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UAE announces visa reforms to lure investors, boost economy

Foreign investors to have 100% ownership; 10-year residence permits



DUBAI: Dubai residents relax near a shopping mall. The United Arab Emirates has announced plans to allow 100 percent ownership and visa incentives to foreigners, in a bid to attract investors to boost its slowing national economy. — AP

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates has announced plans to allow 100 percent ownership and visa incentives to foreigners, in a bid to attract investors to boost its slowing national economy. The decision, taken by the UAE cabinet Sunday night, aims to lure "international investments and exceptional talent", according to Dubai ruler Sheikh Mohammed Bin Rashed Al-Maktoum. The new measures come amid signs of an economic slowdown in the oil-rich Gulf state on the back of lower oil prices, with reports showing the vital real estate and tourism sectors of Dubai struggling. The decision will allow foreign investors 100 percent ownership of companies, coupled with 10-year residence permits for them and their families, according to a cabinet statement cited by WAM news agency. The measures will come into force by the end of 2018, the statement said. The UAE leads all Arab countries in terms of foreign direct investment, attracting \$11 billion last year—a jump of 22 percent on 2016—according to the International Institute of Finance.

Although it is the most diversified and open economy in the Middle East, for-

eigners can only own up to 49 percent of companies unless they are established in special free trade zones. The new measures also grant 10-year long residence permits to professionals in the medicine, science, research and technical fields. Like other energy-rich Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) states, foreigners working in the UAE must have their residence permits made by a national sponsor known as kafeel. The International Monetary Fund earlier projected that UAE economic growth would fall from 3.0 percent in 2016 to 1.3 percent in 2017.

Capital Economics, a London-based think tank, however has said that the UAE economy grew by just 0.5 percent last year. It said that the economy of Abu Dhabi, the largest of the seven emirates making up the UAE and the richest in oil, shrank by 1.3 percent and 1.1 percent in the third and fourth quarters of last year, respectively. In Dubai, sales and rents in the real estate sector slowed by five to 10 percent in 2017. The downturn is expected to continue through 2019, before picking up in 2020 when it will host the World Expo trade fair. — AFP

Quran and Ramadan

Ramadan Kareem

By Hatem Basha

The Quran occupies a special place in the fabric of Muslims' consciousness. The Quran is Allah's supreme word to mankind and it is the ultimate source of guidance for Muslims. The month of Ramadan is seen as the most virtuous month because it is the blessed month in which the Quran was revealed. There is an inseparable link between Ramadan and the Quran. This relationship is crystal clear in the verse, "(It is) the month of Ramadan in which the Quran was revealed as a guidance for mankind, clear proofs giving guidance, and the Criterion (for distinguishing right and wrong). So whoever of you witnesses this month, let him fast it." [2:185]

The revelation of the Quran is such a significant turning point in the life of Ummah. Muslims fast during the day and pray at nights to commemorate the month of the Quran. The night in which the Quran was revealed, Laylat al-Qadr, is the best night throughout the year. Muslims are told in the Quran that praying throughout this one night is better than a thousand months of prayer. Allah tells us in the Quran (97:1-3)

"We sent it down on a Blessed Night. And what will explain to thee what the Blessed Night is? The Blessed Night is better than a thousand months." The reward for fasting and praying in this month is so great, that the Prophet (PBUH) states, "Whoever stood for the prayer on Laylat Al-Qadr out of sincere faith and hoping for reward, then all his previous sins will be forgiven." It is evident that Ramadan is intimately linked with night prayer because fasting frees the spirit from the shackles of bodily lusts and desires and softens the heart, making Muslims more appreciative and receptive of the beauty and magnificence of the Quran.

It is noteworthy that reading the Quran is not a cursory matter. True believers read the Quran as the holy speech of God which delivers guidance and commands by which they should act and implement. A fruitful reading of the Quran brings about a profound change in conduct. Ibn Abbas reported, "The Prophet (PBUH), was the most generous of the people and he was even more generous during the month of Ramadan when Gabriel visited him. Gabriel (PBUH) would meet with him every night of Ramadan until the end of the month and the Prophet (PBUH) would recite the Quran to Gabriel. When Gabriel met him, he would be more generous than a swift wind bringing rain."

The hadith shows that the study Quran propels Muslims to be generous and compassionate towards those in need. Muslims are encouraged to read the Quran regularly and even more so in Ramadan. Muslim scholars over the centuries have been known to leave other optional acts of worship

Continued on Page 24

Assembly panel rejects bill on population

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: The National Assembly Legal and Legislative committee yesterday rejected a draft law calling to reduce the number of expatriate workers by setting percentages to individual communities. Rapporteur of the panel, MP Mohammad Al-Dallal said after the meeting that the rejection was based on constitutional and legal reasons as any such legislation must distinguish between workers and residents without jobs.

The draft, submitted by MP Waleed Al-Tabtabai, calls - like several similar

bills for a systematic reduction to the number of expatriates in the country by limiting the numbers of individual communities so as not to exceed a certain percentage. Dallal said the committee pointed out that the draft law should be presented in a different way to be in line with the constitution and valid laws.

