Lots of the boys are still here from before and working to realize their dreams ”

Sweeney said that the boys aged eight and upwards who come to the club, many of whom knew people who died in the fire, were "affected" but not as traumatized as might be expected. "Kids are pretty resilient and get over things quickly whereas adults hang on to stuff and such events are something we don't handle very well," Sweeney said. Fifteen-year-old Jodie lost a close friend in the fire, Yahya Hashim. The two used to do homework together.

Jodie joined the club a month after the fire claimed the life of 13-year-old Yahya, his two brothers and his parents. "It was a shock," he told AFP. The fire "is in the back of our minds but we



Gutted by Grenfell fire, boxing gym comes off the ropes

have to move on". "People have moved past blaming each other and the community has been strengthened so much and now we are all in unison and helping each other to get through it." Asked if joining the gym was a way of honoring Yahya's memory, Jodie answered simply: "Yes, it is." "Because this gym is linked to him as he would walk past it every day to school. "I will always have a sense of him when I am here."

'Removes that anger'

On the night that Grenfell Tower went up in flames, club trainer Moutaz Chellat looked on helplessly as five of his family—his uncle and aunt and three of their children—died. "I lived downstairs from the tower, I could see it from my window and ran out," the 40-year-old, who has been a youth worker for nearly two decades, told AFP. "It wasn't a good feeling, panicking and all that." Chellat said training the young at the gym helped him emotionally. "It removes that anger and angry feeling towards certain things," he said.

Head coach Gary McGuinness, who has worked

at Dale Youth for 15 years, said more local boys were coming to the gym following the fire. McGuinness commands respect in the gym as he sweeps round the room, cajoling gently, encouraging and sparring with the kids in the ring.

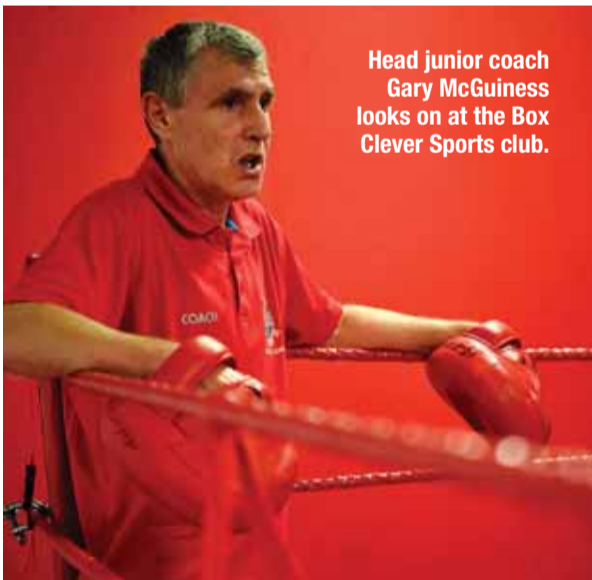
He lost a close acquaintance in 65-year-old Tony Disson, whose three sons won medals and championships for the club. "He was a big part of our club," McGuinness said. "He would love to have seen the new club we have, that is for sure," he said wistfully. The gym is due to move into new premises on June 24. "We are going to push on, we have another home," Sweeney said. "We can go there and keep helping the community and building champions. "Lots of the boys are still here from before and working to realize their dreams." — AFP



Young boxer Sulayman looks on during a training session at the Box Clever Sports club.



Boxing coach Moutaz Chellat (left) spars with a young boxer during a training session at the Box Clever Sports club.



Head junior coach Gary McGuinness looks on at the Box Clever Sports club.



Young boxers train at the Box Clever Sports club.



Boxing coach Moutaz Chellat (40) looks on during a training session.



Dr Nour Al-Tijali launches the first skin and hair care event in Kuwait 'Nour with Nour'

The specialized and first skin and hair care event "Nour with Nour" was kicked off in Sheikh Salwa Al-Sabah Hall in Salmiya. The event was organized by Dr Nour Reza Al-Tijali, a renowned Dermatologist and Venereologist at Adan Hospital, and hair transplant surgeon at New York Hospital. The event accommodates leading international companies in the field of skin and haircare medical treatments, as well as famous dermatologists in Kuwait and abroad, including Dermatologist Dr Fahd Al-Halabi, Dermatologist and

Venereologist Dr Dalia Sadeq and Obesity and Bariatric surgeon Dr Dana Al-Reyahi. Besides, the launch event was attended by media delegates and figures, bloggers in addition to beauty lovers and professionals.

This event aims at raising awareness on various medical topics, mainly the causes of skin diseases, solutions and the different medical treatments for each case by conducting a series of seminars, lectures and workshops that are held by doctors and experts in dermatology and hair transplant in Kuwait.

Dr Nour Al-Tijali expressed her delight for organizing this vital event for the first time in Kuwait and said, "Through this exhibition, we are working hard to achieve the goals and aspirations of international medical events, and to attract specialized companies in the field of hair and skincare to the local market that is considered the region's hub for healthcare and beauty. This event brings together leading international and local companies that showcase new inventions in this field to satisfy customers' needs and meet their expectations".





Michelle Chau sitting in a common area where she rents a small living space in a co-sharing building in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong. — AFP photos



Jezz Ng sitting at her desk where she rents a small living space in a co-sharing building in the Mong Kok district.



Finance worker Adrian Law eats a delivered meal while watching television in his studio apartment.



A general view from the studio apartment of finance worker Adrian Law.



A general view of a co-sharing building where residents can rent a small living space in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong.

Tight squeeze for Hong Kong's young professionals

As housing prices spiral in Hong Kong, young professionals are living in ever-shrinking spaces, with box-like "nano-flats" and co-shares touted as fashionable solutions. Blocks of sleek miniature apartments packed with mod cons are springing up around the densely packed city, pitched as an attractive and more affordable lifestyle choice, but still at an eye-watering cost. Finance worker Adrian Law, 25, paid more than HK\$6 million (\$765,000) two years ago for his tiny studio apartment in a new development in the gentrified Sai Ying Pun neighborhood. The slim glass building squeezes four apartments onto each floor and includes "nano-flats", a new term for homes of under 215 square feet (20 square meters).

Law's studio is a fraction bigger at 292 square feet, with a price per square foot of nearly HK\$20,000. He has adapted to the limited space by buying transformable furniture—his bed folds away against the wall to reveal a desk tucked underneath—and he keeps most of his belongings at his parents' home. But with a fingerprint-activated door lock, washing machine, TV, fridge and even curtains, Law says the flat came with everything he needed. "Property developers are marketing the concept to buyers that they only need a place to sleep and can do anything else outside," he told AFP, admitting he eats mostly take-away food as the kitchen is too small for cooking.

Law's parents helped him put down a 30 percent deposit when he bought the apartment and he sees it as an investment. He pays HK\$24,000 per month for the mortgage, around 40 percent of his salary. "One can only get into a winning position by owning a place," he said. "If you're renting, you are spending all your money without gaining anything at the end."

Health threat

Hong Kong's real estate is the most expensive in the world, with median house prices at 19.4 times median incomes—the worst ratio globally according to the Annual Demographia International Housing Affordability Survey 2018. Property prices have been fuelled by an influx of money from wealthy mainland Chinese investors and developers, and the city government stands accused of



Finance worker Adrian Law is seen shutting the blinds in his studio apartment.

failing to control the red-hot property market. More than 60 percent of new flats under 430 sq ft are taken up by investment buyers, according to government figures.

With the ability to buy a flat increasingly out of reach for the majority of Hong Kong's 7.4 million residents, developers are creating smaller spaces to reach a wider market. Under Hong Kong law there is no limit to how small a flat can be. Ryan Ip, senior researcher at public policy think tank Our Hong Kong Foundation, describes it as an "unhealthy" trend with developers putting profit above quality of life. "If you count the per-square-foot price for smaller-size flats, it is even higher than larger flats," said Ip, who believes mental and physical health will suffer if properties continue to shrink.

