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Court backs MoE over English test; MP blames Islamic groups

Lawmaker calls for recruiting experienced teachers of diverse nationalities

Morocco, Saudis, Egypt out of World Cup



MOSCOW: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo shoots a free kick during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group B match between Portugal and Morocco at the Luzhniki Stadium yesterday. — AFP (See Page 27)

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The controversy over an education ministry decision requiring scholarship students to pass an English-language exam widened yesterday, with the court backing the ministry and MP Safa Al-Hashem accusing Islamic groups of dragging the country backward. MP Omar Al-Tabtabaei meanwhile submitted a proposal to upgrade public education in the country, calling for hiring highly experienced teachers from various countries.

The administrative court yesterday supported the education ministry's decision that Kuwaiti students selected for scholarships must pass the IELTS test before being sent abroad. A number of lawmakers have criticized the decision as unfair because it favors students who study at private English-language schools over students from public schools, whose English skills are not as developed. A number of MPs have warned that the issue could snowball into a major political crisis, calling on the education minister to first upgrade the level of English language education in public schools.

But MP Hashem welcomed the court's ruling, which she said proves that the decision is in line with the constitution and does not discriminate between students, adding that it also preserves public funds after the ministry lost around \$61 million after some scholarship students failed the IELTS exam in foreign countries. She alleged that most of these students are supported by Islamic groups, whom she claimed have contributed to the country's slide in cultural and scientific aspects. Hashem declared her total support to the education

minister's decision over the language test and curbing cheating in exams.

MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli yesterday called on lawmakers to support ministers who make reform decisions, like the education minister's decision on IELTS. He denied that the decision targets students from Kuwaiti tribes, saying that the minister himself belongs to a tribe. Fadhli had on Tuesday praised the decision and said it will improve the level of education, and regretted that 22 MPs including six with doctorate degrees oppose the decision for electoral purposes.

Meanwhile, MP Tabtabaei called in his proposal to set a quota for nationalities of foreign teachers recruited by the education ministry in order not to rely on a specific nationality. In his proposal, he called for recruiting teachers with at least 10 years of experience and who hold master's degrees with a very good grade. Tabtabaei also called for recruiting English teachers from countries whose mother tongue is English, and similarly for French teachers.

Separately, the National Assembly bureau yesterday discussed the issues on the agenda for coming sessions and arrangements and procedures for concluding the current legislative term. The meeting, presided by Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, postponed some issues for further discussion, said National Assembly Secretary MP Ouda Al-Ruwai. He added that the bureau urged various parliamentary committees to complete discussions of the topics on their agendas and refer them to the Assembly. Ruwai pointed to certain measures to be adopted for discussing the state budget and the country's financial status in a private session.

Coalition seizes Hodeida airport from Houthis

KHOKHA, Yemen: Yemeni forces seized Hodeida airport yesterday in a major step towards retaking the rebel-held port city after a week of fighting that has left nearly 350 people dead. Fresh clashes later erupted between UAE-backed government forces and the Iran-allied rebels on a road linking the airport to Hodeida port on the Red Sea coast, a Yemeni army source said. The city, a crucial entry point for imports and humanitarian aid, is the target of a massive operation launched last week by a Saudi-led coalition fighting on the side of the government.

Pro-government forces announced the capture of Hodeida airport in the morning, a day after breaking through the perimeter fence. "The airport was completely cleared, Thank God, and is under control," the coalition commander for the Red Sea coast, Abdul Salaam Al-Shehi, said in a video distributed by the United Arab Emirates' official WAM news agency. UAE Foreign Minister Anwar Gargash tweeted that the "liberation of Hodeida is the beginning to ending the war". "The choice in Yemen is between the state and militia, between order and violence, between peace and war," he wrote, referring to Houthi militiamen.

At least 156 Houthis and 28 soldiers were killed in the fight for the airport, according to Hodeida hospital sources. That raised the death toll in the week-old battle for the city to 348. No civilian casualties have yet been confirmed. On June 13, Yemen's army and its allies launched their offensive to clear Hodeida of rebel fighters who have held it since 2014, raising UN concerns for vital aid shipments and food imports through the city's docks.

The airport is disused but housed a major rebel base just inland from the coastal road into the city from the south. It lies eight kilometers from the city's port, through which three-quarters of Yemen's imports pass, providing a lifeline for some 22 million people dependent on aid. UN envoy Martin Griffiths held four days of talks in the rebel-held capital Sanaa in a bid to avert an all-out battle for the city but flew out on Tuesday without announcing any breakthrough.

The United Arab Emirates and other members of a Saudi-led coalition that intervened in support of the government in 2015 have accused regional arch foe Iran of using Hodeida as conduit for arms smuggling to the rebels. Tehran has denied the allegation. The United Nations has warned any attack on Hodeida port could cripple shipments of desperately needed aid to the 8.4 million Yemenis facing imminent starvation.

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In Syria, race to save precious property deeds

BEIRUT: The external hard drive had been smuggled from Syrian regime territory through militant-held towns and into Turkey. When Ghazwan Koronful finally got his hands on it, he sighed in relief. Loaded onto the disk were pictures of thousands of title deeds from towns in central Syria recently recaptured by government troops and largely emptied of their residents. Fearing Syria's regime would expropriate abandoned properties or tamper with deeds, a network of activists and lawyers set their covert plan into motion.

"It was our most complex operation yet," said Koronful, a 65-year-old Syrian lawyer who heads the network from Turkey, where he has lived in exile since 2012. For nearly five years, Koronful's

Free Syrian Lawyers (FSL) have been working to preserve property deeds and other civil paperwork in Syria's opposition areas. They enter town registries, photograph the documents, carefully log and organize them, then smuggle the hard drives across Syria's sealed northern border into Turkey. "In total, we've got eight terabytes of documents, about 1.7 million documents - court records, wills, birth, marriage, and death certificates," said Koronful.

Among them are up to 450,000 land-related documents from northern and central Syria - title deeds, contracts, and other papers that displaced Syrians could use to prove property ownership. These documents are crucial now, Koronful explained, as the government passes a series of laws that rights defenders fear may unfairly dispossess Syrians from their homes. "Our work simultaneously protects against hostilities that could damage the deeds, and against the regime's attempts through these new laws to tamper with people's

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Eight year-old Maya Mohammad Ali Merhi, using prosthetic legs made by her father from tin cans, walks with him and another child in a camp for displaced people in the northern Syrian province of Idlib yesterday. Maya and her father were both born without lower limbs. Unable to afford real prosthetic limbs, her father made her a pair out of tin cans filled with cotton and scrap pieces of cloth. Maya's family had to leave their home in the Aleppo province to flee battles. — AFP

Trump signs order to end border family separations

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump backed down yesterday on an immigration policy that sparked outrage at home and abroad, signing an executive order to end the separation of children from their parents when immigrant families are caught crossing the US-Mexico border illegally. The order requires that immigrant families be detained together when they are caught entering the country illegally, although it was not immediately clear for how long.

It also moves parents with children to the front of the line for immigration proceedings. The order does not end a "zero tolerance" policy that calls for criminal prosecution of immigrants crossing the border illegally. "It's about keeping families together while at the same time making sure that we have a very powerful, very strong border," Trump said as he signed the order in a hastily arranged Oval Office gathering.

Videos of youngsters in cages and an audiotape of wailing children had sparked anger in the United States from groups ranging from clergy to influential business leaders, as well as condemnation from abroad, including Pope Francis. Trump, a frequent viewer of cable television newscasts, had recognized the family separation issue was a growing political problem. White House



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump displays the executive order he signed yesterday. — AFP

sources said. First Lady Melania Trump, in private conversations with the president, urged him to do something, a White House official said. "The first lady has been making her opinion known to the president for some time now, which was that he needed to do all he could to help families stay together," an official said.

Yesterday's move marked a rare instance since Trump took office in January 2017 in which he has changed course on a controversial policy, rather than digging in. Trump has made a tough stance on immigration central to his presidency. In recent days, the Republican president had insisted his hands were tied by law on the issue of family separations and had

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Tehran signals compromise for modest output rise

VIENNA: Iran signalled yesterday it could compromise on a small increase in OPEC oil output when the group meets this week, as Saudi Arabia scrambled to convince fellow members of the need for a larger rise in production. The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries meets tomorrow to decide output policy amid calls from major consumers such as the United States and China to cool down oil prices and support the global economy by producing more crude.

Iran said on Tuesday OPEC was unlikely to reach a deal, setting the stage for a clash with kingpin Saudi Arabia and non-member Russia, which are pushing to raise production steeply from July to meet growing global demand. But yesterday, Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh said OPEC members that had over-delivered on cuts in recent months should comply with agreed quotas. That would effectively mean a modest boost from producers such as Saudi Arabia that have been cutting more deeply than planned despite production outages in Venezuela and Libya.

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Amir, Crown Prince receive officials at Bayan Palace



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 Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh

Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness then received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness also received His

Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem, His Highness Sheikh

Nasser Al-Mohammad, as well as Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri. —KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



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His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Information Minister and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri.

Buwair honors martyrs' families during Eid holiday



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti author and researcher Abdullah Abbas Buwair hosted a ceremony on the second day of Eid Al-Fitr holiday to celebrate the birthday of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and honor families of martyrs.

Buwair delivered a speech during the event in which he chronicled the achievements of His Highness

the Amir throughout his illustrious political career. Furthermore, Dr Ameera Al-Hassan, Assistant Head of Office - UN-Habitat GCC Kuwait, spoke about His Highness the Amir's ambitious vision based on which the Kuwaiti government embarked in its 'New Kuwait 2035' strategic plan.

Several officials were honored during the event

which took place at Crowne Plaza hotel, including Sheikh Sabah Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, Dr Mustafa Al-Zaabi, Dr Abdurrahman Al-Ahmad, Dr Mustafa Behbehani, Colonel Mohammad Al-Otaibi, Falah Al-Namran, Faisal Boodai, Nasser Buwair, Abdulredha Buzaid and Abdullah Akbar.

Meanwhile, the families of the following martyrs were honored: Ibrahim Mohammad, Abdullatif Al-Hamdan, Munther Al-Seif, Saud Al-Sultani, Hassan Al-Zaabi, Sabti Al-Saad, Ibrahim Musaed, Khamees Dhwaikh, Salah Al-Namlan, Mershed Al-Namlan, Emad Al-Sultan, Ahmad Al-Yaqoub, Hassan Al-Shemmari, Tahir Buhamad, and Ayman Al-Rushoud.



Local

Kuwaiti air force chief impressed by Kuwaiti troops in 'Restoration of Hope'



RIYADH: Commander of the Kuwaiti Air Force Major General Abdullah Al-Foudari poses with members of the Kuwaiti army taking part in the operation 'Restoration of Hope' in Yemen.



KUWAIT: Commander of the Kuwaiti Air Force Major General Abdullah Al-Foudari has commended the air arm of the Kuwaiti army taking part in the operation 'Restoration of Hope' in Yemen. The remarks of Kuwaiti Air Force came as he paid an inspection visit to the Kuwaiti troops in the operation stationed in Saudi Arabia a day earlier, read a statement by the Defense Ministry's Moral Guidance and Public Relations Department yesterday.

Foudari conveyed Kuwaiti Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah's greetings to the troops. He also urged them to remain committed to fulfilling their duties, assuring the soldiers of the Kuwaiti leadership's steadfast support. — KUNA



174,000 millionaires in Kuwait in 2017

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait was recently ranked 17th worldwide in terms of the number of wealthy citizens, with 174,000 millionaires in 2017, a nine percent increase compared to 2016 when the total number of millionaires was only 159,000, according to the 2018 International Wealth Index (IWI) issued by the French IT consultancy company Capgemini. The report added that as a result of capital growth by 5.6 percent, the total number of wealthy

people is increasing in Kuwait despite a recent GDP drop by 2.5 percent because of oil price decreases and a 3.3 percent drop in the real estate market. On the other hand, the report said Saudi Arabia stood 16th with 179,000 millionaires, while the US topped the list with over five million millionaires, followed by Japan with 3,162,000, Germany with 1,280,000 and China with 1,256,000 millionaires.

Unified classifications

The acting manager of the non-governmental manpower department at the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program (MGRP) Ghadeer Al-Qadiri said the program has started preparations for the ISIC4 and ESCOS projects involving developing the international unified industrial classification of economic activities

and crafts that started in 2016 and ended in Jan 2018, when over 90 percent of the 126,000 licenses had been regulated.

Health insurance

The Ministry of Health (MoH) received approval from auditors to extend the contract of the company registering health insurance and issuing health insurance cards to expats for six months, said informed sources. The sources explained that the extension will be valid from July 28 until Jan 27, 2019 without any extra cost for MoH. The sources noted that the tender recently offered for bidding had been cancelled and will be re-offered after amending its conditions, during which it will be difficult to suspend the service. On a different concern, the sources said MoH also got the approvals needed to

renew a contract with a local company specialized in providing e-payment services at various clinics and public hospitals for three years effective from June 8, 2018 at a total cost of KD 3 million.

PAAET registration

The Public Authority for Applied Education and Training's (PAAET) registration dean Dr Rabah Al-Nejadah urged high school graduates hoping to join any of PAAET's colleges and institutes to apply online. Nejadah added that PAAET has 18,000 seats in 2018-2019 and that applicants will be subjected to aptitude tests. She also noted that the first term of the academic year will be allocated for Kuwaitis and the children of Kuwaiti women, while other applicants would be accepted in the second term.

News in brief

Old passports obsolete as of July

KUWAIT: Old Kuwaiti passports will be rendered invalid as of July 1, 2018, the Interior Ministry said yesterday, citing an executive order issued by Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. As per the Kuwaiti minister's instructions, urgent cases will be given priority when issuing the current e-passport, such as patients seeking medical treatment abroad, read a statement by the Kuwaiti Interior Ministry. It added that six centers interspersed nationwide have been authorized to issue e-passports, all of which will be receiving applicants all week long from 8 am to 1:30 pm and from 4 pm to 8 pm. — KUNA

Inflation up 0.36%

KUWAIT: Data revealed by the Central Statistical Bureau (CSB) has shown that the annual consumer prices registered in May 2018 increased by 0.36 percent year on year (YOY). The CBS said in its monthly Consumer Prices Index (CPI) bulletin yesterday that CPI rose in May to 0.09 percent, compared to April as a result of high prices of major groups in the movement of the indices. Prices of Foods and Beverage group increased by 0.36 percent YOY in May as the cigarette and tobacco group was rose by 14.53 year-on-year and 0.54 percent month-on-month. The Prices of the Clothing and Footwear and Housing Services groups were down by 1.03 and 1.45 percent YOY respectively. On the other hand, prices of the Furnishing Equipment and Household Maintenance group were up 1.83 percent YOY. — KUNA

Safe landing

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) said on Tuesday that its flight No. 743 heading to Saudi Arabia's Al-Dammam returned to Kuwait International Airport because of malfunction. The flight landed safely at the airport after taking off, international safety standards were implemented, the corporation said in a press statement. Passengers were received at the airport and obtained required hospitality, it added. Another plane flew to the planned destination at 8:30 pm. The corporation apologized to travelers for any disturbance due to this incident, it noted. — KUNA

Landslide warning

TOKYO: Kuwait's Embassy in Tokyo yesterday warned citizens there of 'dangerous' post-quake landslides and floods, especially in the western part of the country. The embassy advised all Kuwaitis in Japan to take extreme caution and to follow all instructions issued by local authorities in this regard. It also said Kuwaiti citizens who may need help or find themselves encountering an emergency situation, should call the embassy at any time on the following telephone number: 03-3455-0361, or via email consular@kuwait-embassy.or.jp. Last Monday, a magnitude 6.1 earthquake jolted western Japan, killing at least three people and injuring some 230 more. — KUNA

'Abundant oil' in Bahrah field

KUWAIT: Technical surveys and studies recently conducted at Bahrah oilfield, that extends into Sabah Al-Ahmad Nature Reserve, show that it contains abundant oil, said well-informed oil sources. The sources explained that Bahrah oil reserves would contribute to increasing Kuwait's oil production in general, without giving any details or figures. The sources added that work is currently in progress to improve the oilfield's productivity and that Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) prepares to sign a related memo of cooperation with the reserve's administration.

However, the sources said the fact that part of the field is inside the nature reserve entails that drilling machinery moving in and out will affect the flora inside. The sources also stressed that production operations in the oilfield had been relatively complicated in the past years until KOC conducted the needed technical surveys and studies to develop the field's productivity.

Meanwhile, the sources stressed that this development would take lots of hard work and efforts, which require cooperation with the nature reserve's administration through a memo, in which KOC would undertake to take care of the reserve and replant and rehabilitate whatever flora that gets affected in the process. — Al-Rai



Customs inspectors foil smuggling attempt

By Meshal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Abdaly customs inspectors foiled an attempt to smuggle a large quantity of illicit pills inside a bus, said security sources, noting that the driver, a GCC national, had hidden the pills under his seat. Abdaly customs manager Meshal Al-Saeed said advanced inspection devices used at the border exit detected strange objects on the bus, which called for a manual search and finding 4,475 pills hidden under the driver's seat.

Messila beach

Kuwait Municipality's public relations department announced Messila beach has been closed to be developed, greened and provided with facilities like those at Anjefa beach.

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwaiti youth reenact pearl diving through an annual event where they sail in traditional dhows to go diving for pearls just like their ancestors did. — KUNA

Commercial Bank concludes annual Ramadan program

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) concluded its annual Ramadan program which was launched as part of its social responsibility activities. The program included various social and humanitarian activities organized to serve people from all segments of society, said Amani Al-Waraa, Assistant General Manager, Public Relations and Media Department.

Among the activities included in the program was a visit to the Kuwait Cancer Control Center where CBK staff greeted patients on the advent of Ramadan. Bank staff also distributed suhoor meals to outdoor cleaning and construction workers throughout the holy month.

Furthermore, the bank cooperated with governorates to organize girgian activities, including sponsoring girgian ceremonies held by the Farwaniya and Mubarak Al-Kabeer governorates, and celebrating girgian with people at care homes. The bank also sponsored a Ramadan quiz organized by the Capital Governorate, and distributed iftar meals in Hawally governorate.



Local

Minister urges further cooperation with Municipal Council to achieve vital projects

Committee approves modified planning of Sabah Al-Salem University city

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hussam Al-Roumi yesterday stressed the significance of cooperation with the Kuwait Municipal Council to speed up work to achieve vital projects. Fruitful cooperation between the Municipal Council and the executive body of the Kuwait Municipality serves public interests, as it shortens duration of procedure, Al-Roumi told reporters during a visit to Municipal Council's chief Engineer Usama Al-Otaibi. Meanwhile, Otaibi praised the minister's continuous communication with the council, voicing optimism about cooperation among the state institutions, which helps remove obstacles facing state projects.

In the meantime, the Municipal Council's technical committee approved a modified structural planning for the Sabah Al-Salem Kuwait University City - Al-Shadadiyah. Head of the committee Abdulaziz Al-Megel told reporters that they had also agreed to allocate a plot of land for firefighters club. In the meantime, the committee referred a host of proposals to the city's executive body, mainly moving theaters from the residential area, and building a theatrical complex. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The Municipal Council's technical committee members meet at the council's building yesterday. —KUNA

NCCAL holds Int'l Music Festival on June 23rd

KUWAIT: The National Council of Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) will hold the 21st International Music Festival sponsored by Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri, during the period between the 23rd and 28th of June.

The festival honors the memory of late artist Marzouq Al-Marzouq. A musical night will be held on Saturday, led by maestro Rashid Al-Nuwaisher, with a number of young artists performing some of Al-Marzouq's tunes. Meanwhile, Chinese band Guanchi will take the stage a day later, in addition to performances by Turkish and Bahraini musicians.

Folk Art will also be a part of the festival as Al-Zayed Folklore band performs on Tuesday at Kuwait National Museum. NCCAL holds the musical gala annually coinciding with the 'International Day of Music' to highlight Kuwaiti heritage in the minds of the new generation, while showcasing Arabic and foreign creativity. The first International Music Festival was held in 1998. —KUNA

Speaker returns home after IPU meeting



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem returned home on Tuesday after participating in the meetings of the Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)



Executive Committee in Geneva. Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri and several state officials received

Ghanem at Kuwait International Airport. Ghanem's accompanying delegation consists of MPs Ouda Al-Ruwaie and Ali Al-Deqbasi. —KUNA



KUWAIT: People watch on a big screen the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Russia and Egypt on Tuesday in Kuwait City. Business is booming at restaurants and cafes in Kuwait which provide good spots for people to gather and watch World Cup matches indoors away from the heat. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat





Stop exploiting Africa, Pope tells Europeans

Leaving war behind, Syrian refugees embrace new life in UK

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GAZA: An explosion is seen in northern Gaza City after an airstrike by Israeli forces yesterday. Israeli fighter jets hit 25 targets in the Gaza Strip yesterday in response to rocket fire from the Palestinian territory. — AFP

Israeli warplanes hit 25 targets in Gaza

Israel pounds Hamas in response to rocket fire

GAZA: Israeli warplanes pounded Hamas targets in the Gaza Strip yesterday in a new flare-up of hostilities that saw dozens of rockets and mortar shells fired from the Palestinian enclave, the army said. A military spokesman said all targets belonged to Hamas's military wing, the Ezzedine Al-Qassam Brigades, and the strikes were more intense than in previous sorties.

"We struck at a greater intensity, with the intended message for Hamas to understand that we will not allow this situation to continue," spokesman Jonathan Conricus told reporters. The latest spike in tensions follows weeks of deadly protests and clashes along the Gaza-Israel border as well as the worst military escalation last month since a 2014 war.

It comes as US President Donald Trump's special envoy Jason Greenblatt and adviser Jared Kushner visit the region to discuss issues including the Palestinian-Israeli peace process. Israeli planes initially targeted three Hamas military positions overnight in Gaza in response to kites and balloons carrying incendiary and explosive devices launched into Israel from the Palestinian territory, the army said.

"They may look like toys but I can assure they are not

toys, they are weapons intended to kill and to inflict damage," Conricus said. He said that so far Israel had sought to warn off those launching the airborne devices but that could change. "We have warned verbally, we have fired various munitions in close proximity to (them), we have fired various munitions on various related supporting infrastructure and equipment, vehicles etcetera, related to efforts to launch kites - that may not remain the situation," Conricus said in English.

"Hamas and other terrorists, but mainly Hamas" hit back after the first air raids with more than 45 rockets and mortar rounds fired from Gaza towards Israel, seven of which were intercepted by the Iron Dome missile defense system, he added. Three more landed inside the Jewish state, he said, but did not account for the remainder. In response, Israeli planes carried out more raids against 25 "terror objectives" including an underground training compound, according to the army. Gaza medical sources said that five people were lightly injured in the strikes. Conricus said that more than 200,000 Israeli civilians live within range of the short-range rockets fired from Gaza.

"Most if not all of those spent the night in bomb shelters,"

he said. Tensions have soared in Gaza since mass protests and clashes broke out along the border on March 30. At least 132 Palestinians have been killed. There have been no Israeli fatalities. Palestinians are demanding the right to return to the homes their families fled or were expelled from during the 1948 war surrounding the creation of Israel.

Deteriorating path

The Gaza Strip is controlled by Hamas which Israel considers its bitter enemy. Israel maintains the use of live ammunition is necessary to defend its borders and stop infiltrations. It accuses Hamas of seeking to use the protests as cover for attacks. UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres has warned that Gaza is close to the brink of war. The most serious military escalation since the 2014 war between Israel and Hamas last month raised fears of yet another full-blown conflict in the Palestinian enclave. Israel said in late May it targeted some 65 militant sites in the Gaza Strip. It also said around 100 rockets and mortars fired from Gaza either exploded in Israel or were intercepted by air defenses.

Israel and Hamas have fought three wars since 2008 and observe a tense ceasefire that is regularly shaken by hostile acts. Peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians have been stalled since 2014. On Tuesday Greenblatt and Kushner met with Jordan's King Abdullah II in Amman to discuss the Palestinian-Israeli peace process during a regional tour that will also take them to Israel, Egypt, Qatar and Saudi Arabia.



New flare-up of hostilities

Germany foiled bio attack with Tunisian arrest

BERLIN: A Tunisian man arrested in Germany in possession of the deadly poison ricin and bomb-making material was planning a biological attack, the national police chief said yesterday. "Very concrete preparations had been made for an act with a ... biological bomb, which is a first for Germany," Holger Muench, head of the Federal Criminal Police Office, told public broadcaster ARD. German police commandos on June 12 stormed the Cologne apartment of the 29-year-old Tunisian migrant identified only as Sief Allah H. and discovered "toxic substances" that turned out to be ricin.

Produced by processing castor beans, ricin is 6,000 times more lethal than cyanide and has no known antidote. German news weekly Der Spiegel has reported the man was thought to have been following instructions disseminated by the Islamic State group on how to build a bomb containing ricin.

Prosecutors have charged that he was "strongly suspected of intentionally manufacturing biological weapons" but it remained unclear whether he was actively plotting an attack. Muench said "we became aware of this person a few months ago, and then evidence emerged pointing to links to the so-called Islamic State".

The case was an example of "good cooperation between security authorities, nationally and internationally", he said. Bild daily has reported Germany received a tip-off from the CIA based on the suspect's online purchases.



BOCHUM: In this file photo, a research assistant holds seeds of the castor oil plant (Ricinus communis) containing the deadly poison ricin. A Tunisian man arrested in Germany in possession of the deadly poison ricin and bomb-making material was planning a biological attack, police chief said yesterday. — AFP

During the raid, said Muench, "we found a large number of castor seeds from which to make it (ricin), as well as the utensils you need to make an explosive device". "Which concrete target he had in mind we don't know yet ... and the question of possible accomplices also remains open," said Muench.

Prosecutors say Sief Allah H. started buying the equipment and ingredients to make ricin in mid-May-including an online purchase of "a thousand castor seeds and an electric coffee

grinder". He succeeded in manufacturing the toxin earlier this month.

The case comes less than a month after French authorities said they had foiled a terror attack possibly involving the use of ricin. Two brothers of Egyptian origin were arrested. Germany remains on high alert after several deadly attacks claimed by the IS group, including a 2016 truck rampage through a Berlin Christmas market by Tunisian asylum seeker Anis Amri that claimed 12 lives. — AFP



ISRAEL-GAZA BORDER: An Israeli woman inspects the damage of her car in an Israeli kibbutz in the southern Israeli border with the Gaza Strip, after dozens of rockets fired from the Palestinian enclave hit the area. — AFP

Trump's controversial December decision to recognize the disputed city of Jerusalem as Israel's capital sparked anger across the Arab world and prompted Palestinians to freeze all contacts with US officials. — AFP

Taleban fighters slay 30 Afghan security forces

HEART: Taleban fighters killed around 30 Afghan security forces in multiple attacks in western Afghanistan, officials said yesterday, in the deadliest clashes since the militant group ended its ceasefire. Militants stormed at least two bases belonging to government forces in Badghis province overnight and ambushed a convoy of reinforcements. Officials said the group may have used the three-day truce, that ended Sunday, to plan the attacks.

"More than half of the fatalities came from the ambush and roadside bomb blasts that hit a reinforcement convoy," provincial governor Abdul Qhafoor Malikzai said. The other soldiers and police were killed when militants raided their bases, Qhafoor added. The Taleban claimed responsibility for the attacks in a WhatsApp message to journalists. Provincial council chief Abdul Aziz Bek confirmed the death toll and accused the Taleban of taking advantage of the suspension in fighting to do reconnaissance in the area.

"During the ceasefire the Taleban had sent informants to collect information about the bases and plan the attack," he told AFP. Badghis governor spokesman Jamshid Shahabi said that 15 Taleban fighters were also killed and 21 wounded in the attacks on two bases in Bala Murghab district. The defense ministry issued a statement saying fighting in the area continued as the Taleban faced "stiff resistance" from Afghan security forces. Further reinforcements had been deployed, the statement said. It

appeared to be the deadliest fighting since the Taleban returned to the battlefield on Monday after refusing a government request to extend their unprecedented three-day ceasefire.

Year-long truce offer

President Ashraf Ghani announced over the weekend that the government's eight-day ceasefire, which had been scheduled to expire on Tuesday, would be prolonged for another 10 days. The first formal nationwide ceasefire since the 2001 US-led invasion had sparked extraordinary scenes of Taleban fighters, security forces and civilians happily celebrating the Eid Al-Fitr holiday together.

But the jubilation appeared to alarm Taleban leaders, who on Sunday ordered their fighters to stay at their posts or in areas under their control. The Taleban hailed the truce as a success and a demonstration of their "full control" over their fighters. The government's move to extend its ceasefire with the Taleban may buy Ghani more time to work out how to keep the momentum going. His February offer of peace talks with the Taleban, considered to be one of the most comprehensive plans ever offered by an Afghan government, was ignored by the militants, who went on to launch their annual spring offensive.

The insurgents have repeatedly demanded direct dialogue with the United States, which Washington has refused, and the withdrawal of foreign troops. Ghani said Tuesday he was prepared to extend the ceasefire to a year "if the Taleban accepts it", according to a video of a meeting between the president and a group of peace marchers who arrived in the capital on Monday. The government's ceasefire does not extend to the Islamic State group, which claimed responsibility for two suicide attacks in the eastern province of Nangarhar over the weekend that marred an otherwise peaceful Eid holiday. — AFP

International

Syrian army steps up attacks in southwest, Jordan concerned

Both sides committed war crimes during Ghouta siege: UN

AMMAN: The Syrian army stepped up shelling of opposition-held parts of the southwest as it mobilizes for a campaign to regain the area bordering Jordan and the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights, opposition sources said. Violence erupted at the frontline town of Kafr Shams, near the Syrian-held Golan Heights, and further east in the town of Busra Al Harir, which was struck by dozens of mortars from nearby army positions, the sources said. Syrian state media said militants had escalated attacks on civilians in the area which is part of a "de-escalation" zone agreed by the United States and Russia last year with the aim of containing the conflict in the southwest.

