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Kuwait woos foreign investment, details progress on Vision 2035

Plan to develop islands holds promise • Boeing to open Kuwait office



KUWAIT: HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah is seen with ministers and senior officials during a Kuwait Investment Forum session at the Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attend the second Kuwait Investment Forum at Al-Tahrir Hall in Bayan Palace yesterday. — KUNA

By Faten Omar and Agencies

KUWAIT: Kuwait is seeking billions of dollars in foreign direct investment to boost the economy and reduce dependency on oil revenues during the second Kuwait Investment Forum, which opened yesterday under the patronage and attendance of HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak invited foreign investors to invest in Kuwait, noting that Kuwait has taken the necessary measures to facilitate business by reducing customs fees and taxes, simplifying banking and financial transactions as well as creating the most suitable atmosphere for foreign investors to do business.

"Kuwait is eager to continue its policies to bring in more investments. Kuwait has set the course to pursue

economic diversity through various steps including encouraging small and medium enterprises and microbusinesses as well as other ventures," Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) Chairman Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem told the forum. Kuwait Direct Investment Public Authority (KDIPA) Director General Sheikh Meshal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah commended the Kuwaiti leadership for its efforts to diversify the economy, indicating that this new policy is not only a political necessity but also part of efforts for economic reform.

First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said preliminary studies indicate that a national plan to develop Kuwaiti islands could help provide more than 200,000

jobs and generate annual revenue of more than \$35 billion. He cited an ongoing feasibility study over a plan to merge the islands project with Kuwait's Silk City enterprise, saying the proposition was highly likely at this point.

Meanwhile, Boeing announced yesterday a plan to open a permanent office in Kuwait this year. Recent studies by the giant US aircraft manufacturer have shown that by 2035, Kuwait needs 36,000 pilots and around 100,000 crewmembers, Timothy Keating, Executive Vice President of Government Operations for Boeing, said in his speech at KIF. Omar Al-Ghanem, CEO of Alghanim Industries and Chairman of Gulf Bank, said Kuwait has several factors to attract capital, notably

the country's geographic location and its new and enhanced infrastructure.

Later yesterday, various ministers spoke about the outlook of Kuwait's "Vision 2035: New Kuwait" and shed light on the progress to date on each of the program's seven pillars. Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Hind Al-Sabeeh detailed various plans that are in the works, including an anti-corruption project that is part of a national anti-corruption strategy, an integrated strategic plan for e-government and a study on the fourth structural plan of Kuwait. Sabeeh added a human capital project will provide innovative curricula and new jobs, elderly care units will be set up in Hawally and Ishbiya, and general design specifications for buildings will be developed to facilitate the lives of people with disabilities.

SEE PAGE 3

Govt withdraws KD 25bn debt bill; MP slams anti-expat drive

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told the National Assembly yesterday that the government has withdrawn a draft law to allow it to borrow up to KD 25 billion. Ghanem gave no reasons for the government action or whether it plans to submit a new draft law in the future. Under Kuwaiti law, the government cannot make any domestic or foreign borrowing without a law passed by the National Assembly. The existing law has expired and the government must depend on new legislation to borrow in order to finance a budget deficit due to low oil prices.

The announcement came during an Assembly session that was filled for most of the time with strong exchanges between several lawmakers, who accused each other of corruption or being agents of influential

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KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem and MP Riyadh Al-Adasani share a light moment with a lawmaker at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Trump praises military sales in talks with MBS

WASHINGTON: Saudi Arabia's crown prince received an effusive welcome at the White House yesterday from US President Donald Trump, who hailed a "great friendship" with the kingdom and praised US defense sales to Saudi Arabia as a boost to American jobs. In Oval Office talks, Trump and Prince Mohammed bin Salman discussed an agreement last year for \$200 billion worth of Saudi investments with the United States, including large purchases of US military equipment. Trump said the military sales contributed to the creation of 40,000 American jobs.

The talks were part of the first visit by the prince to the United States since he became the heir apparent last June to succeed King Salman. Trump produced charts to show the depth of Saudi purchases of US military hardware, ranging from ships to missile defense to planes and fighting vehicles. "The relationship now is probably as good as it's really ever been and I think will probably only get better. Tremendous investments made in our country and that means jobs for our workers," Trump told reporters during a picture-taking session with the crown prince.

As they talked, US senators debated a resolution seeking an end to US support for Saudi Arabia's campaign in Yemen's civil war. Some members of Congress have been critical of the Saudi campaign, particularly the humanitarian situation and

Continued on Page 11



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump holds a defense sales chart during a meeting with Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman in the Oval Office of the White House yesterday. — AFP

India confirms deaths of 39 workers in Iraq

NEW DELHI: The bodies of 39 Indian construction workers kidnapped in Iraq in 2014 by the Islamic State group have been found in a mass grave, India's foreign minister said yesterday. Sushma Swaraj told the upper house of parliament the workers had been murdered by IS. Their bodies had been found in the grave in the village of Badush northwest of the city of Mosul and taken to a local organization for DNA testing. "Yesterday they told us that 38 samples had matched. The 39th had a partial match as he didn't have any immediate family," said Swaraj.

The workers were abducted in June

2014 when IS militants overran large swathes of territory in Iraq and captured Mosul. The government had for years insisted they were believed still alive and the latest announcement sparked criticism from some relatives of the dead. The victims were mostly from poor families in India's northern state of Punjab and had been working for a construction company in Mosul when they were rounded up.

"We got to know that these people were moved from Mosul to Badush by their captors," Swaraj said. When India's junior foreign minister Vijay Kumar Singh and Iraqi government officials went to Badush, someone told them to inspect a mound in the village, the minister added. "They said that they had buried many people there (in a mass grave). We reached there and requested Iraqi authorities to use a deep penetration radar, which detected many bodies under the surface," she told parliament.

Continued on Page 11



AMRITSAR: Seema (left), her sons Karan and Arjun and her mother-in-law Jeeto react in the village of Chawinda Devi yesterday following confirmation that her husband Sonu had been killed in Iraq. — AFP

Kuwait 9th among Arab cities in Quality of Living index

Recommendation to allow expats to own properties

By A Saleh i

KUWAIT: The 2018 Quality of Living index issued by Mercer Consultancies showed that Kuwait City kept its 9th rank amongst Arab cities and is ranked 126th worldwide, while Riyadh stood 165th worldwide and Jeddah 168th. The survey showed that Dubai and Abu Dhabi topped all Arab cities, followed by Muscat, Doha and Tunis. In ranking quality of life in 231 cities, Mercer's 20th Quality of Living Ranking survey is based on various ele-

ments such as crime rates, healthcare, education, public services, recreation, housing and personal freedom.

According to the survey, Baghdad, Khartoum, Sanaa and Damascus were ranked as the worst Arab cities in terms of quality of life, coming 231st, 229th, 227th and 225th respectively. The survey also showed that Vienna remained the highest ranked city for the ninth year, followed by Zurich, Oakland, Munich, Vancouver, Dusseldorf, Frankfurt, Geneva, Copenhagen and Basel.

Own properties

Official sources said a report prepared by the Cabinet's economic affairs committee includes a proposal to allow expats own their own properties in Kuwait. The sources added that the committee approved the proposal on grounds that it would activate the real estate market, support a vital national economy resource, provide the real estate market with abundant capital and increase demand for private residence in investment areas. The committee's report also stressed that allowing expats own

property would not be made at the expense of citizens and that the ministry of state for housing affairs will continue building new cities to provide housing to them.

6.5 Ring Road

Head of the public authority for roads and land transport Ahmed Al-Hessan threatened to withdraw the 6.5 Ring Road from the contractor because the project's delay exceeded 20 percent of its original schedule. Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting with the project's executive panel which was attended by both the project contractor and consultant to review accomplishment rates, Hessan said there was a 14 percent difference in the expected accomplishment rate of 29 percent. He added that work is currently in progress to bridge the gap so that the contractor can finish the work according to the agreed upon specifications and schedule. "The contractor will have to provide the needed labor and equipment to reduce the time needed," he underlined. Hessan explained that the project is planned to be executed within three years and that studies are currently in progress to determine the obstacles causing the delay. He also described the contractor's performance as 'weak'.

Russia doesn't possess means to poison Skripals: Ambassador

KUWAIT: Ambassador of Russia to Kuwait Alexey Solomatin released the following statement to comment on the ongoing diplomatic row between his country and the United Kingdom:

During the past few days we have witnessed the rise of a new anti-Russian campaign orchestrated this time by the British authorities under the name of "the Skripals case". The authors of this action went far beyond the norms of standard diplomatic protocol and directly, without any proofs, have accused the President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin of organizing the use of poisonous gas in the territory of the Great Britain.

We consider it really necessary to provide the Kuwaiti audience with the real picture and go a bit deep into details of what's actually happening and draw some conclusions.

1. Russia has in an absolute groundless manner and without adducing any proof been accused of using poisonous gas in the territory of the Great Britain and infringing its obligations under the Chemical Weapons Convention. In this regard, it must be stressed, that Russia completely destroyed its chemical weapons in a transparent manner under the control of international observers. At a closing ceremony of the last chemical facility in 2017, three years ahead of a target date, there were representatives of a variety of foreign countries, including the Great Britain. The fact of full destruction of the Russian chemical weapon arsenal was officially acknowledged by the relevant international structure - the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). This fact has been duly recognized by the international community and could not be subject to any doubt.

2. Russia has repeatedly confirmed its readiness to any open and constructive cooperation with regard to investigation of "the Skripals case" both in a bilateral format, and within the framework of the OPCW. We are interested in running an unbiased investigation of this issue in full compliance with the international law. It is our official and public position declared in the UN Security Council and delivered to the British side.

Unfortunately, we do not see the similar approach and interest from London. There is an impression, that the British authorities lack any proofs and avoid holding the investigation with the participation of Russian experts. We have not received any official requests from London to cooperate in investigating this case. Russian proposals to hold consultations in the framework of the Chemical Weapons Convention have in fact been refused. In response to the note from the Russian Embassy in London requesting to grant us an access to the files of the case including the surveillance cameras footage, witnesses reports and the samples we have as a matter of fact received denial.

At the same time, the concerned British authorities deny to allow the Russian side access to Yulia Skripal, who is the Russian citizen, in order to provide her with necessary assistance including the consular one.

3. Reaction of the countries that support the British position is also exponential. British NATO partners without any doubts and delay have supported the allegations originated from London and declared their full trust to the British opinion. What for to spend time for investigation and wait for its results? As a whole we consider, that it is a question of an advanced planned propaganda and premeditated action of the Western countries against Russia.

Let us sum up. The Russian Federation did not violate the Chemical Weapons Convention, all our chemical weapons were destroyed ahead of schedule in 2017. Russia is not and cannot be involved in poisoning the Skripals. We simply do not possess the means for committing this crime. Search for those who are keen to spreading the worldwide anti-Russian hysteria especially on the eve of presidential elections in Russia and cast a shadow on our recent successes in both domestic social and economic development and international achievements. We officially reaffirm that Russia is ready to take part in any open and constructive investigation and supports bringing to account those guilty.

In the conclusion I would like to touch on an important issue and in response to a number of inquiries we've received from the British citizens during the past few days to confirm that there are no artificial restrictions applied on them or any other foreign individuals willing to visit Russia with tourist purposes including the World Cup 2018. The doors of Russia are open. Please, visit and enjoy the rich Russian culture and warm hospitality of Russian people.

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Local

Amir attends, patronizes Kuwait Investment Forum 2018

Islands' development to spark employment boom: Sheikh Nasser



KUWAIT: (From left) Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Executive Vice President of Government Operations of the Boeing Company US Timothy Keating and Omar Al-Ghanem; CEO of Al-Ghanem Industries and Chairman of Gulf Bank attend the first session of the Kuwait Investment Forum yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and Amiri Diwan



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah speaks during the opening ceremony.



Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Chairman Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem delivers a speech.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended and patronized yesterday the second Kuwait Investment Forum, which was held at Al-Tahrir Hall in Bayan Palace. His Highness the Amir was received upon his arrival by Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Khaled Al-Roudhan as well as Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Public Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, and senior state officials were present at the opening of the forum. In his speech at the event, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak said that the Kuwait Investment Forum, which held its first event two years ago, returns with the same message of inviting investors to do business in Kuwait. The attention that His Highness the Amir is allocating to the event is an indication that Kuwait's supreme authority was giving the event his utmost consideration, said

that the current atmosphere in the country should ease the concerns of foreign investors. Recent regional and global economic indicators showed that Kuwait was heading in the right direction concerning business fairness and trust, said Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak. In the conclusion of his speech, the Prime Minister took the chance to welcome the forum's participants and lauded the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry (KCCI) and the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) for their cooperation in the current event.

Measuring trust

Delivering his speech to the forum, Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry's (KCCI) Chairman Ali Thunayan Al-Ghanem thanked His Highness the Amir for his generous patronage and attendance of the forum which groups together local and foreign investors. Ghanem said that the KCCI and KDIPA had

Boeing to open office in Kuwait

set their minds on making the second forum as successful as it was in its first incarnation in 2016. He indicated that foreign investors measure their trust of an economic entity or an economy of any given country through the local and national business personnel's level of satisfaction.

Several countries of various stature and economic capabilities have succeeded in their quest to attract foreign investors and similarly, Kuwait is eager to continue its policies to bring in more investments, said Ghanem. Kuwait has set course to pursue economic diversity through various steps, which included the encouragement of small to medium size enterprises, microbusiness, as well as other ventures, said Ghanem who indicated that the bigger picture in the form of grand development plans should also be with the concern of Kuwaiti authority. Minor and major development plans should go together if any nation seeks progression, he affirmed, adding that the funding of those plans would be through local and foreign investors. He indicated that Kuwait's various contributions to local and regional development would create a sort of leeway for partnership and mutual business ventures with most world countries.

The official cited the recently held Kuwait International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq (KICRI) and other similar events as an indication that Kuwait was keen on the welfare of other countries. The event also displayed Kuwait's willingness to create business opportunities with various countries and entities around the globe. The current forum will be another milestone for local and foreign investors and Kuwait is keen on making it a success, said Ghanem.

Diversifying resources

In similar fashion, KDIPA's Director General Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah commended the Kuwaiti leadership for its efforts to diversify economic resources of the country. He indicated that this new policy was not only a political necessity but also a demand within efforts for economic reforms.

The Kuwait Investment Forum will hopefully tackle various issues connected with the country's economic aspiration, affirmed Sheikh Meshaal who added that since KDIPA's inception around \$2.5 billion in foreign investments was attracted while some 1,000 job opportunities were created for Kuwaitis. Continuing on this road will have a positive impact on Kuwaiti economy and it would also create more business opportunities for numerous partners around the globe, affirmed the KDIPA Director General. The current forum will be an opportunity for the world to be acquainted with Kuwait's current political, economic, and financial developments, said the official who hoped that foreign investors would seek cooperation with Kuwait. After the speeches, a documentary was screened to the guests and participants, displaying the various business opportunities in Kuwait.

Islands' development

Preliminary studies indicate that a national plan to develop Kuwaiti islands could help provide more than 200,000 jobs and generate an annual revenue of more than \$35 billion, a senior Kuwaiti official said. In his speech during the

forum, First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said the aforementioned plan ensures that the country is well protected.

He explained that prosperity in the islands would inevitably help carve out a densely populated region in the north, which makes security and protection all the more necessary. On the notion behind the project, he pointed out that the eastern Kuwaiti islands represent a fledgling area of investment that could be a launchpad for greater cooperation with neighboring countries.

Meanwhile, given the magnitude of the project, the Kuwaiti defense minister revealed that local and global firms have collectively taken up an endeavor that seeks to lure investment into an area with untapped potential. He cited an ongoing feasibility study over a plan to merge the islands project with Kuwait's Silk Road enterprise, saying the proposition was highly likely at this point. "Everybody knows the true value of northern Kuwait," the minister said, adding that his country has lived through two vast human civilizations that have contributed immensely to the world. On strategies to fund the slew of

development projects the country has in store, he said the issue is "currently being examined in a way that would not inhibit the rights of future generations."

Permanent office

Also during the session, Boeing Company announced a plan to open a permanent office in Kuwait this year. Recent studies by the giant US aircraft manufacturer have shown that until 2035; Kuwait needs 36,000 pilots and around 100,000 aircrewmen, in addition to the GCC member-state's ambitious plans to enhance its human cadres, Timothy Keating, Executive Vice President of Government Operations for Boeing, said in his speech at the first session of the forum.

Kuwait's recent measures of facilitations and reformations would inspire international companies, including Boeing, to visit the country, Keating said, noting that training courses for pilots and cadres are to be organized in cooperation with Kuwaiti aviation bodies.

Omar Al-Ghanem, CEO of Al-Ghanem Industries and Chairman of Gulf Bank, said Kuwait has several factors and reasons eligible to attract capitals to invest in it,



KDIPA's Director General Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah addresses the audience.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak. This very support from His Highness the Amir made the first event a success and hopefully this would continue with the currently held forum, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak added.

Private sector

Giving provisions to the private sector and allowing it to use its fullest potential will secure the future of the State of Kuwait, affirmed the Prime Minister who added that though direct foreign investments are relatively new to Kuwait, the country would seek all ventures to benefit both its people and others from around the globe. He indicated that Kuwait policies towards foreign investments are almost as the ones applied on their local counterparts, stressing that the GCC country has reached a level of maturity within the business domain that will guarantee profits for all. Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak indicated that Kuwait dealt with the drop in oil prices with efforts to diversify its economic resources and output, a step that will eventually stabilize the budget and usher an age where Kuwait's aspirations are realized. The Kuwait Investment Forum has invited people with vast experiences in economy, finance, and investment, said Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, adding that Kuwait had the right political, social, and economic status quos that would enable it to thrive and benefit others.

Foreign investment is not only a means to attract funds; it has many other perks that helps develop countries' economies, infrastructures, and human resources. He indicated that to attract foreign investments, Kuwait took the necessary measures to facilitate business via decreasing customs fees and taxes, simplifying banking and financial transactions, as well as creating the most suitable atmosphere for foreign investors to do business.

Fairness and trust are the main current goals that Kuwait is trying to continue to develop for both foreign and national investors, said the Prime Minister who indi-

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Local

Zain opens the doors of Smart Homes at Avenues

Special event showcased digital portfolio of solutions under Zain Life brand

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, held a special event at the Avenues mall to showcase the digital portfolio of services and solutions under its recently launched Zain Life brand. The flexible solutions showcased covered the areas of Smart Homes and Digital Entertainment.

Through its dedicated booth, Zain showcased to the public the digital portfolio of flexible services and solutions for Smart Homes via a number of security devices designed to revolutionize home security. The event also showcased digital entertainment solutions through the PlayStation VR device for virtual reality gaming.

The booth, which witnessed positive feedback from visiting crowds, was designed as a miniature living room equipped with Zain Life's smart home solutions. The booth included a children's corner with many fun activities held like face painting and drawing sessions, and was monitored by Zain's smart camera, where parents were able to monitor their children from the living room and live the smart home experience.

The Zain Life brand offers a smart home security kit, which provides a unique home safety experience through several surveillance solutions that monitor the home and notify the user as soon as any unusual activity inside the home is identified. These solutions include a smart camera, motion sensor, door/window sensors, and smart smoke detector, which all can be controlled and managed through a single smartphone app.

The smart camera notifies the user immediately once any motion is sensed or any sound is made inside the house, and the user will receive an instant notification on their smartphone via the integrated app wherever they

are. The camera can record video in 720p, work in HD at night, and send/receive two-way audio. Users can also watch a live feed from the camera on their smartphone at any time and place.

Zain Life's smart home security kit also includes motions sensors, which can sense any motion inside the house once a person moves in front of them, after which the user will be notified immediately on their smartphone. Customers can place the sensors at any location inside the home. The smart home security kit also includes separate door/window sensors, which can notify users once any doors or windows are opened or broken.

In addition to the smart camera and motion sensors, Zain Life's smart home solutions also features a smart smoke detector, which immediately detects smoke inside the house and triggers an alarm. The smart smoke detector is superior to traditional smoke detectors in that it immediately sends a notification to the user's smartphone once smoke is detected, which offers the user more time to respond to the incident.

At the booth's digital entertainment section, Zain showcased digital gaming via virtual reality applications provided by Sony's PlayStation VR. The company held gaming contests throughout 10 hours with winners announced every hour. An upside-down photo competition was also held with the hashtag #ZainLife and the winner was announced on Zain's social media channels.

The Smart Homes sector is one of the main elements of the digital transformation being undertaken by telecoms around the world, particularly with respect to securing homes and protecting them against theft with the use of modern technologies. Zain is working on designing new

Positive feedback from visiting crowds



plans to match these transformation processes, starting with Zain Life.

The Zain Life brand also includes the all-new Zain Smart Branch, which is considered the first self-service machine of its kind introduced by a telecom in Kuwait. The branch offers customers new service options that were previously not available through a self-service machine, and works automatically through advanced technology without the need of the presence of an employee. Equipped with a smart interface, the Smart Branch recognizes a customer's identity through the advanced face recognition feature, where the branch scans the cus-

tomers civil ID and matches their photo with their face on-the-spot.

Of the many new services offered by Zain's Smart Branch, the most notable is the SIM card replacement feature, which is the first service of its kind provided by a self-service machine. Customers can order a replacement for their lost or ineffective SIM cards and receive a new one immediately without the need of visiting a traditional branch. The Smart Branch also offers a variety of other services including recharging lines, bill payment, managing accounts, and buying devices from Zain's Online Store.

Italian navy ship 'Carlo Margottini' visits Kuwait

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: The European Multi Mission Frigate (FREM) 'Carlo Margottini' welcomed the local media aboard the ship on Monday on the last day of a four-day visit to the country. The navy ship was docked at Shuwaikh Port. Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio and Commander of Margottini Giuseppe Lai met the reporters. The navy ship departed from La Spezia on Feb 20, 2018 and went to Qatar - where it participated in the sixth edition of the Doha International Maritime Defense Exposition and Conference (DIMDEX 2018). It then went to Saudi Arabia, and from Kuwait will go the United Arab Emirates. Margottini will also visit Djibouti in April to take command of the European Union-led counter-piracy operation 'Atalanta'.

"We are very proud of this visit of the Carlo Margottini navy ship to Kuwait. This shows our friendship and our well-established military and bilateral cooperation with this country. Many Kuwaiti officers have studied in Italy and we are happy to be part of their journey,"

Scognamiglio said. The deployment of the Italian FREMM frigate - besides ensuring presence and surveillance aimed at protecting sea lines of communication of national interest - is included among the activities that the Italian navy conducts with allied and friendly nations in a framework of multinational cooperation and dialogue among countries. This activity also allows ensuring a qualified presence in a number of foreign countries, while strengthening or starting relationships with potential partners with which Italy maintains important political, diplomatic, and economic relations, in the framework of the Italian navy's institutional tasks.

The naval unit is a product of the Italian "country system", in which the crew's operational capability effectively combines with systems provided by the European and, in particular, Italian industry, notably including major Italian industrial groups such as Fincantieri, Leonardo, MBDA and Elettronica, whose partnership with the Italian navy allowed the realization of this campaign.

"Our visit here is to strengthen our brotherly ties and foster our navy cooperation with our counterparts. We also want to support the Italian shipbuilding industry. After our visit here, the ship will be deployed to Djibouti to support the European-led international campaign to prevent and protect that area from piracy," Lai said. "We met with our counterpart officials here and the governor of the capital," he added.

Carlo Margottini - commanded by Cmdr Lai - is a ship of the Italian-French FREMM program. She was launched on June 29, 2013 at Riva Trigoso (Italy) shipyard, and



KUWAIT: Ambassador of Italy to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio (center) and Commander of Margottini Giuseppe Lai (right) pose in front of the European Multi Mission Frigate (FREM) "Carlo Margottini". —Photo by Joseph Shagra

delivered to the Italian navy on Feb 27, 2014. She received her combat flag on April 22, 2016 in Reggio Calabria (Italy). Carrying the hull number F 592, according to the NATO classification, ITS Margottini is a new-generation frigate capable of being employed in various operating

contexts. She is the third Italian FREMM, and the second in ASW version. With a crew of 168 men and women - almost half as many as frigates of other classes - Margottini has a displacement of 6,700 tons and reaches a maximum speed of 27 knots.

Gulf Bank concludes induction program for new employees

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is pleased to announce that 15 new employees working in the Branch network have successfully completed their Induction Training Program. The month-long program consists of technical and theoretical training courses. It is tailored for newly recruited employees, in order for them to learn about the Bank's products and offerings, and gain the required skills needed to offer exceptional customer service.

On this occasion, Salma Al-Hajaj, General Manager for Human Resources, at Gulf Bank said: "Gulf Bank is always focused on attracting the right people for the job, and once these candidates join the Bank, we begin a serious and intensive Induction program to offer them the training they need to excel in today's workplace. The inductees learn about the work of the various departments of the Bank, with different employees serving as mentors to the inductees. This interaction helps them understand how

Gulf Bank works, the roles they will be performing, as well as offering them the benefit of their mentor's experience and advice. Moreover, Gulf Bank places great importance on customer service, therefore this training plays a vital role in preparing our new employees to ensure they offer our customers exceptional service."

Hajaj continued: "On behalf of Gulf Bank, I would like to congratulate the newly recruited employees on completing their Induction Training Program. I also thank them for joining the Gulf Bank family and wish them all the success in their careers."

Over the course of their employment, Gulf Bank will continue to invest in them, by offering them opportunities to further develop their skills, improve their abilities, and expand their knowledge, by continuously providing the necessary training and coaching.

The Bank has successfully implemented several initiatives over the past years, such as executive training with KFAS and its long-term sponsorship of INJAZ Kuwait offering professional skills and entrepreneurial training for high school and university students. The Bank is also particularly proud of the popularity and effectiveness of its internal AJYAL Development Program which nurtures young Kuwaiti talent early in their careers, aiming to develop them into 'holistic bankers' and prepare them for leadership positions at Gulf Bank and in our country.



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Am I included in the proposed Settlements? You are encouraged to visit the website www.PetrobrasSecuritiesLitigation.com to see if you are included in the Settlement Class. The Settlement Class includes all Persons who:

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- purchased or otherwise acquired debt securities issued by Petrobras, PwC, and/or PGE, in Covered Transactions, directly in, pursuant and/or traceable to a May 13, 2013 public offering registered in the United States and/or a March 10, 2014 public offering registered in the United States before Petrobras made generally available to its security holders an earnings statement covering a period of at least twelve months beginning after the effective date of the offerings (August 11, 2014 in the case of the May 13, 2013 public offering and May 15, 2015 in the case of the March 10, 2014 public offering).

For purposes of the Settlements, "Covered Transaction" means any transaction that satisfies any of the following criteria:

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The full definition of the Settlement Class, as well as full lists of Petrobras Securities eligible to satisfy criteria (i), (ii), and (iii) are available at: www.PetrobrasSecuritiesLitigation.com.

What do the Settlements provide? Petrobras, the Underwriter Defendants, and PwC Brazil have agreed to Settlements with a combined value of US\$3 billion (US\$3,000,000,000.00). The proposed settlement could provide for a cash payment depending upon: which securities you purchased or acquired; the number of eligible securities that you purchased or acquired; and when you purchased or acquired the eligible securities.

How can I get a Payment? You must submit a Proof of Claim to receive payment postmarked or submitted by June 9, 2018. Visit the website and file a Proof of Claim online, or download one and file by mail.

What are my other options? If you do not want to be legally bound by the Settlement, you must exclude yourself by submitting a written Request for Exclusion Form so that it is received no later than April 27, 2018. If you do not exclude yourself, you will release any claims you may have against Petrobras, the Underwriter Defendants, and PwC Brazil and certain other Released Parties. You may object to the Settlement by submitting a written objection so that it is received no later than May 11, 2018. You cannot both exclude yourself from, and object to, the Settlement. The longer Notice available on the website listed below explains how to exclude yourself or object. The court will hold a Settlement Hearing on June 4, 2018 to consider whether to finally approve the Settlement and a request for attorneys' fees of up to 9.5% of the total Settlement Amount, which is \$285,000,000.00, and a compensatory award of up to \$400,000 for the Class Representatives. You may appear at the Settlement Hearing, either by yourself or through an attorney hired by you, but you do not have to. For more information, including the relief, eligibility, and release of claims, call the number or visit the website below.

1-855-907-3218 www.PetrobrasSecuritiesLitigation.com

Local

Intragastric balloons: Technological means to fight obesity in Kuwait

Kuwait second most obese country worldwide, according to study

KUWAIT: Kuwait is ranked first in the Arab world and second globally as the most obese country, with 80 percent of adults and 30 of children diagnosed as obese, according to a study by Kuwait Obesity Association. The increase of obesity in the world, which is classified as an 'epidemic' by global health organizations, has led to the discovery of new techniques to reduce the spread of obesity, starting from the traditional operations, sleeve gastrectomy surgery and to intragastric balloons.

The intragastric balloons are a means of helping to lose weight and scientifically proven to treat obesity and substitute for surgeries that may have some complications. Kuwait News Agency (KUNA) has taken the opinions of specialists in obesity surgery to identify the types of balloons in Kuwait, which is more appropriate compared to other operations, especially after the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) report on the death of five people due to complications caused by some types of balloons. Spokesman of the Ministry of Health, Dr Ahmad Al-Shatti, said that the ministry is keen to take the FDA reports into account and issuing a note to follow up on patients after the balloons or sleeve gastrectomy surgery.

Shatti stressed the ministry's efforts to assume Kuwait as a regional center for prevention of chronic diseases, including conducting health surveys for the early detection of diseases and monitoring many programs to combat the disease. The Ministry is following modern medical techniques, Shatti said, adding that there are many types of balloons, but the approved for liquid filled balloons are five (Orbera, ReShape, Spatz and Elipse), including the gas-filled balloon (Obalon). Each have advantages and disadvantages.

Healthy eating and exercise

Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah, a former



The Elipse liquid filled intragastric balloon.

Minister of Health and a consultant surgeon specializing in obesity surgery, said healthy eating and exercise, in addition to weight management surgeries, are considered the best solutions for obesity. "Elipse and Obalon are considered of the best balloons, where Elipse does not require any anesthesia and weight 700 grams, while the second is light on the stomach (three grams) and the patient needs three balloons to achieve the goal," Jarallah said. Diabetic obese patients' should use balloons in connection with the reduction of blood sugar, while the morbidly obese should go for sleeve gastrectomy surgery as a guaranteed treatment for blood sugar and blood pres-

sure, he added.

Dr Khaled Al-Zamel, Specialist of General Digestive and Bariatric Surgery at Amiri Hospital, said liquid balloons are placed in patient's stomach after anesthesia, then filled with saline, while the gas balloons are swallowed orally through a capsule without anesthesia, and then filled with nitrogen gas. Removing it needs an endoscope with local anesthesia.

The liquid-filled balloons stay in the patient stomach from four months to a year, while the gas-filled balloons could stay for six months, Zamel pointed out, as leaving the balloon longer or fill it more will cause health complications. Zamel warned obesity



80% adults diagnosed as obese

patients who had already done the laparoscopic gastric banding or the sleeve gastrectomy surgery of also having the balloons, as such step would be "dangerous".

not settle in the stomach for its light-weight, he noted.— KUNA

Acute pancreatitis

Head of Kuwait Obesity Association Dr Youssef Buabbas said acute pancreatitis is a complication caused by the liquid balloons, where after filling it with 900 ml of saline, they will add a pressure on the pancreas, and because they are made of silicone and placed at the bottom of the stomach, it would gather bacteria. Meanwhile, the gas-filled balloon does not interact with the enzymes and does



The Spatz liquid filled intragastric balloon.