Rental prices have also rocketed and the wait for government-subsidized public housing can be five years. Ip says expanding land supply by any means, including reclamation from the sea, is the only way to solve the affordable housing shortage. But other local land research groups argue Hong Kong should develop under-utilized brown-field sites and idle government land first. The government is considering a host of options, from new artificial islands

to developing the city's cherished country parks. Designers are also putting forward their own new concepts, including converting concrete pipes into living spaces and transforming shipping containers into homes.

Sharing space

Many poorer Hong Kong residents resort to renting dingy "subdivided" flats apartments carved up into multiple living spaces. But even for those on a good salary, a decent home is often unaffordable. Jezz Ng, 29, earns a monthly wage of HK\$32,000 as a teacher and has chosen to live in a new co-share housing set-up, rather than shelling out for her own rent. At weekends she goes home to her parents. Ng shares a unit with seven other women where she has her own small room, which can fit a single bed and a desk.

Housed in a revitalized residential building in the working class neighborhood of Yau Ma Tei, privately owned Bibliotheque offers 166 bed spaces across 15 units, with monthly rents ranging from HK\$3,500 to HK\$6,200. All tenants have access to communal facilities, from shower areas and a kitchen to activity rooms and study rooms. "When I started to look for places to rent, my maximum budget was \$8,000 including utilities, but a simple, decent studio room could easily go over this price," Ng told AFP.

She now pays \$5,600 per month, which she says allows her to support her parents financially and pay her sister's tuition fees for a master's degree—a common practice for young adults who are working. Ng adds she feels less cramped than when she lived at home. Founder of the co-share, Keith Wong, says it is designed for young professionals who need time to "accumulate wealth" by limiting their outgoings. For now it is an ideal solution, says Ng. "I want to strive for an apartment, but at the moment, there's no way for me to achieve that goal," she explained. "Even though I have a stable job and the salary goes up steadily, it will never catch up with the increase in property prices." — AFP



Michelle Chau sits on her bed where she rents a small living space in a co-sharing building in the Mong Kok district of Hong Kong.



Jezz Ng sits on her bed where she rents a small living space in a co-sharing building in the Mong Kok district.



Finance worker Adrian Law eats a delivered meal while watching television in his studio apartment.

Storage for the urban kitchen

For city dwellers, adaptability comes in handy in the kitchen. Urban kitchens are typically tiny, presenting storage challenges. And for food storage, there's also the frequent problem of unwelcome houseguests, like mice or bugs. Luckily, there's a lot of great gear to keep perishables and pantry goods organized and protected, much of it pretty stylish too. Alex Weibel, senior food editor at Rachael Ray Every Day magazine, spends a lot of time cooking and developing recipes in her tiny Brooklyn, New York, kitchen. When her cookbooks began to buckle her cabinet, she realized it was time to triage the collection. "I moved my aspirational cookbooks to shelves outside the kitchen," she says.

And then she used the same approach with everything else. "Anything not vital to daily activity doesn't belong on kitchen shelves," she says. "I disguise visible pantry storage in attractive vessels, like vintage Pyrex containers which are easily stackable. And I live by the 'first in, first out' mantra I learned in culinary school, strategically positioning perishables in the front so they get used first." Weibel went to Home Depot for a large wire shelf to mount on an empty wall, and stows her hundreds of spice containers on it. "Now my spices are easily accessible, and look charming," she says. You can also mount metal-lidded jars

under cabinetry by affixing a sturdy, strong magnetic strip. Yamazaki Home's under-cabinet white metal storage shelf is a handy place for resealable bags or tea towels. Rolling chef's tables or carts with wooden tops provide more surface and storage in tiny kitchens with limited counter space. The cart's shelves and baskets can house hand mixers or other small appliances. Don't forget about the inside of cabinet doors. A short curtain rod attached to the inside of a cabinet can hold small tools on ring clips; put a peel 'n' stick cork panel behind it for a message board. A larger rod under the sink can stow spray bottles, paper towels and trash bag rolls.

Freezer and dishwasher safe

Lowe's spokesman Matt Michaels has a pro tip for keeping the fridge functioning well: "Clean door seals regularly with soap and water." He says dirt and grime can prevent a tight seal, so the fridge doesn't stay cold. "Test your seals by sliding a piece of paper in the closed fridge door; if it falls out, it's time to replace them." For countertops or cabinets, consider a system of matching containers that stack and stow seamlessly together. Rubbermaid's Brilliance storage set, made of BPA-proof plastic, is leak-proof, air-tight and stain-resistant, with sturdy latches,



Photo provided by Rubbermaid shows Rubbermaid's FreshWorks food storage system, which have vented lids and crisper trays that keep foods like fruits and vegetables fresher longer. — AP photos

Vents allow for microwaving, and the pieces not only stack but are freezer and dishwasher safe. There's also a system for produce, called FreshWorks. Its containers have trays in the bottom and a vent on the lid that keep moisture away

and increase airflow to keep fruits and vegetables from spoiling too quickly in the fridge.

Glasslock's Slimline low-profile lidded set is made of tempered microwave-safe glass. And the Pyrex sets can go straight from fridge to oven. Identify all the containers using erasable food storage labels. Target has a set of sleek stainless steel canisters for cereals, pasta or baking essentials. A steel rack stowed in a cabinet will hold pot lids, pie pans, and baking and roasting sheets more efficiently than stacking. There's also a collection of glass storage cylinders with decorative stained wood tops. Pest removal and prevention services may be provided by landlords, or you can try some non-chemical methods, like those Katie Voytasek, of LA Best Pest Control, posts on <http://www.forrent.com>. As soon as you bring food home, for instance, transfer it out of its paper, cardboard or Styrofoam packaging and into pest-proof receptacles. Cleaning is key to keeping a small urban kitchen prep-ready and pest-free. Attend to dishes and counters right away. That includes the dishwasher. If it's got dirty dishes in it for too long, roaches and ants will find their way in. — AP



In this handout file photo, a fighter jet of the UAE armed forces takes off from an air force base before raids against Shiite Houthi rebels in Yemen as part of the Saudi-led coalition's Operation Decisive Storm. Yemeni forces backed by Saudi Arabia and the UAE massed around the key port city of Hodeida yesterday in a bid to seize it from Iran-backed. — AFP

Arab states launch attack on Yemen's rebel-held port city

ADEN: A Saudi-led alliance of Arab states launched an attack on Yemen's main port city yesterday, the largest battle of the war, aiming to bring the ruling Houthi movement to its knees at the risk of worsening the world's biggest humanitarian crisis. Arab warplanes and warships pounded Houthi fortifications to support ground operations by foreign and Yemeni troops massed south of the port of Hodeidah in operation "Golden Victory".

Ground battles raged near Hodeidah airport and Al-Durayhmi, a rural area 10 km south of the city, media controlled by the Arab states and their Yemeni allies reported. The assault marks the first time the Arab states have tried to capture such a heavily-defended major city since joining the war three years ago against the Iran-aligned Houthis, who control the capital Sanaa and most of the populated areas.

The port is the main route for food to reach most Yemenis, 8.4 million of whom are already on the verge of famine. The Houthis deployed military vehicles and troops in the city centre and near the port, as warplanes struck the coast to the south, a resident speaking on condition of anonymity told Reuters. People fled by routes to the north and west. CARE International, one of the few aid

agencies still there, said 30 air strikes hit the city within half an hour.

"Some civilians are entrapped, others forced from their homes. We thought it could not get any worse, but unfortunately we were wrong," said CARE's acting country director, Jolien Veldwijk. Saudi-owned Al Arabiya TV quoted witnesses describing "concentrated and intense" bombing near the port itself. "Under international humanitarian law, parties to the conflict have to do everything possible to protect civilians and ensure they have access to the assistance they need to survive," said Lise Grande, UN humanitarian coordinator for Yemen.