An offensive in the southwest would risk a major escalation of the seven-year-old war. The area is of strategic importance to Israel, which is deeply alarmed by Iranian influence in Syria. Washington has warned it will take "firm and appropriate measures" in response to violations of the "de-escalation" deal. US-allied Jordan is increasingly worried about a spillover of violence and has been engaged in stepped up diplomatic efforts to preserve the de-escalation zone which it also helped to broker last year, a Jordanian source said.

Rebels say Iranian-backed fighters allied to President Bashar Al-Assad have boosted their numbers in the area, though a commander in the regional alliance fighting in support of Assad denied Tehran-aligned forces had a big presence there. Elite government troops known as the "Tiger" force, which have spearheaded a campaign that recaptured the Eastern Ghouta region near Damascus, have also been mobilized for the attack. The pro-Damascus newspaper al-Watan said there were "growing indications about preparations for the start of a wide military operation to liberate" the south.



Army and rebels on war footing

"They are moving more reinforcements and there have been several infiltration attempts which we have so far repelled," said Abu Ayham, a rebel commander in the Salah al Din brigades operating in Quneitra.

Crime against humanity

Residents and opposition sources say that in the few days they saw larger movements of troops with armored vehicles and tanks along two main highways that cut through rebel areas. The last two days have seen wider skirmishes, an air strike and rebel ambushes along two main highways being used by the army to reinforce the

new life with our daughters," Al-Masri said. "The UK is our country now." The British government, one of the largest donors to the Syrian crisis, says it has resettled more than 7,000 Syrian refugees between 2014 and 2017, focusing on the most vulnerable, with half of them children.

Local councils, charities and communities have been at the forefront of efforts to help refugees adjust to their new lives, in the face of an arduous asylum process which can take years. In addition, limited job opportunities and a shortage of homes have pushed many into homelessness, which can spiral into labor abuses and sexual exploitation, aid groups say. The government has come under fire for denying basic rights to the so-called "Windrush generation" of Caribbean migrants invited to Britain after World War Two to plug labor shortages.

Community spirit

Kingston is likely to receive another two or three families by early 2019 and aims to resettle 50 people by 2020, said Christine Murphy, local coordinator for the charity Refugee Action, which provides support during their first year. "We have a moral obligation to do our bit to help the most vulnerable in society, both on our doorstep and from further afield," said local councillor Jon Tolley. "We are determined to show that refugees are welcome here and not only to give to and help them, but to recognize the contribution they make to our society, making us more compassionate, open

and understanding." His comments follow moves in some African countries to win more generous terms from international mining companies. In Democratic Republic of Congo, for example, the government has enacted a new mining code that is designed to earn extra money for the state from copper, cobalt and gold produced there.

Mining companies say the government should reconsider the law in order to respect exemptions that were granted by its predecessor. The pope said Europe needed to focus on education and investment in Africa if it wanted to stem the flow of migrants, which is also an increasingly divisive issue in Italy, where the new governing coalition is taking a hard line. "And there's a problem," he added. "We send people back to those who have sent them here. They end up in the jails of traffickers." The pope then showed Reuters graphic photographs that he said showed victims of human trafficking who had been tortured and killed in an unspecified location in Africa. —Reuters

Leaving war behind, refugees embrace new life in Britain

LONDON: Four-year-old Syrian refugee Julie Al-Masri shrieked with laughter as she ran towards her father, clutching a unicorn-shaped handbag which her mother said symbolized the freedom of their new life in Britain, safe from the trauma of war. The family of four is one of eight Syrian refugee households who have been resettled in Kingston upon Thames in southwest London, as part of a government scheme supported by the United Nations refugee agency (UNHCR). "The war destroyed everything. It was a hard life. There was no work, no food, no water," said 30-year-old Omar Al-Masri, who arrived in Britain in November, having spent five years waiting for resettlement in Lebanon after their Syrian home was bombed.

The quiet London neighborhood, where only the sounds of passing cars, is starkly different from their hometown of Deraa, which has witnessed some of the fiercest fighting in Syria's seven-year civil war. "We were very, very happy when we arrived in the UK. I can't explain it. We were happy that we will start a

Stop exploiting Africa, Pope tells the Europeans

VATICAN CITY: Europe should stop exploiting Africa and invest in ways that benefit the continent more, including by sharing mineral wealth more equitably, Pope Francis said. "We must invest in Africa, but invest in an orderly way and create employment, not go there to exploit it," he told Reuters in a wide-ranging interview, while discussing the migration of Africans to Europe. "When a country grants independence to an African country it is from the ground up - but the subsoil is not independent. And then people (outside Africa) complain about hungry Africans coming here. There are injustices there!"

Touching on the reasons for hunger in Africa, the pope said that "in our collective unconscious there is something inside us that says Africa must be

War-ravaged South Sudan at a glance

JUBA: South Sudan, the world's newest country, has been mired in a devastating civil war for more than four years, with tens of thousands of people killed, nearly four million displaced and its economy in ruins. War broke out when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy Riek Machar of plotting a coup just two years after the country gained independence from Sudan in 2011. With the two men to meet yesterday in the latest international effort to stop the fighting, here is some background.

World's youngest state

Before independence, the south of Sudan was ravaged by two civil wars (1956-1972 and 1983-2005) that pitted mainly Christian and animist insurgents in the south against Khartoum's Arab-dominated government. Millions died in the conflicts. A peace accord signed in 2005 by the government and southern rebels exempted the south from Islamic Sharia law and granted it six years of self-rule ahead of a referendum on independence. The 2011 referendum went nearly 99 percent in favor of secession from the north and on July 9 that year, South Sudan proclaimed its independence. Kiir was sworn in as the country's first president with Machar as his deputy. The international community-led by the United States, China, Russia and the European Union, as well as Sudan-quickly recognised the new African state.

Former allies turn enemies

Kiir and Machar were on the same side in the push for independence from Khartoum, but were separated by ethnic and political rivalries. Tensions spiked when Machar from the country's second-largest ethnic group, the Nuer was fired as vice president in 2013. His sacking came after Kiir, from the majority Dinka people, accused him of a failed coup. Machar rejected the charge, in turn accusing the president of purging political rivals.

By December 2013 the new country had descended into civil war, including fighting within the national army, undermined by differences fuelled by the rivalry between Kiir and Machar. The conflict spread to several states and was characterized by ethnic massacres, attacks on civilians, widespread rape, the recruitment of child soldiers and other forms of brutality and human rights violations. —AFP



IDLIB: Eight year-old Maya Mohammad Ali Merhi walks using prosthetic legs made by her father from tin cans in a camp for displaced people, in the northern Syrian province of Idlib. Maya and her father were both born without lower limbs. Unable to afford real prosthetic limbs, her father made her a pair out of tin cans filled with cotton and scrap pieces of cloth. —AFP

city of Deraa, which is split into areas controlled separately by the government and rebels. The army and rebels have also been exchanging gun fire and shelling in a frontline in Deraa city. Employees and hospital staff in two government hospitals in Sweida and Deraa provinces have also been put on high alert, according to a resident contacted by phone from Deraa city.

UN investigators said yesterday that Syrian govern-

ment troops and affiliated forces committed war crimes and a crime against humanity in their long siege of eastern Ghouta through heavy bombardment and "deliberately starving" 265,000 people. About 20,000 rebel fighters entrenched in the besieged area, some belonging to "terrorist groups", shelled the nearby capital of Damascus in attacks that killed and maimed, amounting to war crimes, they said. —Agencies



LONDON: Syrian refugee Omar Al-Masri, who has been resettled to Britain with his family under a government scheme supported by the UN Refugee Agency, is pictured with his daughters in their new home in Kingston Upon Thames. —Reuters

and understanding."

Close to 120,000 refugees live in Britain, according to UNHCR. They are among the lucky few as only about 1 percent of refugees globally are resettled abroad. A key challenge is securing affordable housing for refugees, which is paid for by the local council. Tight budgets mean that Kingston relies on community spirit, with locals

renting out their homes below market rates. "I've been following the developments in Syria and I'm absolutely heartbroken by the scale of the tragedy," said Tony Clemson, who has let out his two-bedroom apartment to a Syrian refugee family. "I wanted to get involved and help ... If the scheme is going to work, they need to have somewhere to live." —Reuters



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis waves to faithful upon his arrival in St Peter's square at the Vatican for his weekly general audience yesterday. —AFP

Scenarios for Turkey's polls

ISTANBUL: The outcome is far from certain in Turkey's elections Sunday, seen as the biggest test for President Recep Tayyip Erdogan at the ballot box in his one-and-a-half decades in power. Parliamentary and presidential polls are being held on the same day for the first time in Turkey's history, under a new constitution that also grants the incoming president greater powers. The key focus will be on whether Erdogan can win the presidency in the first round and if his ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) keeps its majority in parliament. With a run-off scheduled for July 8 if no candidate wins over 50 percent of the vote, several scenarios are possible—each of which will have a profound impact on modern Turkey.

Erdogan clean sweep

SCENARIO: Erdogan wins the elections in the first round, keeps parliament majority. This is the only win-win outcome for the leader and what he had in mind when he in April called the snap elections more than a year ahead of their scheduled date, to catch the opposition off guard. But while Erdogan appeared confident of a knockout victory, that probability has receded with the economy spluttering and the opposition finding momentum. "Erdogan called snap elections expecting to solidify his rule under new constitutional powers, (yet) does not have majority support from Turkish voters," said analysts at the Center for American Progress.

Run-off battle

SCENARIO: The opposition forces a July 8 run-off. While Erdogan appears certain to reap the most votes on June 24, it is far from inevitable he will win the 50 percent plus one vote needed for a first-round victory. His main rival, Muharrem Ince of the Republican People's Party (CHP), has run a surprisingly strong campaign and with the help of other opposition candidates has a realistic chance of forcing the second round. Analysts say that Erdogan would still be the favorite in a run-off. But the outcome of the parliamentary elections could influence voting on July 8 and, even if he won, Erdogan could enter his new term weakened. If the AKP loses its parliamentary majority on June 24, Erdogan would face a presidential run-off "with his aura of invincibility and traditional mastery over Turkish politics severely weakened," said Kemal Kirisci of the Brookings Institution.

Pyrrhic victory

SCENARIO: Erdogan wins presidency, AKP loses control of parliament. This scenario could throw Turkish politics into a period of profound uncertainty, rattle confidence in the economy and possibly prompt new elections. "The most likely outcome, as of today, is an Erdogan victory and a contested parliament," said Aaron Stein, resident senior fellow at the Atlantic Council. Ironically, changes spearheaded by the AKP have allowed the CHP to make a broad alliance for the election with three other parties that could boost opposition presence in parliament.

Much will depend on the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) - which is not in an alliance but staunchly opposes Erdogan-making the 10-percent threshold needed to win seats. The AKP lost its overall majority once before, in June 2015 polls. Erdogan simply called repeat elections, making clear he had no time for coalitions. But in theory, he would have to stand for president again in order to re-run the legislative polls.

End of Erdogan era

SCENARIO: Ince wins the presidency in run-off, opposition controls parliament. Ince is the clear favourite to come second in the first round, allowing his parliamentary allies to rally round him in a run-off and possibly the HDP as well. The opposition alliance winning parliamentary control could create an unstoppable momentum that would help Ince in round two of the presidential elections. "If this comes to pass, a massive political change is likely to occur on several fronts," said Marc Pierini, visiting scholar at Carnegie Europe. —AFP

International

Eritrea leader welcomes Ethiopia PM's olive branch, raising hopes

Hope in the Horn as Eritrea-Ethiopia thaw takes shape

ADDIS ABABA: Eritrean President Isaias Afewerki raised hopes of a breakthrough in one of Africa's most intractable conflicts yesterday by describing recent peace overtures from arch-enemy Ethiopia as "positive signals". Speaking at a Martyrs' Day event in the capital, Asmara, 72-year-old Isaias said he was sending a delegation to Addis Ababa to understand the position of new Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and "chart out a plan".

It was the first response from Eritrea, one of Africa's most closed and authoritarian states, to Abiy's shock pledge this month to honor all the terms of a peace deal that ended a 1998-2000 war between the Horn of Africa neighbors. Adding to the positive mood music, Abiy's chief of staff said the prime minister welcomed Isaias's statement and promised that the Eritrean delegation would be welcomed "warmly and with considerable goodwill".

The war drew comparisons to the First World War, with waves of soldiers forced to march through minefields towards Eritrean trenches where they were cut down by machinegun fire. As many as 80,000 are believed to have been killed in total. Disputes over the still-militarized border, in particular the town of Badme, have kept the two sides at loggerheads, with Asmara using the Ethiopian threat to justify its hefty military spending and long-term conscription.

However, Abiy, a 41-year-old former soldier who has outlined a series of radical reforms since taking over in March, stunned Ethiopians this month by saying he was prepared to honor international rulings that put Badme, which Ethiopia has refused to cede, in Eritrea. Isaias said the concession, which is likely to meet opposition from hardliners in Ethiopia's ruling EPRDF coalition, stemmed from the desire of both countries to reach long-term

"peace and harmony". "The positive signals issued in these past days can be seen as an expression of this popular choice. We can say that the positive messages which have been circulating of late are signs of the people's choice," he said, according to the official translation of his speech on state EriTV television. "Outside myopic considerations of public relations stunts and advantages, we will send a delegation to Addis Ababa to gauge current developments directly and in depth as well as to chart out a plan for continuous future action."

'Constructive'

There were no further details of the mission, including its date or remit, although Eritrea's ambassador to Japan, Estifanos Afeworki, described it on Twitter as "constructive engagement". Ethiopia's prime minister "thanked & congratulated President Isayas Afeworki for the positive response to Ethiopia's #peace and reconciliation overture," Fitsum Arega, Abiy's chief of staff, said on Twitter. "He also expressed his readiness to welcome warmly

Cost of conflict weighing on both countries

and with considerable goodwill the Eritrean delegation to Addis. #Eritrea #Ethiopia." Eritrea has no diplomatic relations with Ethiopia, although it has an embassy in Addis as part of its representation to the African Union, whose headquarters are in the Ethiopian capital.

In parliament this week, Abiy acknowledged that the tensions were inflicting a heavy economic cost on both countries and said Addis should no longer hide this price tag from the Ethiopian people, another stunning departure with the past. Although welcomed across East Africa, Abiy's concession met opposition from veterans of the war still living in Badme and ethnic Tigrayans living in Tigray province, which lies along the Eritrean border. Some



BADME: The graves of the Ethiopian soldiers who died during the battle against Eritrea are painted in the colors of the Ethiopian flag in Badme. —AFP

Tigrayans, who have long been the leading ethnic group in the EPRDF coalition that has run the nation of 100 million for more than two decades, are concerned their interests will be hurt if Badme is surrendered.

Residents told Reuters a protest had already taken place in the Irob district in Tigray over the decision by Abiy, a member of the Oromo ethnic group, Ethiopia's largest. After Abiy's Badme announcement, the Tigrayan

People's Liberation Front, a regional political party that had dominated the EPRDF until Abiy took office in April, came out swinging against any concessions to Asmara. "The Tigrayan People's Liberation Front will not take part in any process that harms the interests of the people of Tigray," it said in a statement, demanding that any withdrawal be linked to additional concessions from Eritrea. —Reuters

Immigration: A deeply divisive topic in Europe

PARIS: The arrival of massive numbers of migrants in Europe over the past few years has stirred fierce debate in many EU member states, and a number of governments have started to take a much tougher line as public opinion becomes increasingly hostile to the new arrivals. Meanwhile, the number of migrants arriving via the Mediterranean has tailed off. After peaking at more than one million in 2015, the number fell to 362,000 in 2016, 172,000 in 2017 and just 37,000 so far this year, according to EU and UN figures. Another point of friction is how the burden can be shared across the EU—especially when large swathes of the population are increasingly hostile to the idea of taking more migrants.

Germany

German Chancellor Angela Merkel allowed more than one million asylum seekers into the country in 2015, a decision that was welcomed at the time but has fuelled anti-immigrant sentiment in Europe's biggest economy. Merkel's CDU party suffered stinging losses in last year's general election, and she only just managed to hang on to power, while the far-right anti-immigrant, anti-Islam AfD party won seats in parliament for the first time. The CDU's Bavarian sister party, the CSU, has since threatened to shutter German borders if Merkel does not adopt a harder position on migration, an impasse that could topple her government. An opinion poll last week showed that nearly 90 percent of Germans favor a tougher stance on migration.

Italy

The main gateway into Europe for refugees arriving by sea, Italy is struggling under the burden placed on it by the so-called Dublin rules, which require migrants to apply for asylum in the first country they enter. An anti-migrant coalition between Italy's far-right and anti-establishment parties was sworn in to government earlier this month after March's election. One of its first decisions was to refuse to allow the Aquarius rescue ship carrying 630 migrants to dock in Italy. Italy has seen around 700,000 migrants arrive since 2013. Since January 1, the number of new arrivals has fallen by 78 percent to just over 15,600, according to data compiled by the interior ministry.

France

France, one of the countries where many migrants have said they would most like to settle, has also experienced tensions, particularly at its border with Italy which authorities have attempted to close. The majority of French people have said they are opposed to illegal immigration, with 56 percent saying they were against the Aquarius being allowed to dock in France. Nearly half of the 630 migrants on board, mostly of African origin, want to apply for asylum in France. Last year asylum applications in France rose to more than 100,000, a 17.5 percent increase.

Austria

Conservative Chancellor Sebastian Kurz, who claims to have helped shut down the so-called Balkan route for migrants in 2016, said Tuesday the debate in Germany could help accelerate efforts to find a Europe-wide solution. Austria received 200,665 applications for asylum between 2013 and 2017, equivalent to 2.3 percent of its population of 8.7 million. After peaking at 88,160 in 2015, the annual figure fell to 24,715 in 2017.

Belgium

Belgium awarded refugee or equivalent status to around 40,000 people between 2015 and 2017, according to official data. The government has toughened its stance, particularly under the state secretary for asylum and migration, Theo Francken, who recently said he was opposed to all illegal immigration in the EU and that only refugees who have been sent from UN-administered camps in war zones should be allowed in. —AFP

Death threats 'become routine' in toxic Brexit debate

LONDON: As a crucial Brexit battle comes to a head in the British parliament yesterday, MPs are weighing not just their own views but also their personal safety amid increasingly toxic public debate. Pro-EU lawmakers challenging the government's Brexit strategy have received repeated death threats, and at least one MP recently decided not to rebel on a bill for fear of reprisals. One member of Prime Minister Theresa May's Conservative Party is under such threat that they had to be accompanied by six armed undercover police officers at a public engagement, according to colleague Anna Soubry.

A leader of the pro-EU Conservative faction, Soubry has faced numerous death threats and on Monday had to call in police to investigate a new one. However, she said the intimidation only strengthened her resolve to vote against the government yesterday, when MP's vote on plans in the EU (Withdrawal) Bill to give parliament a greater say in the final Brexit

deal. "Death threats becoming routine & making many of us more resolute #StandingFirm #MeaningfulVote," Soubry tweeted on the eve of the vote.

During a debate on the same bill last week, Soubry revealed that she knew of at least one MP who declined to vote as they wanted "because of threats to their personal safety". Three people have been convicted over the abuse against Soubry, one of whom was jailed for eight weeks. All three referenced Jo Cox, an opposition Labor MP who was shot dead by a neo-Nazi sympathizer just days before the June 2016 referendum on Britain's EU membership. One of them, a 72-year-old retired engineer, admitted sending racist and threatening emails to a total of six MPs, which included accusations of "treachery" over Brexit.

'Can't do our job'

Online abuse is sadly a fact of life for MPs: Labour MP Jess Phillips, an outspoken feminist, recently reported how she received 600 rape threats in one night. Real-life threats are also too common. Last week, a 23-year-old neo-Nazi admitted in court to planning to assassinate Labour MP Rosie Cooper. But the 2016 EU referendum was particularly divisive and tensions continue to flare up around key

Hardline ally in new attack against Merkel

BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel's hardline allies yesterday took aim at her backing for a new euro-zone budget. German media reported, opening up another front in their attack against her. Merkel's Bavarian sister party CSU had on Monday already given her an ultimatum to curb migrant arrivals or risk pitching Germany into a political crisis that could rattle Europe.

But the CSU now also take issue with an agreement announced Tuesday by Germany's and France's leaders to set up a common budget for the euro-zone which will fund investments in poorer member states. "We were always very skeptical about a euro-zone budget. Simply because it's a form of additional budget," Bavaria's state premier leader Markus Soeder told Sueddeutsche Zeitung. "Is it separate from the German legislature? Does it mean that the fundamental stability of the euro will be challenged? All that must be clarified," he said.

Austria's Kurz raises specter of new migration 'catastrophe'

VIENNA: Austria's Chancellor Sebastian Kurz yesterday raised the specter of a "catastrophe" similar to the events of 2015 if Europe does not agree a common response on migration. Kurz's comments came as he and his ministers held a special joint session in the Austrian city of Linz with their Bavarian counterparts from the German CSU party, which is currently locked in a battle over migration policy within the government of Chancellor Angela Merkel in Berlin.

"We can't wait until we have a catastrophe like the one in 2015," Kurz said, referring to the migrant crisis

Ahead of a meeting with Austrian Chancellor Sebastian Kurz in Linz yesterday, Soeder confirmed that his party will call a coalition panel to examine the issue. Germans are deeply opposed to any "transfer union" that sees their taxes flowing to euro-zone laggards. And Merkel herself had initially appeared lukewarm to the idea of a budget for the bloc. But she has since offered a key concession in backing French President Emmanuel Macron's call for such a fund. However, she said in a recent interview that the total sum should be at the low tens of billions range—far less than what Paris had hoped for.

'Don't mix finance and asylum'

The CSU's attack on the euro-zone reform proposal came in a week already marked by a deep rift between the Bavarian party and Merkel over her liberal refugee policy that allowed more than a million asylum seekers to enter Germany since 2015. Merkel's decision had proven divisive, and voters in September's elections handed her poorest score ever and gave seats for the first time to the far-right anti-Islam AfD.

Several high profile crimes by migrants—including a deadly 2016 Christmas market

of 2015-16, which saw more than 150,000 people seek asylum in Austria, a country of 8.7 million. A row over migration policy in Germany between Merkel and her CSU interior minister Horst Seehofer has shaken the stability of the government in Berlin. Kurz insisted he didn't want to take sides in an "internal German debate" but welcomed the fact that immigration was once again being discussed by EU leaders ahead of a summit later this month.

"If the discussion in Germany has an upside, it's that there's now a new dynamic on the European level, and that there's now a bigger chance that we finally see action in the EU," Kurz said. Without naming Merkel he also aimed a shot across her bows by making clear what he thought were the results of her decision to welcome refugees to Germany in 2015.

Those who opened the borders in 2015 "are responsible for the fact that we have border controls between



LONDON: Pro-EU supporters hold placards during an anti-Brexit demonstration outside the Houses of Parliament in London yesterday. —AFP

events, notably votes in parliament. Victims of abuse have laid some of the blame at Britain's rightwing newspapers, which have dubbed anyone challenging the Brexit process "Enemies of the People" or "Mutineers". Last

week, pro-EU Labor lawmaker Chuka Umunna highlighted a Daily Express headline warning MPs to "ignore the will of the people at your peril". "This is a threat, pure and simple," he said. —AFP



BERLIN: Chancellor Angela Merkel sits next to German Interior Minister Horst Seehofer as they attend a ceremony commemorating the victims of displacement on Germany's refugee day, at the German Historic Museum (DHM) yesterday. —AFP

attack by a failed Tunisian asylum seeker—have also fuelled public anger. Germany's Interior Minister Horst Seehofer of the CSU has been one of the fiercest critics of Merkel's refugee stance. The frustration

border police to turn back migrants. —AFP

Austria and Bavaria, between Austria and Hungary, between Austria and Italy, and that the situation could get even worse", he said. Kurz, who hails from the centre-right People's Party (OeVP) went into coalition with the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ) after an election last year in which both parties made a clampdown on immigration a central theme.

'Common conviction'

Kurz was foreign minister under the previous government and often boasts of his actions to close the "Balkan route" for migrants in 2016. The head of Bavaria's state government, Markus Soeder, emphasized that Munich and Vienna "have a common conviction and position" on the issue. Kurz has said he intends to make migration a key theme when Austria takes up the EU's rotating presidency at the beginning of July and has been busy seeking allies for his stance. —AFP

International

Hiding from traffickers in 'prison-like' tents, Rohingya girls dream of school

Girls are confined to one-room bamboo tents

NEW DELHI: Trapped inside "prison-like" tents in Bangladesh's refugee camps because of fears they will be trafficked or sexually harassed, teenage Rohingya girls dream of going to school and playing outside, aid agencies said yesterday. Adolescent girls are confined to one-room bamboo and tarpaulin tents so as to avoid men, only venturing out in the early hours to relieve themselves, the children's charity Plan International said on World Refugee Day.

"They spend almost every hour of every day inside their sweltering tents, where the only activities they have to keep themselves occupied are cooking and cleaning," said Orla Murphy, Plan International's Bangladesh director. "There is a real hunger for social interaction, the feeling of normality," she told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

The number of Rohingya in camps in Cox's Bazar has swelled to almost 1 million since last August, when an army operation in Myanmar following Rohingya insurgents' attacks on security forces prompted an exodus to Bangladesh. With the start of the monsoon season, the government is working to relocate tens of thousands of people amid fears of landslides and waterborne diseases. Plan International interviewed 300 girls aged between 10

and 19, many of whom said they have little or no freedom to go outside and they only spend time with their families, reminiscing about happier times back home in Myanmar.

"In Myanmar if I wanted to play, I could, but I cannot play here," 11-year-old Noor told Plan International in a report that described adolescent girls' lives as 'prison-like'.

"I had friends and went to school. I was really interested to learn English and tailoring. But there is no school here." Children's charities only run temporary "learning centers" for some refugee children up to the age of 14 because Bangladesh does not allow formal schooling in the camps. With a growing number of Rohingya refugees being sold to older men as child brides by human traffickers, and widespread domestic abuse, rights groups called for more services to protect girls, from education and security to toilets.

"They become susceptible - sex tourism thrives here," said Nafeesa Shamsuddin, a spokeswoman for Bangladesh's BRAC charity. "Pimps target these vulnerable girls." While younger girls can be seen hauling bags of grains and firewood, fetching water or looking after babies, they are forced into isolation when they reach puberty, said Daphnee Cook, a spokeswoman for the British charity Save the Children. "Many childhoods end around this age," she said. "The perception is that these girls are now women and will face more risks." — Reuters



Rohingya girls sold to men as child brides



RATHEAUNG: This undated handout picture shows a group of Muslim women composed of Rohingyas and Bangladeshi boarding police trucks in Rathedaung township in Rakhine state after their damaged boat ran into trouble off the coast of Rakhine state. — AFP

North Korea, China discuss 'true peace', denuclearization

SEOUL: North Korea's Kim Jong Un and Chinese President Xi Jinping came to an understanding on issues discussed at a summit of the two leaders, including denuclearization of the Korean peninsula, the North's state media said yesterday. Kim and Xi assessed the historic meeting Kim had with US President Donald Trump in Singapore last week and exchanged opinions on ways to resolve the issue of denuclearization, Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) said.

The North Korean leader also promised during a meeting with Xi in Beijing to cooperate with Chinese officials to secure "true peace" in the process of "opening a new future" on the Korean peninsula, it said. Xi told Kim the neighbors' joint efforts could definitely ensure peace and stability on the Korean peninsula, China's official Xinhua news agency said.

"I have faith that, with the joint efforts of China and North Korea, our relationship can definitely benefit both countries and both peoples," he said, during a meeting at Beijing's Diaoyutai state guest house. Kim told Xi that previously China and North Korea had helped each other out like family members. "General Secretary comrade Xi Jinping has shown us touching and familial support and concern," he said, according to Xinhua. Kim wrapped up his two-day trip to Beijing yesterday with a visit to an agricultural sciences exhibition and the Beijing subway command centre, Xinhua added.

The visit follows his Singapore summit, where Kim and Trump reaffirmed a commitment to work towards complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula. Trump surprised officials in South Korea and the United States after that meeting by saying he would end "provocative" joint US-South Korean military exercises. The United States and South Korea said they had agreed to suspend a joint military exercise set for August, although decisions regarding subsequent drills have not yet been made.

Yesterday, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang

Kyung-hwa said the decision to suspend the exercise could be reconsidered, based on future developments with North Korea. "I think we've made it clear this is a goodwill gesture to strengthen dialogue momentum," Kang said. "It's not irreversible. They could come back if the dialogue loses speed, or if North Korea doesn't live up to its denuclearization commitment," she said. Kim is on his third visit to China this year. Xi offered high praise to the North Korean leader on Tuesday for the "positive outcome" of last week's summit with Trump.

KCNA also reported that Xi said relations between

China and North Korea had reached a new level of development since Kim's first visit in March and that the pacts by the two leaders were being carried out "one-by-one". Kim also told Xi he was willing to bolster friendship and cooperation, it said.