KUWAIT: Sheikha Sharifa Al-Jassim, the spouse of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, sponsored and attended yesterday an annual awareness forum on woman health, themed 'sunshine vitamin.' Head of the Endocrinology Unit at the Amiri Hospital Dr Nadia Al Ali addressed the event on the vital effect of the vitamin on body organs, symptoms of deficiency, and how to remedy it.— KUNA



Ooredoo platinum sponsor of ACK Career Fair

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait participated in the Australian College of Kuwait's Career Fair, which took place in the Aviation Building of the ACK on Monday and Tuesday. The Human Resources Department was present at the career fair to answer students queries about job opportunities, job descriptions, career paths, and to learn about the different training and internship opportunities Ooredoo pro-

vides annually in collaboration with different entities.

In a statement to the press, Ooredoo Kuwait reiterated its belief in the major role youth play in the future of our country. "Our support for youth is deep-rooted within our strategy across the organization in Ooredoo. This is not the first time that Ooredoo has taken part in a job fair. Our aim is to open new horizons for the ambitious youth by giving them opportunities to apply their educational knowledge to the professional world."

Ooredoo boasts a dynamic and fresh corporate culture where new ideas are nurtured, and everyone is given a fair chance to grow and maximize their potential. Ooredoo employees are always given opportunities to develop their skills and enhance their knowledge through extensive year-round training programs along with new challenges to develop their interests.

ABK's 24th group of participants graduate from 'ABK Academy'

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) congratulated the 24th group of students who recently graduated from the 'ABK Academy', during a ceremony that was held for the 17 participants who successfully completed the four week intensive program.

The 24th round of training consisted of two main parts.

The first was classroom facilitation focused and the second was 'on the job' training, whereby candidates had the opportunity to be fully engaged in the work culture within the bank, and the day-to-day operations giving them more hands on experience.

ABK Academy has graduated a total of 535 candidates to date; preparing a substantial number of individuals to take on jobs within the bank. This type of involvement and contribution is of tremendous value not only to national youth, who gain tremendous insight into banking as a profession, but also to the bank who has the chance to train and employ local talent. The ABK Academy was launched as an educational platform that focuses on training students and individuals seeking a job opportunity in the banking sector. By engaging with these participants, the bank is able to build on existing potential and talent, and better identify the areas in the bank, in which they could put this positive energy to work.



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Erdogan calls on US to end Syria 'deception'

Palestinian president insults US ambassador to Israel

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PARIS: In this file photo taken on December 10, 2007, Libyan leader Muammar Gaddafi arrives at the French Elysee Palace in Paris for a meeting with French president Nicolas Sarkozy. Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy has been called in for questioning by investigators looking into suspected Libyan financing of his 2007 election campaign, a source close to the inquiry said. — AFP

French ex-president Sarkozy detained

Libyan dictator Gaddafi 'financed' Sarkozy campaign

PARIS: French ex-president Nicolas Sarkozy was detained for questioning yesterday over allegations that late Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi financed his 2007 election campaign, including with suitcases stuffed with cash, a source close to the inquiry said. Sarkozy was taken into police custody yesterday morning and was being questioned by officers specializing in corruption, money laundering and tax evasion at their office in the western Parisian suburb of Nanterre.

The 63-year-old had until now refused to respond to a summons for questioning in France's most explosive political financing scandal, one of several legal probes that have dogged the right-winger since he left office after one term in 2012. Sarkozy's detention was first reported by the Mediapart investigative news site and French daily Le Monde.

AFP's source said that Brice Hortefeux, a close ally who served as a senior minister during Sarkozy's presidency, was also questioned yesterday as part of the inquiry. Since 2013, investigating magistrates have been probing media reports, as well as statements by Gaddafi's son Seif al-Islam, that claimed funds were provided for Sarkozy's first tilt at the presidency. "Sarkozy must first give back the money he took from Libya to finance his electoral campaign," Seif told the Euronews network in 2011 as NATO-backed forces were driving his father out of power.

Sarkozy has dismissed the allegations as the rantings

of vindictive Libyan regime members who were furious over France's military intervention in Libya that helped end Gaddafi's 41-year rule and led to his death. He has also sued Mediapart, which has driven media coverage of the Libyan allegations since 2012 when it published a document allegedly signed by Libya's intelligence chief showing that Gaddafi had agreed to fund Sarkozy to the tune of 50 million euros (\$62 million). The case drew heightened scrutiny in November 2016 when a Franco-Lebanese businessman admitted delivering three cash-stuffed suitcases from the Libyan leader in 2006 and 2007 as contributions towards Sarkozy's first presidential run.

In an interview, again with Mediapart, Ziad Takieddine claimed he dropped 1.5 to 2 million euros in 200-euro and 500-euro notes each time and was given the money by Gadhafi's military intelligence chief Abdallah Senussi. When asked about the allegations during a televised debate in 2016, Sarkozy called the question "disgraceful" and said the businessman was a

"liar" who had been convicted "countless times for defamation". The legal investigation is looking into these allegations, as well as a 500,000-euro foreign cash transfer to Sarkozy ally Claude Gueant, and the sale of a luxury villa in 2009 in the south of France to a Libyan investment fund for an allegedly inflated price.

Ties to Libya

Sarkozy, the son of a Hungarian immigrant father who takes a hard line on Islam and French identity, was nicknamed the "bling-bling" president during his time in office for his flashy displays of wealth. He failed with a bid to run again for president in November 2016 and has stepped back from

frontline politics since then, though he remains a powerful figure behind the scenes at the rightwing Republicans party. Seven months after his 2007 presidential victory, Sarkozy invited Gaddafi to Paris and clinched major arms and nuclear energy sales to the oil-rich north African country, which has since descended into civil war.

The Libyan autocrat was allowed to pitch his Bedouin-style tent on a lawn in central Paris and attended a dinner at the presidential palace, which was boycotted by several of Sarkozy's ministers. It is not the first time that Sarkozy has been detained: he became the first French president to enter police custody in July 2014 over a separate inquiry into claims that he tried to interfere in one of the several investigations targeting him. He was taken into custody yesterday after another former associate, Swiss businessman Alexandre Djouhri, was arrested in London in January.

Other cases

Investigating magistrates have recommended Sarkozy face trial on separate charges of illegal campaign financing over his failed 2012 re-election bid. The prosecution claims Sarkozy spent nearly double the legal limit of 22.5 million euros (\$24 million) on his lavish campaign, using false billing from a public relations firm called Bygmalion. He faces up to a year in prison and a fine of 3,750 euros if convicted, but he is appealing the decision to send him to trial, claiming he knew nothing about the fraudulent practices that Bygmalion executives have admitted to. Only one other French president—Jacques Chirac—has been tried in France's Fifth Republic, which was founded in 1958. He was given a two-year suspended jail term in 2011 over a fake jobs scandal. — AFP



Suitcases stuffed with cash: Source

American Dream fails generations of blacks: Study

LOS ANGELES: Even the richest black boys raised in the United States earn less in adulthood than white boys from similar backgrounds, according to a wide-ranging study published Monday. While white men who grew up wealthy tend to stay that way, black boys raised in affluent families and neighborhoods are more likely to become poor than to stay well-off, researchers at Stanford and Harvard universities found. White boys fare better than black boys who grow up side-by-side with parents on similar incomes in 99 percent of American neighborhoods, according to the study, which traced the lives of 20 million children.

No such income disparity exists between black and white girls from families with comparable earnings, however, according to the research, carried out in collaboration with the US Census Bureau. "A defining feature of the 'American Dream' is upward income mobility: the ideal that children have a higher standard of living than their parents," said The Equality of Opportunity Project, a joint initiative between Stanford and Harvard.

In contrast, Hispanic Americans "are moving up in the income distribution across generations," and Asian immigrants have levels of upward mobility greater than all other groups, said Raj Chetty and Nathaniel Hendren, who wrote the study, "Race and Economic Opportunity in the United States." In a perhaps more anticipated finding, black boys who move early in their life to districts with lower poverty levels, less racism and strong paternal presence have lower levels of incarceration and higher incomes as adults. — AFP

Egyptians who took part in Arab Spring say voting 'useless'

CAIRO: As banners supporting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's bid for a second term fill Cairo's streets, some who participated in the 2011 democratic uprising say they will boycott this month's "predetermined" elections. "It's been a downwards slippery slope since the last presidential elections (in 2014): nothing is improving," said Sami, who took part in the January 2011 uprising which toppled longtime president Hosni Mubarak. Sisi, as defense minister, led the July 2013 ouster of former Islamist president Mohamed Morsi following mass protests against his divisive one-year rule.

Now, Sisi is seeking another term in the March 26-28 elections, running against Moussa Mostafa Mousa, a candidate who had previously expressed support for the incumbent. Other presidential hopefuls were arrested or withdrew. "It's a nominal participation. They couldn't have just one person running unopposed, so they brought someone just as a show so they can say there is competition," said Sarah. Like Sami and everyone else interviewed in this story, she asked to be identified by a pseudonym. "I won't put the effort and vote in an election that is already predetermined," she said.

2011 hopes dashed

The situation is a far cry from Sarah's high hopes in 2011, when she joined protests "excited to



CAIRO: Photo shows a large billboard showing a privately-sponsored election advertisement supporting Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi in Cairo's northern suburb of Shubra. — AFP

have free and fair elections, and to vote in competitive elections where my voice would make a difference." Over 18 days, mostly young Egyptians overcame thousands of security forces, capturing Tahrir Square in downtown Cairo. There, they camped day and night until Mubarak, who had been in power for nearly 30 years, left office. The military then took charge of the country. Soon after, major Mubarak-era officials were arrested and courts began examining cases of police brutality. "It was an incredible moment of hope; the sky was the limit," said Sami.

After the military's year in power, Morsi, who hailed from the Muslim Brotherhood group, became Egypt's first democratically elected civilian president in 2012. A year later, Egyptians concerned at the rise of political Islam within the gov-

ernment supported Morsi's ouster, with many hoping further democratic elections would follow. "But what happened next, with the nomination of another person from the military, it was very clear that we went back to the same loop," said Sami.

When he joined the 2011 protests, he was hoping for "freedom and liberty". But during the years of turmoil that followed, many gave up these demands in favor of economic stability and security. People "were upset, but opted for calmness," he said. "Now, the outcome is zero. Economically, everyone is pressured, no matter your income level, all your savings and income were slashed in half." With its foreign exchange reserves down since the uprising, Egypt floated the pound in 2016, causing the currency to lose more than half its value against the dollar. — AFP

International

Palestinian leader insults US ambassador to Israel

White House urges Abbas to choose hate or peace

RAMALLAH: Palestinian president Mahmud Abbas labeled the US ambassador to Israel David Friedman a "son of a dog" on Monday during an attack on Donald Trump's policies. The scathing comments come with US President Trump still expected to launch a plan for peace between Israel and the Palestinians despite Abbas boycotting his administration over his controversial recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital. "The US ambassador in Tel Aviv is a settler and a son of a dog," Abbas said in comments to Palestinian leaders in Ramallah.

The White House later Monday slammed Abbas's "insults", saying he must choose between hate and peace. "The time has come for President Abbas to choose between hateful rhetoric and concrete and practical efforts to improve the quality of life of his people and lead them to peace and prosperity," top Trump aide Jason Greenblatt said in a terse statement. Relations between Abbas's government and Trump's administration have broken down since the White House recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December.

The Palestinians also see the disputed city as the capital of their future state and have refused to meet with Trump's envoys since. Friedman, who was Trump's personal lawyer before being appointed last year, is a longstanding supporter of settlement building in the occupied West Bank, considered illegal under international law. In response to Abbas, Friedman, who is Jewish, told a conference that Abbas's comments could have anti-Semitic connotations. "His response was to refer to me as son of a dog. Is that anti-Semitism or political discourse? I leave that up to you," he said, according to a US embassy spokes-

woman. Abbas's comments appeared to be in response to a tweet by Friedman earlier on Monday. In it he referred to an attack in the West Bank as "in the north", raising questions over whether he views it as part of Israeli territory, and accused Abbas's Palestinian Authority (PA) of failing to condemn it. "Such brutality and no condemnation from the PA!" he tweeted, referring to a Friday car ramming that killed two soldiers and a Sunday stabbing in Jerusalem that left an Israeli dead, both carried out by Palestinians. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu later denounced Abbas's remarks on Twitter. "For the first time in decades, the US administration has stopped pampering Palestinian leaders and tells them 'that's enough'. Apparently the shock of the truth has caused them to lose their mind," he said.

Israel has militarily occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem since 1967. Abbas's government has limited autonomy in parts of the West Bank, while the Jewish state annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. All countries currently have their embassies in Tel Aviv and view the future status of Jerusalem as a matter to be negotiated between the parties. But in December Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital and in May Friedman will become the first US ambassador in the city as the embassy is moved.

Bomb attack

Separately during the speech, Abbas accused rival Palestinian faction Hamas of a bomb attack targeting his prime minister Rami Hamdallah last week and threatened fresh sanctions against the Islamist movement. Abbas had previously said Hamas was responsible as it controls secu-



RAMALLAH: Palestinian demonstrators push a garbage container into the street during clashes following a demonstration in the West Bank city of Ramallah, as protests continue in the region amid anger over US President Donald Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as its capital. —AFP

rity in the Palestinian enclave, but Monday evening said it was "behind the attack". Hamdallah was uninjured in last Tuesday's attack, which saw a roadside bomb explode as his convoy entered Gaza in what Palestinian officials have called an assassination attempt.

Six of his security guards were lightly hurt. In the speech to Palestinian leaders in the West Bank city of Ramallah, Abbas said if the attack had succeeded it would

have "opened the way for a bloody civil war". Hamas condemned what it called Abbas's "provocative positions," saying its security services were still investigating the explosion. The Islamists and Abbas's secular party Fatah have been at odds since 2007 when Hamas seized control of Gaza in a near civil war. Abbas controls the internationally recognized Palestinian government, based in the occupied West Bank which Hamdallah leads. —AFP

Thailand court jails drug lord 'Mr X' for life

BANGKOK: A major Laos drug lord dubbed 'Mr X' was jailed for life yesterday by a Bangkok court, as Thailand battles record meth trafficking through its borders. Xaysana Keopimpha, a swaggering Laotian who before his arrest paraded his celebrity links and penchant for sports cars on social media, was picked up at Bangkok's main airport in January last year. He was accused of being a kingpin in a meth smuggling ring that funneled tons of Myanmar-made 'yaba' pills and ice (crystal meth) through Communist Laos and into Thailand.

The Laos route south is increasingly used by trafficking gangs keen to reach markets in Thailand, Malaysia and as far as Australia and Japan—where the price of the drug spikes. A Bangkok court initially handed Xaysana the death penalty but reduced it to life imprisonment after he admitted several charges of drug smuggling, including over 1.2 million 'yaba' pills in a case dating back to 2016. "Due to his confession during the investigation process, the court decreases his sentence to life imprisonment," a Criminal Court judge said in his ruling.

Evidence pulled from mobile phones linked Xaysana with a smuggling network that used Nong Khai, the Thai border point with Laos, to move drugs south, the judge added. Standing handcuffed in his prison uniform, Xaysana did not react as the verdict was delivered. He faces another trial for possession of 3.3 million yaba pills due to start in July. Details of Xaysana's colourful life unspooled after his arrest last year. Investigators say he boasted a contacts book stuffed with the rich and powerful, including Thai celebrities, who may have helped shield his narcotics cartel.

Others say he was a middle-man for the shadowy criminals at the apex of the trade who remain unprosecuted. Xaysana and his networks allegedly helped move drugs manufactured in the "Golden Triangle"—a lawless border region where Thailand, Laos and Myanmar all meet. Rampant corruption across the zone has allowed the drug trade to flourish. Record amounts of yaba and the more addictive ice are being seized by Thai police.

But drug experts say the seizures are as much a sign of surging production as improved police work given cartels have easily been able to make up for confiscations and there has been no palpable increase in street prices. In January a Thai naval patrol seized 11 million meth pills (with an estimated \$100 million street value) from traffickers using the Mekong River to move drugs Laos into Thailand, Thailand, Vietnam, China and Cambodia are all reporting major meth cases around the border areas with Laos, according to Jeremy Douglas, Southeast Asia and Pacific regional representative of the UNODC.

"Lao shares a border with every other country of the Mekong," he said, putting it at the "crossroads... of the regional drug and precursor (chemical) trade." Laos' opaque authoritarian communist regime has also turned the insular country into a sanctuary for trafficking networks. "Organized crime take advantage of vulnerabilities, and when they look at Lao they see opportunity," Douglas added. The highest quality yaba pills (15-20 percent meth purity) come from the factories of the North and South Wa-armed ethnic groups in a self-governing state on the Myanmar-China border—and by



BANGKOK: Convicted drug kingpin Xaysana Keopimpha leaves the courthouse after his trial in Bangkok yesterday. A major Laos drug lord dubbed 'Mr X' was jailed for life by a Bangkok court, as Thailand battles record meth trafficking through its borders. —AFP

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International

US President urges death penalty for drug dealers

Part of Trump's plan to combat opioid epidemic

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Monday made a controversial call for drug traffickers to face the death penalty, as part of his plan to combat America's opioid epidemic—a move that appears to be as much about politics as policy. The Republican leader launched the proposal during a speech in Manchester, New Hampshire—a state hard hit by the opioid crisis—and the move was designed to burnish his tough-on-crime credentials.

"These are terrible people, and we have to get tough on those people," he told the crowd. "If we don't get tough on the drug dealers, we're wasting our time." "That toughness includes the death penalty," he added. An estimated 2.4 million Americans are addicted to opioids, a class of drugs that include prescription painkillers, as well as heroin. Trump pledged to fix the crisis when he took office a year ago, but so far, he has struggled to make headway on an epidemic that kills an estimated 115 Americans a day due to overdoses, according to the government-funded National Institutes of Health.

Drug-related murder is already a capital offense in the United States, but no one has ever been executed using those rules. Officials indicated there would be no attempt to change the law to make the death penalty mandatory for trafficking alone, a move that would well run afoul of Supreme Court rulings on proportional punishment. In those rulings, the high court suggested that nothing other than murder can be considered a capital offense. "It's possible that our country's not ready for that," Trump conceded. "And I can understand it, maybe. Although personally, I can't understand that."



An estimated 2.4 million Americans addicted to opioids

Rodrigo Duterte, whose war on drugs has led to the extra-judicial killings of alleged traffickers. Philippines police say they have killed 4,100 drug suspects as part of the campaign, while rights groups claim the real toll is around three times the number. The International Criminal Court is investigating. Experts say that the apparent link between low drug use and capital punishment in places like Singapore can be misleading. Iran, they point out, also has the death penalty for drug use but still has one of the highest rates of opiate addiction in the world.

Many Democrats oppose the idea of executing drug dealers, and changing the law would require an act of Congress. "We will not incarcerate or execute our way out of the opioid epidemic," Democratic senator Ed Markey

Rally the base

With Republicans at risk of losing control of Congress in legislative elections in November, Trump is keen to rally his base ahead of the polls behind a tough-sounding message. A series of special elections has seen Republicans struggle to match the intensity of anti-Trump sentiment, with high turnout among Democrats delivering a series of shock victories.

Most polls show Trump's approval rating hovering around 40 percent, with supporters and opponents expressing intense feelings either way. This announcement is likely to be no different in terms of how the public reacts. Around 55 percent of Americans are in favor of the death penalty for murder, the lowest levels in decades. Trump has previously mooted the "ultimate" punishment for drug dealers and has praised Philippine President



MANCHESTER: Attorney General Jeff Sessions (left) and First Lady Melania Trump talk as US President Donald Trump speaks about combating the opioid crisis at Manchester Community College in Manchester, New Hampshire. —AFP

said last week. "Extreme proposals like using the death penalty only perpetuate a harmful stigma associated with opioid use disorders and divert attention from meaningful conversations and progress on expanding access to treat-

ment, recovery, and other public health initiatives," he said. Trump also announced that measures would be taken to tackle over-prescription, illicit drug supplies, and insufficient access to treatment. —AFP

News in brief

Storm hits Madagascar

ANTANANARIVO: A powerful tropical storm that lashed the island of Madagascar has left 20 people dead and affected 19,000 more, according to an official toll. The storm also closed several national highways that were flooded by the heavy rain, the country's disaster management office said late Monday. In a previous toll late Sunday it said 17 people had died and 15,000 had been affected. Storm Eliakim slammed into the northeastern Masoala peninsula on Friday before barreling south down the coast. By Monday it had moved away from the Indian Ocean island and "presents no more danger". Madagascar, one of the world's poorest countries, is frequently hit by cyclones and tropical storms. —AFP

Two dead in Moldova

CHISINAU: Two people were killed and two others injured in Moldova yesterday after a man set off a grenade near a shop where he tried to steal several packs of cigarettes, the country's police chief said. A man went into a shop in the capital Chisinau before midday, took 10 cigarette packs and tried to leave without paying, the chief of Moldovan police Alexandru Panzari told reporters. The man, identified as a resident of Chisinau with a criminal record, had the grenade "either in his bag or his pocket", he said. "The salesman did not allow him to leave with the cigarettes," said Panzari. —AFP

Shooting at high school

WASHINGTON: A shooting erupted at a high school in the eastern US state of Maryland yesterday, but the event was quickly "contained," officials said. There were no immediate official reports of casualties in the shooting at Great Mills High School, located about a 90-minute drive southeast of the US capital Washington. St Mary's County Public Schools said on its website that the school was on lockdown and the incident had been "contained" but provided no further details. It said law enforcement was on the scene. "It happened really quickly, right after school started" after 8:00 am. Jonathan Freese, a student at the school, told CNN. "The police came and responded really quickly," Freese said. —AFP

Unqualified magistrates

KINSHASA: Authorities in the Democratic Republic of Congo have exposed more than 200 unqualified magistrates, an official source said yesterday. A commission of enquiry formed in October to probe the qualifications and recruitment conditions of more than 3,000 magistrates found that hundreds "should not be there." Justice Minister Alexis Thambwe Mwamba told reporters. "The commission has been able to establish that many individuals entered or are in the judiciary who shouldn't be," he said. "More than 200 individuals will need to be 'rooted out of the judiciary to ensure only real magistrates remain.'" —AFP

Venezuela health crisis

CARACAS: Venezuela's opposition-dominated Congress said Monday the country's deepening economic crisis has left hospitals lacking even the most basic medicines and surgical materials. A country-wide survey showed that 88 percent of all medicines were missing from pharmacy shelves, while 79 percent of the most basic medical equipment was unavailable. "Venezuelans who have to go to hospital have to buy everything," lawmaker and doctor Jose Olivares told a press conference in Caracas. "There is an 84 percent shortage of catheters and probes, which are basic materials in any hospital." —AFP

Fifth 'parcel blast' reported in Texas

AUSTIN: A package exploded yesterday at a FedEx distribution facility in Texas, authorities said, following a series of other blasts in Austin in recent weeks that police had attributed to a serial bomber. The parcel exploded at a facility in the town of Schertz, in the San Antonio area. In a statement on social media, the Schertz Police Department said one person received medical attention at the scene. "We can confirm that a single package exploded while in a FedEx Ground sortation facility early this morning," the shipping company said.

"One team member is being treated for minor injuries. We are working closely with law enforcement in their investigation." The Washington Post, quoting the FBI, reported that the package had been bound for Austin, the state capital-scene of previous deadly blasts. The explosion came as hundreds of police officers and FBI agents searched for the perpetrator of Sunday's blast in Austin—the fourth this month—left two young men seriously injured and the city on edge.

Police said that blast was connected to three previous bombings in Austin. They said bomber used a tripwire in Sunday's attack. "We're clearly dealing with what we expect to be a serial bomber at this point," Austin police chief Brian Manley told reporters. But Manley said police have been unable to determine a motive for the bombings. The four blasts in Austin killed two people in the city of nearly one million people and injured another four. "Is this terrorism? Is it hate-related?" Manley asked. "As we said from the very beginning, we were not willing to classify this as terrorism, as hate, because we just don't know enough."

In the earlier bombings, two African American men were killed by packages left on their doorsteps, raising

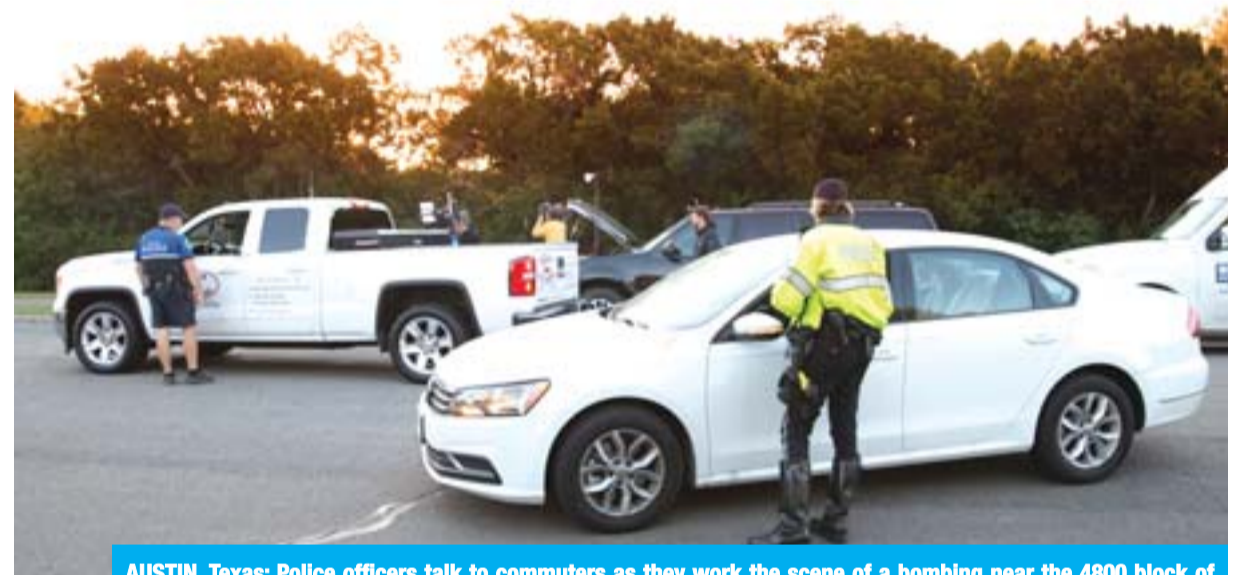
With McCabe firing, Trump risks stoking obstruction charges

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump's firing of FBI deputy director Andrew McCabe risks strengthening allegations that he is obstructing the Russia meddling investigation of special counsel Robert Mueller, legal experts say. Trump could be making a calculated gamble by painting potential witnesses against him like McCabe and former FBI director James Comey as unreliable. But increasingly, his derogatory tweets about both, making clear he wanted them fired, have stoked accusations that he is illegally interfering with Mueller's probe—a charge that would threaten the viability of his presidency.

"Andrew McCabe FIRED, a great day for the hard working men and women of the FBI - A great day for Democracy," Trump tweeted Friday after McCabe was dismissed for allegedly lying in an in-house investigation. "Sanctimonious James Comey was his boss and made McCabe look like a choirboy. He knew all about the lies and corruption going on at the highest levels of the FBI!" Trump followed that with a Twitter attack on Mueller, who took over the collusion investigation after the president fired Comey in May 2017. "The Mueller probe should never have been started in that there was no collusion and there was no crime," Trump said, alleging that Mueller's team of investigators are all opposition Democrats. "Does anyone think this is fair?"

Investigation still secret

No one knows for sure what charges Mueller, the taciturn, 73 year old prosecutor—and a former FBI director himself—is studying. But signs have increased that, in addition to his focus on possible Trump campaign collusion, he is building a case on obstruction of justice. "At this point, it appears that Trump is unconcerned about potential liability, given his continued tweets attacking the FBI and DOJ," said Renato Mariotti, a former federal prosecutor,



AUSTIN, Texas: Police officers talk to commuters as they work the scene of a bombing near the 4800 block of Dawn Song Drive in Austin, Texas. —AFP

speculation of a racially motivated crime. A 75-year-old Hispanic woman was also injured in a blast. But Manley said Sunday's bombing also seriously wounded two white men aged 22 and 23 as they walked in a quiet residential neighborhood. He said it appeared random and was triggered by a tripwire. Manley said the use of a tripwire also means police are dealing with someone who "shows a higher level of sophistication, a higher level of skill" than initially believed.

Manley appealed to the bomber to contact the authorities and to the public to report anything suspicious. "I will reach out to the suspect or suspects and ask that you contact us, ask that you reach out to us, communicate with us so that we can put this to an end," Manley said. "There are

innocent people getting hurt in this community and it needs to come to a stop." The authorities said they were increasing the reward offered for information leading to an arrest, bringing the total city and state bounty money to \$115,000.

An exploding package killed 39-year-old Anthony House on March 2. A 17-year-old African American, Draylen Mason, was killed on March 12 and the Hispanic woman was critically injured the same day. All of the cardboard packages were hand-delivered and the bombs were built with household items available at hardware stores. A task force of hundreds of law enforcement personnel are working the case, including criminal profilers and experts from the Federal Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms (ATF). —AFP



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on May 11, 2017, acting FBI Director Andrew McCabe testifies before the Senate Intelligence Committee. Andrew McCabe was fired late March 16, 2018 by US Attorney General Jeff Sessions. —AFP

on Twitter. "It remains to be seen what the consequences of his actions will be, but he continues to build an obstruction case against himself."

McCabe's lawyer, former Justice Department inspector general Michael Bromwich, said "the tweets confirm that he has corrupted the entire process that led to Mr. McCabe's termination and has rendered it illegitimate." The theoretical case of obstruction begins with Comey's allegations that Trump pressured him last year. It could include false testimony by Trump aides, Trump's reported demands to fire Attorney General Jeff Sessions and Mueller, possible attempts to cover up campaign contacts with Russians and other behavior, including McCabe's sacking. And on Saturday, Trump's lawyer John Dowd, speaking to The Daily Beast, appeared to interfere when he called for "an end to alleged Russia collusion investigation manufactured by McCabe's boss James Comey."

Obstruction used against Nixon, Clinton - Obstruction of justice was one of the allegations arising from the Watergate investigation that forced Richard Nixon to resign in 1974 in the face of certain impeachment in Congress. It was also one of the two articles of impeachment voted against Bill Clinton by the House of Representatives in 1998, in the Monica Lewinsky scandal. —AFP

Abortion, free expression in conflict at US Supreme Court

WASHINGTON: "Clinics" across the United States feature "caregivers" in white blouses accompanied by ultrasound gear, but one thing pregnant women will not get in these facilities is an abortion. Calling themselves "Crisis Pregnancy Centers," they are at the heart of a sensitive case going before the United States Supreme Court.

Christian and conservative groups are objecting to a California law which obliges such private anti-abortion agencies to tell pregnant clients they can get an abortion or contraception at other centers subsidized by the state. Groups opposed to voluntary abortion argue that the 2015 law, backed by Democrats, violates their right to freedom of expression guaranteed by the First Amendment to the Constitution. The fundamental right to abortion has become "more fundamental than is the fundamental right of freedom of speech," even though the latter has been established for 227 years in the Constitution's Bill of Rights, says a briefing filed by Liberty Counsel, a Christian group dedicated to defending human life "from the moment of conception." Abortion, the group said, has only been recognized as a fundamental right for 45 years, a reference to the 1973 Roe v Wade Supreme Court decision which legalized abortion throughout the country.