The committee also rejected draft laws calling to limit life term in jail to just a 25-year sentence and that each year should be equal to nine months only. Dallal said the meeting was attended by representatives of the Interior Ministry who also rejected the draft laws, saying that such matters should remain in the hands of the judiciary. The committee also approved two draft laws calling to grant more benefits to the children of Kuwaiti women married to foreign husbands and also to treat Kuwaiti women

Continued on Page 24

Kuwaiti investor targets former Gulf battlefield

SOUTHERN BADIA: On a former battlefield of the 1991 Gulf War, deep in Iraq's southern desert, a Kuwaiti investor is looking to grow 100,000 date palms and build a nature reserve complete with ostriches and deer. Few Kuwaiti firms have returned to do business in Iraq since Saddam Hussein's 1990 invasion of its smaller neighbor and its UN-led liberation a year later.

But businessman Abdul-Aziz al-Babtain is pouring \$58 million into a date farm project in southern Badia, some 150 km from the port city of Basra, officials said. "We hope to have 100,000 (trees) in the next five to six years," said Diyah Sharadeh, Babtain's representative in Iraq, adding that the dates would first be sold in Iraq and later exported. So far 5,000 date trees have been planted.

Iraq once produced three-quarters of the world's output of dates but now accounts for 5 percent after decades of conflict, despite being home to around 350 types of date tree. Babtain had begun the farm in the 1980s, a sign at his office shows. But Iraq seized it after the 1990 invasion, and due to its proximity to the Kuwaiti border it turned the area into a military zone, digging trenches for heavy guns. These were then bombed in air strikes as part of

Kuwait's liberation campaign, but authorities never cleaned up the trenches, leaving bullets and parts of tank turrets rusting away just outside the field.

In a bid to turn a new leaf, Iraq returned the farm to Babtain and granted his business tax exemptions. "This will be the first private (date) investment project in Iraq," said Ali Ghaseb, head of the Basra Investment Commission. "It was a farm, then became a battlefield and is now again a farm." The farm has created some 50 jobs in this desolate area and will need up to 500 workers once the trees begin producing. In a second step, Babtain plans to set up a natural reserve for which ostriches and deer will be imported, Sharadeh said.

Ties between Kuwait and Iraq remained strained even after Saddam was toppled in a U.S.-led invasion in 2003, but they have improved since, with the Gulf state hosting in February a donor conference to rebuild Iraq. But Kuwaiti firms have been reluctant to return, demanding guarantees that their business will not be taken away again. There is only one other Kuwaiti investor in Basra, involved in a shopping mall, Ghaseb said.

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KUWAIT: Kuwaitis shop at a market in Kuwait City during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Nipah virus sparks alert in India; 3 die

NEW DELHI: A deadly virus carried mainly by fruit bats has killed at least three people in southern India, sparking a statewide health alert yesterday. Eight other deaths in the state of Kerala are being investigated for possible links to the Nipah virus, which has a 70 percent mortality rate. Kerala's Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan has urged citizens to stay vigilant and follow instructions from the health department. "Health department is doing everything possible to save the lives of the infected & prevent the advance of virus," his office posted on Twitter.

The victims all died in Calicut district, said Kerala health secretary Rajeev Sadanandan. Samples tested in government labs confirmed the presence of the Nipah virus in three deaths, while Sadanandan said the cause of other suspicious deaths could only be confirmed through tests. "We have sent blood and body fluid samples of all suspected cases for confirmation. It will take 24-48 hours for the results to come." India's health minister rushed medical experts to the state after a local politician reported that residents were panicking in Calicut.

The team would "initiate required steps as warranted by the protocol for the disease", J.P. Nadda said on Twitter. The three who died included two siblings in their early twenties, the Press Trust of India



GUJARAT: Indian bats cling onto the branches of a banyan tree on the campus of Gujarat College in Ahmedabad. — AFP

reported. A nursing assistant who had treated them also died yesterday while the father of the victims was undergoing hospital treatment, PTI reported. Neighbours told local media the siblings who died had eaten fruit picked from a compound where they were building a home.

A bat was found in the well of their home which was later sealed, PTI quoted state health minister K K Shylaja as saying. Nipah induces flu-like symptoms that often lead to encephalitis and coma. Fruit bats are considered the main carrier of the virus for which there is no vaccination, according to the World Health Organization. Nipah was first identified in Malaysia in 1998. It spread to Singapore and more than 100 people were killed in both places. On that occasion, pigs were the virus hosts but they are believed to have caught it from bats. — AFP

Local

Amir meets Jazeera Airways Chief, briefed on new terminal

Sheikh Sabah praises private sector's role in civil aviation



KUWAIT: Chairman of Jazeera Airways Marwan Boodai briefs His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on the opening of the new Jazeera Airways terminal at Kuwait International Airport. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Security Apparatus (NSA) Chairman Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Dean of the Arab and foreign corps in the United Kingdom and Ireland, Ambassador of Kuwait Khaled Al-Duwaisan.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Chairman of Jazeera Airways Marwan Boodai at Seif Palace yesterday. During the meeting, the chairman briefed His Highness the Amir on the opening of the new Jazeera Airways terminal at Kuwait International Airport, including facilities and new technologies.