It was widely expected that Kim would visit Beijing to brief Xi on his summit with Trump, which included Pyongyang agreeing to hand over the remains of troops missing from the 1950-53 Korean War. Two US officials told Reuters on Tuesday North Korea could start that process within the next few days. — Reuters



BEIJING: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un (right) and Chinese President Xi Jinping wave to children after reviewing an honor guard during a welcome ceremony in Beijing's Great Hall of the People. — AFP

Battle for Yemen port of Hodeida

SANAA: Emirati-backed Yemeni government forces seized Hodeida airport yesterday in a major step towards retaking the rebel-held port city after a week of fighting that has left nearly 350 people dead. The offensive to retake Hodeida from rebel fighters who have held it since 2014 has raised UN concerns for vital aid shipments and food imports through the city's docks. Here is a timeline of the battle:

Troops launch offensive

The offensive is launched on June 13 after government forces—who have been advancing on the port for months—receive a green light from the Saudi-led coalition that provides essential air and ground support. The coalition carries out more than a dozen air strikes on Houthi positions on the outskirts of Hodeida; 22 rebels are killed while three pro-government fighters die in an ambush, medical sources say. UN envoy Martin Griffiths, leading talks to ensure the continued functioning of the vital port, urges all sides to "exercise restraint and to give peace a chance." Britain requests a UN Security Council meeting and Russia warns of "catastrophic consequences" for the entire aid-dependent country.

Heavy clashes

There is intense fighting on the second day of the offensive, with Saudi-led coalition warplanes and Apache helicopters providing "continuous" air support, although the government advance is hampered by sniper fire and mines. Medical sources said that 30 rebels and nine pro-government troops are killed in fighting near Hodeida's defunct airport, which serves as a rebel base.

The UAE announces that four of its troops died on the first day of the offensive, when Houthis said they had struck a coalition ship with two missiles. Sweden calls for the UN Security Council to demand "an immediate freeze" to the assault to allow time for talks on a rebel withdrawal and avert a humanitarian disaster. But UAE Minister of State for Foreign Affairs Anwar Gargash insists "it is clear that for the UN-led political process to succeed, the situation on the ground must change".



AL HAJJAH, Yemen: Displaced Yemenis from Hodeida sit in their shelter at a make-shift camp for displaced people in the northern district of Yemen's Hajjah province yesterday. — AFP

Rebel leader defiant

After meeting behind closed doors, the UN Security Council does not demand a halt in the offensive but says the port must remain open. Saudi ambassador Abdallah Al-Mouallimi warns that the Houthi rebels could "blow up part of the port" during a retreat. The Houthis will be given safe passage to the north if they withdraw from the city, the UAE ambassador says. But rebel chief Abdulmalik Al-Houthi urges his men to fight on, promising reinforcements. On June 15, government forces come under attack on the coast road south of Hodeida, leaving around 12 dead and disrupting a vital supply line.

UN envoy leaves

The UN envoy holds four days of talks in the rebel-held capital Sanaa in a bid to avert an all-out battle for the city but flies out on Tuesday without announcing any breakthrough. The Yemeni government and its allies have insisted that the Houthis must fully withdraw from Hodeida and turn over the port to UN supervision. The rebels agree only to share control of the port with the United Nations. — AFP

Japan dreams of jackpot with legal casinos

TOKYO: At a casino school in Tokyo, croupier-in-training Takuto Saito settles behind a green table and reaches for the roulette wheel, addressing a group of imaginary punters: "Spin up. Place your bets." The 24-year-old has never set foot in a casino, but he is gambling that new laws opening up the lucrative sector will soon create plenty of jobs for croupiers in Japan.

Opening his palms to fake surveillance cameras on the roof to show there is nothing up his sleeves, Saito says he enjoys watching how players make their moves and the tense atmosphere around the gambling tables. Owner Masayoshi Oiwane says interest has skyrocketed in his casino school, where would-be croupiers learn to deal baccarat games, spin the roulette wheel and supervise betting on the green baize tables. "Our enrolment has doubled from last year," he said. "We are seeing an unprecedented level of momentum."

Japan was long the only developed nation that banned casinos but passed legislation in 2016 paving the way to make the industry legal. And on Tuesday, the lower house of parliament passed a bill allowing the construction of three "integrated resort" (IR) facilities combining casinos, convention centers, hotels, restaurants and entertainment venues. Japan is often viewed as the Holy Grail of gaming in Asia due to a wealthy population, proximity to China and appetite for other forms of legal gambling, including horse racing and pachinko, a slot machine-style game.

Economists estimate the casino industry could bring in takings of 2.0-3.7 trillion yen (\$18 billion to \$34 billion) a year, and national and regional governments are set for a jackpot of a combined 30-percent tax on gaming revenues. Japan's government hopes they will become tourist draws, local versions of Las Vegas or Macau that will be a shot in the arm for a stagnant economy and attract business travelers and new tourists. It has brushed aside opposition from activists, including those concerned about Japan's already well-documented problem with gambling addiction. — AFP

News in brief

Iran lawyer arrested

TEHRAN: An Iranian defense lawyer has been arrested after claiming a man executed this week for killing three policemen was innocent, Iran's Fars news agency said yesterday. Zeinab Taheri was taken into custody after an arrest warrant was issued against her for making "false statements" and because of "her lies propagated online claiming (the defendant) was not guilty," the conservative-linked agency said. It did not specify the date of her arrest. "The female lawyer who recently claimed to be the defendant's lawyer and who has gone hoarse saying he is innocent was basically not this person's lawyer," Tehran's chief justice Gholamhossein Esmaili said, according to the agency. Mohammad Reza Salas was hanged on Monday for driving a bus into a group of police officers during February clashes with security forces, killing three of them. — AFP

10 killed in Zambia

LUSAKA: At least 10 subsistence miners were killed when a mine dump known locally as Black Mountain collapsed in Zambia's second-largest city and copperbelt mining hub Kitwe yesterday, police said. The vast mound of dark earth in the country's northeast has become an economic lifeline for thousands of people who make a living from activities that local media report have been partially legalized. "So far we have retrieved 10 dead bodies and seven bodies of those injured," said Copperbelt Province police commissioner Charity Katanga. Operations to retrieve bodies were ongoing, she added. Local media reported that miners were forced to step in last month after small-scale miners began using explosives to extract copper from the mine dump, damaging nearby properties and possibly dislodging the mound. — AFP

Cyber attack targets jets

TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu called on governments worldwide yesterday to join forces to defend against cyber threats that he said could even bring down military and civilian aircraft. Cybersecurity also represents an enormous business opportunity, Netanyahu told a cyber conference at Tel Aviv University, adding that Israel receives about 20 percent of global investment in the sector. "We cannot go back to the world of levers, pulleys and couriers. Since we are going forward, we are absolutely vulnerable. Our airlines can be brought down, our fighter planes can be brought down," he said. While Israel monitors attacks at its cybersecurity centre in the southern city of Beersheba, Netanyahu said there was "no silver bullet". — Reuters

Macedonia name deal

SKOPJE: The Macedonian parliament ratified yesterday a historic accord with Greece to rename the small Balkan nation the Republic of North Macedonia in a bid to end a 27-year row between the two neighbors. "We have a deal that clearly defines our identity, our Macedonian language for ever," Prime Minister Zoran Zaev told lawmakers ahead of the vote, urging them to back the agreement. A total of 69 MPs in the 120-seat assembly supported the accord, while the nationalist opposition deputies were not present during the vote. The agreement's adoption by parliament clears the way for a referendum to be held at a later date. If the public back the name change, the government will then have to change the constitution—a key Greek demand before its own parliament is asked to ratify the deal. — AFP

Business

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13 Asian markets up but trade war keep dealers on edge

14 Oil in the Faroe Islands: A mirage or miracle find?

14 Pets At Home bets on vets to break curse of British retail



HONG KONG: A woman (C) poses for a photo in front of a business that has been decorated in fake flowers in the central district of Hong Kong. —AFP

Air India stake sale plan shelved

Government will continue to support carrier's financial needs

NEW DELHI: India has shelved a plan to sell a 76 percent stake in state-owned carrier Air India due to lack of interest from bidders, a government official said yesterday, marking the latest setback in its ambitious efforts to rescue the ailing airline. Air India is now reviewing its funding needs and weighing ways to remain competitive, Junior Civil Aviation Minister Jayant Sinha told reporters at a briefing, adding the government is still committed to privatizing the airline.

The decision to pull the plug on the plan came after India last month failed to attract buyers for the government's stake in the debt-laden carrier, in a blow to Prime Minister Narendra Modi's credentials as a reformer willing to step away from running money-losing businesses. "We ran a disinvestment process where we made it very clear what type of bid we were interested in receiving. Nobody expressed any interest ... that process right now is over so we have to move forward and consider other alternatives," he said.

The government will continue to support the loss-making airline's financial requirements while it works on alter-

natives, Sinha said, without giving a specific timeline for a new plan. The sale was also key to Modi's plans to help keep the fiscal deficit at 3.3 percent of GDP, a goal already under pressure from giveaways to farmers and other welfare benefits ahead of the 2019 national elections.

While the government says it has been forced to review the plan also because of high oil prices, a weaker rupee and rising interest rates, potential bidders found some of the stake sale terms too onerous, making it a non-starter. Delays could exacerbate the carrier's financial woes and hurt the government's efforts to cut debt, analysts said, adding the focus should now be on improving Air India's operations so it does not lose more money or market share.

"The government would look to improve the operational efficiency of the airline so that it becomes attractive for private investors to come in," said Teresa John, economist at Nirmal Bang Institutional Equities. "I don't see the Air India stake sale happening before 2019 elections unless the scenario changes, especially with airlines already under pressure on rising cost," she said.

Non-core assets

Air India, which employs some 27,000 staff, said this month it was seeking a short-term loan of 10 billion rupees (\$148 million) so it can continue day-to-day operations. The carrier had debt worth 487.81 million rupees (\$7.16 billion) as of March 31, 2017. Analysts say while a new plan is being worked on, the government should consider selling some of Air India's non-core assets to fund its working capital needs.

Air India has six subsidiaries - three of which are loss-making - with assets worth about \$4.6 billion. It also has an estimated \$1.24 billion worth of real estate, including two hotels. The national carrier, operates domestic and international flights, runs a low-cost airline and also has a ground-handling business. Under the terms, bids were invited for all three. "Air India is a classic case where the sum of parts is more valuable than the whole entity. Individual suitors are interested in different parts of Air India and they should go for a part sale," an industry source said.

Incremental funds

The decision to suspend the sale is a highly disappointing reversal of the government's earlier commitment to privatizing the national carrier, consultancy CAPA India said in a note. "Under continued government ownership, with no clear roadmap, Air India is likely to see its domestic and international market shares decline over time to a point where the carrier is no longer relevant," it said.

Air India has been losing domestic market share to rapidly expanding lower-cost operators like InterGlobe Aviation Ltd's IndiGo and SpiceJet Ltd that are now looking to expand their international routes as well. CAPA India estimated the carrier would make losses of \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion over the next two years alone, adding it represented an unnecessary drain on taxpayer funds. "There will be need for incremental funds but it is not clear if that will come from the government or external borrowing from banks," said the industry source, adding that the airline would most likely have to take on more debt. —Reuters

Ford bets its future on new Detroit hub

CHICAGO: Bill Ford Jr, the great-grandson of the American carmaker's founder, stood in front of thousands Tuesday in Detroit, with an abandoned train station in the background, and entwined the company's future with that of the dilapidated building behind him. "This station is a symbol," Ford declared. "We're making a big bet on our future."

The company-one of America's "Big Three" automakers-bought the Michigan Central Station building, a Beaux Arts gem opened in 1913 that has stood abandoned and decaying for three decades, to make it the centerpiece of a new urban high-tech campus. The once proud building has faded, but is poised for much the same renewal that Detroit residents and businesses hope will mark the Motor City's post-recession, post-bankruptcy renaissance.

At an event, the Ford Motor Company unveiled its lofty plans: a space of 1.2 million square feet spanning several city blocks, where the company's employees, and those of partner firms and startups, will work on innovations such as autonomous driving and electrification. "Just as Detroit has had to re-imagine what it's going to be, we have to do the same, because everything is changing," Ford said.



DETROIT: (L-R) Jim Hackett, Ford President and CEO, Bill Ford, Ford Motor Company Executive Chairman, rapper Big Sean, Detroit Mayor Mike Duggan, and Michigan Governor Rick Snyder gather for a photo in front of the historic, 105-year old Michigan Central train station. —AFP

Courting millennials

Ford hopes to open the redeveloped train station in three to four years and make it a "magnet for high-tech talent," according to a company statement. Part of the company's gamble is that, by moving its innovations divisions into Detroit's urban core, Ford can attract the technology-savvy millennials it needs. The company's main headquarters will remain in nearby suburban Dearborn.

"We want the best startups, the smartest talent, the kind of thinkers, engineers and problem-

solvers who see things differently, to come and partner with us here in Detroit," Ford said. The venerable American brand is facing the same challenge as other carmakers, which is basically an image problem, said Michigan State University marketing and communications professor Robert Kolt. "I've never heard a student say, 'Well, I want to work for a car company.' They just don't say it," Kolt told AFP. "If you want to attract young people, you build a Silicon Valley-type of headquarters." —AFP

GE to be dropped from Dow Jones stock index

NEW YORK: Slumping US industrial giant General Electric will be booted from the prestigious Dow Jones stock index next week, S&P Dow Jones Indices announced Tuesday. GE will be replaced on June 26 by pharmacy chain Walgreens Boots Alliance, which will contribute "more meaningfully" to the index, S&P Dow Jones said.

GE was an original member of the Dow in 1896 and has been in the index continuously since 1907. The move comes on the heels of a bruising two-year slump for the iconic US company, which has seen shares tumble nearly 60 percent over the last 24 months amid downturns in its power generation and oil services businesses. S&P Dow Jones noted that the Dow index is weighted by stock price, which means that GE accounts for less than one percent of the overall benchmark.

Walgreens Boots has a higher stock price and will have more influence on the index, which has 30 members. Thomas Edison

launched GE in the 19th century. Over time, the company has an intermittent presence in a sprawling array of industries, including entertainment and finance. The company has pared back some of these businesses in recent years, selling NBC Universal to Comcast and divesting most of its finance business. GE's best performing units of late have been health care and aviation.

Under pressure from Wall Street, GE last year replaced Jeffrey Immelt with John Flannery as chief executive. Since Flannery became CEO last summer, GE has trimmed costs, streamlined its board, cut its dividend and revamped employee compensation. The company also has announced plans to sell \$20 billion in industrial assets.

In April, GE reported a loss of \$1.2 billion in the first quarter due to \$1.5 billion in reserves to cover legal settlements connected to a subprime lending unit it exited. Flannery warned at the time that outlook for the power sector was even worse than previously thought. Analysts have praised Flannery, but questioned whether the moves are sufficient, with some speculating whether a breakup of the company would make sense. GE said its turnaround efforts were on track. "We are focused on executing against the plan we've laid out to improve GE's performance," the company said in response to the index change. —AFP

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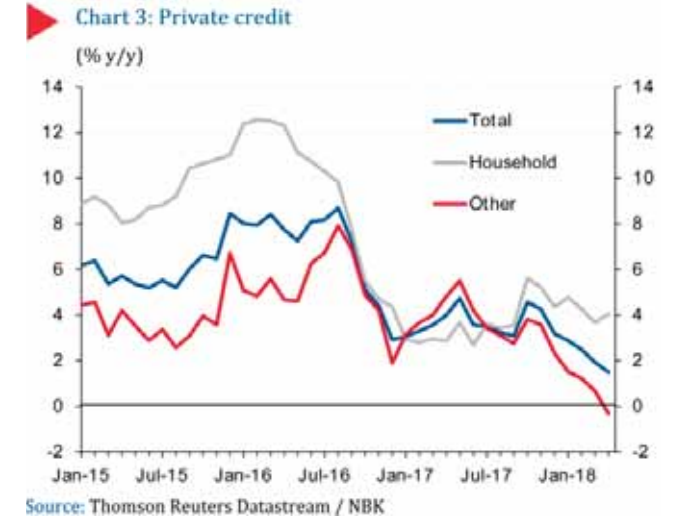
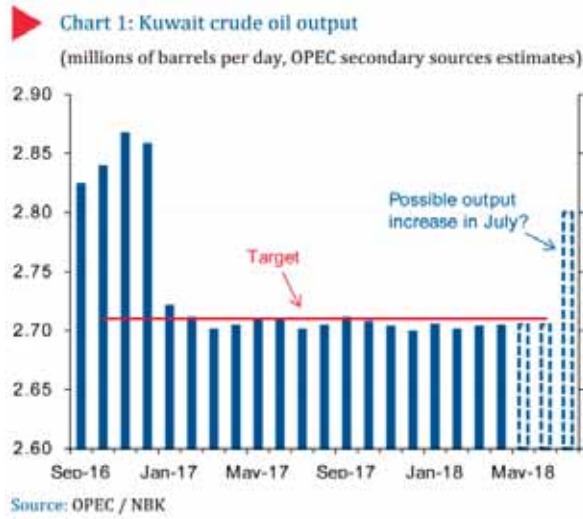
Business

NBK Economic Update

Kuwait Brief: Oil output rising on OPEC policy shift; CBK rates held

Domestic real estate sales eased back in April following a bumper March

KUWAIT: Although oil prices have eased back a touch over the past few weeks, we have revised up our forecast for economic growth this year on fresh assumptions about oil production in light of an expected change in output targets by the OPEC+ group in June. Weak credit data for May, however, suggest that non-oil growth is struggling to gain momentum, although some of this may be related to seasonal factors and we still look for a mild pick up in 2H18 once the new expansionary budget begins to take effect. It appears that parliament is softening its opposition to the new debt law and is linking it to budget reforms. The law would allow the government to borrow up to KD25 billion from KD10 billion previously and extend debt maturities to 30 years. However opposition to the law remains substantial.



Kuwait to benefit if OPEC+ target is lifted
Having seen a big rally in previous months, crude oil prices fell back in late May and early June. The price of Kuwait Export Crude declined from a peak of nearly \$76/bbl in mid-May to \$72 towards the end of the month, following similar trends in the global benchmark, Brent. The initial fall reflected the view that crude may have risen too far, too fast, but more fundamentally on news that the OPEC+ group - whose supply restraint has been central to price strength - would raise production by up to 1 million b/d when it meets on 22nd June.

rising by 80,000 b/d or 3% to nearly 2.8 million b/d. We have altered our oil production and GDP forecasts to reflect this change in assumptions. Previously we had expected the deal to unwind at the end of the year. If it is brought forward to July, then some of the production increase we expected for 2019 will fall this year instead. Oil sector GDP is therefore now seen rising 1.5% this year and the same in 2019, versus 0% and 1.5%, respectively, before. This will lift overall GDP growth to 2.5% this year from 1.8% previously.

stabilize in April, posting slightly positive m/m changes across the various sectors, with the exception of the investment apartment subsector, where prices continued to decline. The stabilization in prices might be explained by a rise in demand due to the large price falls seen in 2017 and 1Q2018 as a result of the market-wide oversupply.

account for 9% of all goods imports.

Market index starts to be phased in. The bourse recently adopted FTSE Russell's industry classification benchmark, hoping to bring the market closer in line with international standards, all while facilitating foreign buying.

Prices have since edged up again, with KEC at \$74 in mid-June. Although the meeting could well be a fractious one with strong opposition from other OPEC members to any increase in output (Iran, Iraq), we think that some easing of supply restraint in H218 is likely to be adopted by the group driven mainly by Saudi Arabia (which already increased its output last month), to offset some of the 0.5 million b/d plunge in output in Venezuela over the past year and possibly future sanctions-driven losses in Iran.

Real estate sales dip, but still strong in April
Real estate sales declined by 15.1% m/m in April to reach KD 300 million compared to KD353 million in March. However, sales levels are still high relative to the 2017 and 2018 monthly averages of KD181 million and KD277 million, respectively. The monthly decline was partly due to the base effect of stronger sales in March, which were the highest since December 2014. The number of transactions, on the other hand, increased by 19% m/m to 679 from 575 in March. Investment sector sales remained particularly strong in April, whereas commercial sales fell back after a bumper March.

Trade surplus rises on higher oil prices, softer imports

Recent strength in oil prices has led to an improvement in the external trade position. The merchandise trade surplus widened in 1Q18 to KD2.3 billion - an estimated 23% of GDP - from KD1.9 billion in 4Q17. The pick up mostly reflects a 5% rise in oil revenues to KD4.4 billion led by higher prices for Kuwait Export Crude which rose 8% q/q to an average of \$63/bbl. Oil revenues account for nearly 90% of all merchandise exports.

Stock market sees mild rally in early June

Boursa Kuwait's All Share index ended May in the red, though subsequently regained most of its losses on improved global sentiment and oil prices, as well as regional dynamics. However, the stock market is still underperforming, with its current retreat over 2Q18 (-4.2% quarter-to-date) more than offsetting the rally it experienced the previous quarter. The index is down 0.9% year-to-date.

Dinar steady versus the US dollar

The Kuwaiti dinar was steady in the month to mid-June, almost unchanged versus the US dollar at \$3.31/KD1; though up slightly against the euro and the pound. The moves reflect the recent strengthening of the dollar against other currencies on the back of political ructions in Europe, strong US economic data and the prospect of rises in policy interest rates by the Federal Reserve.

Kuwait's oil sector is likely to benefit from any relaxation in production targets. It has stuck faithfully to its share of output cuts initially announced in 2016, reducing production by nearly 5% to just over 2.7 million b/d at present. If the group's output rises by 1 million b/d and Kuwait's share of this is similar to its share of the original cut, it would imply Kuwaiti production

Year-to-date, average monthly sales and transactions in 2018 have been higher than the monthly averages for 2017, suggesting that 2018 may be a more active year for real estate if current trends continue. Prices appeared to

But imports also contributed, falling 3% q/q to KD2.6 billion. Import growth was strong last year, reaching a five-year high of 10% for 2017 in a sign that demand in the economy was strengthening. Annual import growth remained positive in 1Q18 at 3% y/y, but down from 12% in 4Q17. One of the reasons for last year's strength was unusual growth in capital goods imports, which reached 20% but slipped to just 1% y/y in 1Q18. Consumer-oriented imports were also soft at 4% y/y, affected by weakness in car imports: autos

Average daily trading activity in the first five months of the year dropped by half compared to its average in 2017, dropping to KD 11.5 million per day. Kuwaiti investors were net sellers during that period, taking advantage of foreign investor buying ahead of the FTSE upgrade. This pushed the 3-month average share of foreign activity in the bourse to a record 22%.

June also saw the private placement of crane operator Integrated Holding Company, which raised more than KD 130 million and was more than twice oversubscribed, reflecting the pent-up demand for investing opportunities in Kuwait. With more than 1000 shareholders, the firm is eligible to list on the premier market, which may further support domestic activity. The lull of the summer months will see trading remain somewhat subdued, but it is expected to pick up around September when the inclusion of Boursa Kuwait into FTSE Russell's Emerging

As expected, the Fed hiked interest rates by a further 25 bps in mid-June, moving the target range to 1.75-2.00%. Unlike other currencies in the region which have pegs to the US dollar, the Kuwaiti dinar is pegged to a basket of currencies dominated by the US dollar, and the central bank (CBK) chose not to raise its policy rate in June so as not to harm non-oil economic growth. The CBK indicated that it will use other monetary policy instruments to keep interest rate differentials to maintain the attractiveness of the dinar, and that banks have the capacity to raise their deposit rates while keeping the cap on their lending rates. The CBK then raised its repo rates by 25 bps and now banks raised their deposit rates by the same amount.

Asian markets up but trade war keep dealers on edge

HONG KONG: Asian equities rose yesterday on bargain-buying after the previous day's battering, but investors remain anxious as the threat of a China-US trade war hangs over markets. Shanghai and Hong Kong bore the brunt of the sell-off Tuesday after Beijing warned it would retaliate in kind to Donald Trump's threat of tariffs on hundreds of billions of dollars' worth of Chinese goods, amounting to much of its exports to the US.

cyber-theft and forced technology transfers that are hurting American jobs and companies. Tuesday's developments surprised many traders who had characterised Trump's protectionist rhetoric as part of a strategy to get a better deal from China.

Trump senior economic aide Peter Navarro continued the forceful language Tuesday by saying China had more to lose from a trade war because it shipped more to the US. He also maintained the administration was acting "to defend the crown jewels of American technology from China's aggressive behavior". Navarro said the White House was open to talks but warned: "The fundamental reality is talk is cheap. Delay is expensive."

OPEC in focus

Still, traders stepped back in to pick up beaten-down equities yesterday. Hong Kong was up 0.8 percent after dropping 2.8 percent Tuesday, while Shanghai ended up 0.3 percent - a small dent in the previous day's 3.8 percent

loss. Tokyo ended 1.2 percent higher while Sydney gained by a similar percentage, Singapore added 0.7 percent and Seoul put on one percent. There were also gains in Wellington, Taipei and Bangkok. In early European trade London rose 0.8 percent and Frankfurt gained 0.5 percent, while Paris put on 0.2 percent.

"Markets are faring much better as investors' emotions have tempered, but in general, markets remain in wait-and-see mode," said Stephen Innes, head of Asia-Pacific trading at OANDA. "Clarity is power but given the lack thereof, it's a struggle to get back in the saddle as a sense of once bitten, twice shy continues to permeate. "The spoils of trade war have attracted bargain-hunting but completely trusting the markets in the aftermath of yesterday's meltdown is bordering on too soon, too quick as sentiment remains very apprehensive."

Rakuten Securities Australia chief operating officer Nick Twidale added: "Markets are preparing for further downside whilst hoping that the latest salvos from the

Trump administration prove to be another 'negotiating' tactic." The dollar clawed back early losses against the yen but analysts warn it is still likely to face further pressure as investors look to the Japanese unit as a point of safety in times of turmoil.

The euro faced more selling following dovish comments about monetary policy from European Central Bank boss Mario Draghi, while the pound was also down against the dollar. Eyes are turning to OPEC's crucial meeting as Saudi Arabia pushes, along with non-member Russia, to raise an output ceiling that has supported oil prices for 18 months. The two major producers are facing stiff opposition at the June 22-23 gathering from nations that have benefited from the increased revenues. "It does seem like an increase is coming," said Greg McKenna, chief market strategist at AxiTrader. "The question is, can such a move be achieved in order to balance the interests of OPEC's customers like the US and India while still holding the cartel together as a functioning group?" — AFP

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Business

Oil in the Faroe Islands: A mirage or miracle find?

TORSHAVN, Denmark: After fuelling hopes of independence from Denmark at the turn of the millennium, the Faroe Islands' dreams of an oil bonanza have turned out to be more of a mirage than a miracle. "We are confident that there is oil and gas here," Kristina Hafoss, finance minister in the Danish autonomous territory in the North Atlantic, told AFP. Even if there's not a single oil platform in sight?

"It's just a question of getting enough companies to go out and search for it and then we will find it." The oil majors lined up in the beginning. In 2000, Britain's BP, Norway's Equinor (formerly known as Statoil) and Italy's Eni were among those who obtained licenses to prospect Faroese waters. After nine test drills and much disappointment, the initial enthusiasm has now waned. Oil and gas was found in some wells, but the quantities were not enough to justify commercial production. Equinor, the last of the oil companies to maintain an office on the Faroe Islands, shut its doors in 2015. "We drilled a total of four exploration wells without making a commercial discovery, and based on the remaining potential we saw in the Faroe Islands the decision was made to exit," spokesman Erik Haaland said. During the most recent licensing

round last year, only one group showed interest but no license was ever awarded.

Positive indications

The failure to find black gold could have extinguished the hopes of Faroese separatists, but the archipelago's economy is thriving thanks to profitable fisheries and fish farm sectors. So much so that around half of the Faroe Islands' 50,000 inhabitants are toying with the idea of becoming independent from Denmark. At the Faroese Geological Survey, experts are trying to make the most of the situation.

"It was a disappointment, I won't pretend it wasn't but given the timing, I'm not that surprised," said marine geologist Heri Ziska, referring to the weak oil price which has forced the oil industry to slash investments over the past few years. Nonetheless, "we have very positive indications from some oil companies," he said, adding: "We can see that they are working in the area, so they're looking actively at it." Off the nearby Shetland Islands, significant oil and gas fields have been found.

Anglo-Dutch group Shell and US group Chevron are set to develop the Combo and Rosebank fields respectively, located just on the

other side of the Faroes' maritime border. "When you know that just a few kilometers from the Faroese border the UK finds oil all the time, it's quite sure that there is oil here," insists Poul Michelsen, the Faroese foreign minister in charge of oil issues.

Vigorous offshore industry

In addition to their geographic remoteness, the Faroe Islands must also contend with the challenge of having a seabed made of basalt, an inhomogenous volcanic rock that complicates drilling and makes it more expensive. Even though a major oil discovery has yet to be made, the Faroe Islands still have a flourishing oil sector. With strong maritime traditions dating back to their Viking roots, more than 1,000 Faroese work in the offshore sector, either in the Faroes or elsewhere. "That's one of the really big successes of oil exploration in the Faroes: we don't have oil production but we have a lot of income from oil," noted Ziska. Regin Joensen is one of those who makes a living on oil rigs.