Calls for restraint

The UN special envoy to Yemen, Martin Griffiths, said the world body was talking to both sides to try to avert a battle. "We call on them to exercise restraint & engage with political efforts to spare Hodeida a military confrontation," he tweeted. UN refugee chief Filippo Grandi said there was a danger Yemenis might flee across the sea to Somalia or Djibouti. Port workers told Reuters five ships were docked at Hodeidah port unloading goods, but no new entry permits would be issued yesterday. The

Arab states say they will try to keep the port running and can ease the crisis once they seize it by lifting import restrictions they have imposed.

Western countries have quietly backed the Arab states diplomatically, while mostly avoiding direct public involvement in the conflict. A major battle could test that support, especially if many civilians are killed or supplies disrupted. The United States, Britain and France all sell billions of dollars of weapons a year to the Arab countries. Aid agencies urged President Emmanuel Macron to cancel a planned Paris conference on Yemen co-chaired with Saudi Arabia. The operation began after a three-day deadline set by the United Arab Emirates for the Houthis to quit the port.

"The liberation of the port is the start of the fall of the Houthi militia and will secure marine shipping in the Bab al-Mandab strait and cut off the hands of Iran, which has long drowned Yemen in weapons that shed precious Yemeni blood," Yemen's Arab-backed government-in-exile said in a statement. A Yemeni anti-Houthi military official said the alliance had brought to bear a 21,000-strong force. It includes Emirati and Sudanese troops as well as Yemenis, drawn from southern separatists, local

Red Sea coast fighters and a battalion led by a nephew of late ex-president Ali Abdullah Saleh.

Houthi leader Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, who has threatened attacks on tankers, warned the alliance not to attack and said on Twitter his forces had struck a coalition barge. There was no immediate confirmation from the coalition. The Sunni Muslim Arab states see the Houthi rise as expansionism by their Shiite foe Iran. They aim to restore President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi, driven into exile in 2014. The Houthis, from a Shiite minority that ruled a thousand-year kingdom in Yemen until 1962, say they took power through a popular revolt and are now defending Yemen from invasion.

Yemen has been in crisis since 2011 mass protests that ended Saleh's 33-year rule. Hadi came to power in a Saudi-brokered transition, but the Houthis drove him out. For a time Saleh joined forces with the Houthis, but they turned on each other last year and Saleh was killed. Parts of Yemen are also held by Al-Qaeda and Islamic State militants. Yemen lies beside the southern mouth of the Red Sea, one of the world's most important trade routes, which oil tankers use to reach Europe from the Middle East through the Suez Canal. — Reuters

Eid exodus: Asia Muslims on the...

Continued from Page 1

Pakistanis were also complaining of congestion as authorities said they expect road traffic to more than double ahead of the holiday.

The country's railways have announced special "Eid trains" with extra carriages and discounts to tackle the rush. In Malaysia, traffic slowed to a crawl on major roads out of Kuala Lumpur, with traffic expected to soar by some 70 percent over the usual volume. India, which has a 180 million-strong Muslim minority population,

does not see a huge annual mass migration. But Delhi bank clerk Shakir Khan is among those who will be headed home for the holiday. "We live in a very fast-paced world and Eid is always special as it gives you a chance to reconnect with your family and friends," the 29-year-old said.

Eid, which is expected to begin from today, comes at the end of Ramadan, when Muslims abstain for a month from activities including eating, drinking, smoking and sex during daylight hours. Safety will be a big factor in some countries. Some 276 Bangladeshis died in road accidents during Eid last year, while the number in Indonesia was an eye-watering 740 people. The Southeast Asian nation's often dangerous roads were clogged with thrifty travelers who packed whole families onto one motorcycle-plus luggage-for grueling trips that can last upwards of 15 hours. — AFP

venues for the tournament will be in the United States with Mexico and Canada having three venues each.

The US previously hosted the World Cup in 1994 while Mexico staged it in 1970 and 1986. Canada has never staged a men's World Cup but it did hold the women's tournament in 2015. A US bid lost out in the vote eight years ago for the 2022 World Cup, which was handed to Qatar, and US Soccer Federation president Carlos Cordiero said it had been a long road to get the tournament back to the country. "It was overwhelmingly emotional for everyone, not just for myself. A lot of very hard work and effort has gone into this campaign... You know, we ran and lost eight years ago. We appreciated that as much as you can do, you are not guaranteed victory," he said.

The Moroccan bid had expected a closer result and some of their backers felt they had been let down by potential allies. "Of course, it's really sad because we were counting on our friends, the countries that are close to us, that are long-time friends. And today they betrayed us," Moroccan Olympic champion runner Hicham El Guerrouj, who was active with the bid team, told Reuters.

The last time FIFA voted on World Cup hosting rights was in 2010, the decision then resting with the old executive committee which chose Russia to host the 2018 finals and Qatar for 2022. Several members of that committee were later banned from the sport after they were caught up in the corruption scandal that engulfed world football's governing body in 2015. Under FIFA's new system for choosing the host, all eligible football federations who attend Congress were given a vote.

The result has been a jet-setting campaign from both bids, whose team members have travelled the globe in an attempt to win over the worldwide electorate. Cordeiro has said his bid would generate \$14 billion in revenue and make an \$11 billion profit for FIFA. The bid also expects record ticket and hospitality revenue. The result is a boost for FIFA president Gianni Infantino who, while he maintained neutrality during the campaign, was known to be keen to see the first expanded World Cup being held in North America. — Reuters

Saudi women rev up motorbikes; end to driving ban nears

RIYADH: Even a year ago, it would have been hard to imagine Saudi women clad in skinny jeans and Harley-Davidson T-shirts, revving motorbikes at a Riyadh sports circuit. But ahead of the historic lifting of a decades-long ban on female drivers on June 24, women gather weekly at the privately owned Bikers Skills Institute, to learn how to ride bikes. "Biking has been a passion ever since I was a kid," said 31-year-old Noura, who declined to give her real name as she weighs public reactions in the ultra-conservative Islamic kingdom.

Overtaking the world's only ban on female drivers, long a symbol of repression against women, is the most striking reform yet launched by powerful Crown Prince Mohammed Bin Salman. But it has been overshadowed by a wave of arrests of female activists including veteran campaigners who long resisted the ban. None of the women at the floodlit motorcycling circuit wanted to talk about the crackdown, a deeply sensitive issue, focusing instead on securing a basic freedom long denied to them.

"I grew up watching my family riding bikes," Noura said as she mounted a Yamaha Virago. "Now I hope... to have enough skills to ride on the street." Next to her, revving a Suzuki, sat Leen Tinawi, a 19-year-old Saudi-born Jordanian. For both women, biking is not just an adrenalin-fuelled passion, but also a form of empowerment. "I can summarize the whole experience of riding a bike in one word—freedom," Tinawi said.

'It's your turn to ride'

Both bikers follow their Ukrainian instructor, 39-year-old Elena Bukaryeva, who rides a Harley-Davidson. Most days the circuit is the domain of drag racers and bike enthusiasts - all men. But since offering courses to women in February on the basics of bike riding, four female enthusiasts have enrolled, most of them Saudis, Bukaryeva said. "They always wanted to learn how to ride a motorcycle. And now they are saying 'it's my time'," Bukaryeva said.

She echoed a catchphrase printed on the institute's promotional material: "It's your turn to ride." Asked why more women had not enrolled for the course, which costs 1,500 riyals (\$400, 340 euros), Bukaryeva said: "Maybe their families stop them." Tinawi echoed the sentiment, saying she faced strong reservations from her family. "My parents said: 'You on a bike? You are a girl. It's dangerous,'" she said. In Saudi Arabia, taking the wheel has long been a man's prerogative. For decades, hardliners cited austere interpretations of Islam as they sought to justify the ban, with many asserting that allowing them to drive would promote promiscuity.