The US has seen an anti-abortion push since President Donald Trump took office in January last year, with his Republican Party that opposes abortion controlling Congress. On Monday the Republican governor of Mississippi promulgated a law banning abortion after 15 weeks of pregnancy, including in cases of rape or incest, down from a 20-week limit. In the current national context the decision by the nine Supreme Court justices will likely have ramifications beyond California, the most populous state, which has about 200 "Crisis Pregnancy Centers" typically run by Christian conservatives. —AFP

International

Turkish leader Erdogan calls on US to end Syria 'deception'

Syria forces battle to secure Damascus

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday told the US to stop "deceiving" Turkey and start cooperation, after Washington said it was concerned by the Turkish-led offensive on the Syrian city of Afrin. Erdogan's typically abrasive comments came after the US State Department reacted to the capture by Turkish forces of Afrin from Kurdish militia by sounding alarm over the fate of civilians and looting. "If we are strategic partners, you must respect us and you must work with us," Erdogan told Turkey's NATO ally during a speech to ruling party lawmakers in parliament.

He said that the US had carried out "such a deception" against Turkey by arming the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) militia which had controlled the Afrin region. Turkish troops supporting Ankara-backed Syrian opposition fighters captured Afrin city during a lightning assault on Sunday, with the YPG largely withdrawing without a fight. Turkey says the YPG is linked to the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK), which has waged a three-decade insurgency inside Turkey and is proscribed as a terror group by Ankara and its Western allies.

But US State Department spokeswoman Heather Nauert on Monday said the US was "deeply concerned" after the assault triggered an exodus of Kurdish civilians from the city. Nauert said Washington was also "concerned over reports of looting inside the city of Afrin", which AFP reporters had witnessed.

'How is this partnership'

Erdogan hit back at the spokeswoman's comments: "Where were you when we shared our concerns? When we said 'let's clean terrorists together here', where were you?" Turkey had previously suggested that it could clear the Islamic State extremist group in Syria with the US, but Washington chose to work with the YPG. "On the one hand you will say to Turkey 'you are our strategic partner' and then after you are going to cooperate with a terror organization? The reality is clear," he said.

Relations between Turkey and the US have been strained over multiple issues including Washington's move to supply the YPG with weaponry and the failure to extradite the Muslim preacher accused of ordering the July

2016 attempted overthrow of Erdogan. "You attempted to deceive us. It was such a deception, I tell you, you sent 5,000 trucks of weapons there. You sent 2,000 ammunitions cargo there," Erdogan said. But the president said Turkey was seizing the ammunition "little by little". "We asked for weapons with our money, you didn't give it to us. But you gave terrorists weapons and ammunition for free. How is this partnership? How is this solidarity?" he thundered.

Pockets of resistance

Meanwhile, Syrian regime and allied forces battled to suppress the last pockets of resistance in and around Damascus yesterday while the beleaguered Kurds in the north braced for further Turkish advances. The simultaneous assaults have sparked one of the worst humanitarian emergencies since the start of

Relations between Turkey, US strained over multiple issues



the Syrian conflict seven years ago, with aid groups struggling to gain access to the masses of displaced civilians. Washington has voiced concern that the chaos in Syria could allow a revival of the Islamic State group, whose "caliphate" collapsed late last year after three years of international military operations.

The jihadists launched a surprise nighttime attack in a southern neighborhood of Damascus, moving into the vacuum left by a deal that saw another armed group pull out exactly a week ago. "IS took full control of Qadam, and 36 government troops and loyalist fighters have been killed," the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights reported. There was no immediate comment from the regime, nor could the Britain-based monitoring group provide casualty figures for the jihadists. Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said the regime was sending reinforcements to retake Qadam, which was attacked from the adjacent IS-controlled neighborhood of Hajar Al-Aswad. The jihadists also have a presence in the nearby Palestinian refugee camp of Yarmuk.

Douma under attack

Assad has in recent months brought swathes of territory back under his control thanks to heavy Russian involvement, as well as support from other forces such as the Iran-backed Lebanese Hezbollah militia. He has



RAQA, Syria: Photo shows a general view of heavily damaged buildings in Raqa. With nearly 354,000 people killed and more than half of the country's pre-war population of 20 million displaced, Syria enters its eighth year of war, free of the jihadist "caliphate" but torn apart by an international power struggle as the regime presses its blistering reconquest.—AFP

recently focused his efforts on flushing out the last pockets that escape government control in and around the capital, the largest of them being Eastern Ghouta. A month-long air and ground assault on the area, which was home to around 400,000 residents, has left more than 1,400 dead. Regime and allied forces have retaken more 80 percent of the enclave and splintered its rump into three pockets, each controlled by a different armed group. Tens of thousands of civilians have fled both the intense bombardment and the deprivations of a siege that lasted five years.

Eastern Ghouta's main town of Douma remains under rebel control but even as a trickle of emergency medical evacuations was scheduled to continue, the regime continued to pound the enclave. An AFP correspondent reported heavy bombardment through the night, adding that ambu-

lances were struggling to reach the wounded so intense was the shelling. At the town's main hospital, exhausted staff worked on extracting a palm-sized shard of wood from the head of a 10-year-old girl.

The local civil defense group known as the "White Helmets" said they were able to retrieve only two bodies and that several others remained trapped under the rubble. Clashes broke out between the Jaish al-Islam rebel group and the regime on the outskirts of Douma, the correspondent said. The Observatory said 16 children were among 20 civilians killed overnight when an air strike on the town of Arbin leveled the school above the basement they were sheltering in. Another humanitarian catastrophe was unfolding hundreds of kilometers to the north near Syria's border with Turkey, whose forces have pressed a devastating offensive.—Agencies

Empowered Xi says China ready to fight 'the bloody battle'

BEIJING: President Xi Jinping delivered a blistering nationalist speech yesterday, warning against any attempts to split China and touting the country's readiness to fight "the bloody battle" to regain its rightful place in the world. Xi's address capped an annual session of the National People's Congress that paved the way for him to rule for life, as China's most powerful leader since Mao Zedong pushes through his vision of guiding the country through a "new era" of unrivalled global military and economic supremacy.

Days after President Donald Trump signed new rules allowing top-level US officials to travel to Taiwan, Xi warned that Beijing would defend its "one China principle", which sees the self-ruled island as its territory awaiting reunification. "All acts and tricks to separate the country are doomed to fail and will be condemned by the people and punished by history," Xi told nearly 3,000 delegates assembled at the imposing Great Hall of the People facing Tiananmen Square.

Taiwan in response urged China to shelve its mindset of "forceful intimidation" and pursue a breakthrough in cross-strait relations. The island's Mainland Affairs Council in a statement accused Beijing of intensifying "propaganda measures to lure away Taiwan's talent, funds and technology for its own economic development". Xi also sought to address concerns about ambitious Chinese development projects abroad, saying they "will not pose a threat to any country." "Only those who are accustomed to threatening others will see everyone as a threat," he added in an address that drew waves of applause from the legislators.

China is overseeing a massive global trade infrastructure initiative to revive the ancient Silk Road, drawing interest from nations participating in the investment but also criticism from others fearing that it mainly serves Beijing's interests. The Chinese leader's plan to build a "world-class" military by mid-century has also raised concerns about how it



BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping (center) shakes hands with delegates at the end of the closing session of the National People's Congress at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday.—AFP

plans to use its increasingly modern forces amid regional frictions over China's territorial claims in the South China Sea. Xi used the speech to espouse his vision of realizing the "rejuvenation of the Chinese nation"—the "greatest dream" of the world's second-largest economy. "The Chinese people have been indomitable and persistent, we have the spirit of fighting the bloody battle against our enemies to the bitter end," he said. But his speech was also a reminder that the Communist Party, more than ever, reigns over the country's affairs. "History has already proven and will continue to prove that only socialism can save China," he said. "The Communist Party is the supreme political leadership of the country and the fundamental guarantee to achieve the great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation."

Indefinite rule

The two-week session of the National People's Congress handed Xi, 64, a second term and endorsed the Communist Party's decision to lift presidential term limits, clearing the way for him to remain in power indefinitely after his new term ends in 2023. His eponymous political philosophy, which was enshrined in the party charter last year, was added to the national constitution and senior government officials had to swear an oath to the document for the first time.—AFP

'Anti-male' discrimination

VIENNA: An Austrian official is to receive more than 300,000 euros (\$370,000) for being unfairly passed over for promotion because of his gender, Austrian media reported yesterday. Peter Franzmayr sued for discrimination after failing to get an internal promotion in the transport ministry in 2011, with the job going instead to the then-head of the rail regulator, Ursula Zechner.

The Federal Administrative Court agreed with him, ruling in February that there was a "discernible pattern, according to which [Zechner] was treated more favorably than the other candidates from the beginning". Franzmayr will receive 317,368 euros in compensation, reflecting the extra money he would have earned in the post as well as damages, the Die Presse newspaper reported. The transport minister at the time of the appointment, Doris Bures of the Social Democrats (SPOe), defended the way it was handled and said all the relevant legal procedures had been followed. The shortlisted candidates were all judged highly qualified, she added, saying that the eventual decision had been taken because of the "massive under-representation of women". "I hope the current decision doesn't call into the question the principle of encouraging the promotion of women," she said in a statement.—AFP

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Privacy issues emerge as major business risk for Facebook

Facebook faces substantial business risks from new European Union privacy rules set to take effect in May, a looming reality that came into stark relief over the weekend with revelations that a controversial political consulting firm had improperly obtained personal data on 50 million Facebook users. Privacy experts said the disclosure that a researcher had sold Facebook data collected via a personality quiz to the consulting firm Cambridge Analytica is a prime example of the kinds of practices that the new General Data Protection Regulation, or GDPR, is supposed to prevent or punish.

The danger faced by Facebook going forward is two-fold: Complying with the rules means letting European users opt out of the highly targeted online ads that have made Facebook a money machine. Violating GDPR mandates could subject the California company to fines of up to 4 percent of annual revenues. Had the Cambridge Analytica incident happened after GDPR becomes law on May 25, it "would have cost Facebook 4 percent of their global revenue", said Austrian privacy campaigner and Facebook critic Max Schrems. Because a UK company was involved and because at least some of the people whose data was misused were almost certainly European, GDPR would have applied.

Shares in Facebook fell on Monday by 7 percent, their biggest drop since 2014, wiping nearly \$40 billion off the value of the firm founded in 2004 by Mark Zuckerberg. Schrems first raised concerns in 2011 about how easy it would be for third-party apps to harvest data from the unwitting friends of Facebook users. Facebook says it has tightened its controls on such practices since it discovered the alleged abuses by Cambridge Analytica in 2015. Schrems has founded a non-profit, called None Of Your Business (NOYB), that is hiring lawyers and exploring avenues for "strategic litigation" over GDPR privacy violations.

According to whistleblower Christopher Wylie, who formerly worked with Cambridge Analytica, the consulting firm used the data to help then-US presidential candidate Donald Trump to predict and influence choices at the ballot box. "The fact of the matter is that Facebook lost control of the data and wasn't adequately monitoring what third-parties were doing," said Scott Vernick, a partner and an expert in privacy and data security at the Philadelphia law firm Fox Rothschild.

Vernick said the maximum GDPR fine could come into play in an incident like this because of the number of users affected and what appears to have been inadequate monitoring of third-party data practices. Facebook said it changed its policies in 2014 to "to give much less data, especially about friends," Facebook Vice President Andrew Bosworth said in a Facebook post on Monday. "We conduct a robust review to identify potential policy violations and to assess whether the app has a legitimate use for the data," the company said on Monday. "We actually reject a significant number of apps through this process."

Compliance with GDPR rules could cost Facebook a significant amount of money. Deutsche Bank analysts in January estimated that Facebook's overall revenue could be lowered by 4 percent in a scenario in which 30 percent of EU users opt out of targeted ads, reducing the effectiveness and likely price of ads shown by 50 percent. The EU represents 24 percent of Facebook's ad revenue, so multiplying those figures, the bank said the regulations could have a 4 percent impact on overall Facebook revenue. "If this regulatory approach spreads to other countries or if GDPR ever becomes more onerous over the medium or long term, it would pose more risk," Deutsche Bank warned.

The firestorm over Cambridge Analytica has prompted a furious response from lawmakers on both sides of the Atlantic, raising the prospect of just such an expansion of privacy protections. Pivotal Research analyst Brian Wieser reiterated his 'sell' rating on Facebook after the weekend reports. Wieser expressed concerns that the company's regulatory risks would intensify and that its sophisticated use of data in advertising was in jeopardy.

A December 2017 survey found that only 21 percent of European consumers know what GDPR is. But after the regulation was explained, 82 percent of respondents said they plan to exercise their new rights, according to the survey of 7,000 Europeans conducted by Cambridge, Mass.-based Pegasisystems Inc., which makes sales and marketing software. PageFair, an Irish startup that helps website deliver non-targeted ads and avoid ad-blocking, estimates that only 3 percent of European social media users will opt-in to targeted ads, a potentially "devastating" blow for Facebook and other platforms, says Johnny Ryan, PageFair's head of ecosystem.

The quandary for Facebook is readily apparent from a video it began showing customers in February: It teaches people how to delete their accounts. GDPR gives users the right to access their data, delete it or transfer it to competing companies. Social networks will also need to regain Europeans' consent every time they want to use their data in new ways, including for targeted advertising. —Reuters



1968: Year of uprisings and dashed hope

The United States facing defeat in Vietnam. Moscow defied in Czechoslovakia. Student uprisings in Berlin, Paris and Mexico. Fifty years ago the world was rocked by revolt and dashed hopes. Here is a look back at the dramatic year of 1968.

Vietnam: US backs down

Washington had been pouring troops into Vietnam since the early 1960s to back the South Vietnamese against Viet Cong guerrillas supported by the communist North. But a major guerrilla offensive in early 1968 forced it to reassess. Starting from the Vietnamese New Year holiday Tet in late January, thousands of communist forces attack southern towns, including the cities of Hue and Saigon. The surprise coordinated assault is ultimately beaten back but it turns public opinion against US involvement in the conflict. By late March, US President Lyndon B Johnson announces a partial halt in US bombardments of the North. It is the start of a long process of US disengagement from Vietnam, which culminates with the fall of the Southern capital Saigon in 1975 and the reunification of Vietnam in 1976 under the North. Talks open in Paris in May, as the French capital is rocked by student protests.

Youths rebel

Anti-war demonstrations that had started in the mid-1960s on university campuses in the United States and Europe with chants of "US, go home!" take on a new dimension in 1968. Youths pour into the streets around the world to vent anger at the war and the capitalist status quo, but also to demand sexual freedom, feminism and - even then - protection of the environment. In Germany, the attempted assassination in April of radical leftist student leader Rudi Dutschke unleashes a riot in Berlin. The unrest spreads to dozens of German cities.

In France, students demonstrate in Paris on May 10, battling police through the night. Two days later, workers join in and a strike paralyses the country for weeks. President Charles de Gaulle dissolves the National Assembly on May 30 but his party comes back even stronger than before in June legislative elections. The social movement is echoed in Italy, Turkey and Japan.

Spring crushed

The winds of revolt reach communist Czechoslovakia, where Alexander Dubcek becomes head of the ruling party in January and tries to introduce reforms for "Socialism with a human face". But the Prague Spring is unacceptable to Moscow, which still dominates communist Eastern Europe. In August, it sends in tanks and soldiers, including from its communist allies, that crush hopes for change. Poland has its own "spring" in March, a student revolt that is swiftly repressed by the harsh communist regime. As several of the student leaders are Jewish, the authorities launch an anti-Semitic campaign which sees thousands quit the country.

Mexico Olympics, a stage

In Mexico, police crack down on protesting students just ahead of the October Olympic Games. Many are killed: Officials put the toll at 33, while foreign witnesses give a figure of between 200 and 300. There is more defiance at the Games: medal winners Tommie Smith and John Carlos raise their fists on the podium in a Black Power salute that puts the spotlight on discrimination against African-Americans.

Apple grabs 2-year lead in 3D sensing race

Most Android phones will have to wait until 2019 to duplicate the 3D sensing feature behind Apple's Face ID security, three major parts producers have told Reuters, handicapping Samsung and others on a technology that is set to be worth billions in revenue over the next few years. The development of new features for the estimated 1.5 billion smart phones shipped annually has been at the heart of the battle for global market share over the past decade, with Apple,

bolstered by its huge R&D budget, often leading. When the iPhone 5S launched with a fingerprint-sensing home button in Sept 2013, for example, it took its biggest rival Samsung until just April of the next year to deliver its own in the Galaxy S5, with others following soon after. The 3D sensing technology is expected to enhance the next generation of phones, enabling accurate facial recognition as well as secure biometrics for payments, gesture sensing, and immersive shopping and gaming experiences.

Tech research house Gartner predicts that by 2021, 40 percent of smartphones will be equipped with 3D cameras, which can also be used for so-called augmented reality, or AR, in which digital objects cling tightly to images of the real world. "This kind of functionality is going to be very important for AR," said Gartner analyst Jon

Erensen. "I think that is something where you don't want to get left behind."

According to parts manufacturers Viavi Solutions Inc, Finisar Corp and Ams AG, bottlenecks on key parts will mean mass adoption of 3D sensing will not happen until next year, disappointing earlier expectations. That means that China's Huawei, Xiaomi and others could be a total of almost two years behind Apple, which launched Face ID with its iPhone X anniversary phone last September. In particular, Android producers are struggling to source vertical-cavity surface-emitting lasers, or VCSELs, a core part of Apple's Face ID hardware.

"It is going to take them a lot of time, the Android-based customers, to secure capacity throughout the whole supply chain," said Bill Ong, senior director of

investor relations from Viavi, seen as the only major supplier of optical filters needed for the 3D sensing modules. "We may have a potential introduction of a second handset maker into 3D sensing at the end of this calendar year. (But) the volumes would be very low. In 2019 you clearly will see at least two or more android-based phones," he added.

Ong declined to name the company that might launch an Android phone with 3D face recognition this year but said that Viavi was in talks with all the major smart phone makers to supply the filters. Some Android phones with 3D sensing capabilities have hit the market in small numbers, such as the Asus ZenFone AR released last year, but those models didn't use the sensors for facial recognition like the iPhone X does. — Reuters

Assassinations

It is a dark year for the fight against the racial segregation plaguing the United States. Martin Luther King, a black pastor and Nobel Peace Prize winner, is assassinated on April 4 by a white escaped convict. His murder unleashes demonstrations across the country. Soon afterwards the president, Johnson, signs one of the last laws on civil rights demanded by the celebrated activist, an act that ends discrimination in housing. On June 5, another political assassination rocks the United States: presidential hopeful Bobby Kennedy is shot by a Palestinian immigrant. The younger brother of president John F Kennedy -

himself assassinated in 1963 - dies the following day.

Biafra disaster revealed

In 1968, the world awakens to the humanitarian disaster in Biafra, which is battling Nigeria to maintain the independence it declared the previous year. Images of starving Biafrans emerge and mobilise a new kind of international humanitarian effort, leading soon afterwards to the formation of Medecins Sans Frontieres (Doctors Without Borders). The 30-month conflict and a Nigerian blockade eventually claim a million lives, many from starvation. —AFP

Students, workers unite

A massive demonstration on May 13 marks the merger of the campus-based movement and parallel protest action by factory and farm workers, who have for months been demanding labor reforms. A 24-hour strike is called and students and workers march together in their thousands across the country. It is the students who made the first move, with some trade unions initially suspicious of, and hostile to, the young "leftists" who had come to "teach them a lesson". But dialogue leads to unity. "It is more fun at the Sorbonne than at the factory," a young man from worker-occupied Renault plant tells AFP. The strike is extended on May 14, the country coming to a standstill. Public transport halts; petrol pumps run dry. Over the next weeks, seven to 10 million workers down tools, in the biggest general strike that France has ever known.

Deadly turning point

The "night at the barricades" of May 24 is particularly violent with a young man killed in rioting in Paris, where buildings are sacked and set alight. A police commissioner dies in protests in the central city of Lyon. The barrelling movement abruptly reaches a turning point. The government and unions agree to a 35-percent hike in the minimum wage. But workers maintain their strike and the last occupied factories are only cleared by June, sometimes after brute police force, with two men killed at a Peugeot plant in the east. President Charles de Gaulle is slow to grasp the scale of the uprising. After demands that he resign, he announces a referendum, including on his continued role, but it meets with little reaction.

Back in charge

Then the president "disappears" on May 29. There are questions, confusion, some alarm. He resurfaces the following day with, it emerges later, reassurances of backing from a key French military command in Germany. Boosted, De Gaulle announces he will not resign and instead dissolves the National Assembly. Hundreds of thousands of people descend onto the streets in relief, a vast show of support after the weeks of uncertainty. A "massive crowd brandishing the French flag and banners" took over the Champs-Elysees avenue, chanting "Down with anarchy" and "France back to work", AFP reports. Elections for a new National Assembly on June 30 overwhelmingly vote back De Gaulle's party and its allies. Over the next weeks, France slowly returns to normal as work and transport resume and street demonstrations are called off. By mid-June the last protestors are evicted from the Sorbonne. There is eventually a referendum on De Gaulle's position, 10 months later. It decides 'no' and he steps down. —AFP

Iran denies harboring bin Laden's son

LONDON: Tehran denied yesterday allegations made by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman that Iran was harboring Osama bin Laden's son and supporting him as the new leader of Al-Qaeda. Decades-old animosity between Sunni Muslim kingdom of Saudi Arabia and revolutionary Shiite Iran has deepened in recent years as the two sides wage proxy wars in the Middle East and beyond, including in Iraq, Syria and Yemen. Iran's murky and fluid relationship with Al-Qaeda has contributed to tensions with Riyadh, which previously accused Tehran of backing Al-Qaeda and sheltering its members.

Prince Mohammed told CBS in an interview that Iran was protecting Al-Qaeda operatives, including some of bin Laden's relatives. "This includes the son of Osama bin Laden, the new leader of Al-Qaeda. He lives in Iran and works out of Iran. He is supported by Iran," he said. Iran's Foreign Ministry spokesman Bahram Qasemi called crown prince's comments a "big lie".

Hamza bin Laden was one of several bin Ladens who ended up in Iran after the September 11 attacks on New York in 2001. Documents recovered from his father's compound in Pakistan after he was killed in a

US raid in 2011 said Hamza was, at least for a period, held under house arrest in Iran. His current whereabouts are not known. Since Osama bin Laden's death, Al-Qaeda has been led by his former deputy, Ayman Al-Zawahiri. Nonetheless Hamza has issued a number of messages on behalf of the network in recent years, threatening further violence against the West. The group has been sidelined significantly by its rival and foe, the militant organization Islamic State.

Iran's Qasemi said that after the US invasion of Afghanistan began in 2001, some Al-Qaeda fighters had crossed into Iran illegally, but that they had been arrested and extradited to their countries of origin. These included bin Laden family members with Saudi citizenship. "Bin Laden's daughter was extradited to the Saudi embassy in Tehran," Qasemi was quoted as saying by Tasnim news agency. "Upon consultation with Saudi Arabia, other members of the Bin Laden family were deported through the same border they had illegally entered Iran," he added.

Shiite Iran and strict Sunni militant group Al-Qaeda are natural enemies on either side of the Muslim world's great sectarian divide. Yet intelligence veterans say that Iran, in pursuing its own ends, has in the past taken advantage of Al-Qaeda fighters' need to shelter or pass through its territory. In Sunday's interview Prince Mohammed also accused Iran of having recruited some of the Saudis who took part in the 9/11 attacks on New York, with the aim of creating a "schism between the Middle East and the West, between Saudi Arabia and the United States of America". — Reuters

Alwaleed 'forgives' Ritz ordeal, refuses to disclose settlement

RIYADH: Billionaire Saudi Prince Alwaleed bin Talal says all is forgiven after his three-month detention in an anti-corruption crackdown, dismissing speculation he had forfeited control of his assets in exchange for his freedom. The prince, dubbed the Warren Buffett of Saudi Arabia, was released from the now-notorious Ritz-Carlton hotel in early January after an undisclosed financial agreement with the government.

"I am not a person who is going to say I forgive but I don't forget. I say I forgive and I forget at the same time," Prince Alwaleed said in an interview with Bloomberg News published yesterday. "It's business as usual. We are going to continue investing in Saudi Arabia. I was born in Saudi Arabia. I will die in Saudi Arabia." The prince refused to divulge the terms of his release, which he described as a "confidential and secret agreement". The agreement had, however, left him free to function normally with "zero guilt" and "zero conditions", he said.

Alwaleed was the most high-profile detainee among 350 suspects rounded up since Nov 4, including business tycoons and ministers, who were held in Riyadh's luxury Ritz-Carlton. The prolonged detention of Prince Alwaleed, ranked among the richest men in the world, had sent shockwaves across a host of companies that count him as a major investor. A Saudi official told AFP

that the prince's release came after a monetary settlement similar to deals that authorities struck with most other detainees in exchange for their freedom. He revealed no figures.

Attorney General Sheikh Saud Al-Mojeb, however, has said that \$107 billion has been recovered in the crackdown in various forms of assets handed over that included property, securities and cash. Alwaleed also denied reports he had been tortured or subject to mistreatment behind bars. "I was never tortured," he said. "Actually, I was given the best service. Doctors used to come twice a day. We had the best service, best food, best everything."

The prince asserted that he was firmly in control of his Riyadh-listed Kingdom Holding company. "Some people in business community will be doubtful, will say: 'What's going on?' "However, I assure them that everything is normal and we are functioning as we were before and we welcome them to come here to see what we're doing in Saudi Arabia and life is back to normal."

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, the 32-year-old son of the king, is behind the unprecedented crackdown on corruption among members of the government and royal family, as he consolidates his grip on power. Prince Alwaleed told Bloomberg he would continue to invest in Saudi Arabia and that he held no ill will towards his uncle King Salman and his cousin Prince Mohammed. The prince said he was in discussions with the Public Investment Fund (PIF), which is chaired by the crown prince, about making joint investments inside the kingdom. Those talks began before his detention at the Ritz-Carlton and focused around putting his Four Seasons hotels in the PIF's Red Sea Project on the west coast and entertainment district outside the capital, he said. — Agencies

Govt withdraws KD 25bn debt...

Continued from Page 1

people. The session was adjourned without approving any law or report as lawmakers discussed a draft law for the establishment of a national commission for human rights amid constitutional disputes.

The exchanges began when opposition MP Mohammad Al-Mutair called for referring allegations against him to the public prosecution, saying that the issue relates to a payment he made to the Kuwait Investment Company. He said the payment was made by him in 2004 and the allegations were being repeated by "corrupt MPs who had received bribes in a bid to tarnish his image".

MPs Riyadh Al-Adasani and Shuaib Al-Muwaizri supported the call and said the entire issue should be

investigated by the public prosecution. At this point, Adasani clashed with Mutair, who accused him of obtaining his information from corrupt lawmakers and called on him to line himself up with those corrupt lawmakers. Adasani responded by denying the allegation and accusing Mutair of receiving his orders from former minister Sheikh Ahmad Al-Fahd Al-Sabah.

The exchanges developed into strong verbal clashes between Mutair and MP Saadoun Hammad, who accused each other of working for influential people. The issue was finally referred to the Assembly's public funds protection panel for investigation.

During the debate on the establishment of the human rights commission, MP Adnan Abdulsamad criticized a campaign against expatriates and said it was unjustified. He said the Assembly must not be part of the campaign because "we are in the National Assembly which concerns both expatriates and citizens". A number of lawmakers led by MP Safa Al-Hashem have been leading a campaign against foreigners working and living in Kuwait.

India confirms deaths of 39...

Continued from Page 1

When the area was excavated, Indian officials found many identification marks such as non-Iraqi shoes and Sikh religious bangles. "We felt these were our people... contacted a foundation working on the issue and shared missing workers' families' DNA samples with them for the identification process," the foreign minister told parliament. The Indian government had never received any ransom demand or any other direct communication from the kidnapers.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi expressed anguish and backed the foreign ministry, saying officials had "left no stone unturned in trying to trace and safely bring back those we lost in Mosul". "Every Indian grieves with those who lost their loved ones in Mosul. We stand in solidarity with the bereaved families and pay our respects to the Indians killed in Mosul," he tweeted late yesterday.

A special plane will bring 38 of the 39 bodies home after formalities are completed in Iraq. The DNA matching process is still incomplete for the final victim.

"Howsoever painful, the families will get the dead bodies after over three years. This will hopefully bring some closure to the grieving families," Swaraj said. Some relatives, however, criticized the government. "For the last four years the same minister has been telling me that we have traced their location and they're alive," Gurbinder Kaur, sister of one of the dead workers, told reporters in Punjab. "I only heard what the minister said on television. I have no other information about it. I am waiting for her to contact me but I don't know what to trust," she added.

Punjab state's chief minister Amarinder Singh described it as "heart-wrenching news". "My heart goes out to the families who had been living in hope since their reported abduction by ISIS in 2014. Prayers with all of them," he said, using another acronym for the Islamic State, Shashi Tharoor, a lawmaker from the main opposition Congress party, told journalists the government had not done right by the families. "If the government didn't have any details, why did they keep telling everyone they are alive? The government cheated the people (families) by giving them false hope for four years," he said. At a press conference later, Swaraj denied the government had given families false hope, insisting it had needed proof before confirming any deaths. The minister also could not say when the hostages had been killed. — AFP

Trump praises military sales...

Continued from Page 1

civilian casualties. A Saudi-led coalition is fighting to counter the influence of Iran, an ally of the Houthi militia, who deny any help from Tehran and say they are fighting a revolution against corrupt politicians and Gulf powers in thrall to the West.

The crown prince, in a rare foray into speaking English, said the Saudi pledge for \$200 billion in investments will end up at \$400 billion when fully implemented. He said a 10-year window for implementing the deal was already underway. "This is a signal that there (are) a lot of things (that) could be tackled in the close future and more opportunities. And that's why we are here today, to be sure that we've tackled all the opportunities and achieve it and also get rid of all the threats facing our both countries," he said.

The two leaders were also expected to discuss tensions with Iran, Riyadh's regional archrival and a country Trump has repeatedly criticized for its expansionist policies in the Middle East. Though the prince, 32, has won Western plaudits for seeking to ease Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil, tackle chronic corruption and reform the conservative kingdom, the severity and secrecy of an anti-corruption crackdown last November has unnerved some investors.

Trump, touching on the sensitive shaking out happening

inside the kingdom, said "some tremendous things have happened since your last visit to the White House". "You were the crown prince, and now you are beyond the crown prince," he said, before adding that he misses Mohammed's father, King Salman, and hopes to see him soon. Prince Mohammed's reformist message and the promise of Saudi investment in the United States has endeared him to the neophyte US president - 39 years his elder - and America's own political princeling Jared Kushner, Trump's son-in-law.

Trump and MBS - as he is known in Washington's corridors of power - have seen eye-to-eye on concerns about Iran's military activism, Middle East peace, relaxing Saudi Arabia's deeply conservative laws and over their love for big ticket mega-investments. "Saudi Arabia is a very wealthy nation and they are going to give the United States some of that wealth hopefully, in the form of jobs, in the form of the purchase of the finest military equipment anywhere in the world," Trump said.