Employed by a Norwegian oil services company, he's the supervisor of an underwater remote operated vehicle off the Ivory Coast. "Working on a Norwegian contract, the money (is) great and



A picture taken on June 5, 2018 shows a lighthouse in the city of Torshavn, on the Streymoy Island, the largest of Faroe Islands in this Atlantic ocean archipelago nation. — AFP

the 2-4 rotation as well. If I work in the North Sea I'm on board for two weeks and then home for four weeks. Working in Africa, the rotation is four weeks on and eight weeks off." For 1343 days worked a year, he earns a monthly salary of almost

6,000 euros (\$7,000), and he gets 935 euros for each additional day. Aged 52, he can't imagine working in any other sector. "You can't change the expensive habits you have developed over the years earning good offshore money." — AFP

AUB's B2B Corporate Cash Management platform now on smartphones

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced that its business to business (B2B) corporate cash management platform is now available via mobile. B2B is AUB's advanced cash management platform that is designed for medium to large sized corporates. It was launched in 2013 and has been implemented across organizations in different industries in Kuwait. Until now the platform was only available through a desktop system but it is now available on a mobile phone through a dedicated B2B application.

B2B allows companies to manage their financial transactions online. It can be tailored to suit the different accounting systems of corporates, and offers significant flexibility that has a track record of meeting the varying needs of our customers. Some of the features of B2B include an on screen viewer, advanced search, payment advice, SWIFT confirmation, notification engine, customizable workflow, enhanced reporting and dynamic file formats.

AUB's Senior Deputy Chief Executive Officer, Tareq Muhmood said, "B2B is a reflection of AUB's continued approach towards developing tailor-made solutions that have been designed to meet the varied expectations of our clients. AUB has quickly developed a strong position of becoming the trusted financial partner of many corporates, forming relationships based on integrity and trust, while also providing innovative banking services that understands and supports our clients' needs at every stage of their development."

In addition, Ali Alnaqi, senior Head of Cash Management and B2B at AUB, said "With B2B being rolled out with a mobile solution, customers are now able to manage transactions whilst on the move. B2B integration framework supports the automation of local and international transfers, payroll



and related staff payments, and electronic collections payments".

Ali Alnaqi added that "We continue to add additional functionality such as reconciliation on company's systems, direct debit mandates, instant notification on all transactions, improved operational efficiencies, secure archiving of processed transactions, one time password generation for every login, access over secure socket layer encrypted channel, and various levels of authorization for transaction processing as per clients' requirements. Customers are able to download the Mobile App through the Android or Apple App store by searching for AUBK B2B.

AUB's corporate banking unit is one of the leading corporate banking service providers to the business community amongst Kuwaiti banks, based on providing insights and tailoring solutions to our customers across different industry sectors. The B2B Mobile App is another step in enhancing how Ahli United Bank is delivering its product and services to its customers.

Pets At Home bets on vets to break curse of British retail

LONDON: Toys R Us, Maplin, Mothercare, Carrefour, House of Fraser, Poundworld. The list of casualties on the British high street seems to grow by the week, forcing survivors to seek new strategies to weather the onslaught from online rivals like Amazon. For Pets At Home, struggling in its traditional business of selling dog and cat food, the game plan is an increasing drive into the higher-margin area of veterinary practices.

The company reported falling profits in late May, sinking its shares to an all-time low, but its in-store vet business was a rare bright spot, with revenues rising 16 percent. It is now placing its bets on vets. It told Reuters it plans to double the number of practices it operates - mainly 50-50 joint venture partnerships with vets - to 1,000 over the next decade. The company will invest 20 million pounds (\$26 million) next year alone in its vets business, which has a core profit margin of about 34 percent compared with its retail division's 14 percent.

Pets At Home is not one of the bigger British retail players, with a market value of about 830 million pounds. Yet its toils and tactics tell a wider story about how companies across the sector are being forced to rethink business models to plot courses out of the gloom. Its push also reflects a global boom in high-margin pet services such as vets, grooming and premium accessories like toys and bedding. U.S. consumer spending on such services is growing at double-digit percentage rates, driving a surge in deal-making in the area. Consumer giant Mars's pet-care division is now larger than its traditional confectionery business, for example, after a string of acquisitions including two announced in the last



LONDON: Shoppers walk past sales advertising in shop windows on Oxford Street. — AFP

week, for British firm Linnaeus and European chain AniCura.

Collapse and calamity

Britain's high-street retailers have had a torrid 2018. As well as online competition, they have been hit by weak consumer sentiment and currency swings due to the Brexit vote. Maplin and Toys R Us collapsed in February, while Poundworld went into administration last week and Mothercare, Carrefour and House of Fraser are shutting stores in restructuring plans.

Pets At Home is looking to elude such a fate, yet its vet expansion plans carry significant risks. The company's revenue from the vets practices - which make up about a third of group operating profit - comes entirely from the franchise fee it charges its joint venture partners, calculated as 17-18 percent of sales. However many of the practices are struggling to turn a profit - suggesting the model could be unsustainable unless business picks up. A Reuters review of the accounts of more than 200 of the joint ventures found three-quarters them are loss-making. Pets At Home declined to comment

on the size of the losses of the underlying joint ventures, but said the group expected each practice to break even after four to five years of trading. "It takes time for a veterinary practice to develop and reach maturity. We have a lot of young practices, more than half are under four years old," a spokeswoman said, adding that 87 of its 461 practices were profitable and debt-free. The company also faces increasing competition from chains include private equity-backed Independent Vetcare and CVS, as well as a shortage of vets and veterinary nurses in Britain that could hamper the expansion plans. "There are a lot of questions out there in terms of the sheer number of practices," said Mark Hedberg, a vet and joint venture partner in the southern England town of St Neots.

"In the last three to four years it has increased massively. It is hard to find veterinary staff to staff all these expansions." Two other joint venture partners told Reuters they were also finding it difficult to staff their businesses. "It is very competitive, especially because the other corporate are in the market," said Laszlo Novak, a joint venture partner in Linlithgow, near Edinburgh. "There is a huge pressure." — Reuters

Burgan Bank winner of cash prize in the Yawmi Quarterly Draw

Congratulations
Shhwar Mohammed Bahader Al-Boulshi
the lucky winner of

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quarterly draw

مع السحب الربع سنوي
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"Yawmi"
changed my day

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced Shhwar Mohammed Bahader Al-Boulshi as the new KD 125,000 cash prize winner in the Yawmi Quarterly Draw. The winner expressed his excitement for being the winner of the rewarding cash prize with Yawmi Account from Burgan Bank. The Yawmi Quarterly draw offers customers chances to win higher rewards, entitling one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 cash prize every three months.

To enter Burgan Bank's Yawmi Quarterly Draws, customers should maintain a mini-

mum amount of KD 500 in their account for 2 months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. For more information about the Yawmi Quarterly Draw, customers are advised to visit their nearest Burgan Bank branch, or call the bank's Call Center where customer service representatives will be delighted to assist with any questions on the Yawmi account or any of the bank's products and services.



Moroni has become the new destination of Turkish Airlines in Africa

DUBAI: Turkish Airlines flying to the most countries in the world, has added Moroni which is the biggest city and the capital of Comoros Union to its network as of 18 June 2018. Moroni flights of the flag carrier will be

operated three times per week and it will be in connection with Seychelles flights. Comoros Union consists of three big island which named The Big Comoros, Anjuan and Moholi. Following the addition of Moroni, Turkish Airlines now reaches 122 countries with 304 destinations worldwide; 53 of which are in Africa. Comoros was named as moon islands by Arabic mariners and also named perfume islands by European countries because of being plenty various scented plant as honey suckle, orchid and gardenia. Agriculture sector is the biggest share of country economy and the climate of the Comoros is tropical. Introductory round trip fares are available from Istanbul to Moroni starting at 973 US Dollars (including taxes and fees). To view the flight schedules please visit www.turkishairlines.com.



Technology

Meet the virtual vigilantes who bust human traffickers from their laptops

Authorities with limited digital expertise struggle to stop tech-savvy criminals

LONDON: When not detecting intelligence threats to oil rigs and dams, Sergio Caltagirone spends his spare time hunting a different kind of predator - traffickers trading in human beings, from war-torn Syria to sleepy US suburbs. The Seattle-based computer scientist, who previously worked for the US Department of Defense, Microsoft and NASA, is one of a new breed of digital hacker sleuths who are saving lives by tracking down traffickers and rescuing victims on the internet.

"It's just like any other business in the world," said Caltagirone, who set up the Global Emancipation Network (GEN) with his wife, Sherrie, two years ago, to analyze data to help law enforcers counter human trafficking. "If you know how to find it, you will see it almost everywhere - almost every major site has some component of trafficking in it," said Caltagirone, whose day job is with the industrial cybersecurity firm Dragos.

Opinion is divided over the rise of hacker sleuths who deploy their cutting-edge knowledge, skills and experience to support governments that often lack the time, motivation and innovative tools to tap into criminal slavery networks. Human trafficking is among the world's largest international crime industries, with about 25 million people trapped in forced labor generating illicit profits of \$150 billion a year - and one which is moving increasingly online.

The US-based National Center for Missing and Exploited Children said in 2017 that almost three-quarters of suspected child trafficking reports it received from the public involved the sex advertising website Backpage.com. Backpage - described by campaigners as the country's largest online marketplace for child sex trafficking - was shut down in April and its founders were charged in a 93-count indictment, including knowingly facilitating prostitution.

But the years of lobbying that preceded the crackdown showed how authorities with limited digital expertise struggle to stop criminals who use technology at every

stage of their business, from recruiting via social media to tracking victims via webcam. "You have to know exactly where to go," said Sharon Nimirovski, head of White Hat, an Israeli cyber security firm staffed by former military intelligence agents.

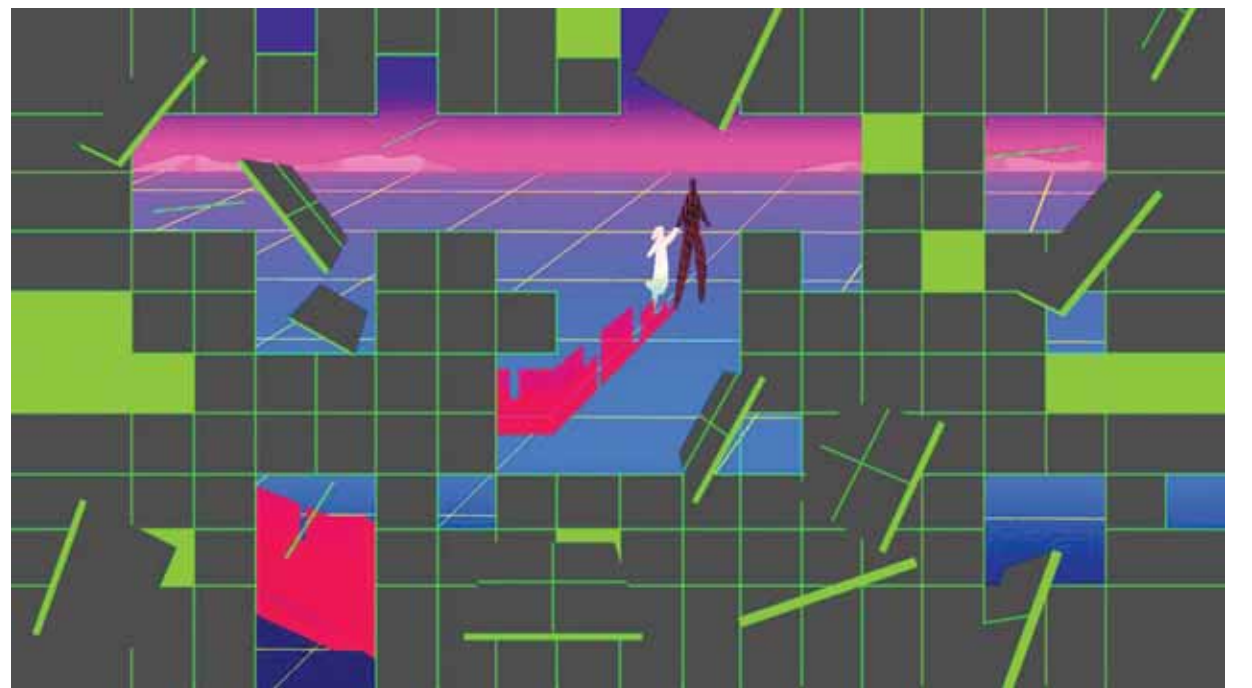
"You have to go undercover and live the hacker cyber scene, know its structure and pretend to be someone you are not in order to retrieve the data that you are looking for." While the precise methods used by hacker activists are veiled in secrecy, Nimirovski said his team has used false digital identities to infiltrate hidden cybercrime sites to gather information on pedophiles. "Just like the police work in the physical world, White Hackers act in the digital dimension," he said, adding that his White Hat Hackers - or hackers working for good - share the criminal evidence they unearth with authorities.

Dark Web

GEN, which is run by volunteers, collects text and images from the open and dark web - a part of the internet invisible to search engines and only reachable using specialized software - to look for patterns that could indicate trafficking. It shares this suspicious online activity for free, via its Minerva platform, with law enforcement, researchers and anti-trafficking charities that often do not have the capabilities to trawl the online black market and message boards.

The software allows investigators to search through data from millions of - often hidden - internet pages using keywords, usernames and phone numbers to find out what other sites their suspects visit and who else they communicate with, GEN said. Digital evidence gleaned from visa blacklists, bitcoin transactions and sex ads can help to bust traffickers by predicting where victims might go, via which routes and who is likely to buy or sell them, experts say.

"The earlier you move into the kill chain, the more effective your disruption becomes, and the more people you ultimately save," said Caltagirone, GEN's technical director. One of the routes GEN is tracking closely is that



of people moving to Eastern Europe from Syrian refugee camps, often in the hope of finding lucrative jobs advertised on fake websites. "Of course these victims are going to be very willing," said Caltagirone, highlighting how technology has not only made it easier for migrants to reach Europe, but also enabled criminals to trick people into trafficking themselves and their families. "This is where you'll get parents who sold their children."

Online vigilantes

Yet caution is required as hackers may not have the training needed to collect evidence that is admissible in court, said Nazir Afzal, a lawyer and former British chief prosecutor who fought major cases involving sexual slavery and child abuse. "If, in some (human trafficking) cases, hacking leads to the early detection of a big vulnerability - that's fine, I suppose," said Rob Wainwright, a cyber security expert and ex-head of Europe's policing agency Europol. "But we have to be very careful about encourag-

ing online vigilantism," he added. "We have to do things in the right way." But others say that private digital sleuths can play a vital role, particularly when working together with the police. "Law enforcement, in many countries, either lack the financial resources or human resources or both needed to perform cybercrime investigations efficiently and swiftly," said Joyce Hakme, a cybercrime expert with the think tank Chatham House.

"Most, if not all, cybercrime investigations require public-private partnerships and getting the right experts on board," she said in emailed comments, adding that ethical hackers working with the police can have a big impact in cracking cases. GEN is confident that cyber hackers have a key role to play in combating trafficking - and boosting prosecutions, which numbered about 9,000 in 2016, according to the US government. "We're not here to save the world," said Caltagirone. "But GEN is here to make people who are saving the world even better at doing it." — Reuters

Thailand banks on tech to end slavery at sea

SAMUT SAKHON/BANGKOK: Enslaved on a Thai fishing vessel for 11 years, Tun Lin saw his fellow workers lose their minds one after another, with one fisherman jumping into the sea to end his life. Some would start murmuring or laughing to themselves as they worked day and night in Indonesian waters on the cramped boat, often surviving on fish they caught and drinking water leaking from an onboard freezer.

"It was like a floating prison - actually, worse than prison," said the Burmese fisherman, who was sold into slavery, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation in Samut Sakhon, a Thai fishing hub some 40 km southwest of the capital Bangkok. The 36-year-old, who was rescued in 2015 after losing four fingers and being stranded on a remote island for years without pay, is now lobbying for fishermen's rights with the Thai and Migrant Fishers Union Group (TMFG).

Under growing consumer pressure, Thailand has introduced a raft of modern technologies since 2015 - from satellites to optical scanning and electronic payment services - to crack down on abuses in its multibillion-dollar fishing industry. It is one of a growing number of countries using innovation to deal with modern slavery, from mobile apps in India to blockchain in Moldova, but experts warn against over-reliance on tech as a silver bullet without stronger workers' rights.

"Technology can be a double-edged sword," said Patima Tungpuchayakul, co-founder of the Labor Rights Promotion Network Foundation, a Thai advocacy group. "It has become an excuse the government is using to justify they have done

something, but in practice they don't use it to solve the problem." More than half the estimated 600,000 industry workers are migrants, often from poor neighboring countries such as Cambodia and Myanmar, United Nations (UN) data shows.

Tracking devices

After the European Union threatened to ban fish exports from Thailand, and the US State Department said it was failing to tackle human trafficking, the Southeast Asian country toughened up its laws and increased fines for violations. It banned the use of workers aged below 18 and ordered fishermen to be given contracts and be paid through electronic bank transfers.

Authorities ordered Thai vessels operating outside national waters to have satellite communications for workers to contact their families or report problems at sea, plus tracking devices to spot illegal fishing. "We are serious in law enforcement regarding human trafficking and illegal labor cases," said Weerachon Sukhontapatipak, a Thai government spokesman. "There might not be abrupt change ... it will take time."

Thailand is also rolling out an ambitious plan, using iris, facial and fingerprint scans to record fishermen's identities to make sure they are on the boats they are registered with and help inspectors spot trafficking victims. Rights groups meanwhile have tried to use satellites to pinpoint the location of ships that remain at sea for long periods, potentially indicating enslavement. But human trafficking expert Benjamin Smith said using satellites to tackle slavery at sea was not easy unless there is a lead on where to track in the vast ocean.

"I think people underestimate the size of the ocean and the ability to pinpoint where something as small as a boat is," Smith from the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) said. "If you have good information, intelligence, then satellite images can be good ... It has to be a small part of a much bigger effort." Smith also



SAMUT SAKHON: Chairat Ratchapaksi, who founded the Thai and Migrant Fishers Union Group to help trafficked fishermen like him, poses for a photo in front of pictures of rescued trafficking victims. — Reuters

highlighted difficulties prosecuting cross-border trafficking cases and maritime police funding shortages, adding that continued consumer pressure on firms to clean up their supply chains could be a potent force to help end slavery. "That's probably the best way you can start," he said.

Good news

Fishermen remain at risk of forced labor and the wages of some continue to be withheld, the International Labor Organization (ILO) said in March. To combat slavery, firms must improve workers' lives, rather than cutting labor costs and recruiting informally to meet demand for cheaper goods, experts say.

"Smaller owners are getting squeezed, and still rely on brokers and agents, who dupe workers and keep them ignorant of their rights and conditions on the boat," said Sumai Phasuk, a researcher with lobby group Human Rights Watch in

Bangkok. Workers are set to become more vocal with the May launch of the Fishers' Rights Network, which aims to combat abuses, backed by the world's largest canned tuna producer, Thai Union, and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF).

"Without enforceable rights at the workplace and the strength that comes from being represented by a union, labor rights violations and the mistreatment will continue," said Johnny Hansen, chairman of ITF's fisheries section. Thailand's ratification this month of the ILO protocol on forced labour also offers hope. It is the first Asian country to promise to combat all forms of the crime, including trafficking, and to protect and compensate victims. "We have ... committed to changing the law to allow workers to form unions, so we can work together to solve the problems," said Thanaporn Sriyakul, an advisor to the deputy prime minister. —Reuters

Australia telecom giant Telstra to axe 8,000 jobs

SYDNEY: Australia's dominant telecommunications company Telstra yesterday announced plans to axe 8,000 jobs-a quarter of its workforce-as part of a drastic new strategy to cope with an increasingly competitive industry. The decision by the company, one of Australia's largest employers, is part of a shake-up targeting an extra Aus\$1 billion (US\$750 million) in cost-cutting by 2022, on top of Aus\$1.5 billion previously announced. It will also split its mobile and infrastructure divisions into separate businesses.

"In the future our workforce will be a smaller, knowledge-based one with a structure and way of working that is agile enough to deal with rapid change," said chief executive Andrew Penn. "This means that some roles will no longer be required, some will change and there will also be new ones created." The cuts come less than a month after Telstra said its 2017/18 earnings will likely be at the bottom of its guidance range of Aus\$10.1 billion to Aus\$10.6 billion, blaming increasing competition in

mobile and fixed broadband. That warning sent its shares tumbling to a more-than six-year low of Aus\$2.71. They had partially recovered since, but took another hit yesterday, closing 4.81 percent lower to Aus\$2.77.

CMC Markets chief market analyst Michael McCarthy said the restructuring plan may not be enough to please investors, who have watched Telstra's share price almost halve in the past year. "Some investors think the Telstra patient needs radical surgery, and could view today's measures as band-aids," he said. Telstra employs 32,000 people across 20 countries, according to its most recent annual report. Of the jobs to go, one in four will be executive and middle management roles.

Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull called the announcement "heartbreaking" for the workers, but said he was confident most would find other jobs. "While one company reduces its workforce, there are other companies and new companies, including other telecommunication companies, creating new opportunities and jobs," he said.

Tipping point

Penn said the company had to take action to stay on top in a highly competitive market where technology was evolving quickly. "In this environment traditional companies that do not respond are most at risk. "We have worked hard preparing Telstra for this market dynamic while ensuring we did not act precipitously. However, we are now at a tipping point where we must act more bold-

ly if we are to continue to be the nation's leading telecommunications company."

Telstra has a range of businesses including fixed broadband, mobile, data and IP, network application services and digital media. Part of its new strategy will see it create a wholly-owned standalone infrastructure business unit from July 1. Called Telstra InfraCo, it will comprise the firm's fixed-network infrastructure including data centers, non-mobiles related domestic fiber, international subsea cables, exchanges, poles, ducts and pipes. —AFP



MELBOURNE: A man (R) sits by the entrance to a Telstra store on Melbourne's central business district. — AFP

EU copyright law passes key hurdle

BRUSSELS: A highly disputed European copyright law that could force online platforms such as Google and Facebook to pay for links to news content passed a key hurdle in the European Parliament yesterday. Major publishers have pushed for the reform, seeing it as an urgently needed solution against a backdrop of free online news that has decimated earnings for traditional media companies. The parliament's powerful Legal Affairs Committee narrowly passed the reform, with 13 votes in favor and 11 against in a ballot that was kept secret given the bitter divisions on the issue.

"An important step for the future of the creative industries in Europe!" said German MEP Christian Ehler, from the right-of-centre EPP group. "There is a big problem if all those who bring our cultural diversity in Europe to life... can no longer live from their work because online platforms are not prepared to involve them properly," he said in a statement. But several MEPs were against the idea, saying it would help only the most widely known news providers to the detriment of independent and start-up companies, effectively curbing the right to free speech.

The committee also passed a law that makes online platforms legally liable for copyrighted material put on the web by users, which critics warn will lead to blanket censorship by tech giants, including Google's Youtube, Facebook's Instagram and Twitter. "These measures would seriously undermine basic internet freedoms," said MEP Julia Reda, from the Greens group. "Putting the special interests of large media companies ahead of our ability to participate freely online is unacceptable," she said.

That reform passed with 14 in favor and 9 against. The reforms, which are part of a much larger overhaul of European copyright law, will now go to a full plenary vote in parliament, expected in July. The EU's 28 member states must also approve the law and they have struggled to come up with their own version of the copyright changes amid their own deep divisions. —AFP

Russia warns against Trump's plans for space domination

MOSCOW: Russia yesterday expressed alarm over US President Donald Trump's call for the United States to dominate space exploration and his plan to create a separate branch of the military called a Space Force. Russian foreign ministry Maria Zakharova said at a briefing that Russia "noted the US president's instructions... to separate space forces from the air force," saying "the most alarming thing about this news is the aim of his instructions, namely to ensure (US) domination in space."

Trump on Monday said at a speech in the White House that "America will always be the first in space" and "we don't want China and Russia and other countries leading us." He also called for the Pentagon to create a new "Space Force" that would become the sixth branch of the American military, although this requires Congressional approval to take effect. Zakharova warned that the US is "nurturing plans to bring out weapons into space with the aim of possibly staging military action there."

"This is not based on guesswork, this is understanding the realities," she insisted. US military build-up in space "especially after the appearance of weapons there, would have a destabilizing effect on strategic stability and international security," Zakharova warned. Russia takes a "diametrically opposite position" that space must be used for "peaceful aims," she said. —AFP

French shops use loophole to sell 'ultralight' weed

PARIS: Technically, the fragrant marijuana buds on offer at a new Paris boutique are not meant to be smoked, as the friendly staff and disclaimers remind clients—brewing the herb in hot water is advised, as is adding it to food. "Smoking is bad for you," a smiling young salesman tells a customer. But judging by the 45-minute wait to get inside the Cofyshop near the Republique square on a recent afternoon, not to mention the smoking paraphernalia behind the counter, that certainly seems to be the goal. France is one of Europe's biggest users of cannabis, with an estimated 22 percent of people aged 15 to 34 partaking at least once in 2016, according to the latest data available.

A recent French poll showed 51 percent in favor of limited legalization, reflecting a growing trend toward more relaxed rules in Europe and the United States. Despite an easing of penalties under President Emmanuel Macron, however, government officials show no appetite for allowing recreational use. But Joaquim Lousquy, who opened Cofyshop in early June, and other boutiques across France think they

have found a loophole for letting people light up. Lousquy claims his range of buds have less than 0.2 of THC, the psychotropic compound that gets people high—below the limit set for French growers of marijuana or hemp for industrial uses.

Instead the plants contain cannabidiol, or CBD, a compound which is used for medical marijuana use and which is authorized in France. "I use the oil because it's a good pain-killer, and you don't get addicted," an elderly woman said while waiting in line before the doorman escorted her straight inside. CBD oil had sold out earlier in the day, so most clients were choosing among three or four different strains of potent-smelling weed—the popular Swiss Cheese was priced at 30 euros for a 2.3-gram bag (\$35 for just under one-tenth of an ounce).

'Smell that!'

Unlike the coffee shops in marijuana-friendly Amsterdam, no coffee is served and no smoking is allowed at Cofyshop. Fans of its "ultralight" buds as

well as cannabis resin say they appreciate the calming effects without the heavy buzz of traditional marijuana. "Smell that, it's fantastic!" said a 37-year-old dentist at a boutique on the hip Rue Oberkampf in Paris, who said he smokes a joint or two every now and then, mainly on the weekends. He said he liked the CBD products because they give "that little magic buzz from when I would smoke when I was young," since they are not as strong "and have fewer psychotropic effects".

Bechir Bouderbala of the cannabis advocacy group NORML said the market was also benefiting from "the growth of the 'well-being' industry, with higher quality products coming from Switzerland". But despite the claim the sales are legal, an official in France's anti-drug task force Mildeca said only the seeds and fibres of marijuana plants can be legally sold—not the flowers, regardless of the purported levels of THC. And no police officer would be able to tell if a person smoking a zero-THC joint wasn't getting high on traditional weed. —AFP



PARIS: Crystals containing CBD (Cannabidiol) are seen in a shop. —AFP

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What's On

NBK shares Eid happy moments with children of NBK Children's Hospital



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait's (NBK) family paid a visit to NBK Children's Hospital at Sabah Medical district to share Eid happy moments with children. NBK Public Relations Officer, Joanne Al-Abdul Jaleel said that NBK staff have always devoted a considerable part of their time to comfort the children and present them with felicitations and gifts in addition to different fun activities such

as face painting and balloon designing. This comes as part of NBK's corporate social responsibility program. "Sharing the happy moments of Eid Al-Fitr and other similar occasions with children is our pleasure. We are proud that NBK devotes such attention to supporting Kuwait society and providing compassion and support for those in need, including sick children," she added.

The visit to the hospital was emotional and overwhelming for both the children and NBK staff. NBK is committed to support its Hospital project by promoting initiatives and events all the year round. This is part of the bank's social responsibility to fulfill the children's time and entertain them while undergoing treatment. This includes all year round activities, a library corner,

movie night, events for the medical staff and fun events that are organized occasionally. NBK's initiative reflects the bank's high sense of duty and responsibility towards the community and helping those in need. It is a well rooted tradition that has been carried out by NBK each year in its efforts to continuously have an active role in Kuwait's society.

German Embassy issues Schengen visa instructions

The travel season has started and many Kuwaiti and third country nationals are choosing Germany as their summer destination 2018.

The majority of applicants consist of Kuwaiti citizens and their families for holiday, leisure and medical visits. Also the expatriates in Kuwait show growing interest in Germany for holiday, trade fair and business visits owed to the continuously expanding business relationships between Kuwaiti and German companies.

With almost 55,000 applications processed by the end of 2018, the German Embassy in Kuwait has recorded a steady increase in Schengen visas over the last few years.

Cities like Munich, Berlin, Aachen and Frankfurt number amongst the most popular destinations. Many travellers, however, also like discovering the different regions of the country by car or train, where they can enjoy a variety of scenic landscapes, unique shopping experiences and premium health care facilities at the same time.

Waiting times - please apply early

The German Embassy would like to call upon all travellers to start filing their Schengen visa applications for their annual vacation in Germany from now on and not just a few days before their actual trip in order to avoid any inconveniences.

At the moment, appointments at the application Centre Al Qabas can be obtained within 1-2 days - during the summer travel season waiting times for an appointment of one week or more can occur due to the high demand. Last summer, the Visa Section of the German Embassy has processed between 10,000 and 12,000 visas per month.

Please bear in mind that for Kuwaiti nationals a minimum of 3-5 working days is required from the moment your application arrives at the Embassy until you get back your stamped passport. For other nationalities, the procedure might take 10-12 days. However, in individual cases the processing can take up to two weeks for all nationalities.

The visa clearance is a computerized process - the German Embassy has no influence on the processing time.

Schengen Visa - where to apply?

In accordance with the Schengen Code, a Schengen visa for a short stay up to 90 days has to be applied for through the Embassy of the country which is your main destination.

The main destination is understood to be the destination where the applicant intends to spend the longest time or where the main purpose of the intended journey is carried out.