His Highness the Amir praised this project, which is a watershed in the civil aviation field and contributes to strengthening the national economy, pointing to the private sector's prominent role in this field. Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received National

Security Apparatus (NSA) Chairman Sheikh Thamer Ali Sabah Al-Salem Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also met with Dean of the Arab and foreign corps in the United Kingdom and Ireland, Ambassador of Kuwait Khaled Al-Duwaisan.

In other news, Kuwaiti First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah held talks with Britain's Senior Defense Advisor on the Middle East Lieutenant General Sir John Lorimer, focusing on issues of mutual interest.

In his meeting with the senior British military officer, the Kuwaiti defense minister spoke of his country's camaraderie with Britain, as both officials also exchanged viewpoints on matters of common concern. The meeting brought together a number of officials from the Kuwaiti defense ministry. —KUNA



Defense Minister meets British officer



First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with Britain's Senior Defense Advisor on the Middle East Lieutenant General Sir John Lorimer.

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Participation in World Health Assembly significant: Minister

GENEVA: The agenda of the 71st session of the World Health Assembly, which kicked off yesterday, includes several important topics to promote global health security and support health system capabilities, Kuwaiti Health Minister Sheikh Basel Al-Sabah said. This came in his statement on the sidelines of the opening of the 71st session, which runs from 21 to 26 May at the United Nations headquarters in Geneva.

The Minister of Health explained that Kuwait's participation in this huge global meeting is an opportunity to meet with health leaders and specialists and to present achievements of the State of Kuwait in these areas, documented by indicators, as well as exchanging experiences with the heads and members of participating delegations, consultants and experts of the World Health Organization (WHO). Sabah stressed the Kuwaiti Ministry of Health's pride in cooperating with the WHO through participation in decision-making and recommendations through the World Health Assembly, the Executive Council and the

Regional Committee for the Eastern Mediterranean.

He also pointed to the ministry's keenness to implement these decisions and benefit from them to modernize and develop health policies, strategies and programs in line with the latest international developments to address the challenges related to international health systems, including the health system in Kuwait.

The Kuwaiti Minister pointed out that health conditions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including East Jerusalem and the occupied Syrian Golan, would also be discussed in the regional and international frameworks to identify the difficulties faced by the brethren in the occupied Palestinian territories in the medical and health sector.

He added that topics discussed by this General Assembly are huge, saying that Kuwait is keen to participate in the discussions, especially those dealing with the preparedness and response plans to health emergencies, pandemic, influenza and follow-up implementation of the Convention on the International Health Regulations.

He also noted that there is correlation between negative climate impacts on health and environment and their impact on physical activity, which will be the subject of a broad debate at the World Health Assembly deliberations. At the same time, he explained that the Assembly would also address the Global Strategy for Women's and Children's Health, including maternal and infant nutrition. —KUNA

Shamal Az-Zour logs one million man-hours without Lost Time Accident

KUWAIT: Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula KSC, the owner and operator of the Az-Zour North One Power and Water Plant, announced that the company has reached 1,000,000 man-hours at the plant without a Lost Time Accident, the equivalent of 10 individuals working safely for 50 years.

The milestone comes only three years after the Operation and Maintenance team took over operation of the first three gas turbines in June 2015 to provide early power during construction of the site. Beginning with 45 employees, the company has grown 146 percent since the start of operations to 111 employees.

Shamal Az-Zour CEO Paul Frain said, "Safety is, and always has been, of the utmost importance to us here at Shamal Az-Zour, and we are proud to reach this key milestone which we could not have achieved without the incredible hard-work and dedication of our entire team. Working very hard to keep a strong culture of safety on site, our employees work diligently to maintain a safe work environment by following proper safety procedures, using the correct protective equipment, and focusing on every detail with determination. This milestone means that for three years we've met our safety goal each day, every day, and we look forward to maintaining this commitment in the years to come."

With a history of excellence in workplace safety, Shamal Az-Zour follows its parent companies, Engie and Sumitomo, in applying their standards for a safe work environment and bases its safety procedures on



their guidance while embracing an 'Educate, Encourage and, if necessary, Enforce' policy that focuses on safety procedures and practices whilst keeping in mind the impact it has on operations and the environment. The Health, Safety and Environment team is constantly on the lookout for unsafe behavior and the management team carry out a 'safety walk' every week, and the staff are involved in the decision-making process and contribute significantly to safety procedures.

Shamal Az-Zour Al-Oula is 40 percent owned by a private consortium comprising ENGIE (formerly GDF SUEZ), Sumitomo Corporation, and AH Al Sagar and Brothers. The remaining 60 percent is owned by the Government of Kuwait, through the Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA: 5 percent), the Public Institution for Social Security (PIFSS: 5 percent) and the Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP: 50 percent). The Government of Kuwait will sell 50 percent of the total ownership through an Initial Public Offering (IPO) to Kuwaiti citizens later this year. The government will retain a 10 percent stake following the IPO.