Prince Mohammed is on a public relations blitz while traveling in the United States, with stops in New York, Boston, Seattle, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Houston. Trump and the crown prince underscored the strength of US-Saudi ties which suffered under the Obama administration. Saudi Arabia, a decades-long US ally, felt neglected by President Barack Obama's pursuit of a 2015 nuclear deal with Iran, Riyadh's regional rival.

As Prince Mohammed arrived in Washington, word trickled out that Saudi Aramco - the kingdom's energy behemoth - was cooling on the idea of a stock listing in New York, something Trump has publicly lobbied for. — Agencies



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump holds a lunch meeting with Saudi Arabia's Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and members of his delegation in the Cabinet Room of the White House yesterday. — AFP

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Sports

Ice princess Alina Zagitova eyes more gold, world records in Milan

Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu out with injury

MILAN: Newly-crowned Olympic champion Alina Zagitova will be looking to continue her golden run as the Russian starlet chases a first world title four weeks after lifting gold in Pyeongchang. The post-Olympic world championships will be without many of the medallists from Pyeongchang including Japan's Yuzuru Hanyu, the men's champion who is out with injury.

Fifteen-year-old Zagitova and German pairs skaters Aliona Savchenko and Bruno Massot are the only winners from South Korea competing this week. Two-time holder Yevgenia Medvedeva will not defend her title after her silver behind Zagitova in South Korea as the Russian nurses a recurring foot injury.

And after her fairytale Olympic gold Zagitova is now targeting world records in Milan starting today's short programme. "I want to improve my programmes to set up the new world records. But my main goal is to skate neatly and to show good results," said Zagitova, who could become the first Olympic women's champion to win worlds the following month since Kristi Yamaguchi in 1992.

Olympic bronze medallist Kaetlyn Osmond and former world silver medallist Satoko Miyahara of Japan will be among her challengers. Veteran Carolina Kostner, who finished fourth in Pyeongchang will carry home hopes, as she competes in her 14th world championships.

The 31-year-old has six world medals-including the gold in 2012 — going back to her first a bronze in 2005. Podium challengers also include Russia's Maria Sotskova, Wakaba Higuchi of Japan and American Mirai Nagasu.

The men's competition will also see a new world

champion with Olympic gold medallist Hanyu-the defending champion-withdrawing with an ankle injury along with former two-time winner Javier Fernandez of Spain.

Japan's Shoma Uno will be the favourite to move up from his silver medal last year after finishing runner-up at the Olympics. American Nathan Chen-the ISU Grand Prix final champion-is also a gold medal challenger after a fifth in South Korea despite landing five clean quadruple jumps in the free skating. China's Jin Boyang, Russia's Dmitri Aliev and Mikhail Kolyada and last year's world junior champion Vincent Zhou of the United States are also podium contenders.

Savchenko chases record

In pairs, Germany's Savchenko, who won five world crowns with now-retired Robin Szolkowy, will be chasing a record when she bids for a first world gold with partner Massot starting in Wednesday's short programme and culminating in the free skate on Friday.

Savchenko, who at 34 became the oldest female figure skating champion in Winter Olympic history, can tie Norwegian legend Sonja Henie for the female record of 11 world championships medals. Savchenko and Massot are the only pairs medallists from Pyeongchang in Milan with their top challengers Russians Yevgenia Tarasova and Vladimir Morozov. In ice dancing France's Gabriella Papadakis and Guillaume Cizeron are favourites to claim a third world title.

They took silver behind Canada's Tessa Virtue and Scott Moir in Pyeongchang after a "nightmare"



Alina Zagitova

wardrobe malfunction when Papadakis's costume became unclipped during the short programme. Virtue and Moir will not be competing with Italy's

former world champions Anna Cappellini and Luca Lanotte challenging at home and Americans Madison Chock and Bevan Bates. — AFP

“Main goal is to skate neatly and to show good results”

Preparations for late Sheikh Salem Al-Humoud tourney in progress

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The final preparations for the late Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah annual tournament in the skeet, trap, double trap, 10m air pistol and rifle and 50m rifle as well as archery are being prepared at the Kuwait Shooting Sport Club.

Deputy Technical Director for pistol and rifle Abdallah Barakat said the board of directors, technical and administrative departments are keen on having national referees that are ready to officiate events by holding lecturers and practical workshops at the start of each season, and this made them well known both locally and at the international level.

He said officials' efforts resulted in enhancing pistol and rifle shooters' performance and it is getting much better as results show from one event to the other.

On his part head of the shotgun referees Hamad Al-Rowaisan said Kuwait is well established in shotgun competition at all levels and arenas. He said that with the support of the board of directors and officials, regularly scheduled courses are held to refresh referees' skills and update them with any changes or amendments on the laws and



Shooters in action.

rules. He said Kuwait referees receive invitations to officiate international events due to their highly accurate performance. He said this is become possible due to the continued support from the Board Directors led by Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi. Director of the national shotgun teams Mohammad Mizyed Al-Daihani said the tournament of Sheikh Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah closes a season that was full of



Hamad Al-Rowaisan

achievements at all levels be it in organization or participating, as our shooters made significant achievements in all tournaments they participated and kept Kuwait flag flying high.

He said that we cannot forget the support by officials who remove all obstacles shooters face, and give the peace of mind to concentrate on shooting, and this enabled them to be among the top shooters worldwide.

The three officials thanked the political leadership in Kuwait headed by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and the government for their support of shooting and shooters.

Hamilton on top, but concern at grassroots level

BANBURY: Britain is on top of the world in Formula One, with Lewis Hamilton beginning his quest for a fifth championship in Australia this weekend, but there is concern at grassroots level.

With costs spiralling and some junior kart teams racing on six figure budgets, youngsters hoping to emulate Hamilton's rise from social housing to stardom are being priced out of contention.

Britain's Motor Sports Association says the number of MSA licence holders in karting-where future champions learn their craft-has fallen by 30 percent in the decade since Hamilton made his grand prix debut in 2007.

Less than 12 percent of the total are under the age of 21. "I don't think it's an insurmountable problem but it's certainly something we need to address quickly," David Richards, the former F1 team principal who was appointed chairman of the MSA in January, told Reuters.

"Otherwise, where will the next Lewis Hamiltons come from? "So it's going to be one of our big focuses now over the next couple of years at the MSA, looking at kart-

ing and how we can make it more accessible, how we can make it more affordable, how we can stop it becoming too bureaucratic..."

Richards, whose Banbury-based Prodrive motorsport and engineering company runs race programmes for manufacturers including Aston Martin, recognised that Britain was still well off compared to other nations.

The country has produced a string of top drivers, boasts world-class engineering and most of the Formula One teams are based there. Richards was concerned, however, about what could happen five or 10 years down the road. "If there are such big barriers to participation that we can't get the talent in the first place, that means we don't get the best people in," he said. "I really do believe that at the grassroots level today, those barriers do exist."

RIDICULOUSLY EXPENSIVE

Speaking at the launch of his Mercedes team's W09 car last month, Hamilton doubted it would have been possible for someone from his background, without money or connections, to come through now. "Right now racing is just ridiculously expensive," said the 33-year-old.

"I think it's much harder for anyone from a council estate in Stevenage to get to Formula One now. It's pretty much impossible because you don't have the money." Richards suggested electric karts, which can be electronically tuned to ensure they are evenly matched, could be one way to contain costs and level

the playing field. "We can look at ways in which we make sure that the karts are all equal and we don't end up with this ridiculous situation where people are buying 10 engines to find the best one," he said.

"We can't have motorsport accessible only to the rich," added the businessman. "This sport has got to be accessible to far more people."

The former Benetton and BAR F1 team boss, who was also a world rally champion co-driver and whose company ran the Subaru team that won titles in the 1990s, hoped to get more women involved at all levels and saw esports as something to be embraced.

The fate of the British grand prix was another concern, with Silverstone hosting the first Formula One championship race in 1950 but its future uncertain after 2019.

Circuit owners the BRDC have activated a break clause in their contract that means a farewell unless a new deal is struck. Richards, who has not been involved in negotiations so far, said the race was a key asset that the country should not let slip-particularly in the light of impending Brexit.

"I think the opportunity to use a flagship event like the grand prix to promote Britain at a time when we need to be promoting ourselves, our engineering expertise and our talent in this country, shouldn't be lost on government," he said. "We will do everything we can as a governing body to try and find a way of retaining it and are looking at the opportunities to do that." — Reuters

Battling Bottas looks for a step up Down Under

MELBOURNE: Valtteri Bottas knows he needs to step up his game from last season if he is to have any chance of keeping his place at Mercedes and has targeted a top-two finish at this weekend's season-opening Australian Grand Prix.

The 28-year-old won only three races last year despite getting a drive for the dominant Mercedes team alongside world champion Lewis Hamilton. With a host of other drivers coveting the Mercedes seat for next year when Bottas's contract is up, the Finn knows this term he has to produce - starting at Albert Park on Sunday.

"I do have big goals," he told reporters at the track yesterday. "I need to try and step up my game and want to start the season well here in Melbourne. Last year, I was third in the race so for sure need to do better than that."

Before last year's podium, Bottas

had a pretty poor record in Australia with 14th, eighth and fifth places in his three races for former team Williams. He failed to even start the 2015 race in Melbourne after suffering a back injury in qualifying which required an overnight stay in hospital.

"I haven't found it to be one of my strongest circuits in the past," he added. "You know, I've always had a bit of mixed results but that's something I want to change. I can't have bad races for myself."

"I want to be consistent in every place, so I think there were some positives in the race last year, so hopefully we can build on that and be quick in the qualifying as well." His team mate Hamilton has won only twice in Australia and finished second for the second year in a row last season on his way to his fourth world title.

Bottas is very much aware that his primary function as Mercedes chase a fifth successive constructors' and drivers' title double is to step into the breach should something go wrong for the Briton. "If Lewis is having a bad day, or bad race for any reason then I need to be able to fight for the win of the race," he said.

"So I'm just going to really focus on my performance, go day-by-day, session-by-session, lap-by-lap and try to be at my best every single time I'm on track." — Reuters

Irish will be at their Best for World Cup

DUBLIN: Rory Best, fresh from becoming only the third man to lead Ireland to a Five/Six Nations Grand Slam, looks set to captain them at the 2019 World Cup after signing a new contract on Tuesday. The Northern Irishman-who won his 11th Test cap in skipping the Irish to a convincing win over England on Saturday at Twickenham to seal the Grand Slam-agreed an extension that will see him through to the end of Ireland's campaign in Japan next year when he will be 37. Ireland head coach Joe Schmidt had joked after the England game that Best was "certainly getting faster on his Zimmer frame on the pitch". "I am in a very privileged position as captain of Ireland and Ulster to be involved with two groups of incredibly talented players," said

Best, who also captained the mid-week British and Irish Lions team on the tour of New Zealand last year.

"I feel I can continue to make a contribution to both Ireland and Ulster Rugby and am delighted to have extended my IRFU contract to the next World Cup." IRFU Performance Director David Nucifora said Best, who has been captain since the 2016 Six Nations after Paul O'Connell retired from Test rugby, fully deserved his new contract.

"Rory has been an outstanding leader for Ireland and continues to produce standout performances at the highest level of the game," Nucifora said in a statement issued by the IRFU.

Best, who is Ireland's third most capped player behind Brian O'Driscoll and Ronan O'Gara, has aside from the Grand Slam captained the Irish to some memorable moments including the historic win over world champions New Zealand in November 2016. Best made his Test debut against New Zealand in 2005 and has scored nine international tries. — AFP

Sports

Rabada boosts S Africa as Australia get pre-Test bowling boost too

Mitchell Starc recovers from sore calf

CAPE TOWN: South Africa will be boosted by the presence of their match-winning fast bowler Kagiso Rabada in the third Test against Australia starting tomorrow but the visitors also received good news when Mitchell Starc was passed fit.

With the series tied 1-1, Rabada, who took 11 wickets in the second Test in Port Elizabeth, has successfully appealed against a ban, while Starc, Australia's match-winner in the first Test in Durban, has recovered from a sore calf.

Conditions at Newlands are less likely to assist the fast reverse swing the pair achieved in the first two matches, but with a good covering of grass two days before the match, the pitch should offer more pace and bounce.

That could make the accuracy and persistence of South Africa's Vernon Philander and Australia's Josh Hazlewood crucial.

Philander has a remarkable record at Newlands, where he has taken 47 wickets in eight Tests at an average of 16.34 but Hazlewood will be playing in his first Test at the ground.

Philander has had mixed fortunes in two Tests against Australia at Newlands. He made a sensational debut in November 2011, taking five for 15 as Australia were bowled out for 47 in the second innings. He had match figures of eight for 78 in a South African win.

But he could only take one for 158 in the match when a pair of centuries by David Warner led Australia to a series-clinching win in March 2014, the most recent occasion on which a Test has been played at the ground so late in a South African season.

Rabada's availability after overturning a ban for brushing the shoulder of Australia captain Steve Smith in the second Test simplifies South Africa's selection,

allowing the hosts to name a squad of 17 players to allow for a variety of combinations.

Australian spin bowler Nathan Lyon said his side had "no dramas" with the decision to clear Rabada and were looking forward to facing him again.

"As Australian cricketers we always want to play against the best players in the world and KG (Rabada) is the number one bowler in the world," Lyon said.

South Africa's most likely selection debates are expected to be whether the extra bounce of Morne Morkel might earn him selection ahead of Lungi Ngidi or whether a fit-again Temba Bavuma should replace Theunis de Bruyn.

Australia are unlikely to make any changes to the team that has represented them in seven successive Tests. In addition to Starc, all-rounder Mitchell Marsh was passed fit after suffering a groin strain in Port

Elizabeth.

There will be a complete change of match officials for the last two matches. Andy Pycroft of Zimbabwe will take over from New Zealand's Jeff Crowe as match referee, while three English umpires will officiate in the middle and as television umpire.

Likely teams:

South Africa: Faf du Plessis (captain), Aiden Markram, Dean Elgar, Hashim Amla, AB de Villiers, Theunis de Bruyn or Temba Bavuma, Quinton de Kock (wkt), Vernon Philander, Keshav Maharaj, Kagiso Rabada, Lungi Ngidi or Morne Morkel.

Australia: Steve Smith (captain), Cameron Bancroft, David Warner, Usman Khawaja, Shaun Marsh, Mitchell Marsh, Tim Paine (wkt), Pat Cummins, Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Josh Hazlewood. — AFP



Philander has a remarkable record at Newlands

Aussie T20 star Agar signs for Middlesex for Blast

LONDON: Australian all-rounder Ashton Agar will play for English county Middlesex in their T20 campaign this season the club announced yesterday.

The 24-year-old—who has been capped four times at Test level and has made seven appearances in T20 matches for his country—will join up after the completion of Australia's five match ODI series and one off T20 fixture against England at the end of June.

He will be available to play in all fourteen South Group matches, and will remain with Middlesex until the end of the Blast, should qualification to the knock-out stages be secured.

"I'm thrilled and very grateful to have signed for Middlesex for the upcoming Blast campaign and look forward to the challenge of achieving success with them," Agar said in a statement issued by Middlesex. "It's a great opportunity to play with an exciting group of players coached by Dan Vettori, a person I always looked up to as a young spinner and cricketer in general. "I can't wait to walk out at Lords, one of the most beautiful grounds in the world - it's quite a privilege."

Angus Fraser, Middlesex's Managing Director of Cricket, said Agar will fill an important vacuum in the team. "In conversations with Daniel Vettori it became apparent that we required an all-rounder to strengthen our T20 side. Ashton Agar's name quickly came to the top of our list," said Fraser.

"Ashton is developing into a high-quality cricketer. "He has shown that he can bat at the top of the order and continues to be an effective bowler."

"He is available for the entire tournament and is a cracking young man," added the former England pace bowler. — AFP

Rashid insists that Afghan World Cup hopes still alive

HARARE: Rashid Khan insisted that "anything can happen" and that Afghanistan are still holding hopes of qualifying for next year's World Cup in England and Wales, after beating the United Arab Emirates by five wickets yesterday.

Rashid took five for 41 as the UAE were bowled out for 177 and team-mates Najibullah Zadran and Gulbadin Naib both hit unbeaten fifties to see Afghanistan home with more than 15 overs to spare in Harare. Afghanistan didn't carry any points into the Super Six round, but two successive victories mean they are now level with Ireland on four points. If they win their final match against the Irish on Friday convincingly and Scotland and Zimbabwe both lose their remaining games against the West Indies and the UAE respectively,

Afghanistan could still snatch one of the two places for the World Cup.

"Anything can happen," said Rashid. "In the Super Six, it's quite difficult for anyone to go directly (into the final). "Still now, a single team hasn't qualified. Everyone is in doubt. That is a good thing. We just need to win the last match and see what happens." It was the 19-year-old Rashid's fourth ODI five-for, taking him to a staggering 96 wickets in just 42 games.

"It feels good to take five-wicket haul and to contribute in the bowling department," he added. "I did well in the last matches as well, but I was unlucky in not taking many wickets. Today I took wickets, and it was a good day for me." After a poor start to the tournament with losses to Scotland, Zimbabwe and Hong Kong, Afghanistan have kept themselves in contention with wins over West Indies and the UAE. "In this Super Six, the target was to win all three matches and just see what happens," said Rashid. "Anything can happen in the match between UAE and Zimbabwe. We can only hope for the best."

Rashid carried the extra burden of captaincy in this tournament as regular captain Asghar Stanikzai recovered from an emergency appendectomy. While his bowling performances thus far have been inconsis-

Stokes shakes up England side for pink-ball test against NZ

WELLINGTON: All-rounder Ben Stokes' probable return is likely to be a major determinant in the makeup of his under-fire England team as New Zealand enters the pink ball era with their first day-night test at home at Eden Park starting tomorrow.

Stokes missed the 4-0 Ashes series loss in Australia while he awaited the outcome of an investigation into an alleged assault. The 26-year-old entered a plea of not guilty via video link with a Bristol court on March 12. England have retained much the same squad that lost the Ashes and Stokes' absence for that series was evident not just across the Tasman but when he returned to England's one-day side against New Zealand earlier this month.

He was a major influence in the field, with several stunning catches and diving stops while he provided additional fire-power as the batting all-rounder with 141 runs at an average of 47.

"It's just having him in the side," off-spinning all-rounder Moeen Ali told British media. "Knowing we've got a much stronger side when he's playing, it gives everyone else a good lift. "I know he's ready to go, and ready to perform, and give back to the team."

Stokes, however, has been battling a back injury sustained while diving when fielding during the one-day series and pending a fitness test may just play as a batsman, necessitating the need for an extra bowler.

Craig Overton and Mark Wood are then likely to be competing to join Chris Woakes, Jimmy Anderson and Stuart Broad.

Anderson and Broad's new ball partnership, however, looks like it could be broken with Woakes and Wood sharing the responsibility with Anderson in a warm-up match in Hamilton that was played with both a pink and a red ball.



DURBAN: File photo shows South African bowler Kagiso Rabada (C) celebrates after taking the wicket during play on the second day two of the first Test cricket match in Durban. — AFP



Rashid Khan celebrates after taking a wicket.

tent and haven't reflected his no. 1 ranking in the ODI and T20 formats, Khan insisted that the pressure of captaincy had not weighed him down. "I didn't feel any pressure when I was captaining and bowling," he said. "I just enjoy myself, whether I'm captain or not captain. I just try my best to enjoy myself."

Rashid was introduced to the attack fairly late after UAE won the toss and

decided to bat, but he quickly made an impact. He had opener Chirag Suri caught behind for a gritty 22, and then removed Mohammad Usman lbw as UAE slipped to 84 for five. Shaiman Anwar and Mohammad Naveed inspired a UAE fight-back, but Khan returned to the attack to dismiss both men, adding the final wicket of no. 11 Qadeer Ahmed to complete his five-wicket haul. — AFP



Ben Stokes

Anderson told Britain's Sky Sports the decision appeared to be because captain Joe Root was contemplating a future without the pair, who have a combined 922 test wickets between them and consistently opened the bowling for the last decade. "Obviously he's disappointed, he's a very proud bloke and we have opened the bowling for a number of years," Anderson said.

"He's bowled first change in the past and I can see what Joe wants to do with looking to the future but also having that experience coming on first change."

The 31-year-old Broad had a poor 2017 and took just 30 wickets in 11 matches last year at 38.80. However he has 399 test wickets and should become the 15th player to pass the 400-milestone at Eden Park. New Zealand's lineup will also undergo a shakeup with all-rounder Mitchell Santner ruled out for the next nine months due to knee surgery, while top-order batsman Ross Taylor is battling a

thigh injury sustained during the one-day series.

Santner had occupied the number six batting slot and was the team's first-choice spinner as New Zealand beat an under-prepared West Indies side 2-0 in December. The 26-year-old then produced arguably career-best form with the bat during the one-day series against England, scoring 216 runs in four innings at an average of 108 and his absence lengthens the home side's tail.

Either all-rounder Colin de Grandhomme or returning wicketkeeper BJ Watling will be forced up the order, with leg-spinner Todd Astle likely to bat at number eight if conditions do not tip the selection to going with four seamers.

Astle has played just two previous tests and bowled only four overs when he last played a test match against Pakistan in November, 2016. The second match in the series, a traditional red ball match, is at Hagley Oval in Christchurch from March 30. — Reuters

Win UEFA final tickets with FedEx

KUWAIT: FedEx Express, a subsidiary of FedEx Corp. and the world's largest express transportation company, is offering football fans in Kuwait the opportunity to win the trip of a lifetime to watch the UEFA Europa League final, including match tickets, flights and accommodation.

The competition, located at www.fedex.com/kw and open until March 25, simply requires visitors to answer three questions and a tie-breaker for a chance to win. FedEx customers can enter up to 100 times through the online competition by submitting valid FedEx Air Waybills. The first 50 customers to submit 10 valid Air Waybills will win a UEFA Europa League replica football.

Since 2015, FedEx has been a main sponsor of the UEFA Europa League, which sees 48 teams from European nations compete for the coveted Coupe UEFA.

Sports

Door remains wide open for England squad hopefuls

Friendly games with Netherlands, Italy might shed more light

LONDON: Less than two months before England manager Gareth Southgate names his provisional list of 35 for the World Cup finals only a handful of players can be reasonably confident of starting against Tunisia in Volgograd, Russia on June 18.

Tottenham Hotspur striker Harry Kane, providing he is fit, and Manchester City right back Kyle Walker look safe bets to get the nod. However, after that pretty much every position is up for grabs. It says much about the lack of 'world beaters' available to Southgate that so many players, many from unfashionable clubs, might still fancy their chances.

Friday's friendly away to the Netherlands and the home clash with Italy next Tuesday might shed more light on who will make the plane to Russia - or they might also pose more questions than they answer. Southgate's biggest headache in the coming months might be deciding who he can trust in goal. Joe Hart, who has 75 caps for England, was between the posts in nine of England's 10 qualification games, conceding only three goals. But erratic club form has seen him come under pressure from Stoke City's Jack Butland and Everton's Jordan Pickford, with Burnley's Nick Pope also in the frame.

Hart lost his place at West Ham United but returned against Burnley in the Premier League this month, only to make a howler in the 3-0 home defeat in which Pope

excelled at the other end. Butland and Pickford have many positive attributes but both made mistakes in Stoke's clash with Everton at the weekend and between them have conceded 101 league goals this season - something that would not have gone unnoticed by Southgate.

Pretty much every position is up for grabs

Former England defender Martin Keown thinks it might be a case of better the devil you know. "If they're not going to prove they're better than him, do you take that risk to play them," he told the BBC.

Not long ago, Chelsea skipper Gary Cahill appeared a shoe-in for England central defence, most likely alongside Manchester

City's John Stones. Cahill, however, was omitted for the upcoming friendlies having lost his place in Chelsea's starting lineup.

With Stones also on the bench at City, Burnley's James Tarkowski, Leicester City's Harry Maguire and Swansea City's Alfie Mawson will try to stake their claims against the Netherlands and Italy.

Despite not qualifying for the World Cup, both opponents will provide stern tests for an England defence that, despite a miserly qualifying campaign, is fallible against high calibre attacks. Tottenham's holding midfielder Eric Dier could also fit into Southgate's preferred 3-4-3 system as a defender and will be vying with Liverpool midfielder Jordan Henderson for the



England manager Gareth Southgate (left) with Harry Kane.

captain's armband in Amsterdam.

Spurs' Dele Alli is Southgate's preferred link man for Kane, but with his club team mate injured, Arsenal's Jack Wilshere and Adam Lallana can underline their credentials in the coming week, as can Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain and Jesse Lingard.

Up front, Marcus Rashford, Raheem Sterling and Jamie Vardy look favourites to join Kane in Russia although Arsenal's Danny Welbeck could nudge his way

back in with a strong finish to the season now he is back from injury. Southgate may face some agonising before naming his 23-man squad for Russia, but that is a position Dutch manager Ronald Koeman and Italy's stand-in coach Luigi Di Biagio would love.

For the Netherlands and Italy, matches against England will mark the first steps in a rehabilitation in time for qualification for the 2020 European Championship. —Reuters



Burgan Bank sponsors 9th Kuwait Open Tennis championship

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the highest contributors to progress and sustainability in different sectors across Kuwait, sponsored the 2018 Kuwait Open Tennis tournament that took place between 4-18 March 2018 at the Kuwait Tennis Federation in Al Yarmouk Sports Club. The tournament was held under the patronage of Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah and Head of the Kuwait Tennis Federation. Burgan Bank's support of the championship highlights its role in advancing the national sports community and the importance of recognizing local talents who also seek to pursue their hobbies.

The Kuwait Open Tennis tournament is the biggest championship organized by the Kuwait Tennis Federation. With participation of more than 450 players across eleven contests this year, the competing categories which included both men and women were singles Under-11, Under-13 and Under-17, players of the age group between 45 and 55 years, as well as women under 18, women's singles and diplomatic cadre.

Sports in Kuwait has taken center stage in recent years, creating a healthy and positive effect on local athletes who are seeking to be inspired to participate in local and global competitions. Burgan Bank has played a vital role in raising the profile of its Kuwaiti youth through its many sustainable sponsorships and partnerships. Burgan Bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



Sports festival of students training ends

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Under the patronage of Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh, assistant undersecretary at the Education Ministry Faisal Maqseed and in the presence of PAS Deputy Director for Planning and Development Hussam Al-Saleh, Director of Sports for All Department Hamid Al-Hazeem,

PR Director Khalid Al-Subaiee and other officials, the closing sports festival of students training centers in various sports was held. Officials led by Dr Fulaiteh inspected various playgrounds and looked at schools that participated in the various sports activities.

The closing ceremony was held at Yousuf Al-Shaheen hall at Kazima Sports Club. Dr Fulaiteh said he was satisfied with the success of training centers project for the fourth consecutive year in which 37 schools and more than one thousand students, as clubs selected 300 players, some of whom expected to join national teams.

He said that sports in Kuwait will only rise with the rise of school sports that students practice at an early age, as skills and talents can be discovered early, adding that the project will continue after the success it achieved. Fulaiteh thanked project officials led by Mahmoud Abul and wished them all success.



Kuwait Ninth Tennis Open tournament concludes

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: Kuwait Ninth Tennis Open Tournament came to conclusion Sunday under the patronage of President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations, Honorary President of Asian Tennis Federation Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The tournament which began March 4 saw around 280 players of various ages and nationalities participated. Prizes and medals were distributed during the closing ceremony by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber, Honorary President of Arab Tennis Federation Sami Al-Ibrahim, Behbehani, Burgan Bank Chairman Majid Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Tamdeen Group Mohammad Al-Marzouq, Director General of Public Authority for Sports Dr Humoud Fulaiteh and Senegal Ambassador, Dean of the Diplomatic Corps Abdou Lahad Mbacke.



The final match of the tournament was in the doubles category which saw Hassan Al-Mousa and his partner Abdallah Al-Mukaimi defeat Abdelhameed Jumaa and Abdelrahman Al-Awadi 7-6, 6-2. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber said the tournament success was at all levels especially after the large number of players in various age categories participated. He said the next championship will be held at the Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber International Courts Complex, adding "our dream will be fulfilled in getting the

sports facility that has international standards and specifications. He said work is going on according to schedule despite the suffering and obstacles we faced, since H H the Amir lauded the idea and a land was allocated and a contract was signed with the finance ministry in 1998 to be the permanent venue of the Tennis Federation.

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber thanked PAS, headed by Director General Dr. Humoud Fulaiteh for its support of KTF activities both in and outside Kuwait.

13 Ice princess Alina Zagitova eyes more gold, world records in Milan



14 Rabada boosts S Africa as Australia get pre-Test bowling boost too



15 Door remains wide open for England squad hopefuls



SAN ANTONIO: Davis Bertans #42 of the San Antonio Spurs handles the ball against the Golden State Warriors on Monday at the AT&T Center in San Antonio, Texas. — AFP

Green hurt, Warriors held to 75 points

Embiid scores 25 points to carry host Philadelphia past Charlotte

SAN ANTONIO: LaMarcus Aldridge took advantage of the absence of Golden State Warriors defensive ace Draymond Green to score 18 of his game-high 33 points in the fourth quarter Monday night, lifting the San Antonio Spurs to an 89-75 victory at AT&T Center in San Antonio. The Spurs' fourth straight win came after Green was inadvertently kneed below the belt by Danny Green in the second quarter, forcing him to the sidelines for the rest of the game with what was labeled a pelvic contusion. X-rays taken at the site were negative. With Draymond Green joining fellow All-Stars Stephen Curry, Klay Thompson and Kevin Durant out of action, the Warriors rallied from a 16-point deficit to take a 63-61 lead into the final period. The Spurs held the Warriors to 12 points in the final 12 minutes. Golden State's 75-point total was its lowest of the season.

CAVALIERS 124, BUCKS 117

LeBron James recorded his 16th triple-double of the season as host Cleveland bested Milwaukee. James scored 40 points on 16-of-29 shooting and added 12 rebounds with 10 assists. Kevin Love started and scored 18 points with seven rebounds in his first action since breaking his wrist in a Jan. 30 game against Detroit. Giannis Antetokounmpo led Milwaukee with 37, and Khris Middleton added 30. The Bucks shot 51.1 percent from the floor and made 8 of 31 3-pointers but were outrebounded

42-32 and had no answer for James.

HEAT 149, NUGGETS 141 (2OT)

James Johnson scored 10 points in the second overtime to lead Miami past visiting Denver. With the teams tied 131-all after the first overtime period, Johnson hit a layup, two treys and a dunk to lift the Heat to the win in their highest point-total game in franchise history. Johnson finished with a team-high 31 points. Kelly Olynyk had 30, Wayne Ellington 23 and Josh Richardson 17. Denver was led by Nikola Jokic with 34 points. Wilson Chandler had 26, Jamal Murray 23 and Will Barton 22. Miami's win coupled with Milwaukee's loss in Cleveland moved the Heat into seventh in the Eastern Conference playoff race, a half-game ahead of the Bucks.

76ERS 108, HORNETS 94

Joel Embiid scored 25 points and grabbed 19 rebounds to carry host Philadelphia past Charlotte. Though Embiid committed nine turnovers, he recorded his fourth straight double-double and his team-leading 37th of the season. Embiid also became the first Sixer to come up with at least 20 points and 19 rebounds in consecutive games since Charles Barkley in 1991. Ben Simmons had a triple-double consisting of 11 points, 15 assists and 12 rebounds. Simmons has dished out at least 10 assists in 19 games this season.