However, for your entry and departure you may cross any Schengen border to reach your destination with a visa issued by any Schengen Member State.

Example:

A Kuwaiti national wishes to travel to Germany for a medical check-up (20 days) and has additionally organized a short holiday in Austria (10 days).

He will arrive at and leave from Amsterdam (Netherlands) and travel from there by car.

The main purpose of the trip and longest stay is the medical check-up, and thus the application should be processed by the German Embassy, even though the arrival and departure to the Schengen area is through Amsterdam.

If no main destination can be determined due to equal duration and purpose of stay in several Member States, e.g. tourism round trip of 5 days in each country, then the Embassy of the Member State whose external border the

applicant intends to cross first should deal with the application.

Please note:

At the border of entry or during other controls you may have to show the visa but also provide additional documentation, for example information on your travel destination or that you have sufficient means to cover the stay and the return trip. It is therefore recommended that you carry with you copies of the documents which you presented when applying for the visa (e.g. hotel booking or letters of invitation, flight confirmations, travel health insurance or other documents stating the purpose of your stay).

What are the Schengen States?

Germany, Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Italy, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Switzerland have all acceded to the Schengen Agreement and are thus Schengen states.

The Schengen area includes all EU member states except the UK, Ireland and Cyprus: at present the EU members Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia only apply some of the Schengen provisions. Until these three countries apply what is known as the Schengen acquis in full, as is their aim, passport controls will remain in place at internal borders. In addition to the EU countries already mentioned, Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein are also Schengen states.

Did you know that...

- ... applications can be handed in as early as three months prior to the intended travel date?

If you are a frequent traveller, then please attach copies of your previous Schengen visas to your application file in order to enable the Visa Team to check whether you might be eligible to a multiple entry visa with a longer validity period.

... for your convenience the external service provider Al Qabas Assurex is operating a Visa Application Centre supporting the German Embassy in Kuwait?

The support of Al Qabas enables the German Embassy to offer better customer service hours and to shorten waiting times for all customers in order to facilitate a smooth application process. All visa applications for journeys to Germany have to be submitted there and customers can track the status of their applications online. For the travellers' convenience, Al Qabas will ensure that the applications include all relevant documents, assist with the application procedure if necessary and offers you additional services. Application forms and further information can be obtained at Al Qabas offices or online at <http://www.qavisa.com/>

... there are now online tools to assist you with calculating the 90 days period of stay?

A Schengen visa entitles the holder to a stay not exceeding 90 days per six-month period, even if the Schengen visa has been issued with a validity of one year or more. This period of stay begins with the first day of entry into a Schengen state. Once a Schengen visa has been issued, the holder is eligible to travel within the entire Schengen zone for a maximum of 90 days within a period of six months, depending on the validity of the visa. Customers sometimes find it difficult to calculate this period of stay. Therefore, you can find an electronic calculator on the homepage of the German Embassy under "FAQ Visa" (www.kuwait.diplo.de) to assist you with your travel planning.

... your fingerprints will be stored in the Schengen Visa Information System (VIS) for 5 years so that you don't have to give them every time when applying?

When arriving at an external border of the Schengen Area, the visa holder's biometric data is

checked to confirm his identity. Thanks to the use of biometric data such as your fingerprints, a visa holder can easily be identified as the person who applied for the visa. Once finger scans are stored in the VIS, they can be re-used for further visa applications within the system over a 5-year period. Children under the age of 12 do not have to give their fingerprints when filing their application.

... the official visa fees for a Schengen visa are only KD 22, even if it is a multiple entry visa?

Depending on the daily exchange rate, the processing fee for a Schengen visa is currently KD 22 for adults regardless of the visa validity period (KD 13 for children between 6 and 12 years and for children below 6 years the application procedure is for free). Al Qabas is adding a standard service charge of KD 10 on top of the Embassy's processing fee and you can find all these amounts transparently documented on their homepage. Unfortunately, some private businesses or agencies are claiming to render visa or messenger services to German Schengen customers without being appointed by the German Embassy. Please be aware of the prices and quality of service of such agencies since various complaints have been received about overpriced services and wrong visa information.

... you have to make a customs declaration if you enter Germany with a total amount of €10,000 (ten thousand Euros) or more per person?

Anybody entering Germany from a non-European Union country carrying cash in a total amount of 10,000 euros or more is obliged to declare this amount of money to the competent German customs office in writing without being explicitly requested to do so.

The purpose of the obligation to declare is to prevent the illegal movement of money across the external borders of the European Union in order to combat money laundering, the financing of terrorist organizations and criminal activities.

The obligation to submit a declaration and the customs inspections are not intended to restrict the free movement of capital in any way.

You will still be permitted to carry unlimited amounts of cash across borders in the future.

Travellers who intend to bring an amount of €10,000 or more per person to Germany can download the necessary cash declaration form at <http://www.zoll.de> prior to their trip and present the completed declaration form upon arrival to the German customs officers to facilitate entry procedures.

... I have renewed my passport. The Schengen visa in my old passport is still valid. Does it allow me to travel to Germany?

Yes. You can travel with your old passport that contains the valid visa together with the new passport. Travellers who have a valid Schengen visa for the duration of the planned trip in the old passport may use this old visa in connection with the new passport to travel to Germany.

- if the new passport is attached to the old one and
- if the spelling of the name and alphanumeric data is exactly the same between the two passports and does not differ (e.g. new visa required, if name spelling in the old passport "Mohammed AJ" and in the new differently "Mohamad A J M").

For travels to other Schengen countries please reconfirm with the respective Embassies.

If you prefer to obtain a new visa in new passport, please note that your old visa must be cancelled by issuing Embassy prior to filing your new application.

The visa validity depends on various factors such as your travel purpose and travel history. If you are a frequent traveler or owner of a business or property in Germany, please feel free to attach additional documents (property/company deed, old visas, copies of border stamps from previous travel to Germany, etc.) when requesting a multiple entry visa with longer validity period.

'Beautiful China-Scenic Guangxi' to debut at Kuwait Music Festival

At the invitation of the National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters (NCCAL) of Kuwait, the Chinese cultural performance entitled 'Beautiful China-Scenic Guangxi' will be staged at 8:00 pm on Sunday, June 24, 2018 at the Abdullhussain Abduredha Theater in Salmiya, Kuwait City, as part of the 21st International Music Festival series.

Professional artists from Guangxi Culture and Art Troupe are set to thrill the audience with vocal solo/duet, Chinese musical instrument solo, highly skilled acrobatics, and folk dance from different ethnic minority groups in China. Through the program, audience can feel in different ways the charm of the traditional and folk Chinese arts and culture.

The performance, free and open to public, is co-sponsored by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the People's Republic of China, NCCAL and the Embassy of the People's Republic of China in the State of Kuwait, and presented by the Department of Culture of Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region of the People's Republic of China. As part of the 'China-Arab Cultural Journey along the Silk Road' program, the performance is aiming at promoting Sino-Kuwait cultural ties and people-to-people relations under the framework of China's Belt and Road Initiative.

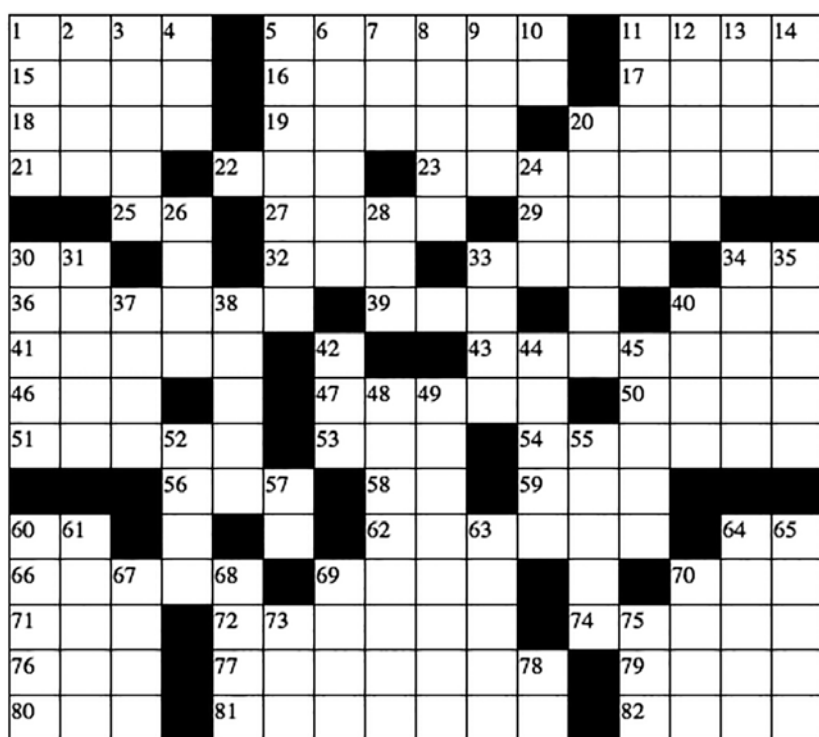


Ladies' Night Potluck

Bring a dish to share with friends and swap ideas for summer activities in Kuwait. The timing of dinner is perfect for those who are fasting beyond Ramadan. The event takes place on Tuesday, June 26, 2018 at 6:45pm (ladies only). Address: Villa No 67, Street 413, Block 4, Shuhada Area, Kuwait. Phone: +(965) 25231015. Email: info@tiescenter.net

Stars

CROSSWORD 1939



ACROSS

1. Acid gritty-textured fruit.
5. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
11. A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
15. A ball of yarn or cord or thread.
16. The upper house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
17. The warhead of a missile designed to deliver an atom bomb.
18. (botany) Of or relating to the axil.
19. Full of flavor.
21. Nocturnal mouse-like mammal with forelimbs modified to form membranous wings and anatomical adaptations for echolocation by which they navigate.
22. A light touch or stroke.
23. East Asian perennial herbs.
25. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
27. An amino acid that is found in the central nervous system.
29. United States composer noted for his innovative use of polytonality (1874-1954).
30. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
32. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
36. Saudi Arabian minister of petroleum who was a central figure in the creation of OPEC (born in 1930).
39. The compass point that is one point west of due north.
41. A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
43. A mechanism in a firearm that ejects the empty shell case after firing.
46. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
47. A republic in the Asian subcontinent in southern Asia.
50. Covered with frost.
51. Any of numerous low-growing cushion-forming plants of the genus *Draba* having rosette-forming leaves and terminal racemes of small flowers with scape or leafy stems.
53. Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
54. Foul with waste matter.
56. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
58. A state in east central United States.
59. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
60. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
62. A deep bow.
66. Found along western Atlantic coast.
71. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
72. Sharp piercing cry.
74. Jordan's port.
76. A guided missile fired from shipboard against an airborne target.
77. Of visual imagery of almost photographic accuracy.
79. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
80. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
81. A roll of ribbon.
82. A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

1. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
2. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
3. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
4. A nuclear reactor that uses water as a coolant and moderator.
5. The slender spear of the Bantu-speaking people of Africa.
6. A cylindrical drawstring bag used by sailors to hold their clothing and other gear.
7. The sound made by a gentle blow.
8. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
9. A quantity of no importance.
10. A public promotion of some product or service.
11. In truth (often tends to intensify).
12. French writer remembered for his swashbuckling historical tales (1802-1870).
13. (informal) Being satisfactory or in satisfactory condition.
14. A Russian river.
20. Of or relating to the intestines.
24. An independent agency of the United States government responsible for collecting and coordinating intelligence and counterintelligence activities abroad in the national interest.
26. A narcotic that is considered a hard drug.
28. A decree that prohibits something.
31. An avalanche volcanic water and mud down the slopes of a volcano.
33. 100 lwei equal 1 kwanza.
34. Any property detected by the olfactory system.
35. The chief source of beryllium.
37. God of death.
38. Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
40. Of or relating to near the ear.
42. A unit of length equal to one thousandth of an inch.
44. A port in western Israel on the Mediterranean.
45. Thick like cream.
48. A short film and commentary about current events.
49. Lose clarity or turn aside esp. from the main subject of attention or course of argument in writing, thinking, or speaking.
52. (pathology) An elevation of the skin filled with serous fluid.
55. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
57. 30 to 300 kilohertz.
61. The capital of Morocco.
63. (folklore) A corpse that rises at night to drink the blood of the living.
64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
65. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
67. Avatar of Vishnu.
68. A person who makes use of a thing.
69. Relating to the Urdu language.
70. The arch of bone beneath the eye that forms the prominence of the cheek.
73. A federation of North American industrial unions that merged with the American Federation of Labor in 1955.
75. God of the earth.
78. A ductile malleable reddish-brown corrosion-resistant diamagnetic metallic element.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Surround yourself with all that is beautiful today. You may put yourself in the spotlight today. Don't push responsibilities to the side today. Take care of business, this will be beneficial later and will help you to avoid conflict today. Don't be surprised to find yourself being challenged by someone today. Aries. Today may be a day you find it necessary to put the feelings of someone close to you ahead of your own. This may be a small sacrifice with great reward.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

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



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

One thing you will long for today is peace and harmony. You will be quite focused on your personal relationships and will be able to enjoy your time with your loved ones or significant other. You will exude a level of charm today that others will be drawn in by. Today will be a great day for new beginnings. Apply for that new position. You should feel as if you are on top of the world and today is just "your day". Today is not the day to stay at home. Get out and about and make your presence known in the world. Your timing is perfect today and today seems to be one of those days that everything comes easy or just falls into your lap.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are one of a kind. Relationships take on greater meaning in your life. You want everything in your world in its place and everything running smoothly. One thing out of place will cause stress and tension in for you. You have a talent for bringing those around you into harmony and this makes you a wonderful leader. You are placing great focus on your marriage or a close relationship with someone dear to you. This is a great move and will result in a strong bond you have been craving. Cancer, all is well in your world and the steps you are taking will develop feed the deep roots needed for lasting love and support from many close to you.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You face today with a clear mind. If anyone has a question you have the answer. Relationships are taking center stage in your life and you are placing a major focus on them. You know the more you feed the relationship the more it will grow. You have reached a level of peace and harmony in your world. This is a great time to spend some time with friends and socialize. All your hard work deserves a reward. Enjoy your time and let your hair down.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You may find yourself wanting to broaden your horizons. You know this is a big world and your life is contained in a tiny square of it. It may be time to take a step out of that box and find what the world has to offer you. You could find it difficult to communicate with others today because you find your mind is a million miles away. Curiosity has taken a hold on you and you can't seem to stay focused on the here and now. You may find this evening that a good book may be just what you need to find this escape you have been searching for. A good time for rest and relaxation is in order for you, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your marriage or partnership or lack thereof seem to be a major focus for you. You feel the need to be needed and need to be loved. You want someone by your side and someone to share your life with. You crave a beautiful relationship and the word soulmate takes on great meaning for you. You desire someone you can share your deepest thoughts and dreams with and someone to always be there to love and support you. You find all these feelings beautiful and desire this type of harmony in your life.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may feel a lack of support of just an unsettled feeling in general. You should find great peace and satisfaction by surrounding yourself with loved ones today. These relationships will be the key to emotional satisfaction you are yearning for. You may also find yourself being looked as a guide or role model by someone younger. You are loved and needed today.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

This seems to be a time of great focus on your relationship. You may find yourself searching for and discovery all of the beauty this world has to offer. You find beauty in your surroundings each today, but today you seem to have a greater appreciation for it. This is a very satisfying experience for you. Peace and harmony are great desires in your world and you are entering a phase where you will feel this way often. You may find that your relationships are the key to your emotional success. You may find yourself surrounded with love and support today. Focus on your loved one today and you may find this is where your needs will be fed.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today you may feel led by your heart maybe even more loving and emotional than usual. Today is a great day to spend time with someone you love. This closeness is something you long for. Intimacy and love are driving factors for you today. You could be extremely sensitive and emotionally unable to express your feelings to someone very close to you. This is something unfamiliar to you as your words usually flow with grace and style. Capricorn. This may leave you feeling somewhat vulnerable.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Today finds you yearning to surround yourself with all things beautiful. You may direct much of your energy on your marriage or partnership. This is a great time for you to spend that extra time with someone you love. This will bring great harmony and peace in to your world. Focus on turning your dreams into reality. You need a strong support system and your loved ones will be just the one for the job. Feed your relationship daily and you will reap great reward and support.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is an exciting time for you. The breakthrough you have been working toward my finally happen today. You may find that reorganizing not only your thoughts, but also your surrounds will bring and new outlook on a problem and the answers will become crystal clear. This is huge accomplishment for you and will bring much excitement and praise into your world. Relationships have become top priority for you. You are starting to recognize and appreciate the world and all the beauty that surrounds you. This is a time that you are leaning towards seeing the good in everyone around you as well. You tend to give others the benefit of the doubt and refuse to judge them on past mistakes. Being in touch with your inner-workings has greatly motivated you to help others.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Real Estate 2

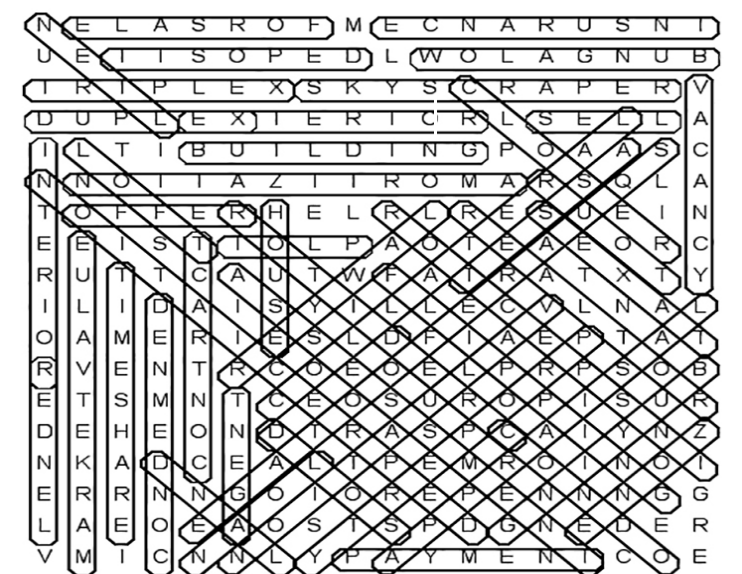
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 22 letters spell a common Real Estate phrase.

A D H I G H R I S E F L O O R S P A C E
T O W N H O U S E E G A E R C A J L R R
Y T I U Q E T N E M Y A P N W O D E U O
C P H O T O S R E S I A R P P A K C O S
O R V A L U E D R O L D N A L O R R T S
M O I N T E R E S T R A T E R T E A L E
M P U S D S Y S E T C A B B N I L P A S
I E S O E U S K H L I F E O L T L S U S
S R E L B R R U O O N I G R L E E T A
S T I D T A U S B R W T S O A E S P R R
I Y T S M T I S S D C H T P F G R A I T
O T I I D N N A O U I C O O E I T N V R
N A N G G E L E A L A V D M N C O R O E
S X E N E F C M R C N I C E I T W O S
U B M P S I A I T T O E I S T S H I U M
R R A I I L N N U C R P R C I O A B O M
V E G N B L O O L A A I O S U O L E R N
E N T U K C F G Z L A V P S F E N A L G
Y T P G N I T S I L E E E A T E N A N T

- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| ACREAGE | DEBT | LANDLORD | SELLER |
| AMENITIES | DEFAULT | LEASE | SHOW HOME |
| APARTMENT | DOWN PAYMENT | LISTING | SOLD SIGN |
| APPRAISER | EQUITY | MARKET | SUBDIVISION |
| ASSESSOR | EVICTION | MORTGAGE | SUBLET |
| BANK | FLIP | PARCEL | SURVEY |
| BROKER | FLOOR SPACE | PHOTOS | TENANT |
| BUYER | FOR SALE SIGN | PRINCIPAL | TITLE |
| CLOSING | FORECLOSURE | PROPERTY TAX | TOWHOUSE |
| COMMISSION | HIGH RISE | PUBLIC AUCTION | VALUE |
| CONDO FEES | INSPECTION | RENT | VIRTUAL TOUR |
| CONTRACTOR | INTEREST RATE | ROW HOUSE | ZONING |

Yesterday's Solution

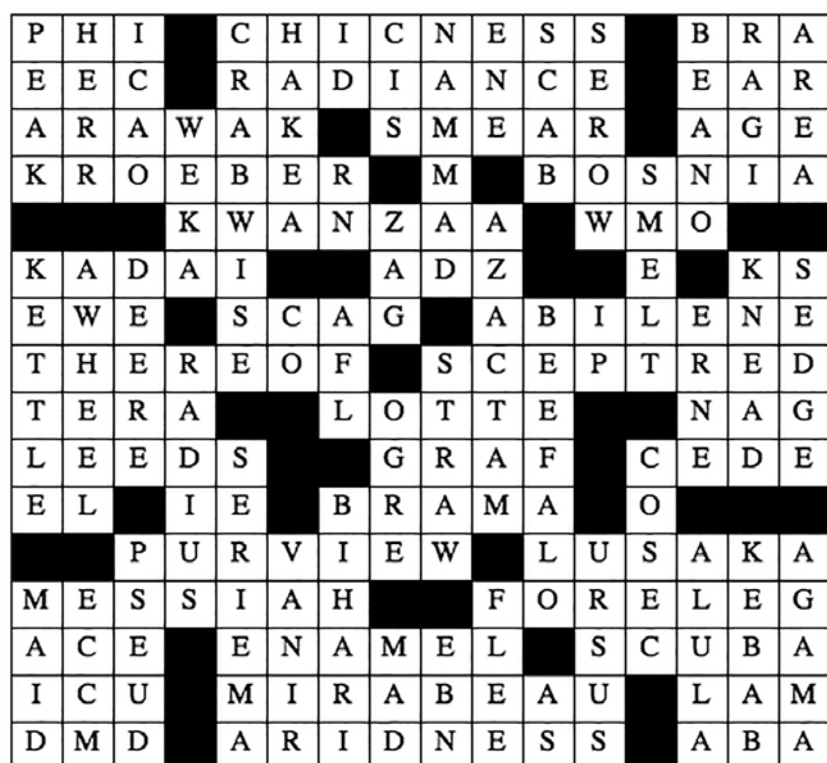
Real Estate 1



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| AGENT | CONTRACT | INTERIOR | REALTOR |
| AMORTIZATION | CREDITOR | LAND | SELL |
| APPRAISAL | DEED | LAWYER | SKYSCRAPER |
| ASSESSMENT | DEPOSIT | LENDER | SOLD |
| ASSET | DEPRECIATION | LIEN | SQUARE FOOTAGE |
| BUILDING | DUPLEX | LOAN | TAXES |
| BUNGALOW | EXTERIOR | LOFT | TIMESHARE |
| BUYING | FLIPPING | MARKET VALUE | TOUR |
| CLOSER | FOR SALE | OFFER | TRIPLEX |
| COLLATERAL | HOUSE | PAYMENT | VACANCY |
| CONDEMNED | INSPECTOR | PLOT | VALUATION |
| CONDO | INSURANCE | PROPERTY | ZONE |

The hidden message is: MULTIPLE LISTING SERVICE

Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku

5	9	4	7		
		4		9	2
2	3			9	7
		1	3	5	7
8	5				2
4	7		2	1	6
		7	3		9
1	5			2	
			5	7	8

Yesterday's Solution

5	9	8	2	3	7	1	4	6
7	4	3	8	1	6	2	5	9
2	1	6	5	9	4	7	8	3
9	8	7	4	6	3	5	2	1
4	3	5	1	2	9	6	7	8
6	2	1	7	5	8	9	3	4
3	5	9	6	4	2	8	1	7
1	7	4	9	8	5	3	6	2
8	6	2	3	7	1	4	9	5

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JUNE 21, 2018



Indian school students take part in a yoga camp in Hyderabad yesterday, ahead of International Yoga Day celebrated every year on June 21. Yoga, which means union in Sanskrit, is a family of ancient spiritual practices and also a school of spiritual thought from South Asia, where it remains a vibrant living tradition and is seen as a means of enlightenment. — AFP

Indonesia takes a bite out of food waste one wedding at a time

In the slums of Jakarta, Indonesia's poor are getting a taste of how the other half live thanks to a new program that aims to take a bite out of its mammoth food-waste problem.

Called a Blessing to Share, the service supplies leftover wedding dishes to some of the poorest members of society in the sprawling capital. Even as it struggles with poverty and malnutrition, the Southeast Asian nation bins more edible food per person than any other country except Saudi Arabia, according to an

Economist Intelligence Unit survey last year. Indonesia's 260 million citizens each throw out an average of almost 300 kilograms (660 pounds) of food annually, ahead of the United States in third spot, the survey said.

The country's food waste problem can be partly chalked up to local hospitality, which calls for ample helpings at all celebrations. Hosts often err on the side of abundance, and many hungry revelers' eyes are bigger than their stomachs—meaning lots of uneaten food. Globally, about 30 percent of food produced

every year is tossed out or spoiled—about 1.3 billion tons—which translates into some \$1 trillion in economic costs, according to the UN's Food and Agriculture Association. That's where a Blessing To Share comes in.

"There are lots of weddings in Indonesia and lots of extra food," said program founder Astrid Paramita. "And there are lots of hungry people unfortunately, so this program is trying to close that gap between the rich and needy." So far the program is fairly limited, but Paramita has big plans and hopes to expand to other cities and also start sourcing edibles from company meetings and conferences. Since starting in November, about 50 weddings have participated in the program with about 1.6 tons of food collected for distribution through a local food bank. For 60-year-old scavenger Efendi, getting a meal from one couple's lavish nuptials across town was a welcome surprise. "I didn't expect this—suddenly I'm getting free food," he said. —AP



A waiter packing uneaten food for distribution through the program "A Blessing to Share", after a wedding at a hotel in Jakarta.



A waitress packing uneaten food for distribution through the program 'A Blessing to Share'.



Volunteers of the program "A Blessing to Share" carrying containers with uneaten food as they distribute leftovers in a slum area in Jakarta.

Vows in the air: German couple married in tightrope wedding

A couple in eastern Germany have gotten married in a swing dangling from a motorcycle atop a tightrope, 14 meters (46 feet) above the ground. The German news agency dpa reported that a pastor standing in a cage atop a fire service ladder presided over the wedding of Nicole Backhaus and Jens Knorr in the town of Stassfurt on Saturday.

The couple exchanged rings in the air but, for safety's sake, waited until they were back on the ground to kiss. More than 3,000 people watched the wedding in the sky, which took place during a local festival. The tightrope was stretched between the town wall and a tower, and the motorbike was ridden by Falko Traber, a member of a family of artists. —AP

Pastor stefen Gierung, left, stands in a cage atop of a fire service ladder in front of bride Nicole Backhaus, center, and groom Jens Knorr, right, both sitting in a swing dangling under a motorcycle with artist Falko Traber, top, during the wedding ceremony atop a tightrope. — AP photos



Bride Nicole Backhaus, left, and groom Jens Knorr, right, sit in a swing dangling under a motorcycle with artist Falko Traber, top, during their wedding ceremony atop a tightrope.



Lifestyle | Features

'The Catcher was a Spy': Moe Berg's double life as secret agent

Baseball pro Moe Berg wasn't much of a star in the diamond but he was an MVP in the theater of war, risking his life behind enemy lines as an Allied spy. Berg traded in his catcher's mitt for a trench coat and a high-stakes mission to monitor-and assassinate, if necessary-the Nazis' chief nuclear scientist. His amazing story is dramatized in the stranger-than-fiction espionage thriller "The Catcher Was a Spy," starring Paul Rudd, Paul Giamatti and a host of other big names, and opening in US theaters on Friday.

"This is a weird World War II story that no one really knows about," director Ben Lewin ("The Sessions") told a preview audience in Santa Monica, southern California, earlier this month. "You unpeel the onion and it's more and more puzzling and fascinating." A secretive and eccentric man with a steel-trap intellect, Berg was born in Harlem, New York, in 1902 to a pharmacist and a housewife.

He studied at Princeton, where he was notorious for his mastery of a reputed 12 modern and ancient languages, often practicing Sanskrit from behind home plate during training sessions. Berg played shortstop in the minor and major leagues before switching to catcher, appearing for several top teams



In this file photo actors Paul Giamatti and Paul Rudd attend the 'The Catcher Was A Spy' Premiere during the 2018 Sundance Film Festival at The Marc Theatre in Park City, Utah. — AFP

including the Boston Red Sox and earning a law degree on the side from Columbia University.

Assassination mission

His spy career started on a 1934 goodwill baseball tour in Tokyo alongside Babe Ruth

and Lou Gehrig. Berg put on a kimono and sneaked onto a hospital rooftop to film the harbor and Navy shipyards. Years later, after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor, he showed his footage to President Franklin Roosevelt's Office of Strategic Services, which later became the CIA. Historians say Berg believed

his material was used to plan the first US aerial attack on Japan, in 1942.

This has never been confirmed, but the OSS was impressed enough to send him on courses in lock-picking, pyrotechnics and killing. The agency arranged for Berg to attend a Zurich lecture by Werner Heisenberg, the Nobel Prize-winning quantum physicist in charge of Nazi attempts to create an atom bomb, to assess how close they were. He arrived with a gun in one pocket and a cyanide pill in the other, with instructions to assassinate Heisenberg if the scientist appeared to be on the cusp of a breakthrough. Berg got no such impression and later decided against an assassination attempt during their one and only meeting, as they walked in the direction of Heisenberg's hotel after a social event.