Local

Expatriate workers increased in one year; drop in last three months of 2017

Lawmaker slams ministries' failure to implement 'Kuwaitization'

KUWAIT: The number of expatriate labor forces in Kuwait increased slightly in one year according to recent statistics, but the government's efforts to address the country's demographic imbalance by reducing foreign laborers might have started to bear fruit as the same statistics show that expat workers' numbers dropped within the last three months of 2017.

The total number of expat workers increased from 1,610,575 as of December 31, 2016 to 1,668,725 as of the end of 2017, according to statistics released recently by the Labor Market Information System of the Central Statistical Bureau. As a result of 58,150 foreign employees entering the local market, expats' percentage in Kuwait's labor market increased slightly from 81.9 percent in late 2016 to 82 percent in late 2017, while the percentage of Kuwaiti workers dropped from 18.1 percent to 18 percent within a year.

On the other hand, the statistics show that the number of expat workers dropped by around 0.3 percent in three months as they had made up 82.3 percent of the market by September 30, 2017. And while this slight drop reflects Kuwait's ongoing efforts to reduce the number of foreign workers in Kuwait, the government continues to receive criticism and accusations of failure to push forward of the 'Kuwaitization' of jobs as effectively as possible.

Creating more jobs
Chairman of the parliament's employment and public sector staff replacement committee MP Khalil Al-Saleh has meanwhile criticized the health ministry for failure to terminate long-serving



Graduates' visa halt starts July 1

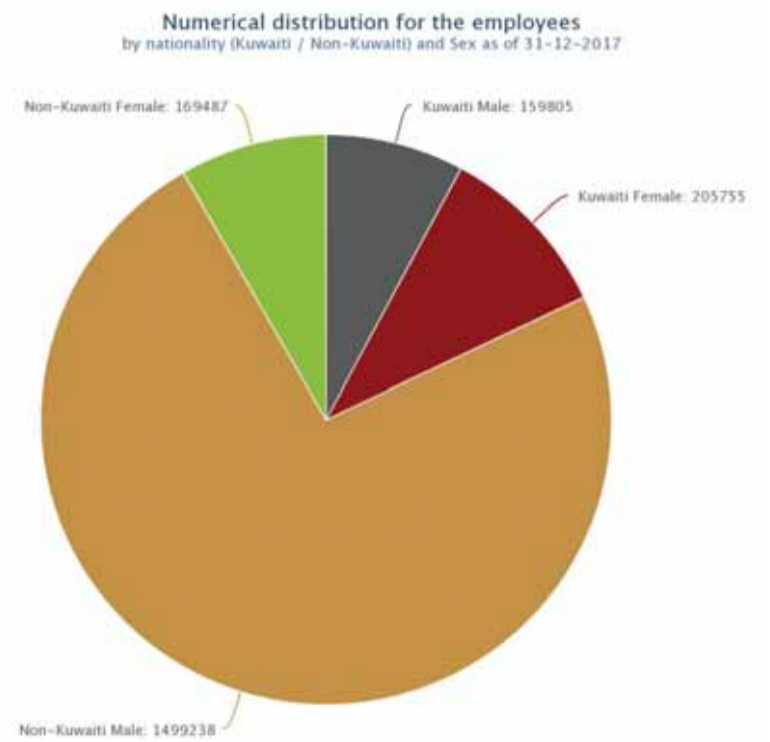
ing expatriate employees in order to create more jobs for Kuwaiti candidates. "What harm will the health ministry suffer if it terminates the contracts of expat doctors who are over the age of 65, cannot carry out surgeries and have become administrative employees?" Saleh told Al-Rai daily. He was responding to statements made recently by Head of the Civil Service Commission (CSC) Ahmad Al-Jassar, in which he stressed that expats remain irreplaceable in the education and health ministries despite ongoing efforts to replace expatriate employees in the public sector with national manpower.

Saleh argued meanwhile that expats at the education ministry constitute a large number,

adding that the ministry must carry out a good plan to 'remedy the issue'. He said that there are still expat teachers teaching social subjects despite the availability of Kuwaiti graduates who are not accepted because there is 'no need' for them, yet new expat teachers are still hired for these subjects.

Saleh preferred that employment not be limited to graduates from Kuwait University's college of education and graduates from other colleges should be accepted to become teachers, while giving incentives to those with rare specialties, adding that the education ministry must accept every university graduate who wants to be a teacher. "Our work in the committee is based on making Kuwaitis replace expats in state departments, especially if there are Kuwaitis who can do what others are doing," he said, adding that it is no longer acceptable to appoint expats in administrative jobs, and only expats the country needs should remain. Jassar had stated earlier this week that 2,595 unemployed Kuwaiti citizens have rejected jobs that the CSC have nominated them for as of the end of 2017, but did not specify which kind of jobs were offered.