PACERS 110, LAKERS 100

Myles Turner scored 21 points and Victor Oladipo added 20 to power Indiana to victory over Los Angeles in Indianapolis. Turner, who made 9 of 15 shots, had missed the previous game with a left ankle sprain. Turner added seven rebounds. Oladipo hit 8 of 15 from the field. Rookie forward Kyle Kuzma was high for the Lakers with 27 points, making 10 of 18 shots. Brook Lopez scored 23 on 10-of-15 shooting and Julius Randle added 21 points and a team-high nine rebounds for L.A. Kuzma and Lopez each had eight rebounds.

PISTONS 106, KINGS 90

Blake Griffin posted 26 points, nine rebounds and seven assists to help Detroit knock off host Sacramento. Ish Smith scored 18 points, Reggie Bullock added 17 and Andre Drummond collected 16 rebounds and blocked three shots as Detroit won for just the fourth time in the past 17 games. Anthony Tolliver scored 12 points, Stanley Johnson added 11 points and three steals and Luke Kennard had 10 points. Buddy Hield scored 20 points for the Kings, who fell for the fourth time in their past six games. De'Aaron Fox tallied 16 points, Justin Jackson added 15 and Skal Labissiere had 10.

KNICKS 110, BULLS 92

A resurgent Tim Hardaway Jr. had 22 points to lead

New York to its first back-to-back wins since late January with a victory over visiting Chicago. Hardaway, who went through a cold streak in early February, topped 20 points for the fifth time in eight games (with 19 points in two of the other games), going 7-for-15 from the field with four 3-pointers. He had 17 of his points in the third quarter, when the Knicks broke the game open. Cristiano Felicio had 17 points and Antonio Blakeney and Bobby Portis both had 16 off the bench to lead the Bulls, who were without three of their most important players — Zach LaVine, Kris Dunn and Lauri Markkanen — as they lost for the third time in four games.

NETS 118, GRIZZLIES 115

Reserve Caris LeVert and Allen Crabbe scored 22 points apiece as Brooklyn held on to defeat visiting Memphis. LeVert produced his sixth game with at least 20 points while Crabbe posted his 13th showing of at least 20 points as the Nets won consecutive games for the first time since beating Miami and Detroit Jan. 19-21. DeMarre Carroll added 18 points while Rondae Hollis-Jefferson contributed 16 points and 12 rebounds for his 10th double-double of the season. D'Angelo Russell chipped in 14 on a night when he missed nine of 10 3-point attempts. Andrew Harrison led seven in double figures with 19 points for the Grizzlies, who lost their 15th straight road game. — Reuters

Cycling launches fresh bid to root out mechanical dopers

LAUSANNE: The International Cycling Union (UCI) will today unveil a beefed-up set of measures and an arsenal of methods to detect so-called mechanical doping.

When Frenchman David Lappartient took over the UCI in September, he promised to deliver a package of measures to tackle the menace of miniature motors in professional cycling, ahead of the current season.

Lappartient has appointed the 2014 Tour de France runner-up Jean-Christophe Peraud, a trained engineer, to manage a commission looking into the issue.

Femke Van den Driessche became the first competitive cyclist to be found using a motorised bike in 2016 at the junior world cyclo-cross championships, an offence which saw the Belgian national junior champion receive a six-year ban from the International Cycling Union. The suspicion is that tiny motors hidden in the frame of a bike are being temporarily switched on at key moments of races such as climbs or when riding into headwinds.

At a meeting in Geneva today Lappartient is set to unveil a series of fresh measures. "This problem is of key importance," says the UCI chief. "We will of course be using x-rays, thermal cameras and detectors and physical dismantling (of bikes)," Lappartient said. "But there are other technologies that can be used."

"We shall set to work in the world of research in order to create a method whereby television images will reveal sudden surges of power and detect anomalies right away," the UCI president explained.

The UCI has turned to the CEA, the French Alternative Energies and Atomic Energy Commission,

whose general director Gabriele Fioni will be present at today's meeting. "We will announce today an action plan for 2018 of research to develop an infallible and complete detection method for the future, and we will be working together with the CEA to develop this," the UCI said. American entrepreneur Bob Stapleton, the former boss of the Columbia cycling team, a current UCI executive and leader of the body's 'technological fraud' department, will also attend. Only a handful of other cases of mechanical fraud have been detected. In October 2017 a 43-year-old amateur cyclist was snared in a targeted sting operation and caught riding a motorised bicycle in a competition in France before admitting to using the bike in five races over the previous three months.

A 53-year-old Italian, Alessandro Andreoli, was also caught out in 2017 at a race in Italy following a tip-off to organisers. He admitted to using a motorised bike after a thermal camera had been used to identify a motor, but later claimed he was innocent. — AFP



PARIS: File photo shows President of the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI), David Lappartient poses during a photo session in Paris. The new president, has placed his fight against technological fraud as one of his priorities. — AFP

Business

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2018

18 Tunisair looks to new African routes as Europe battle brews**19** China's premier seeks to allay fears over global trade war**21** Al Shaya & Al Sagar organizes Peugeot test driving event at Box Hill College

BUENOS AIRES: Handout picture released by Argentina's Finance Ministry press office showing Finance Minister Nicolas Dujovne (center right) and the president of Argentina's Central Bank Federico Sturzenegger (center left), during the opening of the G20 First Meeting of Finance Ministers and Central Bank Governors, in Buenos Aires on Monday. — AFP

US, China flex muscles at G20 meeting

US tariffs on steel, aluminum to come into force Friday

BUENOS AIRES: Tensions over trade surfaced on the first day of a G20 meeting of finance ministers on Monday as the United States and China—whose differences are fueling fears of a trade war—flexed their muscles in the Argentine capital.

The meeting of the world's leading economies in Buenos Aires comes days before US tariffs on steel and aluminum are due to come into force on Friday for all countries except Canada and Mexico.

The main focus of the talks is the threat of a trade war between the US and its trading partners, particularly China and the European Union. And, as with every G20 meeting since US President Donald Trump's arrival at the White House, the drafting of the meeting's final statement has revealed differences between the world's two biggest economies.

"China and the United States are each flexing their muscles during the negotiations on the final text of the communique," which will be released at the end of the meeting on Tuesday, a source close to the talks said. "The communique is likely to show that there are tensions over trade." "The text won't look to hide these tensions, but it should however underline that a collective solution remains the best option," the source added. The US tariffs are essentially aimed at China, whose steel-producing overcapacity has hampered US producers for years, but Washington's European allies have also come under fire from Trump, who has particularly targeted German trade surpluses.

In recent days, Europeans have reaffirmed their unity amid a flurry of diplomatic moves to prevent steel and aluminum taxes leading to a trade war. "Dividing Europe cannot be in the interest of the American government, and it will not succeed," German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier told German business daily Handelsblatt before heading to Washington. But France's minister Bruno Le Maire waded into the tariff row at the meeting, telling US

Treasury Secretary Steve Mnuchin "very frankly" that the EU should be exempted from the US tariffs. "To tell you the bottom line, no one would understand if the EU, at the end of the day, is not globally exempt from this," he said, after meeting Mnuchin on the sidelines. He said he told Mnuchin that the tariffs "will hurt your own allies, in this case your own European allies, impact on the jobs of your allies, on the businesses of your allies." Analysts said the G20 are not going to resolve differences on trade policy this week, but may be able to find some common ground. "They may agree to work to reduce overcapacity in the steel industry," said Capital Economics in a note, after the issue was reportedly discussed in a weekend meeting between German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Chinese President Xi Jinping.

US and EU duel over taxes

However, the EU's consideration of a plan to tax the revenues of US tech giants Amazon, Apple Facebook and Google is further increasing tensions. Before the Buenos Aires meeting, G20 members failed to reach agreement on a united way forward, paving the way for unilateral action in the meantime. The European Commission in Brussels will present its own measures today in the aftermath of the

G20 meeting. France's EU Commissioner Pierre Moscovici sought to reassure Washington in a letter to Mnuchin. "These proposals are neither a response to a French request nor a response against the United States," Moscovici told AFP.

"We have been working on these proposals for months, in close consultation with the digital companies, Europeans, the OECD and our international partners, including the Americans." Nevertheless, Mnuchin issued a hands-off warning on Friday. "The US firmly opposes proposals by any country to single out digital companies," he said. In such a tense context, the final communique will avoid once again any references to "protectionism" and replace it with a more ambiguous commitment to resist "inward looking policies." — AFP



Threat of trade war main focus of discussion

Federal Reserve set to raise rates as Powell era begins

WASHINGTON: The Federal Reserve was set to begin its two-day policy meeting yesterday which is expected to produce the first of at least three increases in the key interest rate this year. With economic forces gathering that are likely to fuel inflation in 2018, the central bank could raise the benchmark lending rate four times to prevent the world's largest economy from overheating after a decade of recovery. That prospect has investors on edge as stock prices remain at dizzying heights.

Newly-installed Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell will hold his first press conference at the conclusion of the meeting Wednesday, after being sworn in last month and his words will be closely scrutinized for hints about the likely pace of rate hikes. The Fed also will update its forecasts for the economy and how aggressively officials think the central bank will have to act in coming years.

"The members will be looking at a variety of factors, but they can be summarized simply: Is growth strong and is inflation moving back toward its target?" econo-

mist Joel Naroff wrote in a client note.

"The answer on both accounts seems to be yes." Since the Fed last met in January, economic data have been mixed and forecasts for economic growth in the first quarter have dimmed. Weak data on retail and auto sales, durable goods orders and the housing market as well as soft construction spending and a widening trade deficit have disappointed in recent weeks.

As a result, forecasters at Morgan Stanley, JP Morgan Chase and the Atlanta Federal Reserve Bank lowered their estimates for GDP growth in the first three months of the year to under two percent—well below President Donald Trump's goal of three percent a year or higher.

First quarters generally run below trend, however, and the economy looks set to resume its healthy expansion later in the year. Surveys of the manufacturing and services sectors show a strong head of steam, while consumer confidence and business sentiment are at record highs. — AFP

EU seeks Facebook data breach probe

BRUSSELS: The European Union pushed yesterday for an urgent investigation into revelations that a firm working for Donald Trump presidential campaign harvested data on 50 million users. EU Justice Commissioner Vera Jourova, who has called the breach "horrifying", was meanwhile to seek clarification from the social media giant during a visit to the United States this week.

Facebook has faced worldwide criticism over the claims that Cambridge Analytica, the UK data analysis firm hired by Trump's 2016 campaign, harvested and misused data on 50 million members. The European Parliament's Brexit coordinator Guy Verhofstadt, a former Belgian premier, called for an investigation yesterday. "When is Mark Zuckerberg going to explain what happened with our data? The data breach is an absolute scandal," tweeted Verhofstadt, who heads the parliament's liberal group. "The European Parliament must start an investigation. I will keep you updated about our progress."



SAN JOSE: In this file photo, 2016 Facebook co-founder and chief executive, Mark Zuckerberg, speaks at an Oculus developers conference in San Jose, California. — AFP

The EU parliament's civil liberties committee on Monday sent a letter to Facebook asking it to testify before the body, a parliamentary spokesman told AFP. British lawmakers on Monday also asked Zuckerberg to give evidence to a UK parliamentary committee on the data row. Jourova's office said she had called on inde-

pendent European data protection authorities who are meeting in Brussels to probe the growing Facebook scandal. "Commissioner Jourova would encourage setting up a taskforce to investigate this case," as the authorities had done last year with a similar breach by cab firm Uber, her office said. — AFP

Aramco eyes local IPO, may spike overseas listing

NEW YORK: Saudi Arabia plans to sell shares of Saudi Aramco on a local exchange and may scuttle entirely an earlier plan for an overseas listing, The Wall Street Journal reported Monday.

Aramco had previously discussed an initial public offering in the latter half of 2018 and had been eyeing a listing on New York or another international exchange. However, the oil giant is now contemplating listing on a domestic stock exchange, viewing the legal risks of listing in New York as considerable, said The Journal, which cited unnamed officials as well as some public comments from top Saudi officials.

The report also said the earliest a listing could take place would be April 2019. The report comes as

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman prepares to meet with President Donald Trump, who has publicly lobbied for a US Aramco listing. The Aramco IPO had previously been seen as potentially raising \$100 billion, but higher oil prices have helped mitigate the need for additional funds. The Journal said.

The IPO forms the cornerstone of the petro-state's reform program to wean the economy off its reliance on oil revenues. Until 2014, oil income made up more than 90 percent of public revenues in Saudi Arabia. But following a protracted global oil slump, the kingdom is seeking to diversify its economy and privatize some state assets alongside new measures such as a value-added tax. — AFP

Business

China's premier seeks to allay fears over global trade war

Li says foreign firms will compete on equal footing

BEIJING: Voicing hopes that Beijing and the United States could avoid a trade war, Premier Li Keqiang told the close of the annual parliament session that China would open its economy further, so that foreign and Chinese firms can compete on an equal footing.

Fears of a global trade war mounted after US President Donald Trump's imposed hefty import tariffs on steel and aluminum earlier this month and, according to sources in Washington, the United States is set to unveil new tariffs specifically targeting China by the end of this week.

"I hope both China and the US will act rationally, and not be led by emotions, and avoid a trade war," Li told reporters in a televised news conference at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

Those hopes would be damaged if, as sources say, Washington goes ahead with plans for new tariffs on up to \$60 billion worth of Chinese technology and consumer goods annually, in a move to fulfil Trump's campaign promises to get tough on China and its trade practices.

Without going into detail, Li told his once a year press conference that China will improve access to its services and manufacturing sectors while further lowering import tariffs, including those on cancer-related drugs.

"China's economy has been so integrated with the world's, that closing China's door would mean blocking our way for development," Li said.

"China's aim is to ensure that both domestic and foreign firms, and companies under all kinds of ownership structure, will be able to compete on fair terms in China's large market."



Beijing vows to open up economy further

When Xi's top economic adviser Liu He visited Washington recently, the Trump administration pressed him to find ways to reduce China's \$375 billion trade surplus with the United States. "We are unwilling to see a big trade deficit, not only with the US," Li said. "We hope trade will be balanced."

Trade tensions

In his remarks, Li said that as China widens access to its markets, there will be no forced transfers of technology, and China will better protect intellectual property rights.

Trump says Beijing has forced US companies to transfer their intellectual property to China as a cost of doing business there, though China has insisted that technology transfers are not a condition of gaining market access.

A source who had direct knowledge of the Trump administration's thinking told Reuters last week that the tariffs expected to be announced this week would chiefly target information technology, consumer electronics and telecoms and other products benefiting from US intellectual property.

But they could be much broader and hit consumer products such as clothing and footwear, with a list eventually running to 100 products, this source said.

"We hope the US could ease restrictions on high-tech or high value-added product exports," Li said. "We will strictly protect intellectual property. We hope this important means for balancing China-US trade will not be missed, otherwise we will lose a chance to make money."

Economic targets

Before the press conference, Li introduced China's four new vice premiers, including Liu He, widely regard-



BEIJING: China's Premier Li Keqiang (C) speaks as attendants top up his glass during a press conference after the closing session of the National People's Congress in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

ed as China's new economic tsar. But adhering to protocol, it was the premier who did all the talking. Li said China was confident of achieving its 2018 economic targets. The government aims to expand its economy by around 6.5 percent this year, having easily surpassed the same target in 2017.

China's financial sector was in good shape and banks have enough provisions, Li said, adding that regulators

would take "resolute measures" to tackle financial risks.

The Chinese central bank was being given responsibility for drafting important laws covering the banking and insurance sector, with regulation over the \$42 trillion sector becoming more streamlined and tighter. And Li said he was willing to consider a formal visit to Japan, amid signs of improving ties between the two nations—Reuters

Uber self-driving car kills Arizona pedestrian

SAN FRANCISCO: Ride-sharing giant Uber said Monday it is suspending use of self-driving cars after one of the vehicles struck and killed a pedestrian in the US state of Arizona. The Uber vehicle was in autonomous mode, with an operator behind the wheel, when it hit a woman walking in the street in the city of Tempe late Sunday, according to the San Francisco-based company.

The victim was hospitalized and later died from her injuries. "Our hearts go out to the victim's family," an Uber spokesperson told AFP. "We are fully cooperating with local authorities in their investigation of this incident." Uber said it had temporarily halted its use of self-driving cars for testing or customer rides in Tempe, Pittsburgh, Toronto, and San Francisco.

Tempe is one of just two cities-along with Pittsburgh-where the ride-sharing firm has been using autonomous vehicles as part of its regular passenger. The vehicle operator in the driver's seat was the only person in the car when the accident occurred, Uber said. The car was in police hands on Monday. Sunday's accident was the first fatal self-driving car crash involving a pedestrian. The first deadly self-driving car accident was reported in mid-2016, and involved a Tesla.

Sheriff needed?

The Tesla Model S, cruising on "Autopilot," failed to detect a crossing tractor-trailer against a bright sky, killing the driver-who it later emerged had kept his hands off the wheel for extended periods of time despite automated warnings not to do so. Investigators at the US National Transportation Safety Board determined the probable cause of the Tesla crash was the combination of "a truck driver's failure to yield the right of way and a car driver's inattention due to overreliance on vehicle automation."

Autonomous-vehicle technology has been touted as having potential to save fuel, ease congestion, and to save thousands of lives by avoiding accidents due to human error. As with the fatal Tesla crash, however, the deadly Uber accident is likely to stoke concerns that the industry is moving too fast.

Google-owned Waymo this month began using its self-driving trucks to haul cargo bound for the internet giant's data centers in Georgia, while rival Uber announced the use of self-driving semi-trucks as part of an on-demand trucking service in Arizona.

In September, US Transportation Secretary Elaine Chao released new guidelines that permit more testing of self-driving cars. But America's non-profit Consumer Watchdog has warned that roads are being turned "into private laboratories for robot cars with no regard for our safety." The group on Monday called for a nationwide moratorium on testing self-driving cars on public roads while investigators figure out what went wrong



in the Uber accident. "Arizona has been the wild west of robot car testing with virtually no regulations in place," Watchdog technology project director John Simpson said in a statement. "When there's no sheriff in town, people get killed."

Car vision tests?

US states set their own rules for roads, and a handful have passed laws allowing self-driving vehicles. California and Arizona have been particularly encouraging, hoping that companies developing autonomous technology in those states will create local jobs and facilities devoted to a promising new industry.

Duke University robotics professor Missy Cummings is among the advocates of slowing down introduction of autonomous vehicles to avoid risk and get

proper regulations in place. While machines are better at staying vigilant and reacting to routine situations, human drivers have proven superior at handling unusual or unexpected situations, according to the professor.

Cummings reasoned that if people need to pass vision exams in order to get driving licenses, so should self-driving cars. She noted a case in which putting stickers on a stop sign could fool autonomous car sensors into seeing it as a sign indicating a speed limit.

"If we are still learning at this rate, and still uncovering major problems, it begs the question of why we are trying to put this technology into widespread use," Cummings told AFP. "I am a big fan of the technology, but it is very unproven and experimental." —AFP

China electric car execs call for policy support, end to protectionism

SHANGHAI: Delegates to China's annual meeting of parliament have urged the state to provide more policy clarity for the electric car industry and overhaul a local government subsidy program they say has distorted the market.

China is aggressively pushing new energy vehicles (NEVs) not only to cut smog in congested cities but also as a strategic industry that will help boost its firms' global presence. It is now moving to make producers more competitive by phasing out subsidies. But industry figures said in proposals submitted during this year's National People's Congress (NPC) that the state still must tackle "protectionist" local governments that dish out extra subsidies and draw up preferential policies aimed at excluding rivals.

"Although policy direction at the national level is clear, there are still factors at local government level that do not benefit the development of the NEV sector or the establishment of a fair, competitive market," said Wang Fengying, chief executive of China's Great Wall Motor Co Ltd and a delegate with Hebei province. She said local governments were using subsidies to protect their own firms rather than stimulate the sector as a whole, and local governments were also adjusting technological standards to shut out rivals.

NPC delegates also called for more consistent guidelines, nationwide technological standards for batteries as well as cars, and a more finely-tuned system of incentives. Current subsidies focused on production, rather than consumption, were counterproductive, some delegates added. China manufactured 794,000 NEV units and sold 777,000 in 2017, both the world's highest and up more than 50 percent on the year. Total NEV ownership in China reached 1.8 million, more than half the global total.

Executives said the future of the industry will hinge on improving performance and driver convenience, with battery life, recharging speeds and the availability of recharging stations among the major concerns. They urged government to raise technological thresholds and create incentives to improve battery range. Policies were also needed to encourage NEV sharing and to grant electric vehicles preferential road access to make them more attractive to consumers.

Protectionism

Preferential policies to encourage cleaner electric vehicles are not unique to China, with the likes of United States and Norway also offering a wide range of subsidies and incentives such as tax credits for buyers or exemptions from road toll and car registration charges. But in China, intense regional competition means that provinces go the extra mile to encourage production. Forced to abandon heavily-polluting industries, China's regions have turned to clean, state-backed sectors like electric cars for alternative sources of growth. Heilongjiang in the northeast was one of several provinces lobbying for more support for its NEV industry this year, saying it would help revive China's old rustbelt region. Anhui in eastern China also called for support to establish a NEV innovation center.

But industry delegates said progress has been impeded by regional efforts to promote local NEV champions. "The long-term existence of different types of local protectionism not only leads to low-quality and redundant production and inefficient, wasteful investment," said delegates from Anhui led by Zhou Fugeng, senior engineer with Jianghuai Automobiles. "It also severely reduces consumer choice, fragments the market, inhibits innovation and deviates from the state's original intentions to develop NEVs," they said. —Reuters

WTO members say US actions threaten trade body's authority

NEW DELHI: Nearly 50 countries expressed concern yesterday about the "serious threat" to the World Trade Organisation posed by unilateral trade actions, a pointed reference to US import tariffs that have caused a global outcry.

Delivering concluding remarks after a two-day informal meeting of the WTO members in New Delhi, Indian Trade Minister Suresh Prabhu did not refer to the United States by name.

He said members expressed deep concern over the "serious threat" posed to the credibility of the WTO, particularly on its principle of "non-discrimination" following the cycle of recent unilateral trade measures.

"In some interventions, the need for WTO members taking urgent and coordinated action to address the underlying issues was highlighted," Prabhu said.

"It was recognized by almost all the participants that it is the collective responsibility of WTO members to address the challenges facing the system and putting it back on a steady and meaningful way forward so that it continues to serve the people of our countries."

Calling for a united front to respond to the US tariffs, WTO Director General Roberto Azevedo said the recent unilateral trade measures have the potential to escalate tensions. "We heard today, many, many countries saying we have a concern over this. There is a potential of escalation. We should try to work in the framework of WTO," Azevedo said.

Separately, Prabhu told reporters that the United States was committed to the World Trade Organization, even though Washington has raised concerns about the functioning of the WTO and asked for reforms. —Reuters



WASHINGTON DC: Newly-named German Economy Minister Peter Altmaier arrives to speak to the press in front of the White House in Washington, DC, on Monday.—AFP

Trump enthusiastic about reaching NAFTA deal: Canada's PM

OTTAWA: US President Donald Trump appears to be "enthusiastic" about coming to an agreement on NAFTA, Canada's Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said on Monday amid signs the pace of talks is accelerating. Mexican and US officials earlier this month pushed to speed up the process to update the North American Free Trade Agreement, though Trump has repeatedly threatened to terminate the \$1.2 trillion trade pact unless Canada and Mexico agree to far-reaching US demands for changes.

Trump has also ratcheted up tensions by tying the suspension of new US steel and aluminum tariffs for Canada

and Mexico to a successful NAFTA renegotiation. Canada and Mexico say they view the two issues as separate. "We're renegotiating NAFTA, we've seen from the President he's enthusiastic about getting to a deal," Trudeau said during a panel discussion.

Negotiators are due to meet in the United States for an eighth round of talks in April. All three sides cite the need to avoid interfering with Mexico's presidential elections in July as a reason to move quickly. In a sign the tempo might indeed be picking up, Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland held a meeting with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer in Washington last week that lasted four hours rather than the scheduled 60 minutes, said a Canadian source familiar with the talks.

"He just came really ready to work... There is a growing willingness from the Americans and the Mexicans to try to do as much as possible over the course of the next few weeks," said the source, who declined to be identified given the sensitivity of the situation.

At the end of the seventh round in Mexico City on March 5, Lighthizer floated the idea of reaching an agreement "in principle" in coming weeks. —Reuters

Business

World stocks attempt recovery on eve of Fed

LONDON: World stocks nudged slightly higher yesterday, with gains capped by news of plunging German investor confidence and markets cautious on the eve of a US Federal Reserve decision, dealers said.

In Tuesday deals, the London FTSE 100 and New York Dow Jones indices recovered composure, while the Paris CAC and Frankfurt DAX saw earlier gains capped by news that German investor confidence plunged in March, reflecting fears of a transatlantic trade war.

US stocks inched higher yesterday with energy stocks leading the way thanks to a jump in oil prices but technology stocks remained on the defensive after the previous day's bruising selloff. Oil rose to its highest level so far this month, lifted by tension in the Middle East and the possibility of further falls in Venezuelan output.

That helped push the S&P 500 index up 0.9 percent. S&P 500 technology stocks, after a fleeting

advance at the opening bell, were back modestly in the red, adding to Monday's steep losses when Facebook Inc's data privacy issues hit the sector.

Investors are also focused on the Federal Reserve's two-day policy meeting where it is expected to raise interest rates by a quarter percentage point. But the bigger question is how aggressive the US central bank will be with monetary policy after that. Traders currently expect two more rate hikes later this year, although they said policymakers could set a hawkish tone by forecasting four increases in their "dot plot" projections.

The past nine years of US stock market gains have come with the Fed fostering an environment of easy money for the financial system, but it has begun gradually withdrawing that accommodation as the economy appears to be on healthier footing. Few economists expect new Fed chair Jerome Powell to alter the trajectory of the bank's anticipated rate path, but as it is his first meeting at the helm, investors have been somewhat on edge as the meeting approaches.

Aside from the Fed, the Trump administration is creating a stir with plans for up to \$60 billion in new tariffs

on Chinese imports by Friday, targeting technology, telecommunications and intellectual property, sources familiar with the matter told Reuters.

"There's much more volatility in this marketplace and that's because there two main fears - monetary policy mistake and trade policy mistake and on back-drop is a lot of chaos that comes out of White House," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B. Riley FBR in Boston.

A survey of 220 analysts and investors from the ZEW institute gave a reading of 5.1 points-a slump of 12.7 points from February's level and far below the 13.1 forecast by analysts.

The last time confidence among financial players was so low was in the months after Britain's June 2016 vote to quit the European Union.

London stocks meanwhile added 0.3 percent following data showing a slowdown in British annual inflation in February. "Small gains in UK and European markets have not put much of a dent in yesterday's losses," noted IG analyst Chris Beauchamp.

"Hopes of a rebound in stocks have faded, with little

enthusiasm evident this morning among buyers in the wake of yesterday's downward turn." News of a massive data breach at Facebook fuelled fears of a regulatory crackdown on the technology sector, sparking plunges worldwide on Monday.

The scandal at the social media giant further fuelled anxiety among investors already fretting over possible US rate rises and Trump's protectionist rhetoric, which has sparked talk of a global trade war.

Reports said Cambridge Analytica, the analysis firm hired by Trump's 2016 presidential campaign, stole data from 50 million Facebook user profiles to help design software to predict and influence voters' choices. "The scandal surrounding Facebook in relation to Cambridge Analytica has dented the tech sector as a whole, and the longer the story looms, the more pressure is likely to be applied to the industry," CMC Markets UK analyst David Madden said.