'Enigmatic'

"There was a real meeting between Berg and Heisenberg. Nobody really knows what happened or what was said," Lewin said. "People who were given accounts of that meeting, pretty much like us, made up the content. What we know is that both men walked away alive." Based on Nicholas

Dawidoff's bestseller of the same name, the movie boasts a star-studded support cast that includes Guy Pearce, Sienna Miller, Jeff Daniels, Mark Strong and Tom Wilkinson.

Some filming took place at Fenway Park, home of the Boston Red Sox, but most scenes were shot over 32 winter days in Czech Republic capital Prague. Berg left the CIA in 1954 and never worked again, beginning a nomadic existence and living on the hospitality of friends and family. He died at the age of 70 and remains the only major-league player whose baseball card is on display at the headquarters of the CIA.

Rudd told the Internet Movie Database at the Sundance Film Festival in Utah, where the movie premiered in January, that there were still many unanswered questions about Berg. "This is an interesting spy story in that it's very cerebral, it's not James Bond," he said. "A lot of the action is what's going on in people's minds." — AFP

Anger mounts in Hollywood over Fox immigration coverage

"Modern Family" co-creator Steve Levitan became Tuesday the latest in a string of Hollywood figures berating Fox over its news division's coverage, announcing he was quitting the entertainment giant. Much of the anger has centered around Fox News's reporting of US President Donald Trump's move to forcibly separate migrant children from their parents at the southern border, which some see as deliberately misleading.

Levitan tweeted that the cable station's "23-hour-a-day support" of the gun lobby, conservative conspiracy theories and President Donald Trump's falsehoods were "harder to swallow every day as I drive onto that lot to make a show about inclusion." "I look forward to seeing #ModernFamily through to the end and then, sale or no sale, setting up shop elsewhere," he said. Levitan, who won five consecutive Emmy Awards for the long-running ABC sitcom, had already announced that next year's 10th season would be the last, with his 20th Century Fox Television contract due to expire.

Fox News-which didn't immediately respond to requests for comment-is often criticized for its coverage, but the reverberations are rarely felt in the corridors of parent company 21st Century Fox. On Monday, Levitan publicly supported actor and filmmaker Seth MacFarlane's comment that he was "embarrassed" to work for Fox. Fox News anchor Laura Ingraham has come in for particularly vociferous criticism after she described detention centers holding 2,000 immigrant children at the southern border as "essentially summer camps."

Both Ingraham and fellow anchor Sean Hannity-seen as one of Trump's closest unofficial aides-have been hit by advertiser boycotts. "Ghostbusters" and "Bridesmaids" director Paul Feig, who made "Spy" and "The Heat" for the studio, also criticized the news coverage. —AFP



In this Dec 5, 1968 file photo shows jazz singer Nina Simone in London.



In this handout photo made available by Nancy Pierce shows the interior room of the home of jazz singer Nina Simone in Tryon, NC.

Birthplace of singer, activist Nina Simone to be preserved

The dilapidated wooden cottage in North Carolina that was the birthplace of singer and civil rights activist Nina Simone now has the protection of the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The trust said in a news release Tuesday that it will develop and find a new use for the house in Tryon where Simone was born in 1933.

Last year, four African-American artists purchased the home. National Trust President and Chief Executive Officer Stephanie Meeks says the trust will work with the home's new owners and the community to honor Simone's contributions to society and to "inspire new generations of artists and activists." The three-room, 660-square-foot (60-square-meter) home went on the market in 2016. Simone's original name was Eunice Waymon. She died in 2003 at the age of 70. — AP



In this June 27, 1985, file photo, Nina Simone performs at Avery Fisher Hall in New York. — AP photos



In this handout photo made available by Nancy Pierce shows the birthplace of jazz singer Nina Simone in Tryon, NC.

Artist buried for three days under busy Australian road

An artist has emerged from three days entombed in a steel box under a busy Australian road in a performance billed as a tribute to victims of totalitarian violence. Mike Parr, 73, fasted during his time underground, with oxygen pumped into the 1.7-metre (5.5-foot) by 2.2-metre container to keep him alive as traffic drove overhead. He had bedding, water, a waste bucket, a sketchpad and pencils for the stunt in Hobart, part of Tasmania state's annual Dark Mofo festival, which celebrates darkness through large-scale public art, food, film and music.

"The anxiety of the artist's disappearance is the point of the piece," organizers said. It was also an attempt to highlight "the shadow cast by the genocidal vio-

lence of 19th century British colonialism in Australia", they added. Parr, who had been buried with only a small light, clambered out of his prison on a ladder late Sunday after heavy machinery carefully removed the asphalt that had sealed him in. He exited without saying a word or acknowledging a crowd that had gathered in the rain. He is expected to detail his experience in a public forum yesterday. "He is an endurance performance artist and he's been doing this for many years, so his body is quite used to doing this," Dark Mofo curator Jarrod Rawlins told reporters. —AFP



This handout photo shows performance artist Mike Parr, 73, sitting in a coffin-like steel box as he is entombed under a busy road in Hobart, Tasmania. — AFP

Fans grieve as detectives search for XXXTentacion's killers

For hours, the fans came in a steady stream to mourn and pay their respects at the spot where rapper XXXTentacion was gunned down, some leaving behind expressions of sympathy along a fence and on the sidewalk. No arrests have been announced in the shooting of the 20-year-old rapper, who Broward County sheriff's officials say was ambushed by two suspects as he left an upscale motor sports dealership Monday afternoon in his electric BMW. His attorney, David Bogenschutz, said investigators told him the 20-year-old rapper, who pronounced his stage name "Ex Ex Ex ten-ta-see-YAWN," had visited a bank shortly before the shooting and possibly withdrew cash to buy a motorcycle.

That brought a parade of mourners Tuesday to the spot behind Riva Motorsports where XXXTentacion was gunned down, not far from where he grew up in Lauderdale. They placed candles, flowers and teddy bears on the sidewalk near where the rapper known by his fans simply as "X?" was shot. They decorated 100 yards (91 meters) of sidewalk with chalk art including messages of sympathy and loss such as "Feel for you XXX" and "4evr Young."

Myles O'Hara, 17, and Aaron Gavin, 20, sat on the curb, solemnly staring at the ground, mostly ignoring the people who moved past. They said they admired XXXTentacion because he was a local kid who rose from rough circumstances and was making a positive contribution. "He had some legal allegations before, but the last year he had only been a positive influence on people's lives, making hit Billboard songs," O'Hara said. "He has been a kind person. You

could look at his face and smile and he was just a normal kid like us ... His style is almost hard to explain. He had an angry tone. He meant everything he said, even the most simplistic words. It just came off his tongue like nothing. He was speaking his mind."

Gavin said unlike other rappers whose songs emphasize buying expensive merchandise, XXXTentacion rapped about his emotions. "X talked about how he felt instead of materialistic things like owning this car, this house, this house," Gavin said. Brandon Lang, a 29-year-old magazine owner, said XXXTentacion may have had an angry persona in his performance, but in reality he "did good things," pointing out that he had come home to perform in an upcoming charity show.



A fan rap singer XXXTentacion pauses by a memorial, Tuesday outside Riva Motorsports in Deerfield Beach, Fla, where the troubled rapper-singer was killed the day before. — AP

Pot smoke

"He had all these mistakes that could have wound up defining him but he didn't let that happen," Lang said. "That is why he is connecting to all these kids because these kids are going through a really sad time, a sad world. He taught them how to cope." In Los Angeles, hundreds of fans turned Melrose Avenue into a mosh pit in celebration and mourning of XXXTentacion late Tuesday night. In an impromptu memorial outside a Hollywood bike shop, fans filling the street and dancing on rooftops shouted along with his songs beneath a cloud of pot smoke.

A big painted sign in the shop window read RIP XXX followed by hearts. Police closed off the street and let the party grow to nearly 500 people before calling for the crowd to clear out. The entertainer, who sported dreadlocks and facial tattoos, was a rising star. He notched a No. 1 album in March with his sophomore effort "???" and had a top 10 hit with "Sad!" but was facing trial on charges that he beat up his pregnant girlfriend. His brief career was marked by controversy. In 2016, he was arrested on charges including home invasion for a 2015 incident, and less than a month later was jailed on charges that he attacked his girlfriend, who was pregnant at the time. Later, he faced more charges including witness tampering. — AP

Lifestyle | Music & Movies



A sales girl sorts through dvds in a shop at the Nigerian film market in Lagos. — AFP photos



Nigerian actress Hilda Dokubo (second left) and Nigerian actor Wole Ojo (left) talk with the chief operator on the shooting of the movie 'The CEO' in Lagos.

Nigeria sees a rush to get Nollywood online

A glamour blogger, a filmmaker and a tech mogul are competing to create a home-grown African rival to Netflix, but poor internet connections and intense competition are proving daunting obstacles. They dream of popularizing access to films made in Nigeria, which is home to the world's second biggest movie industry in terms of production behind Hindi-language Bollywood. With nearly \$4 billion in revenue and almost 2,000 productions every year, films made in what is known as Nollywood are largely sold on the streets and to idling motorists caught in traffic as pirated copies for just a few dollars.

Local start-ups and Nollywood stars understand the interest in changing the distribution of films that are hugely popular across Africa, where cinemas are few and far between. With such a huge potential market, video-on-demand platforms have sprung up in Lagos, Nigeria's commercial capital and home to the country's film industry. And competition is already fierce.

monthly fee of 1,000 naira. "We are hoping to be to Africa what Netflix is to the world," Ikeji wrote on her Instagram page, which has some two million followers. She promised glamour, sass and humor, particularly with reality shows such as "Football Wives" or "Highway Girls of Eko", "a show on real-life prostitutes" in Lagos.

The 37-year-old former model-turned-businesswoman made her fortune through advertising revenue on her site, which tracked the lives of Nigeria's rich and famous. She said she had invested "half-a-billion naira" of capital in the project. As well as buying video, she is also making original content from her own studios in Lagos. Before the end of the year, Nigerian company Envivo is expected to launch its own platform with an initial investment of more than \$20 million, said filmmaker Chioma Ude, who is the firm's marketing director. "(US telecoms giant) Cisco wants a big footprint in Africa, and as our technical partner, they will provide all the technology, from the network to the video compressions, etc.," the founder of the Africa International Film Festival (AFRIFF) told AFP.

the lack of widespread high-speed internet coverage. Only 34 percent of Africans have internet access compared with more than 50 percent in the rest of the world, according to the 2018 Global Digital report. But Africa showed the biggest progression in internet users last year, especially through mobile telephones.

Serge Noukoue, organiser of the annual Nollywood Week in Paris, said price was everything and the African consumer wanted to pay "as little as possible" to watch a film.

"Even iROKOTv, the pioneer on the continent, doesn't really make a profit," he said. "They have had a lot of success in fundraising but what subscribers actually bring in is less conclusive." Jason Njoku founded iROKOTv in 2010 but said he made a mistake to count on streaming from the start. "It simply couldn't work," he explained. "Data costs were prohibitive, as is access to reliable broadband across huge swathes of the continent. Our customer service team was inundated with queries. "We totally rebuilt our product and rebuilt our entire company around the African consumer and their habits." That led to an application that ate less data and which allows free mobile downloads of video files. There is original content, while films have also been subtitled in French, Swahili and Zulu to make them more

accessible to other African countries.

Fierce competition

Competitors have emerged elsewhere in Africa in recent years, including Kenya's BuniTV (\$5-a-month) or South Africa's Magic Go (\$8-a-month). "If these online platforms don't make money yet they're a bet on the future for when connections are better," said Noukoue. "A lot of projects have been created but there will not be room for everyone in the market in the long term. Competition will be fierce." Giants of the sector such as Netflix, which in 2016 launched in Africa, could outshine the continent's video-on-demand pioneers in years to come. "Netflix doesn't yet have a real Africa strategy but it's started to produce original African content. That will be a gamechanger. "It has considerable means at its disposal that the others don't have." — AFP



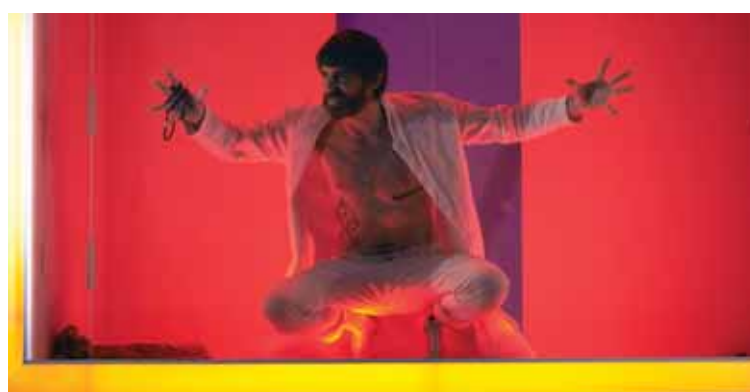
The co-founder and CEO of Iroko television Jason Njoku speaking about Iroko tv during an interview in Lagos.

Netflix of Africa?

Blogger Linda Ikeji—one of Nigeria's biggest names on social networks—recently launched Linda Ikeji TV (LITV) to great fanfare. It offers dozens of films, series and programs inspired by US shows but with a Nollywood twist for a

'Prohibitive' data costs

A viable economic model for the promoters of Nollywood online still needs to be found, given



British actor Paul Anderson performs in a scene from 'Tartuffe', Moliere's play adapted by British playwright Christopher Hampton.



British actor Paul Anderson (left) and French actress Audrey Fleurot perform in a scene from 'Tartuffe'.

Bilingual play brings Trumped-up Moliere to London

For the first time in the history of London's West End theatre district, a play is being staged in English and French—Moliere's classic "Tartuffe", transposed into Donald Trump's United States. The comedy at the Theatre Royal Haymarket stars two television regulars from either side of the Channel—Paul Anderson in the title role as a US evangelist, and Audrey Fleurot as Elmire. Anderson is known for his role as Arthur in "Peaky Blinders", a crime drama series about a 1920s gang in Birmingham, while flamboyant redhead Audrey Fleurot played lawyer Josephine Karlsson in the Paris police and legal drama "Spiral".

In the modern take on the 1660s play, Orgon, portrayed by Sebastian Roche, is a French media tycoon in Los Angeles, who falls under the spell of radical evangelist Tartuffe. Tartuffe has hoodwinked Orgon so comprehensively that he looks set to steal his fortune, drive away his son, seduce his wife Elmire and marry his daughter. The play is going down well with a young and enthusiastic audience calling for encores. However, newspaper critics have not been so keen. The Times said "Merde, what a mess", calling it a "pretentious shambles" and "excruciating", while The Daily Telegraph said it

was "frankly maladroit" and "induces tears of frustration".

Scandalous play

Is it provocative to stage a bilingual play in Britain as it heads for the EU exit door? "Tartuffe" has always been a scandalous play, right from its origins when it was banned, and the provocation inherent in the play continues," director Gerald Garutti told AFP. "It's a play which divides opinions, between those who favor a form of openness, and those who tend more towards withdrawal, autonomy, insularity and something more closed. And clearly politics and ideology have a stake in it," he said, in reference to Brexit. Garutti prefers to go by the acclaim from the stalls, where a Netflix-happy generation is able to juggle with the languages and the surtitles, which crop up in several places around the stage.

And in Christopher Hampton's adaptation, a final surprise twist anchors the play in the realities of the modern-day United States under President Trump. "I wanted to keep as much as possible of the original text and in thinking of the idea of a religious guru, I naturally thought of California," Hampton told AFP. "From that

came the idea of an American Tartuffe with whom all the members of the family have to speak in English." Besides Trump, "the Me Too movement was a strong part of my thinking. "Like all the great plays, 'Tartuffe' remains relevant in a slightly different way with the passage of time."

Gymnastic switch

Each era throws up its share of virtue-spouting hypocrites who cannot practice what they preach, whatever it is they are preaching. Especially when desire, in the form of Fleurot dressed in a siren's robes, enters the mix, in a spicy seduction scene with the falsely puritanical evangelist Tartuffe. "At the start of rehearsals, the French team said 'we don't touch Moliere!'. But in the end, it's interesting to bring things up to date, so long as we don't distort the play," Fleurot told AFP.

Working with two languages was also a challenge. Roche said: "It's an interesting gymnastic switch between French and English, it's a very different rhythm. There is also a different sound." To play Tartuffe, Anderson wears a white linen tunic which covers up his tattoos. "The risk element is what I liked about it, not doing something the people would expect me to do," he said.

The inspiration for his interpretation came partly from his own imagination but also from dark manipulators such as the Russian monk Rasputin and the Californian serial killer Charles Manson. "There is a slight Charles Manson in him, in the charming side, in the charismatic side," said Anderson. "He was very charismatic, regardless of being a monster." The play runs until July 28, with tickets ranging from £15 to £90 (\$20 to \$118; 17 to 102 euros). — AFP



British actor Paul Anderson, French actress Audrey Fleurot (right) and British-French actor Sebastian Roche (left) perform in a scene from 'Tartuffe'. — AFP Photos

Music fans mark 70 years since first LP as vinyl enjoys revival

In the basement of the British Library, curator Andy Linehan inspects the latest addition to a massive archive of wax cylinders, cassettes, LPs and CDs - a vinyl record that made musical history. Released in the United States in 1948, Mendelssohn's Concerto in E minor, performed by violinist Nathan Milstein with the New York Philharmonic Symphony Orchestra, was the very first vinyl LP, or long playing record. The 12 inch 33 1/3 rpm format allowed longer pieces to be recorded, changing the way listeners enjoyed their music.

"The fact that the long playing record came into existence was a huge step for music sound recording and for the listener," Linehan, curator of popular music in the British Library sound archive, said. "Previously you could only get 3 minutes or so onto one side of a record and now because you had a narrower groove and a slower speed, you could get up to 20 minutes, which meant you could get a whole classical piece on one side of a record ... you could get a whole package of songs together on one record."

Today marks 70 years since Columbia Records introduced the LP, and British music retailer HMV and label Sony Classical recreated 500 copies of the concerto to give away to fans, with one replica donated to the British Library's archive. The record adds to the library's 250,000 collection of LPs, usually commercial releases in Britain, and artefacts going back to the beginning of sound recording, such as wax cylinders, patented by Thomas

Edison in 1877, the first way fans could buy music to listen to at home. Today's anniversary comes at a time when vinyl has been enjoying a revival. In Britain, while it still only accounting for 7 percent of album sales, it draws fans of all ages.

According to the British Phonographic Industry (BPI), vinyl LP sales rose to 4.1 million last year from 205,292 in 2007. "Vinyl is popular because people see it more artefact rather than utility," Gennaro Castaldo, BPI communications director, said. "They love the whole ritual around buying it and then playing it at home and also the sound quality is much warmer, richer and people appreciate that." Rock remains the best-selling vinyl genre and last year, the biggest seller on the format in Britain was Ed Sheeran's "Divide" album. Older titles such as Amy Winehouse's "Back To Black" and Fleetwood Mac's "Rumors" were also in the top 10. "Our record stores are stocking more vinyl than we've ever stocked in terms of the last 10 years," Simon Winter, PR and events manager at HMV, said.

At the flagship HMV store on Oxford Street, in central London, music aficionados buying vinyl records said they appreciated its sound quality. "I grew up with mum and dad listening to a lot of Meat Loaf and a lot of heavy metal and rock and roll ... and a lot of that was done on vinyl," Steve Pound said. "That recording is just very, very unique." — Reuters



Andy Linehan, Curator of Popular Music Recordings at the British Library, places a limited edition pressing of Mendelssohn's Violin Concerto in E Minor 1948 recording - the very first 33rpm vinyl LP to be issued - into the British Library's musical collection of over 250,000 pieces, in London, Britain. — AP



Italian chef Massimo Bottura (right) celebrates next to his wife Lara Gilmord after receiving the Best Restaurant award for his restaurant L'Osteria Francescana during the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards in Bilbao. — AFP photos



Italian chef Massimo Bottura talks with the press after receiving the Best Restaurant award for his restaurant L'Osteria Francescana.



Japanese chef Jimbocho Den receives the best 17 restaurant award.

ITALY'S **OSTERIA FRANCESCANA** CROWNED WORLD'S BEST RESTAURANT AGAIN

Italy's Osteria Francescana was crowned the world's best restaurant for the second time on Tuesday at an awards ceremony put on by British trade magazine Restaurant, beating out top eateries in Spain and France. Run by chef Massimo Bottura, the restaurant in Modena, Italy pipped last year's winner, New York's "Eleven Madison Park," in the World's 50 Best Restaurants awards, after first taking the honor in 2016. It is the only Italian establishment to have won the annual accolade. "This is amazing, this is something we built all together," Bottura told the awards ceremony held in Bilbao in Spain's northern Basque Country, famous for its avant-garde haute cuisine. "I am going to use this spotlight to show that chefs in 2018 are much more than the sum of their recipes."

The top restaurants list's organizers praised "Bottura's contemporary cuisine, which challenges and reinvents Italian culinary tradition while make use of the finest produce from the Emilia-Romagna region." His father wanted him to become a lawyer but when he was 23-years-old Bottura, who was famous for rustling up culinary delights for his friends, dropped his law studies to open a Trattoria in Campazzo, in the countryside around Modena in the Po River Valley. On his days off, he would study with French chef Georges Cogny, who had a restaurant two hours away. "He said to me: 'always follow your palate, because you have a great palate which will make Modena known around the world,'" Bottura said during an interview with AFP in 2016. He opened Osteria Francescana in 1995 after spending time in New York and Monaco.

Bangkok's "Gaggan", whose owner-chef Gaggan Anand has won praise for his modern spin on his native Indian cuisine.

Half in Europe

Spain continued to dominate the line-up with three restaurants in the top 10, including El Celler de Can Roca, while France had two including Mirazur. The 2018 list of 50 best restaurants included eateries in 22 countries-but over half were in Europe. Six are in the United States, six in Latin America and six in Asia. Tuesday's ceremony also handed out individual chef awards. Britain's Clare Smyth, who catered the dinner at the royal wedding of Prince Harry and Meghan Markle last month, was named best

female chef and France's Cedric Grolet best pastry chef. Peru's celebrity chef Gaston Acurio, who is known for combining classic European techniques with typical ingredients from the Andean country, was given a lifetime achievement award.

The top restaurant award has gone to Spain seven times, the most of any country. In addition to El Celler de Can Roca's two wins, ground-breaking Spanish chef Ferran Adria's El Bulli, which he closed in 2011, took the prize a record five times. This year was the first time the ceremony was held in Spain. The event has been held before in London, New York and Melbourne. — AFP



Peruvian chef Gaston Acurio receives the Lifetime Achievement award.

Two Peruvians in top 10

Spain's El Celler de Can Roca, which took the top honor in 2013 and 2015, came in second while third place went to Mirazur in southern France. Restaurant magazine, owned by William Reed Media, launched the awards in 2002 and they are now as coveted by restaurants as Michelin stars, although the methodology used to select the best restaurants has faced criticism, especially from several French chefs who say it remains unclear. There are no criteria for putting a restaurant on the list, which is based on an anonymous poll of more than 1,000 chefs, restaurant owners, food critics and other industry insiders from around the world.

Each member gets 10 votes and at least four of those votes have to go to restaurants outside their region. The top 10 included two Peruvian restaurants, "Central" which slipped to number six from fifth place last year, and "Maido" which climbed to number seven from eighth place. The only Asian restaurant in the top 10 was



Spanish chef Juan Mari Arzak (center) and his daughter Elena Arzak receive the best 31st restaurant award.



British chef Clare Smyth receives the 'Best Female Chef' award.



Eneko Atxa (right) receives the award as 43rd best restaurant award.



Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco (left) celebrates receiving the 2nd best restaurant award for his restaurant Mirazur.

Celeb chef Samuelsson to open restaurant in Miami's Overtown



File photo shows chef Marcus Samuelsson in New York. — AP

Miami is trying to rebuild a neighborhood that was once a vibrant center for black culture, and a celebrity chef is contributing what he does best: food. Marcus Samuelsson has bought a former pool hall in Miami's Overtown neighborhood and plans to open a restaurant there later this year. A redevelopment board is already pouring tens of millions of dollars into Overtown, but Samuelsson is the first celebrity to make a commitment there. He bought the building for \$1.5 million while turning down opportunities on South Beach.

Samuelsson's cuisine and philosophy is a study in cultural fusion, much like the man himself. He was born in Ethiopia and raised by white adoptive parents in Sweden. He first made a name for himself with upscale Scandinavian fare at Manhattan's chic Aquavit restaurant in the 1990s. A James Beard award winner, his celebrity grew with appearances on Food Network shows. Then in 2010, just as Harlem started gentrifying, Samuelsson opened a restaurant there called Red Rooster. It was an immediate hit. He made an art of turning Southern soul food into hip urban fare, offered gospel brunches and organized food festivals. More recently, he opened Marcus B&P in downtown Newark, an area that is also in the early stages of a comeback.

Street art

"There's a linkage between Overtown and Harlem and I want to be part of that," Samuelsson said in an interview. His Overtown eatery will hire from the community, offer internships and feature local artists on the walls. "Through art you learn a narrative about people's journey. Music does that, food does that, art does that," he said. Overtown is sandwiched between swanky downtown Miami high-rises and artsy Wynwood with

its shops, bars and world-renowned street art. Despite the prime location, though, Overtown has suffered from a lack of investment and higher-than-average crime rates.

In its prime, Overtown was known as a "Little Broadway" of the South. Black stars like Louis Armstrong, Nat King Cole, Sammy Davis Jr and Billie Holiday performed at Overtown's Lyric Theater. And even when they were performing elsewhere, they stayed in Overtown's black-owned hotels because hotels in Miami's white neighborhoods would not accommodate them.

In the 1960s, two expressways built through the heart of the neighborhood displaced thousands of residents, contributing to Overtown's decline. Then in 1980, three days of riots in Overtown left 18 dead, 400 injured and \$100 million in damage. The protests were sparked by the acquittal of four white police officers in the fatal beating of a black insurance salesman. But the neighborhood is poised for a turnaround. "You are part of a renaissance that's going to mean the most for this neighborhood," redevelopment board Chairman Keon Hardemon told 200 people at an outdoor luncheon across the street from where Samuelsson's restaurant will be located. "We want this place to truly be the Harlem of the South."

The sold-out \$135-a-person preview of Samuelsson's plans attracted politicians and the owner of an MLB franchise. Trays of fried chicken and waffles with smoked maple syrup were served with short ribs, shrimp and grits, dirty rice fritters, collard greens and cornbread with tomato jam. A strolling New Orleans-style jazz band played a festive rendition of the gospel song "I'll Fly Away" as the crowd clapped and swayed.

Soul food restaurant

Beyond the barricades surrounding the well-heeled celebration, lifelong Overtown resident Dwayne Riggins, 50, parked his

bicycle and watched. His dad owned a soul food restaurant just down the street. He points out the empty lot where a pharmacy used to be. He said he likes the new high-rises being built. "Some people might not approve, but it's time for Overtown to change. It's been down and out all our lives," Riggins said. Rudy Lorenzo, who owns a convenience store, hopes the changes will attract a better-paying clientele, but warns matter-of-factly that the locals "are going to get pushed out ... They aren't going to be able to afford the new apartments."

That's an issue that's played out in many cities around the country - including New York - as residents who lived through years of neglect get priced out when things rebound. Bubba Haynes has lived in Overtown for 55 years. He did construction years ago on buildings near the Lyric Theater. Now he's retired and helps at his son's retail store. "With growth, you take a lot of this crime out of here, but then you're going to lose a lot of the history," he said.

Samuelsson hopes to reflect some of that history along with contemporary local culture when he opens his restaurant. He doesn't have a menu yet, calling that "the fun part." His Harlem menu includes cornbread and his Swedish grandmother's meatballs; his Newark restaurant infuses pasta with Ethiopian flavors in a dish called dorowat rigatoni. "I'm going to come down a lot and I'm going to learn historically what was here, what's relevant right now," he said. "I know it's going to be comfort food." — AP

Classifieds

Thursday, June 21, 2018

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate freshening at times specially over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h.