Postgraduates' visas
Meanwhile, an official source at the Public Authority for Manpower said the decision to stop granting visas to postgraduates and graduates under 30 will go in effect at the start of July. The law was to be implemented at the beginning of the year, but was postponed for more studies and to remove legal loopholes, Al-Rai reported quot-



ing the source. The source said the decision aims at attracting experienced people from outside the country who are over 30, apart from instructing businessmen and private companies to use national labor and create new job opportunities

for youth, especially for those with university degrees. The source said the authority is working on allowing expats to renew their work permits six months before they expire for companies that subscribe to the "Ashal" service.

'Sheep death' video threatens ban on livestock shipments to Middle East

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A number of Australian legislators yesterday demanded an official ban on exporting sheep to the Middle East in response to footage circulating in media outlets worldwide showing hundreds of sheep shipped from Australia to Middle Eastern countries including Kuwait and other GCC states dying because of thermal fatigue.

Yesterday, parliamentarian Susan Lee introduced legislation that would "gradually phase out the live sheep export trade in the Middle East over the next five years." The bill is titled "Long-term sheep export ban for 2018." "A decision will be made to immediately suspend the export of live sheep over the three months of the summer, from July to September," she said.

The draft resolution has the support of the Green Party and the Labor Party in the Australian parliament, and if the resolution is passed, the shipment of shiploads of live Australian sheep to the Middle East will be finished by 2023, Australian media, like the SBS news network, said. Lee said she had "decided to introduce the legislation after disturbing video footage surfaced earlier this year, showing the death of sheep in appalling conditions on flights to the Middle East," Australian newspapers and media reported.

"The opposition will support the bill," Australian Labor Party spokesman Joel Fitzgibbon said. "Member bills are not the best way to encourage legislation, but that's what happens when the government today gives way to a very important issue for the Australian community," he told reporters in Canberra.

Meanwhile, former National Party leader and Australian Agriculture Minister Barnaby Joyce rejected the bill, stressing that "the decision has many drawbacks. If the live sheep trade is closed, you will make people poorer," the minister told reporters yesterday. Prime Minister Malcolm



A picture allegedly showing rotting bodies of sheep that died en route to the Middle East. Source: Animals Australia

Turnbull told parliament yesterday: "The government supports the export trade, which respects the society's views on animal well-being. We are taking immediate action to ensure that animal welfare is maintained."

Kuwait's Al-Mawashi company, the largest importer of Australian live sheep, had revealed that it is looking to find other secure sources of livestock as a result of Australia's talk of banning the trade.

Osama Boodai, chief executive officer of Al-Mawashi, was quoted by the Northern Daily Leader of Australia stating that those on the Middle Eastern side of the trade were also outraged at the footage on board sheep ships, saying "those conditions were not acceptable to any of us." Boodai visited Australia to talk to politicians and farmers about the reality of conditions on livestock ves-

sels. "People are judging us without having all the facts in front of them," he said.

Al-Mawashi, which incorporates the Kuwait Livestock Transport and Trading, is a majority government-owned business focused on food security rather than maximizing profits, he explained. It was subsidized by the Kuwait Government until it became self-sustaining and has been importing Australian sheep for four decades.

"Kuwait is not an agricultural region but given we sense the threat to livestock imports, we have started building our own flock and are hoping to increase its capacity," he said. "However, there are real limitations to our production potential and ability to ever be self-sufficient. That's why for countries in the Gulf, the livestock trade is a matter of national food security."

MSAL officials charged with usurping public funds

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) yesterday announced referring a male manager and a female employee at the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor (MSAL) to the public prosecution over charges of usurping public funds. Nazaha explained that with the help of her immediate boss, the employee had been stealing money.

Smoking areas

The comprehensive court yesterday ordered mandating the ministry of justice to allocate smoking areas at the new court complex in Farwaniya and Jahra. The court order came based on a case filed by lawyer Khalid Al-Otaibi, who accused the courts of violating the environment protection law by not setting special places for smokers. Otaibi explained that people smoke in all offices, corridors and staircases in these buildings.

Mega projects

A government report said the government urged ministers and concerned state bodies to execute six mega development projects with a total value of around \$1.2 billion within the 2018-2019 plan. According to the report, the projects



include Mubarak Al-Kabeer Port, South Mutlaa purification plant, a new maternity hospital, a new pediatric hospital, Kuwait center for creativity and leadership and developing Blajjat Street.

Oil sector

Chairman of the Oil and Petrochemicals Industries Workers Federation Mohammed Al-Hajri warned the government against making any decision that might completely 'paralyze' the oil sector and cause further tensions. "The government should learn the lesson from previous experiences," he stressed, criticizing at what he described as 'provocative statements' made by Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, "who used to be an oil minister and should have known better that imposing the strategic payroll alternative on oil sector workers will force them to seek other jobs." In other news, the Ministry of Health (MoH) recently adopted some conditions and regulations to regulate workers who are paid on a monthly basis, including using fingerprint devices and subjecting them to a regular leave policy.

Cabinet condemns launch of missiles on Saudi Arabia

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti cabinet yesterday strongly condemned the Houthi militia's recent launch of ballistic missiles on southern Saudi city of Khamis Mushait. The missiles were successfully intercepted by the Royal Saudi Air Force. During a routine meeting held Monday at Seif Palace and chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, the cabinet said the vicious aggression by the Houthis targeting the Kingdom's security and stability demonstrates the group is not serious in responding to the international efforts seeking an end to the conflict in Yemen.