Many women fear they are still easy prey for conservatives in a nation where male "guardians"—their fathers, husbands or other relatives—can exercise arbitrary



RIYADH: Saudi-born Jordanian Leen Teenawi prepares for a training session at the Bikers Skills Institute, a motorcycle driving school, on the outskirts of Riyadh. — AFP

authority to make decisions on their behalf. "Expect more accidents" because of women is a common refrain in an avalanche of sexist comments on Twitter. The government has preemptively addressed concerns of abuse by outlawing sexual harassment with a prison term of up to five years and a maximum penalty of 300,000 riyals.

'Climate of fear'

The most immediate practical worry for female motorists is the dress code. Inside the private institute, the bikers wear skinny jeans, with abrasion-proof knee pads wrapped outside—but that is still unthinkable in public. Body-shrouding abaya robes—mandatory public wear for women—are impractical while riding as their flowing hems could get caught up in the wheels. Many women also complain that female instructors are in short supply and that classes are expensive. But topping all concerns is the crackdown on women activists—while the kingdom trumpets women's rights.

Saudi Arabia this month said it detained 17 people for "undermining" the kingdom's security. State-backed media published pictures of veteran driving activists, the word "traitor" stamped across them in red. "It's a complete contradiction for the government to proclaim it is in favor of new freedoms for women and then target and detain women for demanding those freedoms," Samah Hadid, Amnesty International's Middle East director of campaigns said. The arrests have unleashed a torrent of global criticism—including from vocal supporters of Prince Mohammed's reform drive, such as Bernard Haykel, a professor at Princeton University.

Calling the crackdown "a mistake", he has urged the government to "apply due process and the rule of law" in handling jailed activists' cases. Observers say the arrests seem calculated by the crown prince to placate clerics incensed by the modernization drive and to send a clear signal that the pace of reform will be driven by him alone, not the activists. Back at the institute, as the floodlights dimmed and the women bikers donned their abayas to leave, the crackdown was not a topic of discussion. "A climate of fear is now evident in Saudi Arabia," Hadid said. — AFP

US, Mexico and Canada to host...

Continued from Page 1

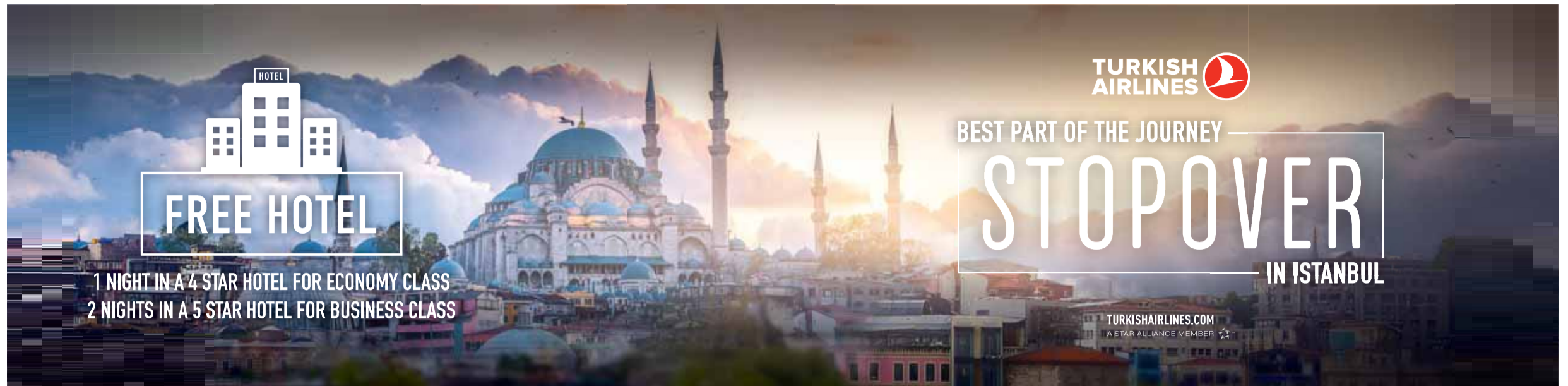
Even if Trump were to be elected for a second four-year term in 2020 he would not be president when the World Cup kicks off in 2026.

Trump had earlier warned that countries voting against the North American bid would suffer consequences. The president has regularly assailed world leaders like Germany's Angela Merkel and France's Emmanuel Macron for 'ripping' America off over trade. On Twitter Trudeau said: 'Good news this morning: The 2026 FIFA World Cup is coming to Canada, the US and Mexico. Congratulations to everyone who worked hard on this bid - it's going to be a great tournament!' The United States, Canada and Mexico were expected to qualify automatically for the tournament as has been the tradition for all World Cup host nations.

After the bid some observers expressed hope that the 'NAFTA World Cup' would rebuild cooperation between the three countries. Trump will be gone from office when the tournament does take place. 'See? Always better when we work together,' Roberta Jacobson, ambassador to Mexico until May, wrote on her Twitter feed. The North American bid collected 134 votes to the 65 for Morocco. One Congress member voted for 'neither bid.' Mexican President Enrique Pena Nieto tweeted 'We did it!'

The 2026 finals will be the first expanded tournament featuring 48 teams, up from the current 32-team event which begins in Russia today. Both bids were given a last chance to make their case with 15 minute presentations in front of the Congress at the Moscow Expocentre. Of the 80 games, 60 will be held in the United States with 10 each in Canada and Mexico. The final will be played at MetLife Stadium in New Jersey, home to the National Football League's New York Giants and New York Jets. Ten of the eventual 16 chosen

Sports



World Cup fever builds as fans, teams pour into Russia

Local fans gather, waving flags and good-naturedly chanting 'Russia, Russia'

KAZAN: World Cup fever is finally taking hold in Russia, where wild enthusiasm in provincial centres such as chilly Kazan is filtering through to Moscow ahead of today's opening match in the capital.

While curious locals have clamoured to see the likes of Lionel Messi and Neymar, it has proved a slow build-up to the June 14-July 15 showpiece, which is being held in Russia for the first time.

The tournament opener featuring Russia and Saudi Arabia at the imposing 80,000-capacity Luzhniki stadium has so far failed to capture the imagination of Muscovites, although they have warmly welcomed foreign fans. Groups of South American supporters with drums and whistles took to the streets around Red Square this week, posing for pictures with shoppers. In response, a small knot of local fans gathered, waving flags and good-naturedly chanting "Russia, Russia".

But it has been outside the capital where enthusiasm for the beautiful game has really taken hold. Australia were pleasantly surprised Monday when a crowd of 3,200 turned up to see Dutch coach Bert van Marwijk put the Socceroos through their paces in Kazan, a two-hour flight east of Moscow.

A public holiday gave fans the opportunity to show their support at Australia's state-of-the-art training complex in the capital of the semi-autonomous Republic of Tatarstan. "It was good to see all the fans from Kazan come out and support us, we didn't really expect it," said Australia defender Josh Risdon, who postponed his honey-

moon following his selection to the Socceroos' squad. "Aussie, Aussie, Aussie, Go, Go, Go," screamed sections of the crowd, many waving yellow and green Australia flags handed out by organisers. Defender Josh Risdon appreciated the backing ahead of Australia's Group C campaign against Euro 2016 finalists France at the Kazan Arena on Saturday. "It was good to see all the fans from Kazan come out and support us, we didn't really expect it," said the player, who postponed his honeymoon following his selection to the Socceroos' squad.