BY DAY: Dusty and Hot with moderate to fresh, strong at times north westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 65 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			Strong Wind and Dust	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 20/06/2018 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	45 °C	34 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	35 °C		
ABDALY	47 °C	32 °C		
BUBYAN	---- °C	---- °C		
JAHRA	46 °C	34 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	43 °C	33 °C		
SALMIYAH	40 °C	34 °C		
AHMADI	43 °C	36 °C		
NUWAISIB	46 °C	33 °C		
WAFRA	45 °C	33 °C		
SALMY	43 °C	31 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	06/21	Dusty and Hot	45 °C	35 °C	NW	25 - 65 km/h
Friday	06/22	Dusty and Hot	44 °C	34 °C	NW	25 - 65 km/h
Saturday	06/23	Hot + rising dust	44 °C	32 °C	NW	25 - 55 km/h
Sunday	06/24	Hot + rising dust over open areas	46 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:13
Sunrise	04:48
Zuhr	11:50
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:50
Isha	20:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	34 °C
MAX. RH	30 %
MIN. RH	09 %
MAX. Wind	N 53 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

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No: 285081606515, here-
by change my name to
Amrinder Pal Singh
Dadyal for all future pur-
pose.
(C 5400)

I, Inacinha Fernandes
Barreto, daughter of
Angelo Fernandes, hold-
er of Indian Passport No:
M4642005 & Civil ID No:
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Arrival Flights on Thursday 21/6/2018				Departure Flights on Thursday 21/6/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
MSC	405	Sohag	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
FEQ	441	Asyut	00:05	MSC	502	Alexandria	00:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:15	JAI	573	Mumbai	00:30
KAC	504	Beirut	00:50	MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
SAI	441	Lahore	00:50	FEQ	344	Sohag	01:05
KAC	102	London	00:50	MSC	406	Sohag	01:05
JZR	539	Cairo	01:00	JZR	528	Asyut	01:05
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:15	THY	773	Istanbul	01:45
RJA	642	Amman	01:35	KAC	417	Manila	01:45
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	SAI	442	Lahore	01:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	JZR	502	Jeddah	01:55
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	677	Dubai	02:00
AXB	395	Kozhikode	02:00	WAN	351	Luxor	02:00
JZR	267	Beirut	02:10	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:45
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	AXB	396	Kozhikode	02:55
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KAC	1269	Istanbul	02:55
WAN	714	AGP	02:30	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
THY	768	Istanbul	02:40	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
JZR	553D	Alexandria	02:50	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
JZR	607	Kochi	02:55	THY	769	Istanbul	03:35
KAC	418	Manila	03:05	RBG	216	Sohag	03:45
RBG	823	Dubai	03:25	JZR	142	Doha	03:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	MSC	404	Asyut	04:05
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	MSR	607	Luxor	04:05
MSR	606	Luxor	03:05	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
MSC	403	Asyut	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:05
KAC	382	Delhi	03:10	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
PGT	823	Istanbul	03:25	PGT	831	Istanbul	04:25
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	540	Cairo	04:40
JAI	572	Mumbai	04:00	KAC	615	Bahrain	05:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KNE	532	Jeddah	05:00
KAC	152	Istanbul	04:15	MSR	576	Sharm el-Sheikh	05:15
KAC	544	Cairo	04:25	SAW	706	Damascus	05:15
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	KAC	503	Beirut	05:15
ETH	620	Hyderabad	04:30	FDB	052	Dubai	05:15
THY	1414	TZX	05:05	QTR	1073	Doha	05:15
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	UAE	858	Dubai	05:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:10	KAC	381	Delhi	05:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:15	NIA	362	Alexandria	05:15
JZR	603	Mumbai	05:25	KAC	283	Dhaka	05:15
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	343	Chennai	05:15
KAC	332	Thiruvandrum	05:40	SWA	511	Riyadh	05:15
JZR	561	Sohag	05:55	GFA	216	Bahrain	05:15
KAC	362	Colombo	06:00	JZR	184	Dubai	05:15
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	608	Hyderabad	05:15
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:25	JZR	512	Sharm el-Sheikh	05:15
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:25	JZR	240	Amman	05:15
QTR	8511	Doha	06:35	JZR	538	Cairo	05:15
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:40	JZR	266	Beirut	05:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:45	QTR	1081	Doha	05:15
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	CAI	876	Cairo	05:15
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	05:15
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	07:05	FDB	064	Dubai	05:15
JZR	143	Doha	07:20	RJA	641	Amman	05:15
JZR	529	Asyut	07:30	ABY	124	Sharjah	05:15
JZR	503	Luxor	07:50	KAC	331	Trivandrum	05:15
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	RBG	556	Alexandria	05:15
WAN	352	Luxor	08:00	NIA	162	Cairo	05:15
KAC	384	Delhi	08:05	FDB	058	Dubai	05:15
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	JZR	602	Mumbai	05:15
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	UAE	876	Dubai	05:15
IRA	673	Ahwaz	08:35	DLH	624	Dammam	05:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:55	KNE	232	Riyadh	05:15
ABY	123	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	357	Kochi	05:15
IRA	667	Esfahan	09:05	OMA	648	Muscat	05:15
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	MEA	403	Beirut	05:15
SAW	703	Damascus	09:30	JZR	1543	Cairo	05:15
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	550	Alexandria	05:15
IAW	157	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	301	Mumbai	05:15
SVR	341	Damascus	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	05:15
SWA	512	Riyadh	10:00	DHX	218	Bahrain	05:15
THY	1516	TZX	10:05	KAC	203	Lahore	05:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	05:15
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KLM	445	Bahrain	05:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	JZR	1540	Cairo	05:15
JZR	541	Cairo	11:05	ALK	230	Colombo	05:15
WAN	134	Doha	11:10	THY	1401	ADB	05:15
JZR	165	Dubai	11:45	KAC	783	Jeddah	05:15
AHY	5101	Baku	11:55	KAC	383	Delhi	05:15
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:20	UAE	860	Dubai	05:15
SAW	709	Latakia	12:30	GFA	220	Bahrain	05:15
MSC	411	Asyut	12:30	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	05:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	QTR	1083	Doha	05:15
THY	766	Istanbul	12:45	WAN	337	Alexandria	05:15
WAN	165	KTM	12:50	JZR	560	Sohag	05:15
JZR	239	Amman	13:00	TRQ	231	KRT	05:15
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00				
JZR	1543	Cairo	13:05				
JZR	357	Mashhad	13:05				
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10				
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:30				



JEDDAH: Saudi football fans wearing paraphernalia and masks with their national team's colors and emblem pose for a picture inside a fan tent in this Red Sea coastal city yesterday ahead of their Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match against Uruguay.— AFP

US withdraws from 'cesspool' UN rights body, cites Israel bias

WASHINGTON: The United States withdrew from the United Nations Human Rights Council on Tuesday, condemning the "hypocrisy" of its members and its alleged "unrelenting bias" against Israel. The US ambassador to the United Nations, Nikki Haley, came to Washington to announce the decision alongside President Donald Trump's top diplomat, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Both insisted the United States would remain a leading champion of human rights but, for many, the decision will reflect Trump's general hostility to the world body and to multilateral diplomacy in general.

The announcement came after the top UN human rights official criticized Washington for separating migrant children from their parents who are seeking asylum after crossing into the country from Mexico. But Haley and Pompeo stressed the decision had been made after a long year of efforts to shame the council into reform and to remove member states that themselves

commit abuses. "These reforms were needed in order to make the council a serious advocate for human rights," Haley said. "For too long, the Human Rights Council has been a protector of human rights abusers, and a cesspool of political bias. Regrettably, it is now clear that our call for reform was not heeded."

The Geneva-based body was established in 2006 to promote and protect human rights worldwide, but its pronouncements and reports have often clashed with US priorities. In particular, the council's focus on Israeli behavior towards Palestinians in the territory it occupies on the West Bank and in Gaza has infuriated Washington. But, as Haley stressed, Washington also believes it comes up short on criticizing even flagrant abuses by US opponents like Venezuela and Cuba.

"Countries have colluded with each other to undermine the current method of selecting members," Pompeo said. "And the council's continued and well-documented bias against Israel is unconscionable," he said. "Since its creation, the council has adopted more resolutions condemning Israel than against the rest of the world combined." Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu welcomed the US move, branding the council "a biased, hostile, anti-Israel organization that has betrayed its mission of protecting human rights."

Haley, who issued a warning a year ago

that Washington would make good on its threat to leave the council if reforms were not carried through, used even starker language. "We take this step because our commitment does not allow us to remain a part of a hypocritical and self-serving organization that makes a mockery of human rights," she said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres regretted the US decision, adding: "The UN's human rights architecture plays a very important role in the promotion and protection of human rights worldwide."

On Monday, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein - a Jordanian - had rebuked Trump over the US practice of splitting up migrant families detained on the Mexican border. "The thought that any state would seek to deter parents by inflicting such abuse on children is unconscionable," he said.

Independent watchdog Human Rights Watch criticized the move, warning Washington's absence at the council would put the onus on other governments to address the world's most serious rights problems. "The Trump administration's withdrawal is a sad reflection of its one-dimensional human rights policy: defending Israeli abuses from criticism takes precedence above all else," executive director Kenneth Roth said. "The UN Human Rights Council has played an important role in such countries as North Korea, Syria,



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo looks on as US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley speaks at the US Department of State on Tuesday.— AFP

Myanmar and South Sudan, but all Trump seems to care about is defending Israel."

US criticism stems from the fact that Israel is the only country that has a dedicated agenda item at council meetings, one defended in particular by the Arab bloc of countries. Known as "Item 7", this item means that Israel's treatment of the Palestinians comes under scrutiny at each of three annual sessions. The United States refused to join the body when it was creat-

ed in 2006, when George W Bush was in the White House and his ambassador to the UN was John Bolton - now Trump's UN-skeptic national security advisor. After Barack Obama came to power, Washington joined the council in 2009. But when Trump took office, he adopted a hostile approach to world governance, leading Washington to quit the UN cultural agency UNESCO, cut UN funding and planning to leave the Paris climate agreement.— AFP

In Syria, race to save precious...

Continued from Page 1

properties," he told AFP. "Those files represent the hope of return." FSL sprang into action after Homs city's registry was destroyed in a fire in 2013, which activists suspected was a regime bid to strip oppositionists of their land. Smuggling out original deeds from other towns was risky and could be considered tampering, so the FSL's 15 lawyers opted for the next best thing: digital copies. With help from civil society group The Day After, they travelled to Turkey to learn how to handle, photograph, and archive documents.

Back in Syria, they began working through abandoned registries in northern rebel towns: Harem, Azaz, Saraqeb. "We set up a little studio in the room with the most light," said an FSL lawyer still in Syria who identified himself as Samer. With just four Canon digital cameras, two laptops, flashes, and tripods, they photographed thousands of deeds, making sure names and dates were clearly visible. "As soon as we'd finish one 200-page ledger, we'd upload the SD card onto the computer. Meanwhile, the camera didn't stop. We'd put a new card in and start photographing again," Samer, 43, told AFP.

Each month, they emptied their computers onto external drives which they sent to Koronful in Turkey. They raced against air strikes that damaged cameras and wounded staff members, worrying registries would be bombed to pieces before they could finish. "When

we reached the last page, we'd be so happy to be finished. Whatever happens now, if we get bombed, we have a drive with everything on it," said Samer.

Sometimes they lost the race. In 2013, days before FSL was to begin photographing deeds in the northern town of Al-Bab, the Islamic State group swept in and destroyed the registry, Koronful said. They now struggle to get permission to enter registries from suspicious rebels, especially in jihadist-run Idlib, occasionally photographing in secret.

Since Syria's war erupted in 2011, more than six million people have been internally displaced and another five million have fled the country. More than 920,000 have been displaced this year alone, the UN said, the fastest rate yet in the seven-year war. A vast majority leave behind property-related papers, the Norwegian Refugee Council found in polls last year. That puts them at risk of losing access to their land through decrees like Law 10, which allows for property expropriation for urban development. Koronful fears the regime could also dispossess refugees through legislation on re-issuing damaged deeds.

A set of laws allows for missing titles to be restituted using digital copies, but it remains unclear if the government would accept a version produced by opposition-affiliated lawyers. "We're expecting a lot of people to ask for copies," said The Day After's Amr Shannan, pointing to similar post-conflict property disputes in Lebanon and Bosnia as precedents. For now, the digital titles remain tucked away on a pair of hard drives, one in Turkey and another in an undisclosed European city. They aren't yet searchable, but are archived in the same order as the originals. "If there's going to be a return of refugees, one of the most important factors is that they have homes or land to return to," said Shannan.— AFP

intense battlefield in the already-brutal Yemen war. The Yemeni government and its allies have insisted that the Houthis must fully withdraw from Hodeida and turn over the port to UN supervision. The rebels have so far agreed only to share control of the port with the United Nations.

Coalition spokesman Colonel Turki Al-Malki told Al Arabiya television that the alliance captured the airport yesterday and was now destroying nearby Houthi fortifications. He accused the group of placing tanks inside residential areas. "Hodeida port is operating as normal and the movement of ships is normal," Malki said. "We have humanitarian and development plans for when we liberate the city."

In a televised address, Houthi leader Abdul Malik Al-Houthi said fighting would not cease even if the coalition regained the whole country. "The western coast will be a swamp that drowns and finishes the forces of the invaders and the aggressors." Houthi authorities set up loudspeakers on Hodeidah's main streets playing martial chants and excerpts of Al-Houthi's speeches, another resident said. "The streets have been turned into a big audio stage to boost their fighters' morale." — Agencies

Trump signs order to end border...

Continued from Page 1

sought to blame Democrats, although it was his administration that implemented the policy of strict adherence to immigration law.

The Republican-controlled US Congress is also considering legislation to address the issue. The House of Representatives planned to vote today on two bills designed to halt the practice of separating families and to address other immigration issues. But Republicans said they were uncertain if either measure would have enough support to be approved. Trump told House Republicans on Tuesday night he would support either of the immigration bills under consideration but did not give a preference.

Earlier at a meeting with Republican lawmakers at the White House, Trump however made clear he was not easing up on his determination to shut down the border to illegal immigration, calling it a source of rampant crime and drugs. "We still have to maintain toughness, or our country will be overrun by people, by crime, by all of the things that we don't stand for and we don't want," he said.

As countries marked World Refugee Day yesterday, British Prime Minister Theresa May, Canadian Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau, the Council of Europe and Pope Francis all took issue with Trump's "zero tolerance" policy. May said images of migrant children kept in cage-like units were "deeply disturbing," and the Council of Europe, a global human rights watchdog, said Trump had abdicated any claim to moral leadership in the world. "A person's dignity does not depend on them being a citizen, a migrant, or a refugee. Saving the life of someone fleeing war and poverty is an act of humanity," the pope said on Twitter.

After a downturn last year, since October, the number of migrants seeking to cross the southwest US border from impoverished Guatemala, El Salvador and Honduras, as well as from Mexico, has surged. From March to May this year, more than 50,000 people a month were apprehended for illegally crossing the border from Mexico. About 15 percent of those are arriving as families, and eight percent as unaccompanied children.

Nearly all of the families, and many others, are officially asking for asylum, citing the incessant violence in their home countries. Aiming to deter more arrivals, in early May, the Trump administration announced it would arrest and criminally charge all adults. Meanwhile, any children entering the country with them, including infants, would be taken away and held separately. The issue has stuck an emotional chord, amid accounts of children screaming and crying in the tent camps prepared for them in southern Texas.— Agencies

on OPEC members Iran and Venezuela, which will likely lead to lower exports. Zanganeh said he would leave Vienna tomorrow even before OPEC holds talks with non-OPEC producers the next day, but efforts were underway yesterday to convince Iran to participate in a deal.

Sources said Saudi Arabia did not want to be seen as putting too much pressure on Iran and hence Russia was instead trying to convince Tehran. Zanganeh was due to attend a ministerial committee today, two sources said. Iran is usually not part of the committee, which includes Russia, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Kuwait, Algeria and Venezuela. Iraq and Venezuela have also opposed a relaxation of production cuts, fearing a slump in prices. Iraqi Oil Minister Jabar Al-Luaibi said yesterday he hoped there would be agreement when OPEC meets but added: "The oil market has not reached the level of stabilization."

Gulf producers usually aligned with Saudi Arabia - the UAE, Kuwait, Oman and Bahrain - have also cautioned against a large output increase and signalled they have been rattled by Riyadh's close coordination with Russia, sources have said. Gulf oil producers' views still differed yesterday on how much to increase production and whether such a move should be gradual, sources said. They nevertheless tried to bring Iran on board for a deal, with ministers from the UAE, Kuwait and Oman meeting Zanganeh yesterday. Oman's oil minister Mohammed bin Hamad Al-Rumayh said he believed Iran would agree to an output increase tomorrow. He said the meeting would tackle over-compliance with oil output cuts and that Iran was "very cooperative". — Reuters

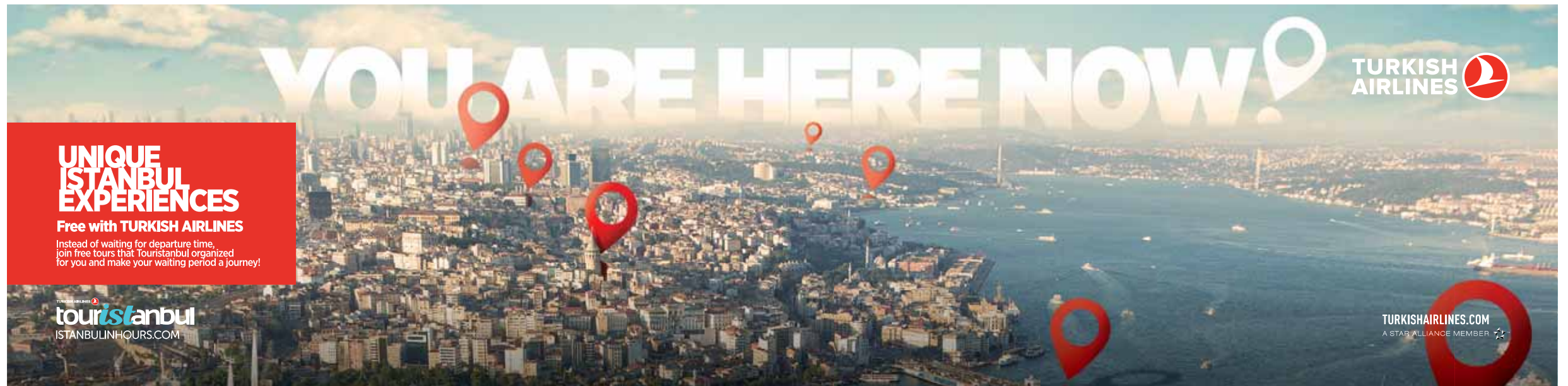
Coalition seizes Hodeida airport...

Continued from Page 1

The Norwegian Refugee Council said the fighting had already disrupted water supplies, putting people at high risk of contamination. "As of 19 June, the water supply has been disrupted in several areas and people are reportedly relying on water from mosque wells," it said in a statement. "Access to adequate and safe water is now a major concern, particularly in light of the ongoing cholera emergency."

Hodeida's residents are now bracing for what they fear will be devastating street fighting, as tanks and buses carrying uniformed troops roll through the empty streets of the once-bustling city. Some 5,200 families fled their homes this month as pro-government forces advanced up the Red Sea coast, according to the UN. The offensive, dubbed Operation Golden Victory, is now the most

Sports



History beckons for Russia as Cherchesov finds winning formula

Russia will reach knockout rounds for first time since break-up of the Soviet Union

ST PETERSBURG: If everything had gone to plan, several of the players who have guided Russia to the brink of qualification for the World Cup knockout stages might have been left at home to watch the tournament on television.

The hosts defied expectations by winning their opening matches emphatically, trouncing Saudi Arabia 5-0 before beating Egypt 3-1 to top Group A. If the Saudis fail to beat Uruguay, Russia will reach the knockout rounds for the first time since the break-up of the Soviet Union, having failed to progress in all three of their World Cup appearances since 1994.

It is a remarkable feat considering the spate of injuries that disrupted preparations, the low expectations of fans and the hostility from sections of the media in the run-up to the tournament. Coach Stanislav Cherchesov, who took over in 2016, was widely criticised after his team's early exit from last year's Confederations Cup, and speculation mounted that he would be sacked.

Yet the 54-year-old has proved to be as adaptable as he is tactically astute and coaxed 38-year-old Sergei Ignashevich out of international retirement to replace injured Rubin Kazan centre back Ruslan Kambolov.

Ignashevich has started both of Russia's games and his experience has been invaluable, with the hosts unruffled by Saudi Arabia and managing to keep Egypt's prolific striker Mohamed Salah quiet for long

periods. "We don't have the word 'problem' in our vocabulary," Cherchesov said after his side beat Egypt. "We have had some issues and we deal with them as soon as they emerge."

FREE-FLOWING ATTACKING

It is at the other end of the pitch, however, that Russia are springing the biggest surprises. The team was expected to struggle after losing striker Aleksandr Kokorin to injury, but Cherchesov's decision to bring towering centre forward Artem Dzyuba back in from the cold has proved a masterstroke. Sent home from training before the Confederations Cup amid rumours of a row with the coach, Dzyuba spent a year out of the national team. He was loaned out by Zenit St Petersburg to mid-table Arsenal Tula, where he scored six goals in 10 appearances to force himself back into the reckoning for the World Cup. Making his first appearance as a second-half substitute, Dzyuba scored a minute after coming on against the Saudis and started against Egypt, where he harried Ahmed Fathi into scoring an own goal for the opener before adding Russia's third himself.

His ability to hold up the ball has benefited Russia's creative midfielders, with Denis Cheryshev and Aleksandr Golovin both feeding off him. Cheryshev also started the first game on the bench, coming on in the first half after Alan Dzagoev was injured, and immedi-



NOVOGORSK: Russia's coach Stanislav Cherchesov addresses his players during a training session in Novogorsk outside Moscow yesterday, as part of the Russia 2018 World Cup football tournament. — AFP

ately made his mark with two goals. He started against Egypt and turned in another precise finish for Russia's second. With the fans now firmly behind them, Russia are hoping Uruguay can hold off Saudi Arabia to confirm the host nation's progress to the next stage of the World Cup. Dzyuba said Russia had been fortunate to

play their opponents in the right order. "Saudi is a very good team, Egypt much better, and Uruguay even better," he said.

It is not just luck, however, but inspired selections, sound tactics and rising confidence that has the Russians dreaming of a place in the last 16. — Reuters

Putin revels in soccer side's unexpected World Cup form

MOSCOW: With the host team set to advance to the knockout stages for the first time since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia's World Cup is going better than even Vladimir Putin expected. Increasingly isolated on the global stage, the World Cup has so far helped Putin send a defiant message to his opponents that Russia is succeeding despite Western efforts to hold it back. Calls for a boycott by some Western politicians failed to gain traction, all Moscow's organisation and infrastructure commitments have been met, and Russia's 11 host cities have been flooded with international fans drinking, singing and dancing in the streets.

For Putin, Russia's runaway success on

the pitch has been the icing on the cake. After thrashing Saudi Arabia 5-0 in their opening match and securing a surprise 3-1 win over Egypt in St Petersburg on Tuesday, Russia are now all but guaranteed to go through to the final stages of the tournament. "I think this success is very important, and all the more so because no one really expected it," said Maxim Trudolyubov, senior fellow at the Kennan Institute and editor-at-large of Russian daily Vedomosti.

"Putin is the kind of politician who wants victories," he said. "For Putin, (politics) is a fight, a game, a gamble, a victory ... and about showing everyone that Russia means something in the world." Russia entered the World Cup ranked by FIFA as the tournament's weakest team and without a win on the field in more than seven months.

So low were expectations, that a satirical song mocking the national side and questioning the financial sense of hosting the event went viral online, garnering more than 9 million views on YouTube. "Our team is, let's be frank, shit," sings Russian comic Semyon Slepakov in the song.

Even Putin seemed resigned to focusing his attention on victories away from the pitch, quipping that "the winners will be the organisers" when asked at an economic



MOSCOW: File photo shows Russian President Vladimir Putin (L) shakes hands with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman during their meeting at the Kremlin in Moscow on June 14, 2018. — AFP

forum last month who would win the World Cup. Since then, the Russian leader, who is a keen sportsman although not a footballer, was seen laughing and joking with FIFA head Gianni Infantino and Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as Russia cruised to its big win in the tournament's

opening match. Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said Putin had not been able to watch Russia's performance against Egypt as he was on a plane back from a trip to Belarus, but he was told about the result by his staff as soon as he landed. — Reuters

Iceland step into the heat for Nigeria showdown

VOLGOGRAD/GELENDZHIK: Iceland will try not to melt in the fierce heat of Volgograd when they take on Nigeria in only their second ever World Cup match tomorrow after impressively holding twice champions Argentina to a draw at the weekend.

World Cup debutants Iceland are dreaming of the knockout stage and writing a new chapter in one of the most outstanding stories of international football in recent years. In their way stand not only Nigeria, who are desperate for a win after losing their opening game 2-0 to Croatia, but also the challenge of searing temperatures in the southern Russian city.

Weather forecasters are predicting heat of 32 degrees Celsius (90 degree F) at kickoff time on Friday, 10 degrees hotter than when Iceland pulled off their 1-1 draw with Argentina on Saturday. "Of course we've talked about it," assistant coach Helge Kolvidsson told reporters yesterday at their training camp in Gelendzhik before Iceland make the journey to Volgograd.

"We have doctors... and we're trying to prepare as good as we can, if it's going to help with vitamins or stuff

like that, but it's going to be the same for both teams." Iceland, who feature many players based in northern European countries, have chosen a resort near Sochi, on Russia's hot Black Sea coast, to help their acclimatisation.

Kolvidsson said the players were mindful of Nigeria's long experience at the top table of world football. "They've been in the World Cup finals five times, three times they have moved on to the next round," he said. "We are here for the first time."

GUDMUNDSSON DOUBT

In a potential blow for Iceland, winger Johann Berg Gudmundsson - who is central to the team's quick, counter-attacking style - is a doubt after tearing a muscle in the Argentina game. Playmaker Gylfi Sigurdsson, who recovered from injury just in time for the World Cup, played 90 minutes against the South Americans, raising hopes he will remain fit for Nigeria.

While a draw for Iceland would keep their knockout hopes alive, Nigeria, who are bottom of Group D, are under huge pressure to get all three points with manager Gernot Rohr saying his team must win.

Striker Odion Ighalo promised Nigeria would be on the front foot after managing only two chances on target against Croatia. "The Iceland game will be different from the Croatian one," Ighalo told FIFA's website. "We want to attack that game and we want to create chances because only with chances you score goals."

So far, only one team from Africa have won at the Russia World Cup-Senegal who beat Poland 2-1 on Tuesday-adding to the pressure on Nigeria. — Reuters



YESSENTUKI: Nigeria's forward Alex Iwobi controls a ball during a training session at Essentuki Arena in Yessentuki, southern Russia. — AFP

VAR, free-kick crackers make it 'set-piece WCup'

YEKATERINBURG: VAR and a trio of spectacular free kicks have led to a spike in the number of goals from set plays in Russia, with some already calling it "the World Cup of set pieces". With all the teams having played at least one game, roughly half of the goals at the tournament so far have come from set pieces-which will disappoint the football purists.

It led to one joke doing the rounds on social media saying that the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) system, which is making its World Cup debut, will have more assists than Lionel Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo.

Aliou Cisse, coach of Senegal, said: "We know that nowadays defensive systems are very tight so set pieces will be decisive weapons during the group matches." The numbers bear that out.

Following Sweden's 1-0 win against South Korea on Monday, thanks to a penalty awarded with the help of VAR, football analytics firm Opta Sports said 53.8 percent of the 26 goals up to that point had come from set plays. That chimes with the calculations of Mads Davidsen, technical director at the Chinese top-tier side Shanghai SIPG, who said: "That is significantly higher than previous tournaments."

"At Euro 2016, in total 30 percent of goals were scored from set pieces and the last World Cup in 2014 the number was around 38 percent." Davidsen, a UEFA Pro coach from Denmark, added: "Cup tournaments will always have a higher set-piece scoring percentage than domestic leagues because it's 'easier' to prepare and train set pieces, and national teams have the time issue of having few training sessions together during a year, so it's difficult to work detailed on your style of play."

"There is no doubt VAR has had an effect as well." There were 13 penalties awarded during the whole of the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, not including penalty shootouts. There have already been 10 awarded in Russia even though the tournament is still only in its early stages.

VAR has vastly increased the number of spot kicks because more infringements are being seen than before. — AFP

Sports

Tampa Bay Rays win, end Houston Astros' 12-game winning streak

Carpenter hit tiebreaking homer as St Louis edged Philadelphia

HOUSTON: Wilson Ramos produced an RBI single in the eighth inning, and the visiting Tampa Bay Rays snapped the Houston Astros' 12-game winning streak with a 2-1 victory on Tuesday at Minute Maid Park. Ramos, who leads all American League catchers in voting for the All-Star Game, lined a pitch from Astros right-hander Hector Rondon that just cleared the glove of leaping third baseman Yuli Gurriel and scored Matt Duffy, who opened the frame with a double to right field. Rondon (1-2) had worked 13 consecutive scoreless appearances, and he stranded Adeiny Hechavarria at second base after entering in relief of Justin Verlander with two outs in the seventh. Duffy and Ramos both went 2-for-4 while Joey Wendle also posted a multi-hit game. The Rays prevented Houston from setting a franchise record for consecutive wins. Right-hander Sergio Romo notched his fourth save by recording the final two outs of the ninth.

CARDINALS 7, PHILLIES 6

Matt Carpenter hit the tiebreaking homer in the ninth inning as part of a three-RBI performance as St. Louis edged host Philadelphia. Carpenter deposited an 0-2 pitch from Phillies right-hander Seranthony Dominguez (1-1) just inside the right-field foul pole with two outs in the ninth. Tommy Pham and Kolten Wong added solo homers for the Cardinals. Odubel Herrera and Carlos Santana homered for Philadelphia, the 11th for each.

GIANTS 6, MARLINS 3

Buster Posey homered and then got involved in a beanball war that prompted the ejection of Miami starting pitcher Dan Straily and manager Don Mattingly, helping San Francisco to extract a small measure of revenge with a win at AT&T Park. After Giants starter Dereck Rodriguez plunked Lewis Brinson, one of the heroes of Miami's comeback from behind win Monday, in the top of the second inning, both pitchers and benches were warned to avoid further retaliation. Mattingly complained to the umpires after they'd warned his team even though it was Brinson who was hit Tuesday night, closing his argument by saying to Posey, "You're next." Sure enough, after the Giants had increased their lead to 3-0 in the third inning, Straily nailed Posey, resulting in the pitcher's ejection, as well as his manager's.

ANGELS 5, DIAMONDBACKS 4

Ian Kinsler homered and Mike Trout reached base four times for the second game in a row, helping Los Angeles snap a three-game losing streak with a narrow win over Arizona. Angels pitcher Felix Pena, making his first career

major league start, gave up one run on two hits and three walks, but lasted just four innings. Four Angels relievers combined to pitch the final five innings, Blake Parker pitching the eighth and ninth for his eighth save. Trout drove in two runs with a single, walked twice and reached on catcher's interference, raising his on-base percentage to a major league-best .469.