The news hammered tech giants, with Facebook plunging 6.8 percent while other household names were also hit-including Apple, Google-parent Alphabet and Netflix-by regulatory concerns.—Agencies

Daily Kuwait Stock Exchange Report			
Tuesday, March 20, 2018			
Index	Change	Closing	Last Closing
Price Index	▼ -18.94	6,705.89	6,724.83
Weighted Index	▼ -2.05	405.92	411.97
KSX 15	▼ -5.81	957.13	962.94

Volume	43,103,492
Value (KWD)	8,805,715
Number of Trades	2,440

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KD)	Trades	Last	Change
IPG	0.0	0.0	0	0	410	0	0.0
NAPESCO	850	832	80,842	51,436	25	832	▼ -18.0
ENERGIYH	27.5	23.0	40,051	921	4	27.5	▼ -2.5
GPI	28.3	27.0	95,100	2,604	8	27.1	▼ -0.7
ABAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	0.0	0.0

Security	High	Low	Volume	Value (KQ)	Trades	Last	Change
SOKOUK	42.5	36.0	331,000	13,225	11	41.9	▼ -2.4
XRE	52	51	1,154,435	59,031	29	52	▲ 0.5
URC	60	60	400	24	1	60	0.0
NRE	110	110	106,900	11,979	4	110	▼ -1.0
SRE	340	340	125,000	42,500	7	340	▼ -9.0
TAM	381	348	2,071	780	3	348	▲ 0.0
AREEC	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	148	0.0
MASSALEH	36.0	36.0	11,000	396	4	36.0	▼ -3.0
ARABREIC	33.2	33.0	524,963	17,719	9	33.0	▼ -0.2
ERESCO	33.8	33.8	1,500	51	1	33.8	▲ 0.3
MANAEE	714	710	468,000	332,837	22	710	▼ -4.0
INAJZZAT	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	92	0.0
INVESTORS	15.2	14.6	1,627,989	24,262	43	14.6	▼ -0.4
IRC	31.0	29.4	730,000	22,226	15	30.5	▲ 0.2
ALTUARIA	85	84	87,470	5,712	2	84	▼ -1.0
SANAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	32.0	0.0
AYANRE	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	71	0.0
AQAR	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	78	0.0
ALADARIA	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	26.5	0.0
MAZAYA	110	109	251,475	27,448	6	109	▼ 1.0
TUARA	60	60	30	2	1	60	▲ 8.0
TAAEMEER	28.9	26.5	9,010	236	2	26.9	0.0
ARKAN	80	77	420	34	2	80	▼ -1.0
ARGAN	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	160	0.0
ABYJAAR	19.2	19.0	1,084,700	32,188	28	19.0	▼ -0.2
MUNSHAAT	78	78	162,670	12,669	10	78	▼ -3.0
FIRSTDUBAI	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	46.8	0.0
KBT	54	53	115,600	6,154	10	54	▲ 1.0
REAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	1.871	0.0
MENA	27.8	21.1	12,000	305	7	27.7	▲ 2.4
ALMUDON	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	38.7	0.0
MARAKEZ	29.8	24.0	17,089	454	11	24.1	▼ -0.9
REMAM	0.0	0.0	0	0	0	39.2	0.0
Mashaer	56	56	187,000	10,322	11	56	0.0
Real Estate			7,811,782	626,676	239	1149.65	▲ 1.00

National Bank of Kuwait

Financial Markets

Daily Report

At 02:00 PM Previous Day

البنك الوطني NBK

Global Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Dow Jones	24,946.51	24,610.91	-335.60	▼	-1.35	-0.44
NASDAQ	7,481.99	7,344.24	-137.75	▼	-1.84	6.39
S&P 500	2,752.01	2,712.92	-39.09	▼	-1.42	1.47
Financial Times	7,042.93	7,060.68	17.75	▲	0.25	-8.16
DAX	12,217.02	12,246.36	29.34	▲	0.24	-5.20
CAC 40	5,222.84	5,232.62	9.78	▲	0.19	-1.50
Swiss	8,811.33	8,799.59	-11.74	▼	-0.13	-6.21
Nikkei 225	21,480.90	21,380.97	-99.93	▼	-0.47	-6.08
Topix	1,719.97	1,716.29	-3.68	▼	-0.21	-5.57
Hang Seng	31,513.76	31,549.93	36.17	▲	0.11	5.45
Straits Times	3,498.29	3,513.31	15.02	▲	0.43	3.24

MENA Stock Indices

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Kuwait	6,724.63	6,705.69	-18.94	▼	-0.28	4.71
Saudi Arabia	7,710.57	7,740.00	29.43	▲	0.38	6.70
Dubai	3,183.41	3,182.80	-0.61	▼	-0.02	-5.34
Abu Dhabi	4,542.53	4,525.42	-17.11	▼	-0.38	3.28
Bahrain	1,348.21	1,341.05	-7.16	▼	-0.53	1.24
Qatar	8,889.92	8,977.85	87.93	▲	0.99	4.30
Oman	4,832.54	4,781.92	-50.62	▼	-1.05	-5.23
Lebanon	1,173.45	1,177.51	4.07	▲	0.35	2.17
Jordan	2,217.09	2,220.59	3.50	▲	0.16	4.25
Egypt	17,172.13	17,148.06	-24.07	▼	-0.14	14.33
Morocco	13,164.74	13,164.92	0.18	▲	0.00	6.26
Tunisia	6,932.07	0.00	0.00	-	0.00	10.35

Global Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	US Dollar	Euro	Sterling Pound	Swiss Franc	Japanese Yen	Australian Dollar
Kuwait Dinar		12.3936	3.1190	2.6953	2.3676	3.1613	353.04	4.2992
Saudi Riyal	0.08069		0.2678	0.2175	0.1910	0.2551	28.49	0.3469
US Dollar	0.30130	3.7342		0.8121	0.7134	0.9525	106.37	1.2953
Euro	0.37102	4.5983	1.2314		0.8787	1.1733	131.03	1.5949
Sterling Pound	0.42236	5.2346	1.4018	1.1380		1.3356	149.14	1.8156
Swiss Franc	0.31633	3.9204	1.0499	0.8523	0.7487		111.68	1.3599
Japanese Yen	0.00283	0.0351	0.0094	0.0076	0.0067	0.0090		0.0122
Australian Dollar	0.23260	2.8828	0.7720	0.6270	0.5508	0.7353	82.12	

MENA Currencies Exchange Rate

Currency	US Dollar	Kuwaiti Dinar	Saudi Riyal	Bahraini Dinar	Qatari Riyal	Omani Riyal	Emirates Dirham	Egyptian Pound
US Dollar		0.30130	3.7342	0.3742	3.6275	0.3831	3.6576	17.5700
Kuwaiti Dinar	3.1190		12.3936	1.2459	12.0395	1.2716	12.1394	58.3140
Saudi Riyal	0.2678	0.08069		0.1002	0.9714	0.1026	0.9795	4.7052
Bahraini Dinar	2.6724	0.80521	9.9794		9.6943	1.0239	9.7747	46.9548
Qatari Riyal	0.2757	0.80306	1.0294	0.1032		0.1056	1.0083	4.8436
Omani Riyal	2.6100	0.78640	9.7463	0.9766	9.4678		9.5464	45.8579
Emirates Dirham	0.2734	0.80238	1.0209	0.1023	0.9918	0.1048		4.8037
Egyptian Pound	0.0569	0.01715	0.2125	0.0213	0.2065	0.0218	0.2082	

Global Interest Rates

Currency	1-Week	1-Month	3-Month	6-Month	1-Year
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.25	1.63	1.88	2.06	2.38
US Dollar	1.63	1.82	2.20	2.36	2.61
Euro	-0.42	-0.41	-0.37	-0.32	-0.25
Sterling Pound	0.48	0.50	0.60	0.71	0.92
Swiss Franc	-0.80	-0.80	-0.74	-0.65	-0.53
Australian Dollar	1.60	1.78	1.78	1.75	1.79
Japanese Yen	-0.02	-0.07	-0.05	0.02	0.11

Global Bond Yields

Country	2-Year	5-Year	10-Year	30-Year
United States	2.31	2.66	2.86	3.10
Europe	-0.59	-0.01	0.58	1.21
United Kingdom	0.83	1.17	1.45	1.77

Commodities

Index	Previous Close	Last Price	Change	Daily Performance %	Yearly Performance %	
Kuwait Oil	62.73	63.37	0.64	▲	1.02	-1.18
Brent	64.38	64.95	0.57	▲	0.89	-4.19
West Texas	62.02	62.00	-0.02	▼	-0.03	2.52
Gold	1316.56	1313.10	-3.46	▼	-0.26	1.06
Silver	16.30	16.29	-0.01	▼	-0.07	-3.97

Source: National Bank of Kuwait

Business

Al Shaya & Al Sagar organizes Peugeot test driving event at Box Hill College

Students, staff get a chance to test drive all-new Peugeot 3008, 5008

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automotive Imports Co WLL. Al Shaya and Al Sagar, the authorized distributor for Peugeot vehicles in Kuwait held an exclusive test drive event at Box Hill College on March 5 and offered students and staff a chance to test drive the all-new Peugeot 3008 and 5008.

During the event which lasted from 9 am to 2 pm, a range of models of Peugeot displayed, delicious catering was provided. The driving test program started at 10 am with the registration of the participants. After a simple explanation of the rules of driving and road safety, reviewing the features of vehicles and highlighting their latest technologies, students had the opportunity to experience Peugeot new models and to discover refinement, innovation, and performance of the Peugeot 3008 and 5008. The participants expressed their satisfaction about the elegant design and comfort features of 3008 and 5008. On the sidelines of the event, Peugeot Al Shaya & Al Sagar held a draw among students who have test driven the vehicles. Three winners left with a KD 200, KD 100 and KD 50 gift card from Al Shaya.

"The way for you to be convinced of your dream car and to make sure it feels right for you and your driving needs, is to test drive it," said Ashish Tandon, general manager of Kuwait Automobile Import Company. He added "Kaico will organize such an event to raise awareness among the youth on how to choose their next car". In support to the start of their professional life, Kaico offered Box Hill student's special offer on their next purchase from the large range of Peugeot: free service, free registration and golden fully comprehensive insurance.

3008

The new PEUGEOT 3008 offers a unique blend of style, comfort and road

handling. The spectacular PEUGEOT i-Cockpit is state of the art and gives new meaning to being in the driver's seat. It offers a more intuitive and intense driving experience, with a compact steering wheel, 12.3" head-up display and central capacitive touch-screen console with ergonomic piano keys to top it all off. The new PEUGEOT 3008 also offers a number of driving aids and other high-tech equipment, as well as seamless connectivity.

The all-new PEUGEOT 3008 has elegant headlights with black and chrome trim, which further emphasize the new modern, feline look. These headlights incorporate LED daytime running lights, and full LED headlights.

The 3D-effect LED claw lights at the rear of the vehicle make an instant impact. These lights are visible by day and at night and give the all-new PEUGEOT 3008 SUV its powerful identity and impressive presence on the road.

5008

The powerful and sleek design of the New SUV Peugeot 5008 makes an instant impact. Its stylish silhouette, Black Diamond roof and grille with chrome fins create an elegant design with spacious and generous dimensions. Whether you are alone or with passengers, your driving experience is taken to a whole new level on board the 7-seater SUV Peugeot 5008. With its three individual seats and third row of two seats that can be folded away and taken out, configure your new SUV 5008 just the way you like it, to ensure your passengers have a comfortable journey.

The new 5008 offers a number of features for the comfort of all on board: Body-hugging front seats feature an optional multipoint massage system, premium hi-fi system, large panoramic open-



ing glass roof, permanent connectivity with the Mirror Screen function and 3D connected navigation system. Cutting-edge advanced driver assistance systems make driving even safer with an arsenal of safety features: advanced grip control, hill assist descent control, automatic emer-

gency braking system, distance alert, lane keeping assistance, driver attention warning, smart beam assistance, speed sign recognition and speed suggestion, adaptive cruise control, blind spot monitoring, park assist and so-called Visio Park - which provides a 360-degree view.

Al-Ahleia Insurance renews partnership with LOYAC



KUWAIT: Al-Ahleia Insurance Company renewed its annual partnership with LOYAC as part of its social responsibility initiative and out of its strong conviction in the message it conveys. In this regard, LOYAC's board member, Fetouh Al-Dalali said that Al-Ahleia was one of LOYAC's basic partners and that insurance goes beyond life insurance to cover the future of the youth. She added

that Al-Ahleia had trained hundreds of young people over the years. Al-Ahleia board chairman Ayman Al-Shayea said that the company's most valuable investment was that in the youth which is the foundation of any development program.

He added that this was exactly the foundation for LOYAC's programs and that such a fact had motivated Al-Ahleia to enhance its support to voluntary works.

Is your superstar mum's smartphone overdue for an upgrade?

KUWAIT: Mums are known for being both selfless and self-conscious rather than recognizing the superstars they really are, so they're usually always the last ones to be part of a photograph or picture-perfect selfie moment. But what they do love is capturing memories with friends and family, and looking back on photographs they can cherish without the hassle of editing or searching for the best filter.

If your superstar mum's smartphone is long overdue for an upgrade, this is the perfect time to treat her to Huawei's new superstar smartphone, the nova 3e. The new launch is just in time for Mother's Day and presents the best mobile phone to commit beautiful photo memories to screen.

The nova 3e has an exceptional screen display, using Huawei's FullView Display 2.0. It gives a larger screen area for a better and more comfortable viewing experience, with a high resolution for rich and vivid colours when watching videos or taking photos. The vibrant viewing experience with greater colour and detail lights up great memories on screen.

The Huawei nova 3e also has revolutionary beauty modes to perfect each image, so that people look their absolute best. The beauty modes accentuate each person's natural beauty. From highlighting unique facial features to brightening skin tones and even softening lines, the nova 3e is ideal for capturing the perfect



memory of loved ones. The beauty modes even conceal acne, refresh and revive skin tone, brighten and enlarge the eyes, and makes eyelashes look thicker and more prominent. So this Mother's Day, give your superstar mum a superstar phone that makes even ordinary shots look glamorous and that captures beautiful memories with her loved ones.

US bans transactions with Venezuela's digital currency

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump on Monday signed an executive order barring any US-based financial transactions involving Venezuela's new petro cryptocurrency, as US officials warned that it was a "scam" by President Nicolas Maduro's government to further undermine democracy in the OPEC country.

"The 'petro' is a desperate effort by a corrupt regime to defraud international investors," a senior US administration official told reporters, strongly warning that any transactions in the petro digital currency would violate US sanctions. "Investing in the 'petro' should be viewed as directly supporting this dictatorship and its attempts to undermine the democratic order in Venezuela," the official added.

Trump's order bars "all transactions related to, provision of financing for, and other dealings in, by a United States person or within the United States, any digital currency, digital coin, or digital token," issued by Venezuela's government since Jan. 9, the White House said in a statement.

Maduro is hoping crypto-currencies will help Venezuela skirt US financial sanctions as it struggles under hyperinflation and a collapsing socialist economy. Venezuela rejected the sanctions, which it says are illegal under international law. "These unilateral sanctions ... constitute a new imperial aggression aimed at intensifying the attack on our people," the government said in a statement.

The order comes as the Trump administration is actively exploring options to sanction Venezuela's oil sector. On Feb 20, Maduro said the newly launched oil-backed petro cryptocurrency raised \$735 million in the first day of a pre-sale. Maduro also said last month Venezuela is preparing a new cryptocurrency called "petro gold" that will be backed by precious metals. Any US transactions of the Venezuelan petro conduct-



CARACAS: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro applauds during a press conference to launch a new oil-backed cryptocurrency called "Petro" at the Miraflores Presidential Palace on Feb 20, 2018. — AFP

ed before Monday's order would be considered on a case-by-case basis, a second US administration official said.

"We would base our licensing determinations on the facts and circumstances of those particular applications," the second official added. The United States is considered a crucial source of capital for securities and tokens because of the size of its economy and because many global financial operations at some point pass through US financial institutions. — Reuters

Swiss see risk to global economy from US protectionism

ZURICH: The Swiss government warned yesterday that US protectionism could undermine an economic upturn that prompted it to raise its growth forecasts for the export-led Swiss economy.

Like the Swiss National Bank last week, it also said the Swiss franc's welcome recent weakening against the euro could be reversed should tensions on financial markets erupt again, creating more headaches for exporters. The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) now expects the economy to grow 2.4 percent this year and 2.0 percent in 2019.

SECO said it thought short-term positive and negative risks for the global economy were balanced.

"The global upturn could last longer than expected and the Swiss franc could depreciate further in the context of continued good international economic conditions. This in turn would give the Swiss economy a further boost," it said.

"However, the protectionist measures

recently announced in the US pose negative risks for the global economy. "Although the tariffs recently imposed on metal imports are unlikely to affect the Swiss economy very much, any escalation to a trade war between the major economic zones would have a considerable dampening effect in the medium term," SECO said.

The risk of turbulence on financial markets remained, perhaps triggered by unexpectedly rapid normalization of monetary policy in the United States. "This could create further upward pressure on the Swiss franc," it said.

SECO cited as potential pitfalls political uncertainty in Italy, a lack of clarity about Brexit negotiations and unanswered questions about neutral Switzerland's ties to the European Union, the country's biggest export market.

"In Switzerland itself, there is also a risk that the construction sector will undergo a sharper correction than is forecast," it added. — Reuters

Technology

All-new Renault Talisman 2018 offers quality, safety and luxury

The new car revolutionizes the executive sedan class



By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Driving is always fun when you have a great car! Kuwait Times test-drove the French-made Renault Talisman for a few days, and the experience was different! Imagine driving a classy, high quality and luxury car - this is exactly the feeling one gets while cruising in the 2018 Talisman. One of many unique features Talisman is proud of is the built-in massage apparatus on the seats for relaxation. Driving while your seats are massaging you can be really comforting and soothing! Select the way you want to be massaged - hard or soft. It is electrically adjustable and can store up to six personalized positions.

The seat also has anti-whiplash head restraints to limit head and neck injuries. Known for its sporty edge and flair for luxurious rides, the Talisman can indeed satisfy one's craving for the best car. Designed to fulfill customers' drive for the perfect blend between comfort and high performance on the road, the dynamic sedan has almost all what is desired in a vehicle.

The Talisman also proud of its latest on-board multimedia systems - seamlessly built into the dashboard, the new, intuitive and connected touchscreen tablet lets you manage all the functions of your car. The touchscreen monitor serves as interactive media system while driving. Talisman also offers a keyless entry, and only a touch of a button and pushing the brake will start the car automatically. The key seems like nothing but an accessory!

Is it hard for you to parallel park? Let the Easy Park Assist Pack take control of the steering wheel. It measures the available space and works out your line of approach. All you have to do is manage the accelerator, brakes and gear. With front, rear and side sensors plus a rear-view camera, you have all-round, 360° protection against impacts with obstacles and other vehicles.

The car is available in multiple colors, but the red and black models are quite attractive and elegant. The interior is truly classy too. The Talisman includes power steering, power windows, electric mirrors with demisting function, central locking, keyless entry, automatic dual zone A/C with rear vents, automatic

wipers, steering wheel with audio/Bluetooth/voice command controls, multi-information display, fabric seats, 4.2-inch screen with AM/FM, USB, AUX, audio streaming via Bluetooth and voice command/recognition for phone.

Offering well-balanced and generous volume, the Talisman serves as the right fit for customers seeking optimal practicality, enjoyment and premium led experiences through its electronic damper control for outstanding on-road dynamics, a class-leading energy TCe 190 turbocharged direct-injection petrol engine, with 190hp on tap and fuel consumption and CO2 emissions of as low as 17 km/liter and 139 g/km respectively.

Also, reflecting the Renault Talisman's modern style is its elegant 18-inch wheel rims and refined chrome side fins with a lighting signature that weaves together the impermeable reach of the LED pure vision headlights and the distinctive style of the C-shaped daytime lights. The narrow taillights slice their way onto the trunk lid and not only embellish the derriere, but also give prominence to the Renault insignia.

With a special focus on personal well-being, the Talisman offers a spacious cabin with perforated, quilted leather seats that contain the class's most comprehensive list of functions (air conditioning, massage function, heating, ventilation) in the front and a boot of a capacity of 608dm3 (VDA) combined with a sleek exterior profile. Moreover, the vehicle contains an 8.7-inch touchscreen display, exclusive BOSE surround sound with 13 speakers, color head-up display, a 7-inch digital instrument display, easy hands-free trunk access, smart hands-free entry system and a comprehensive range of driver aids including hands-free parking and blind spot warning.

Ensuring a customizable and intense driving experience, the Talisman guarantees a conveniently accessible Multi-Sense technology and an intuitive R-link 2 tablet that offers a big-screen multimedia feel and full control of the on-board technology. Drivers can engage the car in accordance to their mood by simply choosing one of five different modes - from sport to comfort.



The fun-to-drive sedan comes at an affordable price

Health

Sudan, the world's last male northern white rhino, dies

There are only two females remaining alive

NAIROBI: Sudan, the last male northern white rhino, has died in Kenya at the age of 45, after becoming a symbol of efforts to save his sub-species from extinction, a fate that only science can now prevent. When Sudan was born in 1973 in the wild in Shambe, South Sudan, there were about 700 of his kind left in existence.

At his death, there are only two females remaining alive and the hope that in-vitro fertilization (IVF) techniques will advance enough to preserve the sub-species. Sudan, elderly by rhino standards, had been ailing for some time, suffering from age-related infections, according to his keepers at the Ol Pejeta Conservancy, where he lived under armed guard to prevent would-be poachers.

"His condition worsened significantly in the last 24 hours; he was unable to stand up and was suffering a great deal. The veterinary team... made the decision to euthanize him." Ironically, Sudan's death comes as hundreds of scientists and government envoys gather in Colombia at a biodiversity crisis summit for a global appraisal of mass species extinction.

"We on Ol Pejeta are all saddened by Sudan's death. He was a great ambassador for his species and will be remembered for the work he did to raise awareness globally of the plight facing not only rhinos, but also the many thousands of other species facing extinction as a result of unsustainable human activity," said Richard Vigne, Ol Pejeta's CEO.

Wiped out by poaching

Rhinos have few predators in the wild due to their size. However, demand for rhino horn in traditional Chinese medicine and dagger handles in Yemen fueled a poaching crisis in the 1970s and 1980s that largely wiped out the northern white rhino population in Uganda, Central African Republic, Sudan and Chad. A final remaining wild

1970s, Sudan "escaped extinction in the wild", when he was shipped to the Dvur Kralove Zoo in the Czech Republic. He did manage to sire two females while at the Czech zoo. His daughter Najin, 28, and her daughter Fatu, 17 are the two females left alive at Ol Pejeta.

Then in 2009, Sudan, another male and the two females were shipped to Ol Pejeta in Kenya, with high hopes that conditions similar to their native habitat would encourage breeding. However, despite the fact that they were seen mating, there were no successful pregnancies. Further efforts to mate a male southern white rhino with the females-and thus conserve some of the northern white genes-were also unsuccessful. The other male rhino, Suni, died of natural causes in October 2014.

Hopes pinned on science

However, scientists have gathered Sudan's genetic material and are working on developing IVF techniques to preserve the subspecies. Sudan gained worldwide fame in 2017 after he was featured on the popular dating app Tinder in an effort to raise money for the IVF procedure-which has never been done with rhinos.

The plan is to use sperm from several northern white rhino males that is stored in Berlin, and eggs from Najin and Fatu and implant the embryo-which will be created in an Italian laboratory-in a surrogate southern white female, according to Ol

“He was a great ambassador”

population of about 20-30 rhinos in the Democratic Republic of Congo died out during fighting in the late 1990s and early 2000s, and by 2008 the northern white rhino was considered extinct in the wild.

Modern rhinos have plodded the earth for 26 million years. As recently as the mid-19th century there were over a million in Africa. The western black rhino was declared extinct in 2011. In the



Najin (L) and Fatu, the only two remaining female northern white rhinos graze in their paddock on March 20, 2018 at the Ol-Pejeta conservancy in Nanyuki, north of capital Nairobi. — AFP

Pejeta. Sudan's "death is a cruel symbol of human disregard for nature and it saddened everyone who knew him," said Jan Stejskal, Director of International Projects at the Dvur Kralove Zoo. "But we should not give up. It may sound unbelievable, but thanks to the newly developed techniques even Sudan could still have an offspring."

Even if the subspecies can be revived, their natural habitat is still too dangerous for them, but Samuel Mutisya, head of conservation at Ol Pejeta, says there is still hope. "It will take many years to have a substantial population of northern white rhinos, and you can't predict what Central Africa will be like in 10 years." — AFP

Sick air travelers more likely to infect next row

MIAMI: People who fly on airplanes while contagious can indeed get other people sick, but the risk is mainly to those seated next to them or in the adjacent row. US researchers said Monday. The study in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences (PNAS) is the first to

quantify the odds of getting sick based on a passenger's proximity to an infectious person.

Researchers studied 10 transcontinental flights and meticulously tracked passenger movements to estimate the likelihood of common respiratory infections like severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and influenza, which are spread by tiny droplets in the air and on surfaces. "Passengers seated within one row and within two seats laterally of the infected passenger had an 80 percent or greater probability of becoming infected," said the study. "For all other passengers, the probability of infection was less than three percent." Researchers also warned that infectious crew members could infect an average of 4.6 passengers per flight. "Thus, it is imperative that flight

attendants not fly when they are ill," said the study led by researchers at Emory University and the Georgia Institute of Technology. The good news is that public health guidelines typically go even further, urging those seated within two rows of an infected passenger to undergo surveillance for certain contagious diseases.

"The authors' model argues that it requires you to be closer than previously reported-within one row and two seats of an infected passenger-as opposed to two rows regarding greatest risk of becoming ill on an airplane," said Lenox Hill Hospital emergency physician Robert Glatter, who was not involved in the study. "But the risk was significantly less if you were seated beyond two rows of an infected person who was coughing or sneezing. This

runs counter to traditional thinking that if a person coughs or sneezes anywhere in the cabin, they will infect the entire plane." The study, which was conducted during flu season, reported only one person actively coughing, "which is often not the experience of the flying public," Glatter added. Swabs for respiratory viruses on tray tables and seatbelts also showed no trace of viruses, suggesting that most illness is spread by sneezing and coughing, not droplets that fall on surfaces or the ground. "Meticulous attention to hand washing, or using hand sanitizer remain important ways to reduce your risk of becoming ill during air travel," said Glatter. "Traveling while contagious is "an important public health concern" given that three billion passengers per year travel by air, said the report. — AFP

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What's On

'International Tasting Bazaar' at Boulevard



International Tasting Bazaar event was launched in collaboration with the United Nations in 15-16th of March, 2018 under the patronage of HE Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al Hamad Al Sabah -Deputy Prime Minister & Minister of Foreign Affairs and Mohamad Hazzam Al Athaina, Mayor of Salmiya Area. The event title was "Public Space for Peace" and aimed to focus on the importance of having an open public space around Kuwait districts that is socially engaging and impactful.

The festival highlighted unique cultures and food specialties by the participation of embassies in Kuwait and small and medium. The festival was concluded with the diamond sponsorship of More Cafe, Glow and Pause. A gold sponsorship from: Arzan Financial Group, and a unique media sponsorship from: Kuwait Times, Al Anbaa and Al Rai Newspapers. Nevertheless, it was generously sponsored by Symphony Style Hotel Kuwait and MISAKI Flowers.

Adwan Al Adwani, Chairman of Al Salmiya Group for Enterprise Development Company, during his speech in the festival stated that organizing this initiative in Boulevard came as a result of its strategic location as public space at the heart of Salmiya, Kuwait's most vibrant district. Boulevard stands as an urban hub for recreational, social, commercial, natural, and touristic attractions in which visitors can enjoy an array of activities.

Al Adwani added that Boulevard Park was designed in a way to promote a unique offering of a mix of indoor and out-door services, activities, and facilities to empower families by contributing to the local commu-

nity and making it accessible convenient for both families and kids. It is considered Sustainable due to its multipurpose setting for park goers having a library, shopping, and restaurants with beautiful open out-door space creates a sense of holistic well-being for guests.

Dr Ameera Al Hassan Deputy of Zena Ali Ahmad, Director of UN-Habitat Regional Office has stated that this collaboration between the UN-Habitat and Boulevard aims to bring together people. It represents the culmination of the cooperation between private sector and UN organizations along with participation of all sectors of the society. Bringing in cultural diversity by enriching residents experience in a variety of international food dishes, representing different regions of the world, creating cross-cultural friendships. Dr Ameera further added, this is part of our mandate to update and inform all residents of Kuwait on the international pillars of what makes a community sustainable by promoting both the New Urban Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG).

Many schools participated in a competition to raise awareness of what is 'open public space'. Showcasing their creative talents in drawing a model of what they need and want in the sustainable "My Future City Model". James - CEO of More Cafe, (Diamond Sponsor for this festival) stated: "At MoRE we believe in communities, empowerment and creating the space for the public where people can gather and share quality time". He also announced soon opening More Cafe in Kuwait. With a breath taking and pleasant atmosphere with special services and an area that supports creativity, education and sharing.



Fawaz Al Munaya - Arzan Financial Group representative (Golden Sponsor for this Festival) has stated that "Arzan is always supporting events that serves and develops the urban community. And our participation in this event was driven by our faith in such initiatives that push the society. It is worth mentioning that Arzan Financial Group offers its customers financial and consultancy services in addition to investment tools that

help them meet global market requirements. Arzan Group offers a wide variety of business lines such as financing and investment to satisfy the needs of organizations, small and medium companies and other valuable clients and investors". Al Munaya finally thanked Al Salmiya Group for Enterprise Development and UN- Habitat for their great efforts in organizing this initiative.

On the occasion of Mothers' Day, NBK organizes flower workshop

On the occasion of Mothers' Day, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) organizes a flower workshop at the Children's Specialty Hospital and the Stem Cell Therapy Unit, as part of its social responsibility program towards the patients. Titled "Design a Flower Pot", the workshop was organized in collaboration with "Al Flowers" team who provided the children with ready shaped pots and flowers to arrange and dispose. Children chose their favorite flowers and arranged them in the way that expresses their creativity and the passion towards their mothers, doctors and nurses.

NBK Public Relations, Assistant General Manager, Manal Al Mattar congratulated the mothers, doctors and nurses on the occasion of mothers' day. "This workshop is a creative way to celebrate this day. It's an approach where children express love and devotion to their closest and dearest persons who are always with them during their therapy".

"NBK is committed to support its Specialty Hospital Project by promoting initiatives and events all the year round. This is part of our social responsibility that we are proud to be upholding to satisfy our beloved children", added Al Mattar. The event come as part of a fun-program dedicated to the children at the NBK Specialty Hospital and extends all year long. This Fun Program includes a library, a reading corner, storytelling sessions, activities for the medical staff such as the "nurse of the month", interactive expression day, fun events and a movie night



activity 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.

It's worth mentioning that NBK's Stem Cell Therapy Unit is the first children's bone marrow transplant center in Kuwait. The new center is the largest corporate social responsibility donation in Kuwait and will expand the hospital's ability to treat children with cancer and blood diseases.



GUST introduces Gus the mascot

Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) yesterday officially unveiled its new university mascot during a festive celebration. Attending the event, university students, faculty, and staff were all anxious to finally meet Gus for the first time. The mascot, Gus, is representing GUST's athletics teams in their competitions as of this academic year. The new mascot was introduced during an entertainment-driven event, where those in attendance participated in a unique activity. Students, staff, and faculty were asked to post pictures on their personal social media accounts using the hashtag #GUSTFALCONS.

Published photos were then printed and pinned to a large mosaic board placed at the center of the campus, resulting in a grand picture of Gus the mascot. Attendees also had the chance to admire a real life falcon up close. GUST President, Prof Donald Bates, said, "The falcon mascot is the culmination of an enthusiastic adventure initiated by our students, athletes, and staff, upon the request of our university's leaders. It reflects the sense of belonging and loyalty among our university's community, and will represent our drive and determination for victory and achievement."

Gus the mascot was officially announced in September 2017. He has been selected and designed fully by the university, and his name chosen by the university's students, staff and faculty through a submission and voting

process which ended last week. The Athletics Department at GUST coaches six different teams for both male and female athletes, including: basketball, volleyball, football, squash, tennis, and table tennis. All teams have designated experienced coaches to ensure that the athletes' talents are honed and developed.

Over the years, GUST's athletics teams have been competing, and winning, local and international competitions. GUST's women's football team triumphed and won first place at the annual University Athletics Association of Kuwait (UAAK) championship last year. This comes as the second UAAK football title win for GUST's women in three years. While the GUST men's football team attended and won 1st place at the 2017 Belgrade International University Sports Tournament (BeST) in Belgrade, Serbia.

The tournament brought together 17 different universities from across Europe, Russia, Asia, and the Middle East to compete at an international level, experience different cultures, and forge international friendships. The university is participating again at BeST this year with three teams, and Gus will be there to cheer them on. GUST is known locally and regionally for its state of the art sports facilities, which include a fully equipped gym, swimming pool, squash courts, basketball court, and FIFA-accredited outdoor soccer field.



TV

AM MOVIES ACTION

01:05 American Ninja II: The Confrontation
02:45 Nick Of Time
04:20 Invasion Day
06:00 I Am Number Four

19:00 Friends
19:25 Friendszone
19:50 Real Husbands Of Hollywood
20:12 Friends
20:35 Friends
21:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah

Discovery Family

00:30 Destroyed In Seconds
00:55 Destroyed In Seconds
01:20 The Next Great Magician
02:10 Risking It All

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:50 Untamed & Uncut
01:45 The Jeff Corwin Experience
02:40 My Tiny Terror
03:25 Predator's Prey

BBC FIRST

00:40 Our Girl
01:35 Death In Paradise
02:30 Top Of The Lake
03:25 Doctors
04:55 Doctor Who

03:00 Nextworld
03:50 Ultimate Survival
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made

ID

00:50 Kiss Of Death
01:45 House Of Horrors: Kidnapped
02:40 Alaskan Temptress: People Magazine Investigates

crime & investigation network

00:00 It Takes A Killer
00:30 It Takes A Killer
01:00 Evil Up Close
02:00 Evil Up Close

03:50 Nextworld
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
06:20 Destroyed In Seconds

Disney HD

00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binnie And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:05 Nightcap
00:30 Teachers
00:55 This Is Not Happening
01:20 Why? With Hannibal Buress

03:50 Nextworld
04:40 Tanked
05:30 How It's Made
06:20 Destroyed In Seconds

00:10 Sabrina Secrets Of A Teenage Witch
00:35 Binnie And The Ghost
01:00 Hank Zipzer

Disney HD

06:25 Binnie And The Ghost
06:45 Disney Mickey Mouse
06:50 Rolling With The Ronks
07:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir

23:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
06:00 Lollirock

Disney Junior

00:00 Mission Force One
00:30 PJ Masks
01:00 PJ Masks
01:30 Art Attack

00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street

Discovery Channel HD

00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Street Justice: The Bronx
01:50 Goblin Works Garage
02:35 Cuban Chrome

03:20 Extreme Engineering
04:05 Flying Wild Alaska
04:50 Dirty Jobs
05:35 How Do They Do It?