Slow build-up to the June 14 to July 15 showpiece

supporters at Roshehino outside Saint Petersburg. Hours after arriving they staged a training session where free footballs, scarves and flags were launched into the stands. Real Madrid midfielder Luka Modric also exchanged passes with delighted youngsters.

The build up has not been without controversy, with Egypt's Mohamed Salah attracting critical headlines in Britain after posing for a photograph with Chechen strongman Ramzan Kadyrov. Reports said Kadyrov, who with Moscow's support rules Chechnya with an iron fist, personally picked up the Liverpool, striker at his team hotel in Grozny and drove him to training in front of 8,000 cheering fans. While the atmosphere remains muted in the

BRAZIL PULLING POWER

In the Black Sea resort city of Sochi about 5,000 people turned out to watch the Brazilian squad train, chanting the name of Paris Saint-Germain star Neymar. Croatia had barely touched down in Russia before they launched a charm offensive that won over



SARANSK: People attend the opening ceremony of the FIFA Fan Fest in Saransk on Tuesday, ahead of the Russia 2018 World Cup. — AFP

larger of the 11 host cities such as St Petersburg, it is sure to intensify as an estimated one million fans from 32 participating nations pour into the country. President Vladimir Putin said in a televised address last

week that he wanted the event, which has cost Russia \$13 billion to host, to be "an unforgettable experience" for all involved. "We want this event to be a celebration, filled with passion and emotions," he said. —AFP

Former A-League outcast Andrew Nabbout ready for World Cup debut

KAZAN: A one-time A-League reject who sought refuge in Malaysia's top flight, Australia's Andrew Nabbout is poised to cap a remarkable career revival with a World Cup debut against France on Saturday.

And if the rookie Australia striker get the nod from coach Bert van Marwijk, he has pledged to make it count. "If I do get the honour to lead the line, you know what you're going to get out of me," Nabbout said yesterday at the Socceroos training camp in Kazan.

"I'm going to work hard up there and do exactly what I've been doing the last few games." The 25-year-old front man from Japan's Urawa Diamonds scored his maiden goal for Australia in a recent 4-0 friendly win over the Czech Republic. He now has a golden chance to stake his claim for the sole striker's spot in van Marwijk's preferred 4-2-3-1 formation during this World Cup campaign.

Talisman Tim Cahill, 38, is set to start on the bench alongside Lucerne striker Tomi Juric, who has struggled with injury niggles in recent weeks. A training-ground spat

with teammate and defender Trent Sainsbury on Tuesday gave a glimpse into Nabbout's terrier-like qualities.

Although he acknowledges the superior "calibre" of France's big name players, Nabbout is confident in his style of play. He believes counter-attacking opportunities are likely to pop up during the opening game, giving the Socceroos the chance to punish 'Les Bleus'.

"We're aware of the big name players, the calibre they have," he said of Didier Deschamps' side. "We've got a structure and a strategy that we're going to go into the game with, and if we execute that to the best of our ability then we can cause them some problems."

'WE'RE READY FOR FRANCE'

With only four caps to his name, Nabbout has little to shout about. But the trials endured earlier in his career give him the bearing of a far more experienced player. It has been a long, arduous trip for Nabbout, who rejected overtures from Lebanon early in his career as he was determined to wear Australia's green and gold.

He moved to Malaysian side Negeri Sembilan in December 2015 after being released by Melbourne Victory, shrugging off the setback to become the team's top scorer. He returned to the A-League for two seasons with Newcastle Jets, capping his departure with the award for the league's best goal of the year. A move to Urawa Red Diamonds earlier this year was a step up that brought Nabbout to van Marwijk's attention and he debuted for Australia in a 4-1 loss to Norway last March.



KAZAN: Australia's forward Andrew Nabbout gives a press conference in Kazan yesterday, on the eve of the start of the Russia 2018 World Cup football tournament. — AFP

On the eve of his maiden World Cup, Nabbout could not be more confident.

"It gives me huge boost, obviously, looking back at where I came from to where I am now," he said. "It gives me a lot of confidence coming into this game. We've got a job to do against France. They're a big side, but we're ready for that test."

"It's a World Cup experience, after all. I'm going to go out with a smile on my face, taking into account exactly where I've been and try to put in a solid shift." — AFP

Italian city gets football hooligans cleaning to end violence

LONDON: Amid concerns over violence at the World Cup in Russia, one Italian city claims to have found the answer to football hooliganism - make rowdy fans swap brass knuckles for brooms. For more than two decades, supporters of Genoa's two rival teams - Sampdoria and Genoa - have joined forces to clean their stadium in a scheme city officials credit with helping to end years of violence.

"(The) heated confrontations we had for a period of time ... abated significantly," Stefano Anzalone, councillor for sport in the city, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. After street violence led to dozens of injuries and arrests in Genoa, in the early 1990s authorities offered hard-core fans known as "ultras" the chance to launch a company to tackle the problem. Genoa Insieme, a social enterprise, was officially launched in 1992, tasked with employing rival hooligans to clean the Luigi Ferraris stadium where both Genoa and Sampdoria play. Social enterprises are businesses with a mission to benefit society or the environment.

In Italy the number of social cooperatives, a type of social enterprise that get tax cuts in return for providing social services, rose 43 percent to more than 16,000 between 2011 and 2015, according to the national statistics bureau ISTAT.

Toiling shoulder by shoulder helped to ease tensions and gave disadvantaged youths a fresh start, said Roberto Scotto, the 58-year-old Genoa fan who has run the company since 1994. "Problems arise when young people hang out with little to do. Those who have a job and something to lose don't get into trouble," said Scotto. "None of those who worked with us has since had any stadium-related issue."

Scotto said the model could help other countries tackle football hooliganism, which is a concern for the organisers of the World Cup that kicks off on June 14. Some media have predicted a possible repeat of the brawls between Russian and English fans at the 2016 European championship in France although Russia has vowed to crack down on crowd unrest. Yesterday, British authorities said they blocked more than 1,200 people with a history of football-related disorders from travelling to the World Cup. Europe's football governing body, UEFA, has said it welcomed initiatives "in the framework of peer control" that contributed to a friendly atmosphere in and around stadiums. Scotto, however, said policing remains the strongest deterrent against violence at large events like the World Cup, where visiting fans are loosely organised and have no ties to the local community. —Reuters

Robbie Williams selling his soul for World Cup gig

MOSCOW: A long-time Kremlin critic lambasted Robbie Williams for deciding to sing at the World Cup opening ceremony in Moscow today, while a campaign group offered to brief the British pop star on Russia's human rights record.

British businessman Bill Browder, who accuses President Vladimir Putin of conducting a personal vendetta against him, took to Twitter to question why Williams was performing while Russia was under western sanctions. "There's lots of ways to make money @robbiewilliams, but selling your soul to a dictator shouldn't be one of them. Shame on you," Browder wrote.

Russia is keen to use the soccer tournament to signal that despite the sanctions, imposed over its 2014 annexation of Crimea and role in a rebellion in eastern Ukraine, it remains a top player on the global stage.

The singer's PR team declined comment. However, Williams, who has previously sung at private parties organised by wealthy Russians, told Reuters he liked vis-

iting the country and performing at the opening ceremony was an honour. US-born Browder was once a major investor in Russia. He has led a campaign to expose corruption and punish officials he blames for the 2009 death of Sergei Magnitsky, a lawyer he employed, in a Moscow prison.

The US Treasury Department subsequently imposed its own sanctions under a 2012 law known as the Magnitsky Act. Last year a Russian court sentenced Browder to nine years in prison in absentia for deliberate bankruptcy and tax evasion. Browder, who heads investment fund Hermitage Capital Management, has dismissed the allegations.

Human Rights Watch said it had called on world leaders to stay away from the event, pointing to Russia's rights record and its role in the Syrian war. "We certainly see the way the Russian government and President Putin is using the World Cup and in particular the opening ceremony as a way of legitimising his power and his authority," the group's director for Europe and Central Asia, Hugh Williamson, said.