ROCKIES 10, METS 8

Nolan Arenado hit the first of three consecutive home runs in a six-run third inning, and Colorado held on to beat visiting New York. Trevor Story and Ian Desmond also homered in the third to help the Rockies end an eight-game home losing streak. It was the longest home losing streak since Colorado lost nine in a row at Mile High Stadium in its inaugural 1993 season. Asdrubal Cabrera and Kevin Plawewski had two hits apiece for New York, which had its three-game winning streak snapped.

TWINS 6, RED SOX 2

Eduardo Escobar knocked a tiebreaking single to center field that plated two runs in a four-run eighth inning to help Minnesota beat Boston to start a three-game series. Escobar's hit trickled past Red Sox center fielder Jackie Bradley Jr. for his second error of the season, scoring Ryan LaMarre from second and Joe Mauer from first to make it 4-2. Escobar went to third on the error. Minnesota reliever Zach Duke (3-2) got the win despite allowing a run on two hits in the eighth inning. Boston reliever Robby Scott (0-1) took the loss in his season debut, permitting two runs on no hits and a walk in one-third of an inning.

DODGERS 4, CUBS 3 (GAME 1)

Pinch hitter Kyle Farmer hit a two-out, two-run double in the ninth inning to give visiting Los Angeles a win over Chicago in the first game of a day-night doubleheader. The afternoon game was rescheduled from Monday night after rain and a failing bank of lights at Wrigley Field forced the postponement of the series opener. It was the first of seven games to be played between the two teams in a span of 10 days. The Dodgers were 1-for-12 with runners in scoring position before Farmer pulled a pitch from Justin Wilson (1-2) down the left field line and into the corner.

CUBS 2, DODGERS 1 (10) (GAME 2)

Albert Almora hit a walk-off RBI single to right field in the 10th inning as Chicago earned a doubleheader split against Los Angeles in the nightcap. Kris Bryant tripled into the right field corner to open the bottom of the 10th against



HOUSTON: George Springer #4 of the Houston Astros slides around Wilson Ramos #40 of the Tampa Bay Rays in the first inning but missed home plate and was called out after being tagged at Minute Maid Park on Tuesday in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Dodgers reliever Brock Stewart (0-1). Javy Baez was intentionally walked before Almora delivered his game-winning hit. Rob Zastryzny (1-0) picked up the victory after recording one out in the 10th when he retired Yasmani Grandal on a fly ball to right field with the bases loaded. The Dodgers were 2-for-15 with runners in scoring position.

RANGERS 4, ROYALS 1

Cole Hamels allowed just four hits and an unearned run in seven innings and rookie third baseman Isiah Kiner-Falefa and right fielder Nomar Mazara each had three-hit games to lead visiting Texas past Kansas City for its fourth straight win. Keone Kela picked up his 17th save in 17 opportunities in 2018 and 19th in a row dating back to last season with a 1-2-3 ninth for the Rangers. Jake Diekmann struck out two in a perfect eighth to garner his eighth hold. Hamels (4-6), who has a 1.45 ERA and .176 opponent batting average in his last five road games, walked three and

struck out seven and departed after throwing 108 pitches, 72 of which were strikes.

AS 4, PADRES 2 (10)

Jed Lowrie hit a two-run homer with two outs in the top of the 10th inning after his team tied the game on a two-out homer in the ninth to give Oakland an inspiring win over San Diego in the opener of a short two-game series at

PETCO PARK

Marcus Semien singled with one out in the 10th and was at third on a stolen base and a throwing error by catcher Raffy Lopez when Lowrie connected on a 374-foot drive to right off Padres right-handed reliever Adam Cimber (3-3). Right-hander Lou Trivino (4-1) struck out two in two perfect innings to earn the win as A's relievers retired 10 of the final 11 Padres batters to end the game. Right-hander Blake Treinen got his 16th save.—Reuters

WORLD CUP 2018

**Today's Matches
(All local timings)**

Denmark	15:00	Australia
France	18:00	Peru
Argentina	21:00	Croatia

Low-key and long-hitting, Johnson reigns as number one

WASHINGTON: Dustin Johnson overcame injuries and personal issues to become a major golf champion, the long-hitting American star with a low-key attitude grabbing the world number one ranking in 2017. After losing the top spot to compatriot Justin Thomas in May, the 33-year-old son-in-law of ice hockey legend Wayne Gretzky bounced back with a PGA Tour win in Memphis to reclaim the top ranking. Even after a disappointing third place finish in the US Open—where he led by four shots through 36 holes only for his putting touch to desert him at the weekend—Johnson, a man figuring to take a leading Ryder Cup role, was promptly installed by Westgate Las Vegas SuperBook as the early 12-1 betting favorite to win the British Open.

US Open winner Brooks Koepka, a good friend of Johnson, sounded like someone who would take that bet. "He's going to win another (major)," Koepka said. "In my mind, he's probably one of the most talented guys to ever play the game. And the attitude, the work ethic, everything that he brings to it—he will, when he's done, go down as one of the best of all time." Johnson joined the US PGA Tour in 2008 and has won at least once in each of his 11 seasons, capturing January's Tournament of Champions in Hawaii before collecting his 18th US PGA title at Memphis.

Johnson matched Tiger Woods for the most tour wins since 2008. "It's very difficult to win out here. The talent level of the guys on tour is very high and it's hard to get it done," Johnson said. "So to win 11 consecutive years is something I'm really proud of and I want to continue that streak as long as I can." The only longer US PGA season win streaks belong to 18-time major winner Jack Nicklaus at 17 and 14-time major champion Woods at 14. Johnson nearly captured his first major title at the 2010 PGA Championship, with a one-shot lead entering the final hole. He appeared to have made bogey after landing in a sandy nature area but was issued a two-stroke penalty after it was deemed he had grounded his club in a bunker, dropping to fifth place.—AFP

Langer hopes Australia will be better for 'brutal' England loss

NOTTINGHAM: Australia coach Justin Langer hopes his side will be better for a "brutal" and record-breaking defeat by England in the third one-day international in Nottingham on Tuesday that was "nothing like" anything he had ever seen before. England piled up 481 for six, the highest ever total in men's ODI history, following hundreds by Alex Hales (147) and Jonny Bairstow (139), with Jason Roy (82) and skipper Eoin Morgan, who made a quickfire 67, also taking part in the Trent Bridge run-spree.

In reply, world champions Australia were dismissed for just 239 as England won by 242 runs—their heaviest victory and Australia's largest defeat, in terms of runs, at this level.

Langer said Australia, now 3-0 down in the five-match contest against 2019 World Cup hosts England, "can't have had a worse day" as they suffered a 14th defeat in 16 completed ODIs. Amid a welter of depressing statistics for the tourists, England hit a staggering 21 sixes and 41 fours, while Australia paceman Andrew Tye's nine wicketless overs cost 100 runs.

'SHOCK'

Former Australia batsman Langer admitted the crushing reverse which condemned his side to their fourth straight bilateral series defeat in this format, topped even an extraordinary 2006 ODI that saw South Africa make 438 for nine in reply to Australia's 434 for four at Johannesburg's Wanderers ground. "It's a shock," said a stunned Langer. "That is literally England at its best. It's no fluke that they are No.1 in the world. I've never seen anything like that. I was in Johannesburg when Australia got 400 and South Africa then got it, but that was just brutal," he added. "Hopefully our young guys can learn from it—it doesn't get harder than that."

Australia are, however, in England without six first-choice players. Former captain Steve Smith and his deputy David Warner, two of the world's best batsmen, are serving

Ashes to kick off new World Test Championship

NEW DELHI: The Ashes between arch rivals England and Australia will kick off the mammoth new World Test Championship in July next year, according to a world governing body schedule released yesterday. The nine top-ranked sides in the world will compete in the new tournament, with each side playing six series on a home-and-away basis against mutually selected opponents in a two-year cycle.

The five-Test ashes will kick off the first championship in July next year, with the top two teams to square off in a June 2021 final. Other Test series in the programme include the West Indies' three-Test tour of



LONDON: Australia's coach Justin Langer (C) takes part in a practice session at the Oval cricket ground in London. — AFP

year-long bans for their roles in March's ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town—which also led to then coach Darren Lehmann's resignation and his subsequent replacement by Langer. In addition, the Ashes-winning fast-bowling trio of Mitchell Starc, Pat Cummins and Josh Hazlewood are all injured, as is all-rounder Mitchell Marsh. The upshot is that Langer has still to enjoy an international win as Australia coach. "I've known what the task is before this game, it's to build a team and to get better," said Langer, once a mentor to former England captain-turned-administrator Andrew Strauss when they both played for Middlesex. "I've got massive respect for England and the way they are playing their cricket," added the 47-year-old West Australian, saying the top three of Roy, Bairstow and Hales reminded him of the celebrated trio of Adam Gilchrist, Matthew Hayden and Ricky Ponting who all played key roles in Australia's 2003 and 2007 World Cup wins. "Their top three are brutal," said Langer. "The way they are playing is reminiscent

of how we used to play in our day with Gilly, Matthew Hayden and Ricky Ponting at the top."

'DAD NOT HEADMASTER'

But Langer was adamant Australia should not have been bowled out with 13 overs left in their innings on the "best batting track in the world" on Tuesday. "We've got to bat against the top and against spin," he said. "For us to get bowled out in the 37th over on the best batting track in the world—there was huge missed opportunities there for some of our batters. Can't have had a worse day."

Meanwhile, Langer said his job was to boost the morale of all his side ahead of Thursday's fourth ODI at Chester-le-Street, the headquarters of northeast county side Durham. "I have to look after them all. These are the days when you are like a dad not a headmaster. We'll look after them. It was a tough day but we'll keep chipping away at it tomorrow." — AFP

India and New Zealand hosting Sri Lanka, both in July, while the last league game will be in April 2021 with the West Indies visiting Sri Lanka. Meanwhile Pakistan, who start their Test championship journey in October next year in Sri Lanka, have not been given a series against India amid growing political tensions between the two countries.

South Africa will kickstart their campaign in India in October 2019. The ICC gave its nod to the Test championship last year as part of measures to boost the flagging fortunes of the traditional five-day format beloved of purists but with often lacklustre spectator and television viewer numbers. ICC chief executive David Richardson called it a "genuine solution that gives fans around the world the chance to engage regularly with international cricket that has meaning and the possibility of a global title at the end". The new Future Tours Programme (FTP) released by the ICC features all series and tournaments of Test, ODI and Twenty20 cricket for the 2019-2023 period.

New Test entrants Ireland and Afghanistan will play

against each other in February next year and go onto play 12 five-day games each between 2019 and 2022.

Afghanistan have matches scheduled at their home base India and away against Australia, while Ireland will host New Zealand and travel to England. The 12 Test playing nations and the Netherlands will also participate in a 13-team one-day international League that will act as a qualification pathway for the 50-over 2023 World Cup.

Hosts India along with the seven highest-ranked sides in the ODI league at the end of March 2022 will directly qualify, while the bottom five sides will get a second chance to enter through qualifiers.

The structure of the men's FTP (2018-23) includes: ICC Cricket World Cup - 2019 and 2023 ICC World T20 - 2020 and 2021 World Test Championship Cycle 1 - 2019-2021 (final 2021) Cycle 2 - 2021-2023 (final 2023)

All bilateral Tests, ODIs and T20Is outside of the above competitions. — AFP



SNIPPETS



Ronaldo earns edgy Portugal 1-0 win as Morocco's hopes end

Cristiano is tournament leading scorer on four

MOSCOW: Cristiano Ronaldo powered-home a fourth-minute header to give Portugal a 1-0 World Cup victory over Morocco that took them top of Group B yesterday and meant the unlucky North African side become the first to be eliminated from the tournament.

Ronaldo's fourth goal of Russia 2018, following his hat-trick in the 3-3 draw with Spain, took the European champions to four points. Iran have three points and Spain one ahead of their meeting later yesterday.

Morocco, who had a real go at the Luzhniki Stadium but failed to convert their chances, are pointless having also lost 1-0 to Iran and cannot progress to the second round. Portugal struggled to impose themselves and ended up defending for long spells, leaving coach Fernando Santos unimpressed. "We have to look at this, we lost control of the game," he said.

"We misplaced a lot of passes, we lost confidence... it was inexplicable. If in a match against players like they have, if you don't have the ball, they wear you down and you get into trouble."

Despite their battling display, Morocco will rue the unforgivable defending that made all their subsequent good work irrelevant. They qualified for the finals without conceding a goal in six matches yet somehow opted against marking the most dangerous attacker at the tournament in the six yard box when Joao Moutinho swung in a cross from a short corner and Ronaldo duly buried the header.

It was his 85th international goal, taking him beyond Hungarian Ferenc Puskas's European record, with only Iran's Ali Daei ahead of him on 109. Morocco, in their first finals appearance for 20 years, regrouped well and showed some real positivity in attack with Hakim Ziyech and Nordin Amrabat seeing plenty of the ball and Amrabat furious at not being awarded a penalty after wrestling with Raphael Guerreiro.



MOSCOW: Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) challenges Morocco's defender Mehdi Benatia (B) and Morocco's midfielder Mehdi Carcela (R) during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group B football match between Portugal and Morocco at the Luzhniki Stadium in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

The midfielder had begun the game with head protection after being seemingly knocked unconscious against Iran five days ago in a sight that will have left medical professionals fuming about football's feeble concussion protocols.

When they managed to stop appealing and resumed play, Morocco looked dangerous and were the dominant side in the second half. Portugal goalkeeper Rui Patrício made a fantastic diving low save to touch clear Younes Belhanda's

sharp header but Medhi Benatia's blazed effort over the bar was more typical of their finishing from half-a-dozen reasonable chances.

"I'm not disappointed about the performance, I'm happy with it and very proud of my players," emotional Morocco coach Herve Renard told reporters. "As in the first game, we had a lot of chances and I won't criticise anyone." Portugal complete their first-round against Iran while Morocco face Spain, both on June 25. — Reuters

Kosovo will be cheering for Swiss against Serbia

PRISTINA: Kosovo's team is taking no part in the World Cup but emotions are running high ahead of Serbia's match between Switzerland, whose squad includes three players from Kosovo. Midfielders Valon Behrami of Italian club Udinese, Arsenal's Granit Xhaka and Xherdan Shaqiri of Stoke City were all born in Kosovo and all three played in Switzerland's surprise 1-1 draw against Brazil.

Along with Bologna's Blerim Dzemali, born in neighbouring Macedonia, Albanian-speaking players made more than a third of the starting line-up against Brazil. The children of immigrants to Switzerland, they have not commented on Friday's match in Kaliningrad which could be decisive for qualification from their group.

Only Shaqiri commented, when the groups were drawn in December, saying: "I'm, I like this draw." However, relatives of the players make no secret of the symbolic importance of the match when seen from Kosovo's capital Pristina.

For Valon Behrami's uncle Qaush, his nephew will have a "special motivation for victory" on Friday, because his parents suffered while Kosovo was Serbia's province. "They both lost their jobs and father was persecuted," Qaush Behrami said. Agon Xhaka, a 22-year-old football player, said the father of his cousin Granit was in a prison during the regime of late Serbian strongman Slobodan Milosevic and that the "family emigrated after he was released."

SWISS REFUGE

Like dozens of thousands of others, during the 1998-1999 war between Kosovo ethnic Albanian pro-independence guerrilla and Serbian forces, the families of Behrami, Xhaka and Shaqiri took refuge in Switzerland.

There are no official figures, but an estimated 200,000 Kosovo Albanians live in Switzerland, a striking number when compared with Kosovo's 1.8 million inhabitants. Along with the community living in Germany, they make up one of the main sources of income for Kosovo, sending around 175 million Swiss francs (152 million euros, \$176 million) back every year.

This emigration dates back to before the Kosovo war. Kosovo Prime Minister Ramush Haradinaj also lived in Switzerland, working as a bouncer and karate instructor before returning to Kosovo and becoming one of the pro-independence guerrilla leaders.

The last of the conflicts that accompanied the collapse of Yugoslavia claimed some 13,500 lives. More than 10,000 of the victims were Kosovo Albanians. The war ended when NATO bombing forced Milosevic to withdraw his troops. Less than a decade later Kosovo declared independence in 2008. Belgrade still refuses to recognise the declaration and is supported by its traditional ally Russia. — AFP



Xherdan Shaqiri

Blatter attends Moscow match: 'It's my WCup'

MOSCOW: Former FIFA president Sepp Blatter attended a World Cup match in Moscow yesterday, saying the tournament in Russia felt like "my World Cup", but soccer's world governing body said his presence did not directly violate his ban from football activities.

Blatter, who led FIFA for 17 years, is serving a six-year ban from "all football activities" for unethical conduct after FIFA was rocked by a global corruption scandal in 2015. His appearance at the World Cup in Russia is potentially embarrassing for FIFA and its new head, Gianni Infantino, who has promised to draw a line under FIFA's corruption problems and clean up the organisation.

TASS news agency quoted Alexei Sorokin, head of the Russia-2018 organising committee, as saying he had seen Infantino and Blatter at Moscow's Luzhniki stadium watching Portugal's 1-0 win over Morocco. "Today I saw Infantino and Blatter at the stadium, it's true," TASS quoted Sorokin as saying.

In an interview with Britain's Channel 4 News, Blatter said he had been invited to the World Cup by the Russian organising committee and FIFA should respect his right to be at the tournament. "I am not in football activities. I am a personal guest here today," he said. "It should not be an embarrassment to FIFA. If FIFA would have a little bit of respect, knowing that I have an official invitation to come here." — Reuters

Hazard warning fires hungry Lukaku up for glory

MOSCOW: It may have needed a half-time rocket from captain Eden Hazard to jolt Romelu Lukaku into action in Belgium's World Cup opener but coach Roberto Martinez believes the striker has the hunger to fulfil his ambition of global domination.

The Chelsea playmaker gave Lukaku a piece of his mind in Sochi on Monday after Belgium had huffed and puffed but failed to blow Panama's modest defensive fortress down before the interval. "At half-time, I told him we needed him. He'd been hiding out a bit up front," Hazard told reporters. "It's not easy playing with a man missing. But once he got in there, involved in the game, like magic, he scored two. 'I hope he understands that now,'" Hazard added after Belgium opened their Group G campaign with a 3-0 win.

That public dressing down fuelled talk of discord in the camp outside Moscow, where Martinez gave his players Wednesday off following their exertions on the humid Black Sea coast before they face Tunisia on Sunday and England next Thursday. Images of defender Jan Vertonghen screaming at a lack of cover from Yannick Carrasco before the winger was withdrawn, have also sounded alarm bells about a return of the infighting that has dogged the Red Devils at previous big tournaments.

Martinez played down rumours of disharmony and said he had faith in Lukaku delivering not just on his promise of becoming the best striker in the world but also for a team anxious to go further than Belgium's previous best of semi-finals in 1986.

"My team can share views," the Spaniard told reporters on Tuesday. "Any sort of negative word between the players... is not a type of attitude that we have. 'Of course, we want to demand from each other, and that's natural, what happens in a dressing room.'" Vertonghen, the side's most capped player, also denied talk of a rift, calling it the best Belgian team he has known: "We're a complete team," the Tottenham Hotspur defender said. "There's always going to be stress, but I think we coped well."

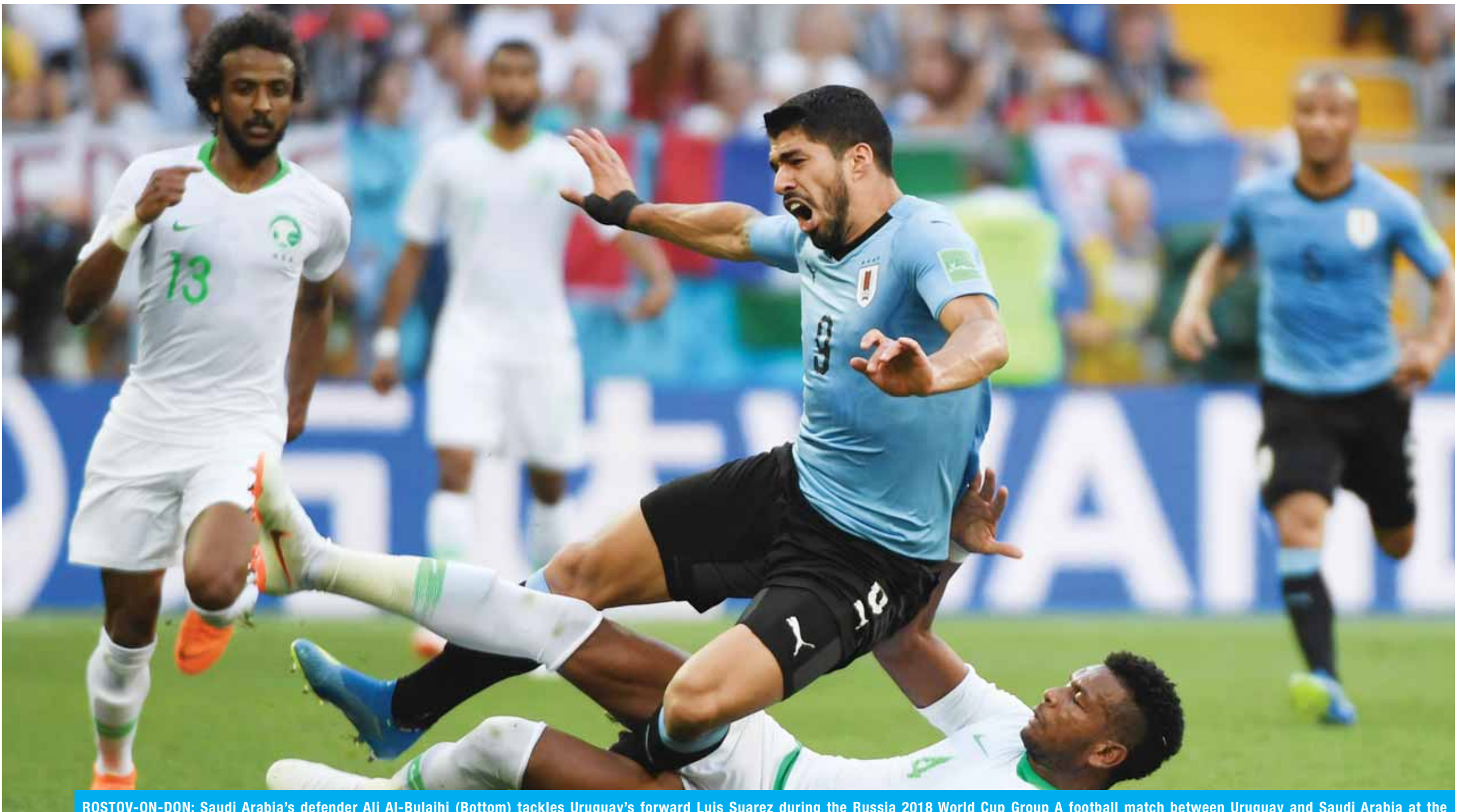
Lukaku could get better yet, Martinez said: "The drive is what interests me in a young player, why does he play football? And Romelu Lukaku plays football to be the best in his position. 'He can be as good as he wants to be.'" Lukaku himself, in an interview with 'The Players' Tribune magazine, spoke of the childhood poverty and smears against his Congolese heritage as motivation for his ambition.

"I wanted to be the best footballer in Belgian history," he said. "Not good. Not great. The best. 'I played with so much anger, because of a lot of things... because of the rats running around in our apartment... because of how the other parents used to look at me. 'I was on a mission.'" — Reuters

25 History beckons for Russia as Cherchesov finds winning formula

26 Tampa Bay Rays win, end Houston Astros' 12-game winning streak

27 Ronaldo earns edgy Portugal 1-0 win as Morocco's hopes end



ROSTOV-ON-DON: Saudi Arabia's defender Ali Al-Bulaihi (Bottom) tackles Uruguay's forward Luis Suarez during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group A football match between Uruguay and Saudi Arabia at the Rostov Arena in Rostov-On-Don yesterday. — AFP

Suarez sends Uruguay into last 16

Russia qualify for next stage, Egypt and Saudi eliminated

ROSTOV-ON-DON: Uruguay booked their place in the World Cup knockout stage along with Russia yesterday, as Luis Suarez scored the winner on his 100th international appearance in a 1-0 victory over Saudi Arabia in Rostov-on-Don.

The South Americans take on the hosts in their final Group A match on June 25 with top spot on the line, while Egypt and Saudi Arabia have been eliminated after both suffered back-to-back defeats.

The 31-year-old Suarez, whose previous two World Cups both ended in bans after his infamous 2010 handball against Ghana and bite on Italy's Giorgio Chiellini four years later, took advantage of a goalkeeping error by Mohammed Al-Owais to put Uruguay ahead midway through the first half.

Oscar Tabarez's side missed plenty of opportunities to add further goals, but a toothless Saudi outfit never seriously looked like snatching a point.

Uruguay, semi-finalists eight years ago in South Africa, have now reached the knockout stage for the third straight time, while Saudi Arabia will try again in their search for a first World Cup win since 1994 in their final game against Mohamed Salah's Egypt.

Suarez made a bright start, looking to make amends for his poor performance in the opening 1-0 win against Egypt, firing a left-footed volley from Cristian Rodriguez's knockdown which was blocked by Ali Al-Bulaihi.

The Saudis managed to have plenty of early possession, although without looking overly threatening, only

to gift Uruguay a 23rd-minute lead. Al-Owais-winning only his second cap after replacing Abdullah Al-Muaiouf in goal-completely missed a floated Carlos Sanchez corner and Suarez tapped in his 52nd international goal unmarked at the back post.

That strike was Suarez's sixth World Cup goal and made him the first Uruguayan to score in three separate finals. Juan Antonio Pizzi's Saudi Arabia continued to look far more assured on the ball than they did in the 5-0 drubbing by Russia on the opening day of the tournament, with Hatan Bahbri firing a wild volley over shortly after seeing a long-range effort tipped away by Fernando Muslera.

Uruguay began the second period with greater purpose, and Suarez came close to a second when Al-

Owais palmed clear his low free-kick. The three points and a last-16 spot should have been wrapped up just after the hour mark, but Sanchez headed over when unmarked at the back post from a wonderful Edinson Cavani cross. The South Americans continued to be wasteful in front of goal, as Martin Caceres sent a header flying off target from the 33-year-old Sanchez's free-kick.

Paris Saint-Germain striker Cavani came close to emulating Suarez by scoring in a third World Cup, but his low shot was smothered by the onrushing Al-Owais.

Uruguay showed all their know-how and experience, though, as Atletico Madrid defensive pair Jose Gimenez and Diego Godin helped see out the closing moments with ease. — AFP

Diego Costa on target as Spain beat Iran 1-0

KAZAN ARENA: A lucky Diego Costa goal handed World Cup hopefuls Spain their first win of the World Cup although dogged Iran came close to causing a major upset yesterday. The victory in Kazan puts the 2010 winners on course for the last 16.

Costa, who scored twice in a 3-3 opening draw with Portugal in Sochi, courted controversy early in the Group B encounter when he stepped on the toes of Iran 'keeper Ali Beiranvand as he waited to kick the ball out.

His gesture went unpunished, and the Atletico Madrid striker required another stroke of luck on 54 minutes when his shot came off Ramin Rezaeian to beat Beiranvand after he had been sent through by Andres Iniesta. The entire Iranian bench poured onto the pitch when Saeid Ezatolahi fired an equaliser for the Lions of Persia just before the hour. But the thousands of Iranian supporters that filled the stadium with the sound of vuvuzelas throughout were left disappointed when it was ruled out for offside.

Spain coach Fernando Hierro welcomed Real Madrid's Dani Carvajal back into the starting line-up

following his recovery from a hamstring injury suffered in the Champions League final win over Liverpool.

With Lucas Vazquez replacing Atletico Madrid midfielder Koke, it gave La Roja a distinctively Real Madrid feel. By the end of a pulsating opening half in which Iran's defence thwarted the few real chances La Roja were able to create, Hierro's men left the pitch looking rather red-faced.

Costa got so frustrated with Iran's defensive tactics that he approached Beiranvand and provocatively stepped on his toes, leaving the 'keeper in visible pain. It went unpunished by Uruguayan referee Cunha, who had awarded France a historic first VAR-assisted penalty that saw Antoine Griezmann score Les Bleus' opener in a 2-1 win over Australia.

Spain resumed in more positive fashion after the break, Beiranvand forced to produce heroics twice in the space of four minutes. But Iran refused to buckle, Carlos Queiroz's men coming close in the final minutes when midfielder Mehdi Taremi headed just over.

Shortly after the restart an Isco corner was flicked on by Costa to Gerard Pique but his effort was cleared off the line. Sergio Busquets' drive from 20 yards was then parried by Beiranvand, who palmed the rebound away before Lucas Vazquez could pounce.

Some great vision from Iniesta, and a slice of luck, however broke Iranian hearts when Costa spun and latched on to the ball before seeing his shot rebound off Ramin Rezaeian and into the net. Spain, however, were



KAZAN: Spain's defender Sergio Ramos (3rd-R) heads the ball during the Russia 2018 World Cup Group B football match between Iran and Spain at the Kazan Arena in Kazan yesterday. — AFP

still flattering to deceive. On a rare counter goalkeeper David De Gea was left irate when Taremi rose to head a metre wide. Moments later, the stadium erupted when Ezatolahi fired through a packed Spain area to beat De Gea but the assistant referee's flag was up.

In the final quarter hour Iran battled for a late equaliser, but after Vahid Amiri showed class to nutmeg Pique deep on the left and fire over an inviting cross, Taremi's thundering header flew just over the bar as a relieved De Gea looked on. — AFP