The ministers reaffirmed Kuwait's support to Saudi Arabia and whatever measures the Kingdom might take to maintain its security and stability. Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said after the meeting. They also prayed for perpetual security and safety for the Kingdom under the wise leadership of King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al Saud.

By the same token, the cabinet condemned the recent suicide attacks that hit northern Baghdad, killing and wounding many innocent people. It reiterated Kuwait's firm stance in rejection of all forms and motives of terrorism, Saleh added. In addition, the cabinet condemned the act of terrorism that recently killed a police officer in Egypt's Sinai Peninsula, when a bomb hit a military armored vehicle, reaffirming Kuwait's support to Egypt and whatever moves it might take to protect its security and stability. The cabinet deplored the recent school shooting incident that occurred in Santa Fe, Texas, US, killing and wounding several people. The ministers said that such criminal acts that target innocent people run against all faiths and human values. The meeting stressed Kuwait's unwavering stance rejecting all forms of terrorism, as well as the country's support to the international community to fight it and dry up its sources. The ministers offered condolences to President Miguel Diaz-Canel of Cuba, and the Cuban people over the victims of the recent plane crash in Havana. — KUNA

Man stabbed to death; suspect shoots foe dead

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Two murder crimes were reported in Kuwait within the past 48 hours. In the first case, Farwaniya criminal investigators yesterday arrested a number of Arab expats for stabbing a compatriot to death yesterday at dawn, said security sources. Investigations showed that the suspect and his accomplices had gone to the victim's house at dawn yesterday, where they had an argument, during which the suspect used a knife to stab the victim. The suspect then fled the scene, leaving the victim to bleed to death. The killer and his associates were arrested a few hours later. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

In the other case, a 28-year-old bedoon man shot another stateless resident, 33, dead with an AK-47 rifle. The suspect then gave himself up at Ferdous police station out of fear he may be killed by the victim's family. The suspect said he saw the victim in a tailoring shop in Sulaibiya Co-op, so he got his rifle and shot him, saying that the killing was in revenge for killing his brother 15 years earlier, for which he was jailed for seven years. The victim's body was recovered by the coroner, while the suspect was charged with murder.

New traffic law

The Ministry of Interior's (MoI) Undersecretary Lt Gen Mahmoud Al-Doussary yesterday held a meeting with MoI assistant undersecretary for operations affairs Maj Gen Jamal Al-Sayegh, acting assistant undersecretary for traffic affairs Maj Gen Fahd Al-Sowayye, acting assistant undersecretary for legal affairs Brig Farraj Al-Rasman and acting relations and security media manager Brig Tahweed Al-Kandari.

The meeting was dedicated to review traffic law number 67/1976 and discuss setting a new traffic law that will help maintain traffic safety on all roads and include stricter penalties, namely for reckless and stunt drivers who jeopardize their and others' lives. Doussary called for coming up with full visions of the new law as soon as possible so that it could be referred to the legislature to be passed without any delay.

Vehicle impounded

Responding to social media videos showing a reckless driver doing stunts while driving in Farwaniya, MoI's relations and security media department said that the vehicle used was located and impounded, and that further investigations are in progress to identify the driver and arrest him.

Family rescued

Salmiya marine rescue forces were dispatched to rescue a family of four stranded on a boat opposite Kuwait Towers, as water was leaking into the yacht. The family members, including a child, were rescued and returned safely to the yacht club.



KUWAIT: This picture provided by the Interior Ministry shows the murder weapon used in killing the victim in the Farwaniya crime.

Local



Iftar tents highlight Ramadan's spirit

By Ben Garcia

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

Major companies pitch Ramadan tents in public places in Kuwait, where people from all walks of life can break their fast. Most of the people visiting the iftar tents are laborers and passersby. The food served in the tents can be taken home or can be

eaten inside. Tents are set up in open areas, near mosques or near the company's headquarters.

Tents are complete with air-conditioning and are carpeted, with garbage bags or trashcans on the sides. Food is delivered by trucks of catering companies and is given to people free of charge. The tradition of feeding people is practiced by a majority of companies in Kuwait. The Ramadan tents need to have a municipal permit for the safety of people using them.

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



History of Kuwait



KUWAIT: The fish market as it appeared in the winter of 1960. The picture shows buyers checking fish before negotiating with the seller on the price at a sidewalk in the market. (Source: 'Pictures of the old markets of Kuwait' by Ali Al-Rais, Center of Research and Studies on Kuwait 2017. Researched by Mohammad Zakaria Abu El Ella, heritage researcher in the Ministry of Information)

Zain delivers 'Machla Boxes' to strategic partners



KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, delivered a large number of essential food supplies 'Machla Boxes' to its strategic partners of non-profit entities to be presented to disadvantaged families in Kuwait during the holy month of Ramadan. Distributing 'Machla Boxes' is one of the main pillars of Zain's annual Ramadan campaign, which comes in line with the company's Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategy. Zain prepared the boxes - containing essential food supplies - and distributed them to its strategic partners of non-profit entities, including the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Kuwait Food Bank, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor, and Zakat House.