"We'd be happy to brief (Williams) on the human rights situation in Russia ... so that he's well informed when he gets there. He could also make a positive contribution if he speaks out during his visit," he added. The tournament kicks off on Thursday with a match between Russia and Saudi Arabia. — Reuters



MANCHESTER: England's Robbie Williams (R) and team celebrate after winning a England V Soccer Aid World XI charity football match for Soccer Aid for Unicef at Old Trafford in Manchester, northwest England on June 10, 2018. — AFP

Sports



World Cup 2026 to crown decades of growth in North America

US regarded as final frontier for world's most popular sport

LOS ANGELES: The decision to award the 2026 World Cup to North America yesterday follows an explosion in football's popularity across the region which can be traced directly to the 1994 finals staged in the United States.

For decades, the United States was regarded as the final frontier for the world's most popular sport, with the beautiful game unable to encroach on territory dominated by baseball, basketball and American football.

A promising flirtation with the sport in the 1970s—when stars like Pele, Franz Beckenbauer and Johan Cruyff lit up the North American Soccer League—flamed out when the league was wound up in 1984. "Soccer: sport of the future—and it always will be," ran the old joke beloved of American football-sceptics.

Yet the dynamic began to shift, however, when the USA was handed the 1994 World Cup. A total of 3,587,538 spectators thronged stadia across the United States for the country, generating an average attendance of 68,991 fans per game, a record which exists to this day.

More significantly, as a condition of the USA being awarded the tournament, a professional domestic competition was re-established, Major League Soccer. That league launched in 1996 with 10 teams. It has since expanded to 23 teams across the US and Canada, with three more due to join by 2020, eventually expanding to 28 clubs. In 2017, MLS drew average crowds of 22,113, making it the seventh best attended top-flight competition in the world, ahead of leagues in France, the Netherlands and Argentina. "The development of the national team and the creation of Major League Soccer wouldn't have happened without the World Cup," Los Angeles lawyer Alan Rothenberg told the Los Angeles Times in a 2014 interview. "The whole sport got elevated from what was essen-

tially a hand-to-mouth grassroots operation to a well-funded, well-run professional organization."

CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS

At grassroots level, football in the United States is thriving, with more than 24.4 million Americans playing the sport at some level, second only to China, according to FIFA figures. There is also evidence that football is changing the demographics of armchair sports fans in the US.

A Gallup survey published in January found that 7% of Americans named football as their favourite sport, a significant three-point jump from four years earlier. While the NFL (37%), basketball (11%) and baseball (9%) remain ahead of it, soccer is rapidly creeping up on the rails.

Crucially soccer is capturing the key demographic of younger fans. While only 1% of American sports fans older than 55 named soccer as their favourite sport, that number jumps to 11% in the 18-34 age group, tying basketball and comfortably ahead of baseball (6%).

The increases in participation and popularity are mirrored by the steady growth of football on US television networks. The English Premier League has broadcast live games on the main NBC network for several years, while the Bundesliga, La Liga, Ligue 1 and the Champions League are also readily available on various cable networks.

Coverage of soccer in US media outlets has also expanded, with the New York Times in 2016 creating a position for a chief soccer correspondent based in London, an appointment described by the paper as a "huge move." While the 2026 World Cup will be hosted by Canada, the United States and Mexico, the US will stage



7% of Americans named football as their favourite sport



MOSCOW: FIFA president Gianni Infantino (R) poses with the United 2026 bid (Canada-Mexico-US) officials Carlos Cordeiro (3rd R), president of the United States Football Association, president of the Mexican Football Association Decio de Maria Serrano (3rd L), Steve Reed (2nd R), president of the Canadian Soccer Association, following the announcement of the 2026 World Cup host during the 68th FIFA Congress at the Expocentre in Moscow yesterday. —AFP

the bulk of the games. Sixty of 80 matches in the 48-team tournament will be held in the United States, with the US hosting every game from the quarter-finals onwards. In an interview with AFP last year, MLS commissioner Don

Garber said the 2026 tournament in North America would "set an entirely new bar for World Cups." "We have the facilities, we have the market, we have the support," he said. —AFP

WCup group stage: Five highlights

SOCHI: The World Cup group stage will see 48 games crammed into two weeks. AFP Sport picks out the moments to look out for in Russia:

OPENING MATCH

How can anyone miss the opening game at the World Cup? It sets the tone for a month-long festival of football, even if in this case it brings together the two lowest-ranked teams in the competition.

Hosts Russia will walk out onto the pitch at the 80,000-capacity Luzhniki Stadium ranked a lowly 70th in the world, three spots below Group A rivals Saudi Arabia, and without a victory in eight months.

However, Russia has spent more than \$13 billion on preparations for the big event, and President Vladimir Putin will be eager for the hosts to get off to the best possible start.

In contrast, a defeat against minnows Saudi Arabia would heighten the prospect of Russia becoming just the second host nation to be eliminated in the group stage, after South Africa eight years ago.

PORTUGAL V SPAIN

The standout fixture in the first round is this Iberian derby in Sochi, as Spain look to make an early statement of intent when they take on Cristiano Ronaldo and the reigning European champions in Group B.

It is the fourth meeting of the countries at a major tournament in the past 14 years, with the last coming at Euro 2012, when Spain won on penalties in the semi-finals en route to winning the title. Extra spice has been added to Friday's game after Tuesday's announcement that Julen Lopetegui will leave the Spain job at the end of the World Cup to become Ronaldo's coach at Real Madrid.

SALAH RETURN?

Mohamed Salah has been in the headlines in the past few days thanks to the photograph of him posing with Chechen President Ramzan Kadyrov at the Egyptian team's base in Grozny. However, Egyptians will be

more concerned about Salah's fitness, with the Liverpool forward in a race against time to be ready for their Group A opener against Uruguay in Yekaterinburg on Friday.

The 25-year-old is recovering from the shoulder injury suffered in a challenge with Sergio Ramos in the Champions League final against Real Madrid, when he was forced off the pitch in tears.

Egypt are pinning their hopes on Salah after his prolific season in England, as the Pharaohs prepare for their first appearance at the World Cup since 1990.

ENGLAND V BELGIUM

The very last group game will be played in the exclave of Kaliningrad on June 28, and it will be worth the wait, as these sides are expected to be competing for top spot in Group G. The Belgians are ranked third in the world, and Roberto Martinez's squad contains some of the best players in the Premier League, so there will be no surprises for Gareth Southgate's England.

The English have a talented young squad, and for once expectations at home are not over the top. It will be fascinating to see how they fare against Belgium's golden generation, led by Eden Hazard, Kevin De Bruyne and Romelu Lukaku.

VAR

Will the introduction of Video Assistant Referees cause World Cup chaos, or will it prove to be a welcome addition to the competition? VAR has been used to varying degrees of success in Serie A and the German Bundesliga, while FIFA used the system at the Confederations Cup in Russia last year and are confident it will help officials on the field.

FIFA director of referees Massimo Busacca admits the system has been rushed in for the tournament, but said: "We are ready, we know we must be ready as there can be no experiments here."

Controversial incidents will be replayed on big screens inside grounds so fans can see why decisions were reached. And, curiously, VAR officials in the Moscow control room will watch games in full kit.

"VAR officials sweat with the stress-believe me," said Pierluigi Collina, chairman of FIFA's referees committee. —AFP

Russia to win first match, says clairvoyant cat

MOSCOW: Russia's football team has failed to chalk up a single victory in eight months but things could be about to improve — according to a supposedly clairvoyant cat who predicted a win for the side in the first World Cup match.