Discovery Channel HD

00:15 Alaskan Bush People
01:05 Street Justice: The Bronx
01:50 Goblin Works Garage
02:35 Cuban Chrome

Disney XD

06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:25 Milo Murphy's Law
06:50 Right Now Kapow
07:15 Mech-X4

04:35 WAGs
05:30 Celebrity Style Story
06:00 Mariah's World

ITV CHOICE

00:10 Who's Doing The Dishes?
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street

NAT GEO WILD HD

00:20 Original Fight Club
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Valley Of The Wolves
02:50 Monster Fish

ITV2 HD

00:00 Dogfights
01:00 Cities Of The Underworld
02:00 Brad Meltzer's Lost History
03:00 Hangar I: The UFO Files

HISTORY HD

00:20 Swamp People
01:05 Swamp People
02:00 American Pickers
02:50 Biggie: The Life Of Notorious B.I.G.

NAT GEO people HD

00:15 Chasing The Sun
00:45 Tripping Out With Alie & Georgia
01:10 Miguel's Tropical Kitchen
01:40 Chasing Time

14:30 Croatia's Finest
14:55 Croatia's Finest
15:25 Mega Food
16:20 Migue's Feasts

NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC CHANNEL HD

00:10 Yukon Gold
01:00 Wicked Tuna
02:00 Air Crash Investigation
03:00 Engineering Connections

NAT GEO WILD HD

00:20 Original Fight Club
01:10 Monster Fish
02:00 Valley Of The Wolves
02:50 Monster Fish

nick HD

00:12 Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles
00:36 Rabbids Invasion
01:00 Rabbids Invasion
01:24 Sanjay And Craig

nick jr.

00:15 Kid-E-Cats
00:21 Shimmer And Shine
00:44 Sunny Day
01:06 Max & Ruby

nick jr.

00:15 Kid-E-Cats
00:21 Shimmer And Shine
00:44 Sunny Day
01:06 Max & Ruby

05:36 Shimmer And Shine
05:59 Wallykazam!
06:22 Zack & Quack
06:33 The Day Henry Met

AM MOVIES HD

00:05 Monsters University
02:45 Queen Of Katwe
05:00 Brother Bear 2
06:45 Moana

AM SERIES HD

00:00 Riverdale
00:55 Secret City
01:50 Claws
02:40 The Voice

AM MOVIES HD

00:05 Nina Forever
01:45 Mr. Accident
03:20 Sam
05:10 Big Trouble

AM MOVIES HD

COMEDY

00:05 Nina Forever
01:45 Mr. Accident
03:20 Sam
05:10 Big Trouble

AM MOVIES HD

00:35 Catcher: Cat City 2
02:15 Nur And The Dragon's Temple
03:35 The Snow Queen 3

02:25 London Has Fallen
04:15 The Magnificent Seven
06:40 The Flintstones

DISCOVERY SCIENCE

00:40 Mythbusters
01:30 How Do They Do It?
01:55 Food Factory
02:20 Extreme Engineering

STAR GOLD

01:20 Akira
03:00 Akira
03:55 Koffee With Karan
05:00 1, Me Aur Main

STAR GOLD

01:30 Heartbreakers
03:30 The Singing Detective
05:15 Kinky Boots
07:15 Malena

STAR WORLD HD

00:00 Project Runway
01:00 Project Runway
02:00 Grey's Anatomy
03:00 Married At First Sight

TLC

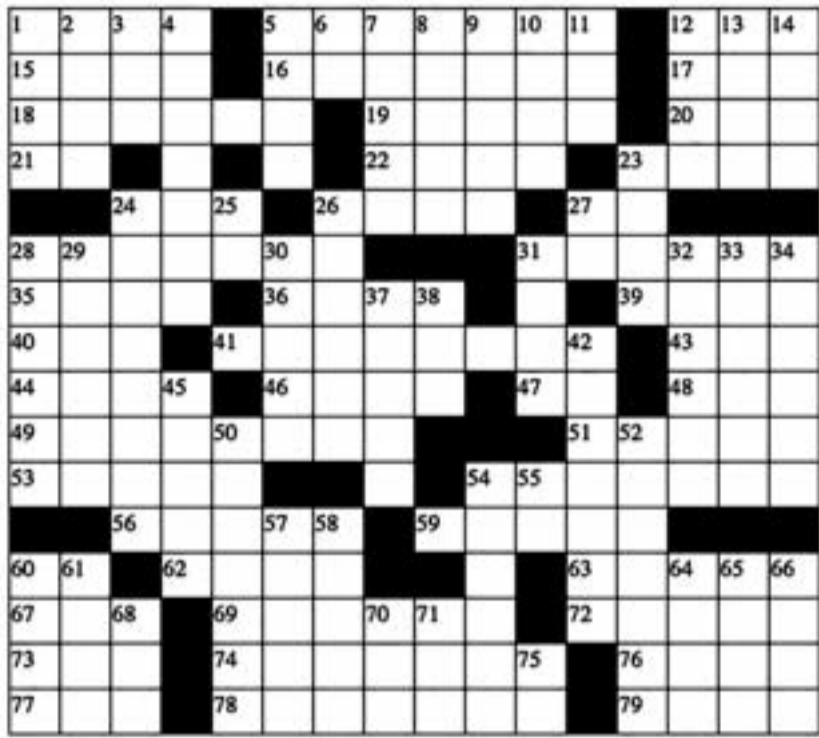
00:20 Too Ugly For Love?
01:05 My Extreme Excess Skin
01:50 Bizarre ER
02:35 90 Days To Wed: Before The 90 Days

AM SPORTS 1 HD

00:30 World Of X Games
01:00 Pro Bull Riders
02:00 WWE Afterburn

Stars

CROSSWORD 1863



ACROSS

1. A wad of something chewable as tobacco.
5. A member of the British order of honor.
12. (computer science) A computer that is running software that allows users to leave messages and access information of general interest.
15. A port in western Israel on the Mediterranean.
16. A member of the Caddo people who formerly lived in the Dakotas west of the Missouri river.
17. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.
18. (slang) Merchandise that is shoddy or inferior.
19. One of the proteins into which actomyosin can be split.
20. The cry made by sheep.
21. A state in east central United States.
22. United States poet and critic (1899-1979).
28. A family of birds coextensive with the order Rheiformes.
35. A genus of Mustelidae.
36. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
39. United States film actress who appeared in films by D.W. Griffith (1896-1993).
40. A change in the electrical properties of the skin in response to stress or anxiety.
41. Resembling a tiger in fierceness and lack of mercy.
43. A zodiacal constellation in northern hemisphere between Cancer and Virgo.
44. Goddess of fertility.
46. A Bantu language spoken in southern Zaire.
47. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
48. (nautical, aeronautical) Situated at or toward the stern or tail.
49. Proboscis worms.
51. Wine and hot water with sugar and lemon juice and nutmeg.
53. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
56. Perfume esp. with a censor.
59. United States chemist (1839-1903).
60. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
62. Horny plate covering and protecting part of the dorsal surface of the digits.
63. Eaten as mush or as a thin gruel.
67. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
69. A sudden spasm.
72. Tropical American tree bearing a small edible fruit with green leathery skin and sweet juicy translucent pulp.
73. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
74. Very small species of shrubs of southern hemisphere.
76. A gonadotropic hormone that is secreted by the anterior pituitary.
77. An interest followed with exaggerated zeal.
78. Containing no liquid or actuated without the use of liquid.
79. Type genus of the Nepidae.
3. A federation of North American labor unions that merged with the Congress of Industrial Organizations in 1955.
4. Any fern of the genus Woodsia.
5. Cook and make edible by putting in a hot oven.
6. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
7. A long noosed rope used to catch animals.
8. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
9. Italian chemist noted for work on polymers (1903-1979).
10. A member of an Iroquoian people formerly living on the south shore of Lake Erie in northern Ohio and northwest Pennsylvania and western New York.
11. Of a light yellowish-brown color n.l.
12. A small cake leavened with yeast.
13. Any of various edible seeds of plants of the family Leguminosae.
14. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
23. Scottish writer of rustic verse (1770-1835).
24. An iron-clad vessel built by the Confederate forces in the hope of breaking the blockade imposed by the North.
25. A bachelor's degree in religion.
26. An association of sports teams that organizes matches for its members.
27. An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
29. Someone who communicates disapproval by hissing.
30. Departing or being caused to depart from the true vertical or horizontal.
31. Greenish-yellow pear.
32. Any plant of the genus Filago having capitate clusters of small woolly flower heads.
33. Being of use or service.
34. A mountain in the central Himalayas on the border of Tibet and Nepal (27,890 feet high).
37. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
38. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
42. A bag used for carrying money and small personal items or accessories (especially by women).
45. Being one more than six.
50. Elongate very slender water scorpions.
52. British sculptor (born in the United States) noted for busts and large controversial works (1880-1959).
54. The first month of the civil year.
55. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
57. The ninth month of the civil year.
58. Leave or strike out, as of vowels.
61. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
64. Belonging to some prior time.
65. A speech defect that involves pronouncing s like voiceless th and z like voiced th.
66. An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
68. A unit of absorbed ionizing radiation equal to 100 ergs per gram of irradiated material.
70. (Norse mythology) God of war and strife and son of Odin.
71. The corporate executive responsible for the operations of the firm.
75. A public promotion of some product or service.

DOWN

1. A closed sac that develops abnormally in some body structure.
2. German chemist who was co-discoverer with Lise Meitner of nuclear fission (1879-1968).

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, you could find yourself lending council to someone younger, or this could indicate that you will figure out exactly where to go in your own life. You could need to feel like the star of the show just now as feelings of insecurity waver through your day. You would like for your contributions to be noticed and praised. Your accomplishments are many; you are creating important memories that will cause you to smile for a long time. Something you do for someone will show them how much you care for them. The realm of possibilities is wide open to love and artistic energy. You could have problems working with groups just now whether for work or play; your quiet nature could be your most positive asset, Aries.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, your thoughts could be well defined and rich today. Your opinion will affect the opinions of others because you are so well regarded. You have the gift of gab and will use it to benefit a project. You will spend your day working with others toward a new way of doing something highly technical or difficult to understand. You could feel a need to be center stage and in control. As you take care of someone they will return the favor with graciousness and love. You may have warm feelings for an elderly person. When reflecting on your life you will recognize the hard work and efforts paid off very well; others follow your example. The more you work on effecting change and improvement, the more reward you will have for you and yours, Taurus.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, your frame of mind and sense of the energy of your environment may not be great for you. Someone is enamored with your quirks and unique way of doing things; use these to progress toward your goals. You will want to make your feelings known and you want them to be respected. You want to produce items or events that will move people and warm their sentiments and smiles. During this cycle, you could overreach by giving too much to someone who happens to be a taker; your choices sometimes do harm to you, try hard to do your best not to fritter away what you have worked so hard to get. You have a deep need to take the spotlight now. Make wonderful memories tonight with a younger person or loved ones, Gemini.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Cancer, you are creating memories that will last a lifetime with people you love and like. The timing could be perfect for a domestic or professional move you have thought about for some time. You could join with someone you know very well to build a new business or maybe even buy one. You love to help others when you can, especially those with sincere need. Your mind is open to cosmic mysteries and secrets of life. You will feel connected and in sink with those you come into contact with. You will shine at a gathering where you could be called on to make a toast. A close love relationship takes on more depth this evening. This is the perfect evening for bonding and romance, Cancer.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Leo, a new environment will encourage your inventiveness, discoveries and confirmations. Your ability to use what you've learned is what you've longed for; the opportunity has arrived for success! Someone could be bitter and jealous of your success and will try to start a disagreement. Letting people see your true, delightful personality will pave the way for other opportunities in the career realm and possibly the personal as well. You will reach the end of some project that has been a challenge from the beginning. You will let someone see your gentle side as you encourage them through a very trying issue. You may distance yourself from someone who just cannot let bygones be bygones; this is for the best and you should feel relieved not guilty, Leo.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Virgo, it will seem as though you sail down the road with nothing but green lights today. You could find yourself alone at the office or home as you go through the day with zero interruptions or irritations; enjoy this rare occurrence! You will draw the attention of a client or friend who finds your energy uplifting. You will say something kind to a stranger and unknowingly make a big difference in his or her day. There is no better karma than doing a kindness to strangers and those who could never repay you. A new client or customer will make you shine in front of the boss or a supervisor later today. This whole day is about putting your thoughtful efforts to work for your company. This day will be a fond memory for some time to come, Virgo.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, through your new work duties your spiritual mindset will shift to a more intellectual level. It is not enough to know certain ways and beliefs exist; you want to experience them fully. You may seek ways to help more with less effort; work smarter not harder and reach more goals. There could be an entire area of people or animals sustained due to your quick thinking and ability to get things started and finished. You may consider someone shady because of the way they do things; a secretive aura surrounds him or her. Your mind may race with different thoughts and considerations. Tonight practice meditation or lose yourself in a new book that appeals to your sense of mystery; sleep well as you enjoy sweet, sweet dreams, idealistic Libra.



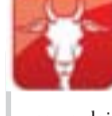
Scorpio (October 23-November 18)

Scorpio, seeing things in a much too positive light is not good for this time. Be realistic when making plans for expanding your business or family. This is not a time for taking risks, especially when you are the only one who sees positive outcomes in this situation. You may have to act quickly to turn on a dime and change directions. A new technical gadget has your attention later today; new ways to make your job easier are always welcomed. Something or someone you absolutely cannot resist could show up later; be careful! Trying times are good for sharpening our self-control. You will see that anything you heart desires can be yours but to realize certain goals we must sometimes hope and plan in silence to keep the energy unblemished, Scorpio.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, during this period of time associations deepen and grow stronger; this is important to you now. Work is concentrated and steady; just the way you like and need it. You will notice that you somehow avoid mishaps or illness and you will realize it is because of your guides and angels. The energy of reaching many people with your message is revealed in this cycle; this could involve broadcast, internet or publishing. You enjoy meeting new people and forming new alliances to make something better. You may want to be in the limelight as you make an announcement. Your attitude will take you a very long way. Things could happen so quickly you become confused, just refuse to be muddled and strive to see things clearly, Sagittarius.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, heed your conservative tendencies when you want to walk on the wild side. This is not the time to gamble or take chances on anything you're doing now. Chaotic, needy behavior on your part will cause you to clash with those around you. Try to avoid this as the negative result could be far reaching. You want people to be grateful for what you do for them. You will have difficulty in getting your point across to someone later today. This could be a cycle of creating memories that will last a lifetime; this could indicate a serious romance, either a new one or rekindling an old one. The heavens indicate you could find yourself in many new places, meeting new people. Kick back and go with the flow, Capricorn.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Aquarius, you want to be noticed and appreciated for your contributions and results. You could find that you have lost an important source of information or product purchase. Someone disagrees with you publicly and a nasty scene could be made. Your taciturn nature will play well with this and you will be shown to be right. You may do well taking risks right now in real estate and financial investments. You will receive a communication from an admirer. Conditions could be favorable now for building your legacy. This is a period of your life you will regard as productive and most successful. This evening may bring interesting information to you via television, film or the written word; pay attention, Aquarius.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, this could be one of those day when the simplest things seem to be off track; you put things down and can't find them or the red lights appear at every intersection. There may be a disagreement with more than one person, or perhaps someone else is not responding as you want. Daydreaming will get you through the day even if someone thinks you should be more aware and down to earth. You may break through a complicated situation when the root of the problem becomes clear. You may be asked to house/pet sit for a short time. Exercise is what you need; find a heated pool or walk if the weather permits. You could share a wonderful meal with loved ones where you discuss and elderly person. Your monetary stash is growing steadily, Pisces.

Wordsearch Puzzle

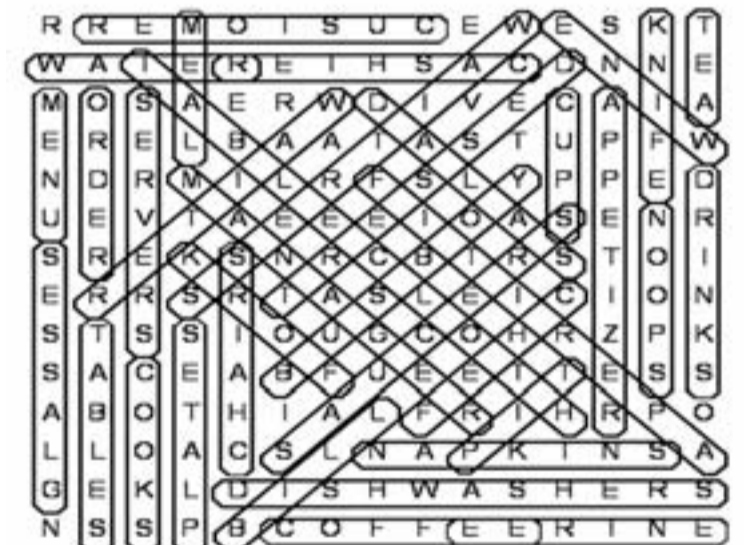
Roller Coasters

Find and circle all of the roller coasters that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 20 letters spell a Ernest Hemingway quotation.



Yesterday's Solution

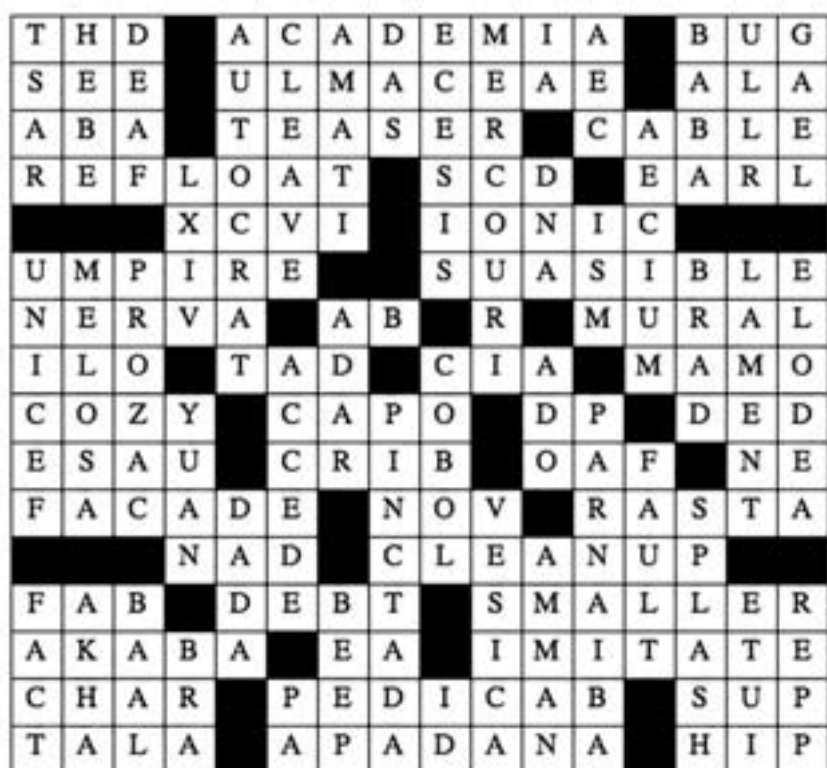
Restaurant



- | | | | |
|-----------|-------------|---------|------------|
| APERITIF | CUPS | MANAGER | SPOON |
| APPETIZER | CUSTOMER | MEAL | TABLECLOTH |
| BILL | DESSERT | MENU | TABLES |
| BUSBOY | DISHWASHERS | NAPKINS | TEA |
| CASHIER | DRINKS | ORDER | TIP |
| CHAIRS | ENTREE | PLATES | WAITER |
| CHEF | FORK | SALAD | WAITRESS |
| COFFEE | GLASSES | SAUCERS | WATER |
| COOKS | KNIFE | SERVERS | WINE |

The hidden word is: RESERVATION

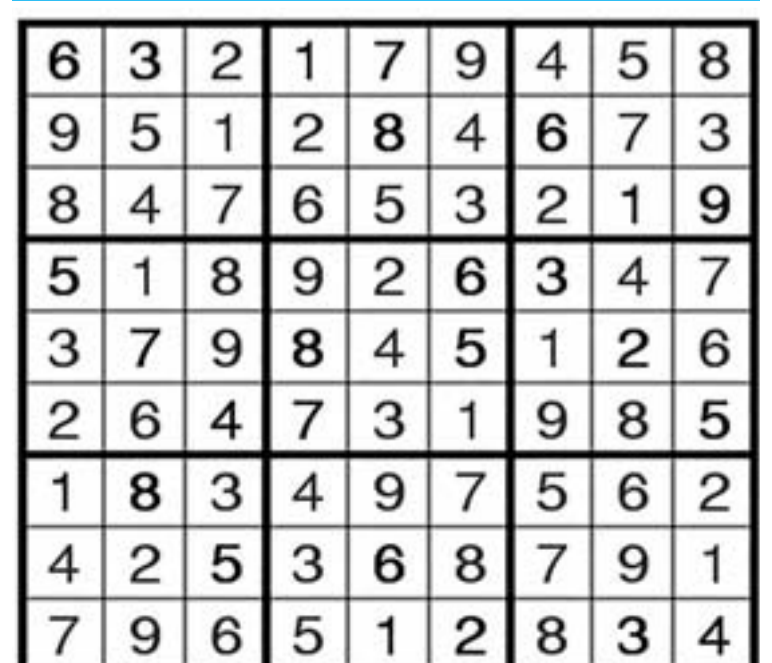
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Classifieds

Wednesday, March 21, 2018

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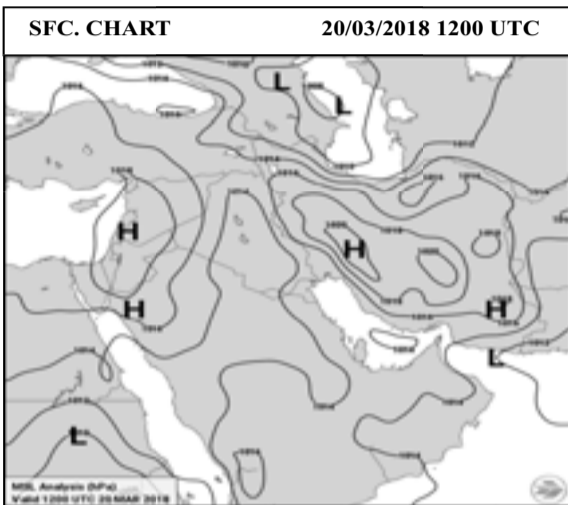
Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Fair with light to moderate south easterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h.

BY DAY: Relatively hot with light to moderate variable wind to south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 28 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING No Current Warnings

STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.
KUWAIT CITY	27 °C	19 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	30 °C	16 °C
ABDALY	34 °C	13 °C
BUBYAN	-- °C	17 °C
JAHRA	33 °C	15 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	27 °C	18 °C
SALMIYAH	24 °C	19 °C
AHMADI	-- °C	19 °C
NUWAISIB	29 °C	18 °C
WAFRA	32 °C	14 °C
SALMY	32 °C	16 °C



DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	03/21	Relatively hot	32 °C	16 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 28 km/h
Thursday	03/22	Relatively hot	33 °C	17 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Friday	03/23	Relatively hot	34 °C	16 °C	NW	12 - 38 km/h
Saturday	03/24	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	32 °C	17 °C	SE	12 - 40 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:32
Sunrise	05:51
Zuhr	11:55
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:00
Isha	19:16

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	29 °C
MIN. Temp.	12 °C
MAX. RH	53 %
MIN. RH	14 %
MAX. Wind	W 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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CHANGE OF NAME
I, JAGADHABI SUJATHA (old name), R/o. Door No. 10-4A, Tadiqalabailu, Korlakunta, Obulavaripalli Mandal, Kadapa District, A.P., India, have changed my name as **SIBYALA SUB-RAMANYAM RAJU** (new name) S/o. **SIBYALA SUB-BARAMA RAJU**. (C.5386) 18-3-2018

Flight Schedule

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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 21/3/2018				Departure Flights on Wednesday 21/3/2018			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
JAI	572	Mumbai	00:05	KAC	692	Muscat	14:15
JZR	607	Kochi	00:10	FDB	059	Dubai	14:20
JZR	539	Cairo	00:50	QTR	1078	Doha	14:20
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	672	Dubai	14:25
PGT	858	Istanbul	00:55	KAC	412	Bangkok	14:35
THY	772	Istanbul	00:55	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:40
DLH	625	Bahrain	01:45	KNE	529	Jeddah	14:55
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	14:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KNE	683	Madinah	15:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:20	KAC	788	Jeddah	15:10
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	304	Mumbai	15:10
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
WAN	548	KTM	02:40	KAC	562	Amman	15:30
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	JZR	787	Riyadh	15:30
KKK	1268	Istanbul	02:55	OMA	645	Muscat	15:35
RJA	644	Amman	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:10	QTR	1072	Doha	15:55
FEG	931	Alexandria	03:15	SAW	705	Damascus	16:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	118	New York	16:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:50	JZR	535	Cairo	16:00
KAC	796	Madinah	03:50	ABY	127	Sharjah	16:00
KAC	382	Deli	04:15	SVA	504	Madinah	16:00
KAC	1544	Cairo	04:25	WAN	436	Al Najaf	16:10
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	357	Mashhad	16:25
UAE	873	Dubai	04:25	JZR	779	Jeddah	16:25
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:35	FDB	051	Dubai	16:40
KAC	284	Dhaka	04:50	KAC	522	Al Najaf	16:45
FDB	069	Dubai	04:55	RJA	640	Amman	16:55
JZR	609	Hyderabad	05:10	KAC	542	Cairo	17:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:20	WAN	954	Baku	17:15
JZR	143	Doha	05:25	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:25	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	JZR	777	Jeddah	17:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	UAE	875	Dubai	18:00
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:10	FDB	063	Dubai	18:10
KAC	362	Colombo	06:25	JZR	483	Istanbul	18:15
KAC	678	Dubai	06:30	MSR	620	Dubai	18:15
WAN	338	Alexandria	06:40	QTR	1080	Doha	18:50
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	KAC	744	Dammam	19:10
BAW	157	London	07:10	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:35	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:25
KAC	384	Deli	08:00	KAC	156	Istanbul	19:30
KAC	358	Kochi	08:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:35	KAC	674	Dubai	19:45
JZR	605	Ahmedabad	08:45	FDB	057	Dubai	19:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	09:05	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:05	KNE	381	Taif	20:00
QTR	1070	Doha	09:10	KAC	166	Rome	20:10
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	620	Doha	20:15
IRC	6552	ABD	09:50	OMA	647	Muscat	20:20
KIS	6032	Mashhad	10:00	KAC	512	Mashhad	20:40
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1088	Doha	20:45
IRA	665	Shiraz	10:40	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:45
WAN	114	Bahrain	11:00	WAN	136	Doha	21:15
AXB	890	Mangalore/Bahrain	11:10	ALK	229	Colombo	21:20
IRM	1188	Mashhad	11:15	MEA	402	Beirut	21:20
QTR	1074	Doha	11:20	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:20
JZR	165	Dubai	11:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	21:25
WAN	134	Doha	11:55	KAC	172	Frankfurt	21:30
MEA	404	Beirut	11:55	UAE	859	Dubai	21:35
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:45
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:15	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:50
KAC	286	Dhaka	12:35	WAN	116	Bahrain	21:50
KAC	798	Taif	12:45	KAC	564	Amman	22:00
JZR	561	Sohag	12:45	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05
KAC	742	Dammam	12:50	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
UAE	871	Dubai	12:50	AIC	975	Chennai/Goa	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	13:00	SVA	514	Riyadh	22:30
CLX	792	Luxembourg	13:20	JZR	241	Amman	22:40
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:40	SVA	502	Jeddah	22:45
KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10	JZR	185	Dubai	23:10
SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15	JAI	574	Mumbai	23:15
KAC	618	Doha	14:15	PIA	239	Sialkot	23:40
				FDB	071	Dubai	23:45
				MSC	411	Asyut	23:55

Lifestyle | Gossip



MARKLE AND HARRY REVEAL WEDDING CAKE

The former 'Suits' actress is set to marry Harry at Windsor Castle's St. George's Chapel on May 19 and the happy couple has chosen Californian-born pastry chef Claire Ptak, who runs London-based bakery Violet, to create the cake they will share with guests in celebration. The wedding cake will be flavored with lemon and elderflower to "incorporate the bright flavors of spring", and be covered with buttercream and decorated with fresh flowers. Kensington Palace announced: "Claire Ptak, who was raised in California, focuses on using seasonal and organic ingredients in her cakes. Ms. Markle previously interviewed Chef Ptak for her former lifestyle website The Tig. Prince Harry and Ms. Markle are looking forward to sharing the cake with guests at their wedding at Windsor Castle on May 19th." Claire wrote on Instagram: "Kinda

excited to announce this one!! Violet has been chosen to make the wedding cake for Prince Harry and Meghan Markle. They both share so many of the same values regarding food provenance, sustainability, seasonality and of course, flavor! [sic]" The fresh, modern choice of cake demonstrates a break with tradition, as British wedding cakes are conventionally an alcohol-soaked fruit-cake decorated with marzipan and white icing. This preserves the cake and pieces are often kept as a souvenir of the event, rather than eaten. Meanwhile, Meghan has been baptized into the Anglican church in an "intimate service" performed by the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby earlier this month.

ED SHEERAN PLANS TO BUILD A PRIVATE CHAPEL



serve the newts' habitat. The 'Shape Of You' singer will have to apply of a license from Natural England in order to proceed with any building work which is found to disturb the habitat of the protected newts. Ed, 27, and his childhood sweetheart Cherry, 25, got engaged last year. The singer is refusing to give anything away about his big day but it's thought the couple were planning exchange vows at his home in Suffolk after he applied to have a chapel installed. Public planning documents show Ed will not be hiring out the place of worship for weddings but does not rule out him holding his own nuptial there. In the document the 'Perfect' songwriter says he needs to build the chapel as a private "retreat for contemplation and prayer." He adds that high-profile house guests would use it to "regenerate their spiritual strength."

The 'Castle On The Hill' singer sparked speculation he plans to marry fiancée Cherry Seaborn in the grounds of his Suffolk mansion after filing a planning application to build an idyllic retreat there. But the building work would disrupt a collection of great crested newts living in his pond, according to The Sun newspaper. Objections have been lodged against the chapel plans, amid claims the pond is home to one of the largest populations of the protected species in the area. Critics are demanding a "full ecological survey" before the application progresses any further. One objector claimed Ed had shown "total disregard to the local ecology" and the need to pre-

Gomez hits out at the 'beauty myth' in society



The 25-year-old singer and actress posted a video of herself messing around with friends onboard a yacht in Sydney, Australia, where she was snapped sunning herself and snacking on an avocado. Selena captioned the clip: "The beauty myth - an obsession with physical perfection that traps modern woman in an endless cycle of hopelessness, self-consciousness, and self-hatred as she tries to fulfill society's impossible definition of flawless beauty. I chose to take care of myself because I want to, not to prove anything to anyone. Wind in her sails." The 'Heart Wants What It Wants' hitmaker is thought to have rekindled her on/off romance with boyfriend Justin Bieber who she has dated on and off since 2011. To mark his 24th birthday Selena took to Instagram to post a picture of herself holding a polaroid which appears to be a photograph of Justin. She wrote: "March

1, 1994 someone I know that happens to be super cool was born. Boom. (sic)" Justin is not with Selena on her current trip to Australia, where is seen messing about in her video with friends, including two unidentified males. It has been reported that Selena's pals think Justin is a "bad influence". A source said: "There's a big crew of people [in Selena's circle] who really don't like Justin and they especially don't like him with Selena. A lot of her friends really don't like him. They think he's bad news for Selena and don't approve of the relationship. They think he's a bad influence on her and she becomes really dependent on him. She's so generous and loyal and puts 100 per cent of herself into everything, including her relationships, which isn't always the healthiest."