In addition to presenting 'Machla Boxes' to its partners, Zain's own team of volunteers also contributed in packing a number boxes at the company's main headquarters and delivered them themselves to underprivileged families who are in need of support during the month of fasting. The distribution covered multiple areas of Al-Jahra govern-

norate throughout four days.

Zain's distribution plan assured the delivery of essential food supplies to those in need before the arrival of the holy month in order to ensure disadvantaged families have enough quantities of the most basic supplies. This initiative is part of a series of programs the company is organizing throughout the holy month of Ramadan with the aim of having a deep positive impact on the community's various segments, especially the most vulnerable ones.

Zain affirmed that its social and CSSR campaign during the holy month of Ramadan includes an extensive array of initiatives and programs that focus on helping less fortunate people to enjoy Ramadan happily, as well as celebrating the true spirit the holy month brings.

Zain's solid Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy primarily focuses on the wellbeing of the entire nation. For this reason, the company has maintained its support of numerous initiatives that spread awareness and help make a difference to people's everyday lives.



KFH 'Feed the Fasting' campaign kicked off in several locations

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched 'Feed the Fasting' campaign as part of its Ramadan program 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan 4', corporate social responsibility and efforts to strengthen ties with the all segments of the society, especially in the month of Ramadan.

KFH voluntary team distributed iftar meals at four locations in collaboration with the Capital and Hawalli Governorates. The locations are: Nayef Palace, Alshamlan Mosque, Souk Al-Mubarakiya and Hawalli Park. The voluntary team prepared and distributed over 800 iftar Meals on first day of Ramadan.

KFH's efforts in Ramadan underline the bank's pioneering role in the social responsibility, while contributing in strengthening the social ties. KFH voluntary team prepares and distributes Iftar meals daily on different locations until end of Ramadan.

KFH's Ramadan program 'Increase Good Deeds in Ramadan 4' includes various visits and voluntary work, social and humanitarian events and activities stemming from the bank's endeavors to solidify its commitment towards the society, while supporting all social and humanitarian initiatives.



KIB kicks off registration for Quran competition

KUWAIT: As part of its commitment towards promoting Islamic values across all segments of the community, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) recently opened registration for its Ramadan Quran Competition and will continue until Thursday. Organized annually, the bank holds this competition for its staff and their children, as well as children of its customers. This year's competition will feature a number of valuable cash prizes for the lucky winners. The competi-

tion is set to take place at KIB's head office from 27th to 30th of May, after which winners will be announced on 11 June.

On this occasion, Dr Mohammed Al-Shamri, Manager of the Internal Sharia Audit Department at KIB, said: "We are always committed to promoting religious values within the local community and fostering strong principles across different segments of the local community, particularly children and youth. Through this Ramadan Quran Competition, we seek to encourage younger generations to learn the Quran and uphold the traditions of proper Quran memorization and recitation."

Additionally, Shamri noted that this year, the competition will be divided into four categories based on participants' ages. Of which, three categories will be dedicated to children of employees and customers. Participants born in 2010

and later will be required to memorize surat Al-Fajr, surat Al-Balad and surat Al-Shams. Those born in 2006 and later will be required to memorize surat Tabarak and surat Al-Qiyama. As for the third category, participants born in 2002 and later will be required to memorize surat Al-Rahman and surat Qaf, whereas the fourth category will be dedicated to employees and will require them to memorize surat Al-Fath.

Shamri further added that those interested in signing their children up for the competition can simply fill out the registration form available at all KIB branches which will then be sent to the Internal Shareaa. In addition to the registration form, those wishing to participate must also submit a copy of their civil ID and their children's civil ID. All requirements must be submitted by Thursday May 24, 2018 at the latest to participate in the competition.

Local



Ramadan women football tournament kicks off



KUWAIT: Four teams competed Sunday in the third edition of the Kuwait's Women Football Tournament which kicked off at Sheikh Jaber International Stadium on Saturday. The tournament is held during the holy month of Ramadan under the patronage of the ministry of youth and sports and in collaboration with La Liga. Sunday's competitions saw Group A matches featuring

Al-Fatat, Tap, Seven and Vamos teams. The tournament comprises of 16 teams divided into four groups. Each group consists of four teams competing in a league style. The first- and second-placed teams from each group qualify for the quarterfinals. The players will showcase their football skills and abilities during the tournament, which culminates in an exciting

championship match. The event is being organized by Eighty Percent, a socially driven sports company established by three young Kuwaiti women dedicated to sports and fitness. The tournament encourages women to incorporate playing sports as part of leading an active and healthy lifestyle.