Achilles, a deaf white cat who is the official animal soothsayer for the tournament, yesterday chose a bowl of food bearing the host's flag rather

than that of Saudi Arabia, who Russia will face today evening. The blue-eyed feline is usually part of a team of dozens of cats that guard Saint Petersburg's Hermitage museum from rodents, but has taken on a new role for the football event.

"Achilles is already used to the public and shouldn't be too stressed," said vet Anna Kondratyeva, who manages the animals. The cat follows in the tentacle-prints of Paul the Octopus who became a star in 2010 after predicting winners for that year's World Cup by choosing one out of two boxes containing food. Others have made a play to be the next Paul-including Swiss guinea pig Madame Shiva in 2014 and British Piranha Pele—but none quite had the mollusc's foresight.

Earlier in the day the head of the Russian Orthodox Church Patriarch Kirill said he would



pray for the national team to give a worthy performance. The hosts, who take on Saudi Arabia in today's curtainraiser, need all the moral support they can get as they come into the event without a win in seven games. —AFP

Song mocking Russian World Cup team goes viral, upsetting some

MOSCOW: A Russian comic's song which mocks the country's World Cup team and questions the financial sense of hosting the event has gone viral on the eve of the tournament, angering some fans and politicians.

Written and performed by Semyon Slepakov, "Ole Ole Ole" imagines Ramzan Kadyrov, the Kremlin-backed head of Chechnya, as the Russian football team's new but unsuccessful manager. It has been viewed more than 5 million times on YouTube <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i63jWjoAW1E>.

Performed with just his own acoustic guitar accompaniment, Slepakov's song has touched a nerve in Russia whose government hopes hosting the World Cup will give it a boost on the world stage even though its team is ranked by FIFA as the weakest in the tournament.

Tapping into the views of many Russians who regard their players as underperforming and overpaid, it predicts Russia will lose their first match 2-0.

Russia, who have not won since October last year when they were helped to victory by two own goals by South Korea, are due to play Saudi Arabia on Thursday in the competition's opening match in front of President Vladimir Putin.

"Our team is, let's be frank, shit," sings Slepakov. He describes an imaginary scene in the pre-match locker room

where Russia's players are smoking a hookah pipe, watching YouTube videos, and texting girls they met in a nightclub the day before, a jokey reference to real-life off-pitch scandals.

Slepakov, a well known TV producer, also sings of how the strain of hosting the competition has sucked up all of Russia's resources even



Semyon Slepakov

though "things are not that great in the kingdom." Thirty-two teams will compete in the June 14 to July 15 tournament, hosted in Russia for the first time in World Cup history, at an official cost of 683 billion roubles (\$11 billion).

'OFFENSIVE'

In an unusual public move, Slepakov mocks Chechen leader Kadyrov, who describes himself as Putin's loyal footsoldier and has been accused by Western rights activists of human rights abuses, allegations he denies.

Putin in the song brings in Kadyrov to try to improve the Russian soccer team. The tongue-in-cheek lyrics imagine Kadyrov threatening the players with his pistol, cutting off their thumbs so they are not distracted by their smart phones, and suggesting they shoot themselves when they lose. The track ends on a high note, suggesting a Russian version of Brazilian soccer leg-

end Pele may be born somewhere in Siberia who can one day help Russia win the World Cup.

Many viewers said they found the song hilarious, but not everyone saw the funny side. "Yet more vulgarity," wrote one viewer who called himself Jora Sukhov on YouTube. "It would not be so funny if it was not so sad," wrote another, Vladislav Efrementko.

Jambulat Umarov, a minister in Kadyrov's government, told a Moscow radio station he thought Slepakov should apologise to the Russian soccer team and Kadyrov.

Kadyrov himself, in a riposte on social media, invited Slepakov to travel to Chechnya and co-write a new song with him. "Only one thing (in the song) is offensive," wrote Kadyrov. "In his song, the team headed by me lost. That is not on. Now, before the World Cup, they (our footballers) need our support. I have not lost hope in their victory." —Reuters

Sports

Gulf Cable wins Al-Roudhan's 39th Ramadan Futsal Tournament



KUWAIT: The Gulf Cable & Electrical Industries (Gulf Cable) team yesterday won the 39th Al-Roudhan Futsal Tourney while the late sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousif team won the juniors' title.

The tourney was concluded under the auspices of HH the Amir and with the presence of HH's representative, the deputy Amiri Diwan Affairs Minister Sheikh Mohammed Al-Abdullah. The conclusion ceremony was also attended by the speaker of the house Marzouq Al-Ghanim, the Information Minister Mohammed Al-Jebri, MOCI, Khalid Al-Roudhan, the Cabinet Secretary General Abdullatif Al-Roudhan, HH the CP advisor, Nasser Al-Roudhan, Zain's CEO Bader Al-Kharafi and the Information Ministry's Undersecretary, Tareq Al-Merzam.

The final match between Gulf Cable and Boubyan Bank ended with a 1-1 draw and reached penalty shootouts where the Gulf Cable goalkeeper, Hani Heeda excelled and managed to win the title for his team.

On the other hand, Sheikh Ahmed Al-Yousif's juniors team won the final match and the 8th tourney title after beating Al-Kuwait team 2-1 in the penalty shootout.

On his part, the head of the organizing committee, Abdullatif Al-Roudhan stressed HH the Amir's patronage was the main element behind its continuity and success. Al-Roudhan also thanked all the sponsors.

Speaking on the occasion, the championship's supreme organizing committee's assistant secretary general Nasser Al-Khater expressed his happiness for the partnership with Al-Roudhan as well as his hopes for this partnership to continue.



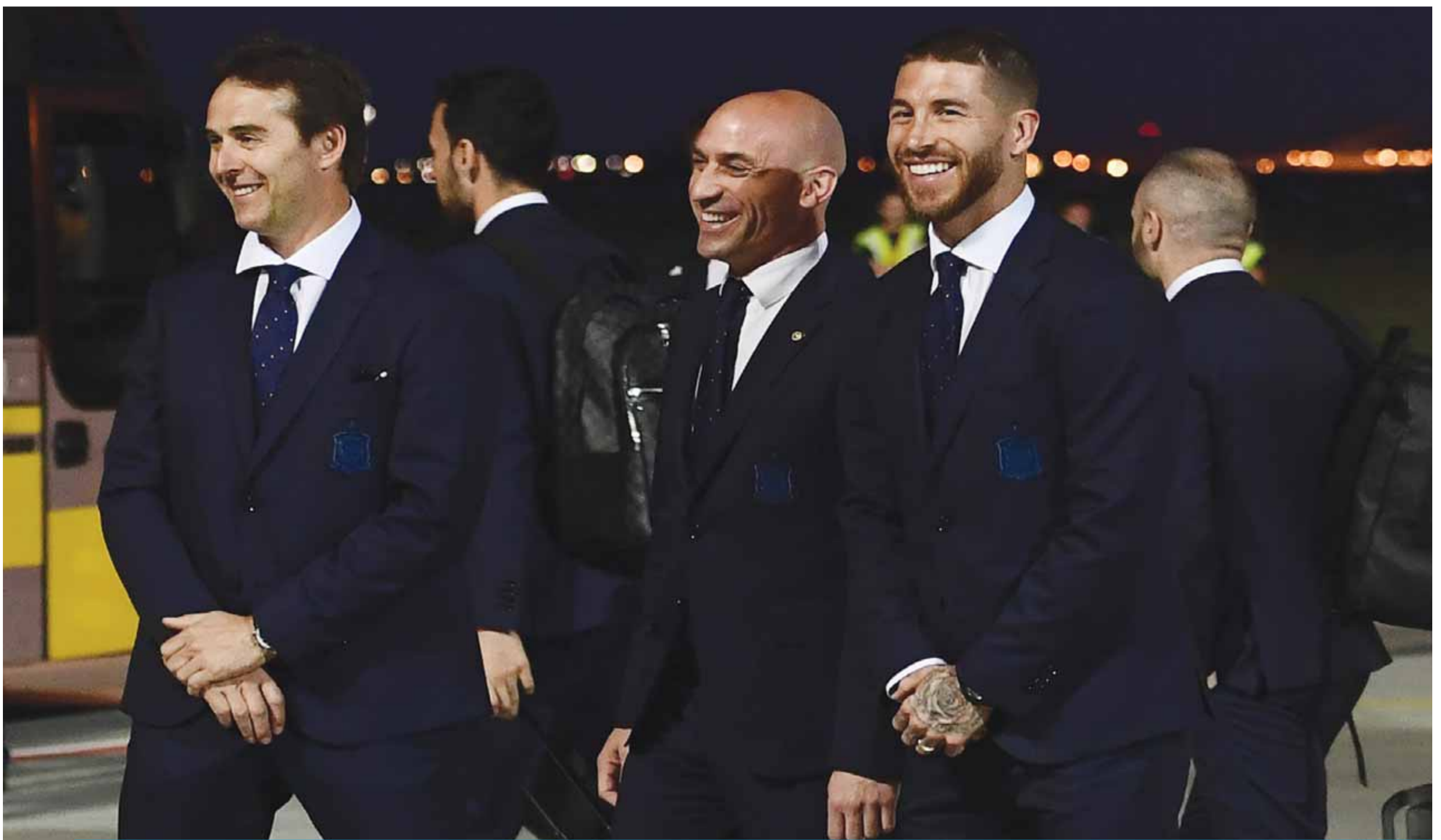
25 World Cup fever builds as fans, teams pour into Russia