LeBlanc admits he acted only for the money

The 50-year-old 'Friends' star played Joey in the hit American sitcom for 10 years until 2004 and his most recent role was in comedy show 'Episodes', which ran for five series. LeBlanc is honest that his motivation to work is to get paid and he is happy to act in anything as long as the pay is good. He told The Times newspaper: "It's just a job. I just turn up, do it and then I'm off. The pay cheque is probably the most important part." LeBlanc - who can currently be seen on the small screen as the main host of BBC motoring show 'Top Gear' - worked as a carpenter before he got into the acting industry and was down to his last \$11 when he was offered the role of Joey Tribbiani in 'Friends'. LeBlanc - who eventually went on to earn \$1 million per episode of friends with his main co-stars - said: "That's actually true. I screwed up. I should have got a real job months and months prior to that because \$11 is not going to get you very far. The rent was paid for that month, but the next month? I don't know. I always had this attitude that I'd do all right. I never wanted to be the biggest actor in the world, I just wanted to keep the bills paid. And then 'Friends' came along." When 'Friends' ended Matt starred in spin-off show 'Joey' for two years, but when it was cancelled he quit the spotlight and ended up taking six years off. He said: "I was going through a divorce, I had a new baby, my daughter was diagnosed with some health issues - she's OK now - and it was a rough time. Work wasn't a priority. I realized the most important thing in life is your family so I hit the reset button, focused on the things that were really important and got through it."



50 Cent and Vivica A Fox reignite their feud



The 'Empire' actress and the 'In Da Club' rapper had a bitter break-up after they dated in 2003 and now Vivica, 53, has written about their relationship in her new self-help book, 'Every Day, I'm Hustling'. According to the New York Daily News, Vivica writes: "Most of the time, I would be the one initiating sex, because I really enjoyed making love with him." She then describes their love-making as "PG-13" but "cherished and special." 50 Cent - whose real name is Curtis Jackson - posted a screenshot of the article on Instagram and wrote: "I'm waking up to this s**t, that was 14 years ago. ? smh who does this? What the f**k! [sic]" Vivica also claims she found out the 42-year-old rapper had planned an elaborate proposal to ask her to marry him in Monaco, where the pair was taking part in the World Music Awards in 2003. The hip hop star and actor had planned to

rent out a theatre in Monte Carlo, show a screening of 'Kill Bill, Vol. 1' - in which she starred - and then propose at the end with a 14-carat diamond ring. But he cancelled his plans after allegedly beginning to feel as though Vivica had stolen the spotlight from him by signing up to host the awards. Following their split, the pair exchanged public barbs for years. But last year Vivica claimed they had ended their feud. Speaking on 'The Wendy Williams Show' in January 2017, she said: "I ran into him at the Knicks game. It is so time for this to be over with, as far as beefing back and forth ... I walked over to him, and I said, 'Happy New Year.' Someone has to be the bigger person. I gave him a hug, we talked for a few minutes, and that was that."



Fetty Wap has become a father for a seventh time

The 26-year-old rapper has welcomed his second child with Lezhae Zeona - who he has two-year-old daughter Zaviera Maxwell with - into the world, just two months after his daughter Alaiya with former girlfriend Alexis Skyy was born three months early. Lezhae shared a video of herself clutching hold of her newborn son via Instagram Live. Following the news of Fetty's latest addition, Alexis took to her Twitter to post a heartfelt message about her daughter, who is still thought to be in hospital. She wrote: "I swear being your mother is the best thing that happen to me (sic)" Prior to the little one's birth, the 23-year-old model revealed she would be in hospital "for a long time". She said: "They're gonna have me in the hospital for a long time and I just pray that everything do good. She's okay, she's fine. "She's healthy that's all that matters to me.

She's like three months early, so I don't know." The goal is to keep her in there but once your water breaks it kinda is hard." The 'Trap Queen' hitmaker - whose real name is Willie Maxwell - recently confirmed he will have seven kids when his son was born. He wrote on Instagram: "Actually my son is on the way so it'll be 7 at 27 with 22 million ... so yeah I think my odds are better than your boyfriends and all my kids moms have moved on and living their life (sic)" Fetty - who also has son Aydin - is thought to be a father to lover Masika Kalysha's baby girl Khari after she identified him as the dad, but he suggested he wasn't. However, Masika later revealed she had asked her former lover to undertake a test to prove paternity on multiple occasions but he refused.

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Khloe Kardashian is nesting in Cleveland

The 'Keeping Up With the Kardashians' star has been "basically bicoastal" for the first eight months of her pregnancy, but now she's just weeks away to giving birth to her first child with boyfriend Tristan Thompson, the 33-year-old beauty has reportedly made the decision not to return to Los Angeles and is instead staying in Ohio until the baby is born. A source told People magazine: "Khloe is in Cleveland and plans to stay there until the baby is born. She is too far along to fly back and forth. 'She is doing great and seems very happy every day. '[Khloe] is a bit nervous about the birth, but mostly excited. She is taking it easy in Cleveland, getting everything ready and she can't wait to meet her baby girl.'" But Khloe won't be without her famous family, including her mother Kris Jenner, when the time comes

for her to give birth. The source added: "Her family is flying to Cleveland when it's baby time. Khloe especially wants Kris there for the birth." The 'Revenge Body' host previously admitted she wants a family member who will "annoy [her] the least" and is "going to be the calmest" by her side when she gives birth. And it was previously claimed Khloe planned to give birth in Cleveland because it would be a more calm and private experience than staying in Los Angeles. A source recently said: "Khloe loves Cleveland and sees it as her new home, plus she's had fantastic medical treatments when she's been for check ups during the pregnancy."

CHRISSEY TEIGEN ANNOYED AT PREGNANCY WEIGHT



The 32-year-old model is expecting her second child with her 'All of Me' hitmaker husband John Legend - a baby brother to their 23-month-old daughter Luna - and on Monday the brunette beauty took to Twitter to reveal she has put on a total of 40 pounds, but she wishes it had all gone to her bottom. She wrote: "up 40 pounds and not one ounce went to my butt. please stop shaming the buttsless, we are trying (sic)" Chrissy then joked that she doesn't like it when other people tell her they weigh less than her. She added: "just a heads up that when a prego says what they've gained, you can only share what you gained if it's more. Not less. THEM'S THE RULES (sic)" The 'Lip Sync Battle' star previously revealed she is worried that she will suffer with postpartum depression once her son is born, as she did when she gave birth to Luna in April 2016. She said: "Do I worry about it with this little boy? I do. But I also know that when it does happen - if it does - I'm so ready for it. I have the perfect people around me for it. That's why I stand for a real core group of people around me." Chrissy praised her spouse and her family for getting her through it all. She added: "I had just had Luna. I knew I had an incredible life and husband and family and all the resources necessary. I knew that I was personally unhappy, but I didn't think that anything was wrong with it because I just assumed that that's the way it goes. You have a kid, you're sad, you lose those endorphins and that's the way it is. I do wish that more people had spoken up around me. I encourage anyone who sees something around them to point it out. It took me to finally sit myself down because I think it's hard for people to point something out."

Kristen Bell and her husband 'choreograph' their parenting



The 'Bad Moms' star and her 'Parenthood' actor spouse have two daughters, four-year-old Lincoln and three-year-old Delta, and they take it in turns to take on new projects to ensure there's always one of them around for the children. Kristen told E! News: "It's a very particular family schedule when we're both working. Although I'm not working right now so he is taking on a larger workload. 'It's choreographed, I guess, to make sure someone is always there and present for our kids.'" The 37-year-old actress feels "lucky" that Hollywood is now so "family-friendly" to working parents and hopes other industries begin to make more allowance for the needs of those with children. She said: "You can bring your children to work, or I could nurse the baby when I was working early on. I hope to see more busi-

nesses - not just the acting world - allow that kind of stuff." Meanwhile, Kristen recently confessed she has caught anal worms from her daughter, twice. The 'Forgetting Sarah Marshall' star couldn't stop scratching her butt after she contracted the infection - also known as threadworm - from Delta. In a video on her Instagram Story, she said: "I just want to explain to you what I'm looking at right now... It's a piece of s**t, literally. And at the top of it, is a little white pinworm. Now, I thought we had rid ourselves of these. And the irony here is so deep, because I did 'The Joel McHale Show', two weeks ago."

The 27-year-old actress was told by her dental practitioner when she was 14 that she would need to keep the plastic guards in for two years, but she has continued wearing both the bottom one, for teeth grinding, and top one for movement for 10 years. Appearing on Australia's 'The Kyle and Jackie O Show', the blonde beauty confessed when asked how she coped playing a character with a lisp in 'Peter Rabbit': "This is so embarrassing, I actually have two retainers, one for the bottom teeth which is for grinding and one for my top teeth which is just so my teeth don't move." The orthodontist, when I got my braces off when I was 14, said, 'You'll need to wear it for two years but I am so paranoid that, 10 years later, I'm still wearing them.'" The 'Suicide Squad' star revealed she took extreme measures to try and stop her teeth grinding habit by having Botox injected into her muscles inside her mouth. She said: "I grind my teeth so bad I ended up getting Botox in the muscles there and it stops you from grinding your teeth." Margot portrays Flopsy the bunny - who suffers from speech problems - in the big screen adaptation of the Beatrix Potter classic. 'Peter Rabbit' stars James Corden as the voice of the mischievous bunny created by British children's author Beatrix Potter and published in the early 1900s. Meanwhile, Margot is reportedly in talks to star in the Quentin Tarantino-directed 'Once Upon a Time in Hollywood'.

Margot Robbie is still wearing her retainers



Cardi B says #MeToo doesn't represent hip-hop stars

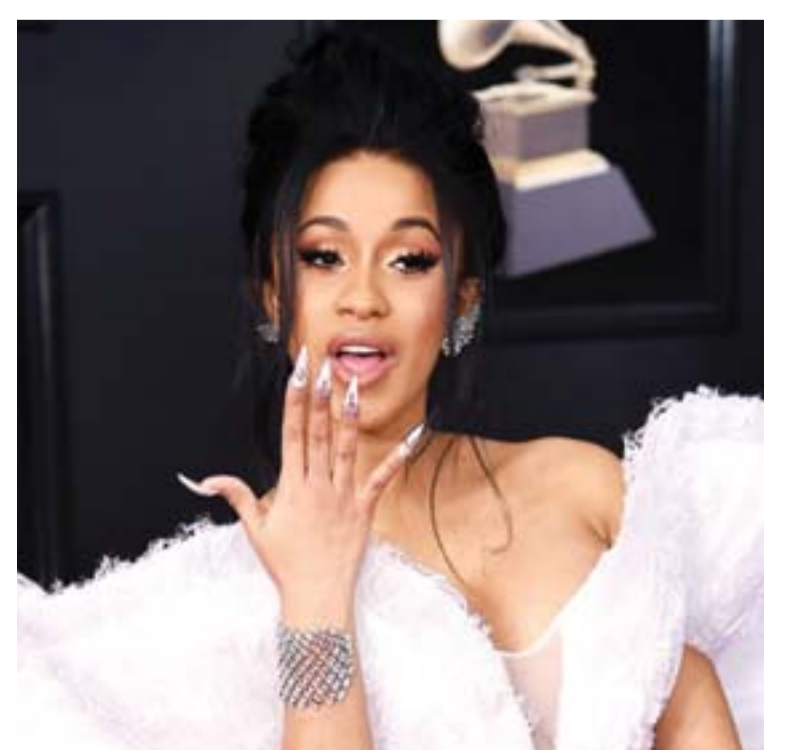
The 'Bodak Yellow' hit-maker claims "nobody gives a f**k" when women in the hip-hop industry speak out about how they were subjected to sexual misconduct. She told Cosmopolitan magazine: "A lot of video vixens have spoke about this and nobody gives a f**k. When I was trying to be a vixen, people were like, 'You want to be on the cover of this magazine?' Then they pull their d***s out. I bet if one of these women stands up and talks about it, people are going to say, 'So what? You're a ho. It don't matter.' These [male] producers and directors [who are supporting the movement]. They're not woke, they're scared." Meanwhile, Cardi B previously admitted she is working hard to make things better for her future

children. She said: "This is my work ethic: I do not want to raise my future kids where I was raised, and I know the only way to do it is working, working, working, working, working. I don't want to live in a small Bronx apartment. I don't want to have three kids that got to share one room. I don't want my kids to go to school and get gang-affiliated. I don't want to do welfare. I don't." And Cardi can't believe so many people look up to her. She added: "When women come up to me like, 'I am a freaking senator,' or, 'I'm a doctor'. It's like, 'Damn, y'all like me? I look up to y'all!' It's not that people want to be like me, but some want to say the things I say and can't, because they're afraid. I say it for them."



Eva Mendes lets her kids wear what they want

The 'Ghost Rider' star - who has Esmeralda, three, and Amada, 22 months, with her partner Ryan Gosling - isn't worried about what her toddlers choose to wear because they "have the right". She said: "Thank God there's no fashion talk. But I let them wear whatever they want. They have the right ... they want to wear jammies all day or if they want to go in a costume to the market, I let them do that stuff ... I let them win that battle. That's the easy one. I'm trying to get them to eat broccoli. That's the one I want to win. They can wear whatever they want." And the 44-year-old actress thinks motherhood has made her "care less" but "care more" too. She added to E! News: "I don't know. I guess I'm still in it. I'm still new to the game. I feel like in a way it makes me care less because it prioritizes everything obviously but at the same time it makes me care more. Even though I have less time to think about what I'm wearing for my day or how to put something together, I think of it more in a sense of even if I'm not with my kids, I'm always representing them. It's always on my mind. I'm somebody's mother and I need to act accordingly. There's an intense amount of pressure that I feel but it's good pressure."





The classic baguette jambon-beurre sandwich



A traditional burger

Au revoir, baguette! France goes mad for le burger

For the first time in history, hamburger sales in France have soared higher than the classic baguette jambon-beurre sandwich as French diners surrender to the American fast-food favorite. Burgers were on the menu at 85 percent of restaurants in France last year with a whopping 1.5 billion units sold, according to a study by Paris-based restaurant consultants Gira Conseil.

More worryingly still for the defenders of French cuisine, just 30 percent of the burgers were sold in fast food joints, with the majority sold at restaurants with full table service. Le burger has almost become French, often served with some of the country's most famous cheeses like Roquefort rather than plastic cheddar.

This is big news for a country that takes great pride in its national culinary culture, and which for years resisted the global burger onslaught. "We've been talking about a burger frenzy for three years. This year, we don't know how to describe the phenomenon. It's just crazy," Gira Conseil director Bernard Boutboul said.

There was a nine percent jump in burger sales last year. "That's phenomenal growth," Boutboul said. In 2016, hamburger sales were on a par with the jambon-beurre, or ham-and-butter baguette-which is still the

most popular sandwich in France. "But in 2017, for the first time, (burgers) overtook (the French classic) by a long way," Boutboul said, with jambon-beurre sales at 1.2 billion units. "One wonders whether the burger might even overtake our famous steak frites in France," he said.

'Beating record upon record'

There, Boutboul may have hit a nerve. While the French see their food culture as unique, the truth is a lot of it is based on meat, bread, salad and potatoes-not a far cry from what makes up a US burger meal. "Where is the country going to?" one Twitter user sighed at the news, with another raging that "we will all end up wearing Mickey Mouse ears in their rubbish theme parks," in a reference to Disneyland Paris.

The only silver lining for foodies was the gradual demise of junk food, with high quality, fresh alternatives on the rise in a growing number of French gourmet burger restaurants. More broadly, however, fast food joint sales were "beating record upon record", Gira Conseil found, making 51 billion euros (\$63 billion) in 2017.

But the big trend was for a more gastronomic experience, the consultants found, often using France's rich

“

Where is the country going to?

”

palette of traditional ingredients. Despite a series of headline-grabbing attacks on its branches by angry farmers two decades ago, France is now McDonald's most profitable market outside the US, with more than 1,400 restaurants.

'I sold my soul'

The Golden Arches has adapted to French tastes with the McCamembert and McBaguette burgers with emmental cheese, Dijon mustard, various French salads and even macarons for dessert. Customers can also drink

beer with their meals. Jean-Pierre Petit, the man credited with helping France fall in love with "McDo", is one of the brand's most influential executives, pioneering McDonald's attempts to adapt itself to local tastes.

In his 2013 book, "I Sold My Soul to McDonald's," Petit admitted that he had not eaten his first hamburger until he was 30. In 2005 Frenchman Denis Hennequin, who introduced the Parmesan burger in Italy and the Shrimp Burger to Germany, became the first non-American to lead the McDonalds brand in Europe. But a lot of the fast food that does best in France is high quality-and fairly pricey.

Food truck culture, another import from the US, has spawned a number of hip burger chains such as Le Camion Qui Fume (roughly translated as the Smoky Truck). Some joints take pride in serving burgers made from premium quality beef, along with a glass of French red wine. "Even the Americans are keeping an eye on what we're doing in our gastronomic fast food sector," Boutboul said. — AFP

Six months on, pressure builds for Weinstein prosecution



In this file photo taken on May 3, 2017 Nominee Cynthia Nixon attends the 2017 Tony Awards Meet The Nominees Press Junket at the Sofitel Hotel in New York City. — AFP

'Sex and the City' star joins New York governor race

Cynthia Nixon, the US actress who shot to fame as workaholic lawyer Miranda on "Sex and the City," jumped into the race for New York governor Monday, unveiling a progressive platform championing economic equality and eschewing big business. The 51-year-old declared her candidacy with a two-minute campaign video posted on Twitter that showed her at home with her wife and children, riding the subway, taking one of her children to school and speaking at liberal political causes.

The move confirmed speculation that Nixon would challenge incumbent Democratic Governor Andrew Cuomo. If elected, Nixon—who is a vocal opponent of President Donald Trump—would be New York state's first woman and first openly gay governor. The actress and liberal activist, who has campaigned for gay marriage, public schools and access to women's health care, announced that she was "sick of politicians who care more about headlines and power than they do about us."

"Our leaders are letting us down. We are now the most unequal state in the entire country with both incredible wealth and extreme poverty. Half the kids in our upstate cities live below the poverty line. How did we let this happen?" she said in the video. "Something has to change. We want our government to work again-on health care, ending mass incarceration, fixing our broken subway. "Together we can win this fight," finished the New York-born and raised Nixon, who said she grew up with her mother in what she called "a one-bedroom, fifth-floor walkup."

The Trump presidency has seen a surge in women-particularly Democratic women-running for office. Only eight of the current 50 US state governors are women. In 2004, Nixon accepted an Emmy award-the highest accolade in US television-for her role as Miranda Hobbes from Trump, the fellow celebrity-turned-politician whose current presidency she publicly opposes.—AFP

Six months after bombshell sexual assault allegations blew up against Harvey Weinstein, pressure is growing for the onetime Hollywood mogul to be brought to justice, with the Manhattan prosecutor under fire for failing to bring a criminal case against him three years ago.

Acting on demand from the Time's Up movement led by top Hollywood actresses, New York authorities vowed late Monday to "review" why the Manhattan district attorney did not prosecute the disgraced movie mogul in 2015. "We are committed to pursuing a full, fair, and independent review of this matter," the state attorney general tweeted after Time's Up urged Governor Andrew Cuomo, who is up for re-election, to act.

More than 100 women have publicly accused Weinstein since October, allegations that sparked a sexual harassment watershed and ended his career. His wife left him and police opened criminal investigations in London, Los Angeles and New York. Weinstein has been hit by a litany of civil lawsuits that stand to see the 66-year-old financially ruined. The Weinstein Company announced late Monday that it is filing for bankruptcy protection.

The studio also said it was immediately releasing accusers from non-disclosure agreements which Weinstein had used to silence them, allowing women to speak up without fear of retaliation. But besides reportedly undergoing treatment for sex addiction at an Arizona clinic, the former powerbroker remains at large after hiring Ben Brafman, one of America's most celebrated criminal defense lawyers.

Frustrated by the apparent failure to bring him to justice, the movement founded by the likes of Reese Witherspoon and Jessica Chastain demanded Cuomo investigate the failure to prosecute the case of Italian model Ambra Battilana Gutierrez, one of the first women to come forward against Weinstein. Had district attorney Cyrus Vance done so, other potential victims may have avoided being mistreated by the producer, they argued. Time's Up called "particularly dis-



Harvey Weinstein

turbing" reports that the mogul "could have... improperly influenced" Vance and that officials in the prosecutor's office "may have sought to intimidate Battilana."

"An independent investigation into the full decision-making process in this case, including a full review of the correspondence within the office and with any representatives for Mr Weinstein, must be undertaken immediately," the movement added. But while state attorney general Eric Schneiderman vowed to open an inquiry, New York's police chief James O'Neill and Vance hit back jointly at a magazine report alleging improper influence. O'Neill and Vance insisted they were "fully committed partners" and touted their "unparalleled track record of holding sexual predators from all backgrounds accountable in thousands of sex crimes."

'Fair question'

"We are confident that any review will confirm that our office has pursued its investigation without fear or favor, based on the merits alone," Vance spokesman Danny Frost said in a statement. "We will of course provide the attorney general with any necessary information, and expect that he will promptly determine that our office has been guided

solely by the facts and the law."

Frost said nothing about the chances of bringing a case to court, only that prosecutors "must make sure they can prove to a jury that every element of a criminal statute was violated beyond a reasonable doubt." Michael Weinstein, a New York lawyer and former federal prosecutor not related to the ex-producer, said Time's Up was asking a "fair question."

"The state always wants to get it right, but when you have a very good, savvy defense lawyer on the other side, you really try to do it properly," he told AFP. Weinstein hired Brafman, one of America's top lawyers, in November, just days after New York police confirmed they were gathering evidence for a possible arrest warrant. Brafman's past clients include former IMF boss Dominique Strauss-Kahn, who ultimately escaped criminal prosecution by Vance for alleged sexual assault in 2011.

"The prosecutor is not there to satisfy the demands of the public mob, they are there to be independent and evaluate the presentation of evidence," said Michael Weinstein. There could be other reasons why the prosecutor has not moved, the lawyer explained-federal prosecutors, for example, may be investigating the financial settlements used to pay off alleged victims and may have asked him to hold back.

Even bringing Weinstein to trial does not predicate a conviction. Strauss-Kahn got off in the United States. So did Michael Jackson, acquitted of child molestation, and Bill Cosby was last year given a reprieve by a hung jury on allegations of sexual assault. His retrial next month could determine whether the 80-year-old disgraced comic faces prison over allegations that he drugged and molested a university basketball official. — AFP

Ellen Barkin hits back at Terry Gilliam for #MeToo comments

The actress Ellen Barkin hit back at Hollywood director Terry Gilliam after he said the #MeToo movement against sexual harassment and assault has morphed into "mob rule." "My hard-won advice: never get into an elevator alone with Terry Gilliam," the American actress, 63, tweeted over the weekend. Barkin worked with Gilliam in the 1998 film "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas."

On Monday, she wrote on Twitter that according to Gilliam, Harvey Weinstein was exposed as an alleged serial sexual predator "because he is an asshole and made a lot of enemies, not because he molested or raped over 80" women. "What is it you are defending when you attack a movement whose goal is to keep women safe?" Barkin wrote.

On Friday, Gilliam raised eyebrows by saying in an interview with AFP that the reaction against the wave of sexual abuse and harass-

ment revelations had become ugly and "simplistic... people are frightened to say things, to think things." He added: "I know enough girls who were in Harvey's suites who were not victims and walked out." "It's like when mob rule takes over," Gilliam said. Barkin reacted with a series of angry tweets against Gilliam but did not give any details about her allusion to "hard-won advice" about not riding alone in an elevator with the director. — AFP



Terry Gilliam

Opera on Alzheimer's to debut in Philly festival

An opera involving two characters with Alzheimer's will premiere at Opera Philadelphia as part of the company's latest festival of experimental fare. Unveiling its 2018-19 season yesterday, the opera house of the US East Coast's second most populous city announced a festival dubbed O18, a follow-up to last year's inaugural stretch of new works. The September 20-30 festival will feature the world premiere of "Sky on Swings," an opera about two women with Alzheimer's who come together in a care home.

Composed by Lembit Beecher with a libretto by Canadian playwright Hannah Moscovitch, "Sky on Swings" explores "the impermanence of memory and the new hallucinatory experience, untethered from identity and history, which can follow in its wake," the opera house said in its announcement. Another world premiere will be "Glass Handel," a multimedia opera performed and co-produced by counter-tenor Anthony Roth Costanzo featuring new arrangements of music by leading US composer Philip Glass and videos by Oscar-winning director James Ivory.

"Glass Handel" starts as a traditional concert but members of the audience will be presented with different visuals, leading them on divergent paths. "Opera Philadelphia is really pushing the boundaries of what opera can be, and we want to take it even further and reach out to new audiences," Costanzo said.

Highlights of Opera Philadelphia's 2018-19 season will include the US premiere of the much talked-about Robert Carsen production of Benjamin Britten's opera "A Midsummer Night's Dream." The production of the opera based on the Shakespeare play premiered in 1991 at the Festival d'Aix-en-Provence in France and caused a stir with the stage's sleek sheets of green under a crescent moon. Opera Philadelphia's inaugural experimental festival last year featured the world premiere of "We Shall Not Be Moved," which won wide critical praise. The hip-hop-infused opera, directed by leading choreographer Bill T. Jones, reflects on the 1985 police helicopter attack in Philadelphia on the black liberation group MOVE. — AFP

Tokyo

Fashion Week



Models present creations by Japanese fashion brand DressedUndressed from their 2018 autumn/winter collection at the Tokyo Fashion Week. — AFP photos



Models present creations by Japanese fashion brand Yukihero Pro-Wrestling from their 2018 autumn/winter collection.

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 21, 2018



TRIPOLI: Lebanese public school students shows their messages as they take part in a release of balloons carrying personalized messages written in French to celebrate the French-speaking Day (Jour de la Francophonie) in Mina's municipality backyard, north of Tripoli. — AFP

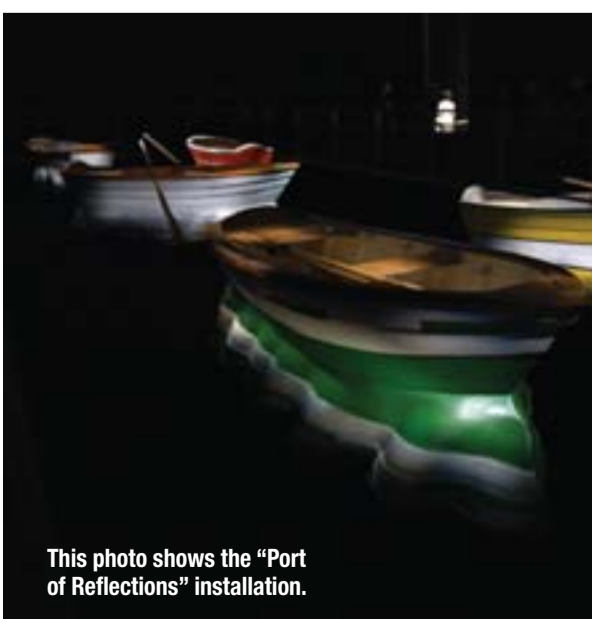
LEANDRO ERLICH: ARGENTINA'S MASTER OF OPTICAL ILLUSION



People look at the "The Classroom" installation.



People visit the "Changing Room" installation.



This photo shows the "Port of Reflections" installation.

Thousands of visitors have posed on his trompe-l'œil facades, he made the pointed tip of the Buenos Aires Obelisk disappear and he even tricked visitors into thinking they were seeing others underwater in a giant pool. Argentina's Leandro Erlich is shaking up the art world with his wonderful world of illusions.

The 44-year-old conceptual artist divides his time between his hometown Buenos Aires and Montevideo, the very livable capital of neighboring Uruguay. In his dream factory—a three-storey studio in the Villa Crespo residential area of Buenos Aires shielded from the road by a giant metal barrier—Erlich creates his giant installations, which have earned cult status in London, Paris and New York.

The secret to his success

Erlich has managed to wow both art amateurs and discerning critics with his work. The biggest display of his work to date — 44 pieces in total—has drawn 400,000 visitors to the Mori Art Museum in Tokyo, where it will run until April 1.

"Erlich stimulates the senses, not just the intellect. He's asking patrons to live through an experience, as one does at the theater," explains Andres Duprat, director of the National Museum of Fine Arts in Buenos Aires. "Not only are his works making waves in the art world, they are reaching a much wider public," Duprat says. "This is not someone who is doing special effects. He's showing how it all works. Once the visitor understands the work, he or she can begin to savor it, and reflect on it."

In "Port of Reflections," colorful rowboats seem to float—except there is no water. "Swimming Pool" sees people walk fully clothed into a pool—except there is no pool. "Elevator Maze," a matrix of elevator banks, confuses patrons when they don't see their own reflection in the mirror. Visitors are thrilled, confused, annoyed or experience an emotion somewhere in between—but they are never indifferent.

"When a work is well received, it brings great satisfaction. It opens up opportunities for the future. In concrete terms, my projects are difficult to do," Erlich told AFP in an interview. "There is no single format," he added. "I've done video, sculpture, photography and of course installations. The idea of conceptual art is now broad enough to include all forms of expression."

Not a solitary artist

Erlich's works play with optical illusions and our perception of sound. At his studio in



Buenos Aires, he works with craftsmen and designers to bring his vision to life. Erlich said his team "came together over time and depending on need." "Fifteen or 16 years ago, I did one or two projects a year. Now, it's more like four," he said.

In Montevideo, he found refuge and the "distance" needed to work. "I have lived for a long time away from Buenos Aires—five years in the United States, five years in France, before returning to South America." In the Uruguayan capital, he finds inspiration and time to think. "I have trouble working in places where there is too much stimulation, too much noise," Erlich says.

"With globalization, the world is smaller now. My universe is indisputably very 'Rioplatense'," he says—an adjective describing the Rio de la Plata estuary separating Argentina and Uruguay. In Buenos Aires, many remember when he made the tip of the obelisk vanish in 2015. He covered the point with a sort of square cap, giving the impression it was cut off. In tandem, a replica of the tip was built and placed in a museum.

"The idea was for people to take back the monument," which cannot be entered, he said. The artist's work has been displayed in cities around the world—New York, Paris, London, Barcelona, Madrid, Rome, Venice, Taipei, Seoul, Tokyo and Sao Paulo, to name a few. In "Building," visitors from a dozen countries placed themselves on a building facade installed on the ground, but reflected in a mirror to the side. "All of my work has an aspect of public participation," Erlich says. "The starting point is my passion for challenges, and being able to express my ideas." — AFP

In this picture taken on March 4, 2018, people experience the "Building" installation during the exhibition "Seeing and Believing" by Argentine artist Leandro Erlich at Mori Art Museum in Tokyo. — AFP photos



People enjoy the "Hair Salon" installation.