26 Russia to win first match, says clairvoyant cat



27 All hands on deck to support Messi, say Argentina team-mates



KRASNODAR: File photo taken on June 7, 2018 (L-R) Spain's coach Julen Lopetegui, president of the Spanish football federation (RFEF) Luis Rubiales and Spain's captain and defender Sergio Ramos disembark from an airplane at Krasnodar airport as Spain's national football team arrives for the Russia 2018 World Cup. Lopetegui was sacked as Spain boss yesterday. — AFP

Lopetegui sacked on eve of WCup

Names former Madrid captain Hierro as coach for the tournament

KRASNODAR: Spain dramatically sacked coach Julen Lopetegui yesterday and appointed federation sporting director Fernando Hierro — just two days before the team's opening game at the World Cup.

In a surprise announcement on Tuesday, Real Madrid appointed Lopetegui as Zinedine Zidane's successor to take over after the tournament in Russia, sparking outrage at the federation and among Spanish fans at the timing of the announcement.

At a severely delayed press conference at Spain's World Cup base in Krasnodar, Spanish football federation (RFEF) chief Luis Rubiales expressed dismay at the timing of events that threaten to derail Spain's World Cup chances.

"The national team is the team for all Spaniards and there are some decisions we feel obliged to take to protect some values," said Rubiales. "Negotiating is legitimate but it took place without the RFEF being informed until five minutes before a press statement was released. There has to be a message for all workers in the federation that there is a right way to do things."

Spain later named former Madrid captain Hierro as the coach for the tournament in Russia. "Fernando Hierro will assume coaching responsibilities at the World Cup in Russia," the Spanish football federation announced.

The 50-year-old Hierro's only real coaching experience came when he was in charge of second division Spanish outfit Oviedo for one season.

Lopetegui had signed a contract extension until 2020 just last month and never tasted defeat in his 20 games in charge as Spain boss.

Spain are due to face European champions Portugal in Sochi on Friday before taking on Iran and Morocco in Group B.

PLAYERS SUPPORT

There were fears Lopetegui's appointment by the European champions could open up old divisions between the Real Madrid and

Barcelona factions in the Spain squad. For the first time since 2006, there are more players from Madrid in a Spanish squad for a major tournament, with a six-strong Real contingent and just Gerard Pique, Jordi Alba and Sergio Busquets from Barca, as well as Barcelona legend Andres Iniesta, who ended his 16-year career at the Camp Nou last month.

However, according to reports in the Spanish media, the players tried to intervene at the last minute to prevent Rubiales sacking Lopetegui.

"I have spoken with the players and what I can guarantee is that the players will do everything in their power, along with the new technical team to take the team as far as possible," said Rubiales.

Spain and Real Madrid captain Sergio Ramos appealed for unity between the fans and players. "We are the national team. We represent a badge, colours, a fanbase, a country. The responsibility and commitment are with and for you. Yesterday, today and tomorrow, together," tweeted Ramos.

La Roja were among the favourites to lift the trophy this summer but the astonishing developments of the past two days could have a devastating effect on their chances.

Lopetegui had a short playing career at both Madrid and Barcelona as a reserve goalkeeper.

However, his coaching career had been far from distinguished before being handed the role as Spain coach after a last-16 exit at Euro 2016 brought Vicente del Bosque's eight-year reign to an end.

After short spells at Rayo Vallecano and with Madrid's youth team Real Madrid Castilla, Lopetegui enjoyed a successful time with Spain's under-19s and under-21s.

He then spent 18 months in charge of Porto but was sacked after exiting the Champions League at the group stage in his second season. — AFP

Federer battles to victory on Stuttgart return

STUTTGART: Roger Federer was made to battle after a losing first set as the Swiss star made his long-awaited return to tennis yesterday with a 3-6, 6-4, 6-2 defeat of Mischa Zverev at the Stuttgart Cup.

The world number two shook off the rust against his German opponent after a poor start, breaking twice in the second and third sets to earn victory in 93 minutes. The 20-time Grand Slam winner, who exited in his opening match at the grass court season curtain-raiser a year ago to friend Tommy Haas, can displace Rafael Nadal from the world's top ranking spot if he reaches Sunday's final.

The 36-year-old finished to the cheers of a sold-out centre court on a chilly day. "I'm happy to have won a match after losing my last two (Indian Wells, Miami in March)," Federer said. "This is a new start. I'm glad to have been able to win again, overcoming some difficult moments after being a set down. Mischa's level dropped in the last two sets and that gave me a chance to win."

"It feels a lot like home here, since it's only two hours of driving from Basel. It's a great place, but I'm hoping for some sun this week." Federer lost the first set to Zverev, older brother of world number three Alexander Zverev, but quickly recovered to post his sixth win in as many meet-

ings in the series. The Swiss was playing his first match in nearly three months after skipping the spring clay court season for a second year in succession in order to fully concentrate on his grass preparation. He is aiming to claim a record ninth Wimbledon title next month at the All England Club.

Federer finished off Zverev, whom he beat a year ago in the Wimbledon third round, on his first match point, a passing winner. The top seed improved to 18-2 on the season as he began the pursuit of his 98th career trophy.

In first round play, German Maximilian Merterer lined up as the first opponent for fourth seed Nick Kyrgios with a defeat of

Croatian lucky loser Viktor Galovic 3-6, 6-4, 6-1. Indian Prajnesh Gunneswaran, ranked a career-best 169, achieved a win in his first ATP main draw appearance, beating Canadian sixth seed Denis Shapovalov 7-6 (8/6), 2-6, 6-3 for the first upset of the week.

Frenchman Benoit Paire hammered 14 aces in his defeat of American Taylor Fritz 6-7 (4/7), 6-3, 6-2. Paire will next face Czech third seed Tomas Berdych. Canada's seventh seed Milos Raonic, his ranking down to 35th, marked his comeback from injury after last playing in Madrid nearly six weeks ago, by seeing off Bosnian Mirza Basic 7-6 (10/8), 6-2. — AFP



STUTTGART: Swiss Roger Federer reacts after his victory over German Mischa Zverev at the ATP Mercedes Cup tennis tournament in Stuttgart, southwestern Germany, yesterday. — AFP