"The championship is held in the context of an interest in women's sports in general and women's football in particular, and offers the teams to gain experience, raise the level of fitness and develop their technical side," Rawya Al-Hajri, Co-Founder and General Manager at Eightypercent.co, said during a press conference last weekend. - Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Safir Al-Fintas hosts 'graish' for media



KUWAIT: Safir Al-Fintas Hotel hosted a 'graish' event recently for the media on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



International

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Nearly a year since fall of Mosul, hunt for bodies goes on

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Maduro wins disputed vote as Venezuela mulls bleak future



STAFFORD, Texas: A host family member of Sabika Sheikh wipes away a tear while speaking at her funeral prayer service at the Brand Lane Islamic Center on Sunday. —AFP

Texas Muslims mourn slain student

Father of Pakistani girl hopes her death can spur gun reform

STAFFORD, Texas/ ISLAMABAD: Houston's Muslim community gathered to offer prayers Sunday at the funeral service for a 17-year-old Pakistani exchange student killed in a mass shooting at her southeast Texas high school. About 1,000 people, many with Pakistani roots and wearing traditional Muslim dress, converged on an Islamic center in Stafford to honor Sabika Sheikh, whose body was brought by hearse to the somber service from Santa Fe, the nearby small rural town where a student murdered 10 people including eight students.

Among the mourners was the late teen's first cousin who lives in the United States. She said Sheikh's relatives are completely devastated. "The family back home, we are in touch with them. They're crying every moment. Her mother is in denial right now," Shaheera Al-Basid, a graduate student in the US capital Washington, told AFP at the funeral service. "It's a shock we need our entire life to recover from," the 26-year-old added.

Men lined up in rows offered traditional mourning prayers as Sheikh's coffin, draped in the green and white flag of Pakistan, was brought into a small, cramped sanctuary. Sheikh had been due to return

home in mere weeks, in time for Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy month of Ramadan.

'Shock'

"It's a shock, it's so sad," said realtor Ike Samad, 67, who was born in Pakistan but has lived here most of his adult life and raised his children as Americans. "I came here just like her, as a student," he recalled. "God forbid that could have happened to me when I was here. As a parent, it is just devastating." Samad also addressed the painful irony that a young woman from a country that many Americans associated with the war on terror in the aftermath of the Sept 11, 2001 attacks on New York and Washington was killed in a country that millions around the world see as a bastion of freedom. The attacks were a "tragedy, and tragedy sometimes teaches you life," he said. "But it also revisits, and in this case very close to here." Several Pakistani-American youths also attended the funeral service, including Danyal Zakaria of nearby Sugar Land, Texas. The 17-year-old said it was "truly mind-blowing" that an exchange student his age could be cut down in cold blood at a US school. "This nation is known to be safe," he said. "If America is not safe, then where is?"

Gun control

Meanwhile, Sheikh's father said yesterday he hoped that the death of his daughter, who wanted to serve her country as a civil servant or diplomat, would help spur gun control in the United States. Santa Fe High School, southeast of Houston, on Friday joined a grim list of US schools and campuses where students and staff have been gunned down, stoking a divisive US debate about gun laws. "Sabika's case should become an example to change the gun laws," her father, Aziz Sheikh told Reuters, speaking by telephone from the family home in the city of Karachi.

Most Pakistani youngsters dream of studying abroad, with the United States the favorite destination for many. Aziz Sheikh said the danger of a school shooting had not crossed his mind when he sent Sabika to study in the United States for a year. Now he wants her death to help spur change. "It has become so common," he said of school shootings. "I want this to become a base on which the people over there can stand and pass a law to deal with this. I'll do whatever I can," he said.

Students said the teenaged boy charged with fatally shooting 10 people, Dimitrios Pagourtzis, opened fire in

an art class shortly before 8 am on Friday. Sabika was part of the YES exchange program funded by the US State Department, which provides scholarships for students from countries with significant Muslim populations to spend an academic year in the United States. Sabika loved her time in Texas, Sheikh said. "She appreciated it so much. She was so excited to be there and to study and meet the people, especially the teachers," he said.

Her family spoke to her every day and she had been due to return to Pakistan on June 9, at the end of the school year. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo offered his condolences in a statement on Saturday, saying Sabika was "helping to build ties between the United States and her native Pakistan". Her father said Sabika had wanted to work in government in some capacity, to help her country. "She would say she wanted to join the foreign office or the civil service," her father said. "The reason was that she said was there is a lot of talent in Pakistan but the image and perception of the country was really bad, and she wanted to clear that up." The US ambassador to Pakistan, David Hale, visited the family in Karachi to offer condolences, the US embassy said in a statement. —Agencies

China calls on all mosques to raise national flag

BEIJING: All Chinese mosques should raise the national flag to "promote a spirit of patriotism" among Muslims, the country's top Islamic regulatory body has declared, as the Communist Party seeks to tighten its grip on religion. Flags should be hung in a "prominent position" in all mosque courtyards, the China Islamic Association said in a letter published Saturday on its website. This would "further strengthen the understanding of national and civic ideals, and promote a spirit of patriotism among Muslims of all ethnic groups", it read.

Mosques should also publicly display information on the party's "core socialist values", and explain them to devotees via Islamic scripture so that they will be "deeply rooted in people's hearts", it said. The China Islamic Association is a government-affiliated body and has the sole power to accredit imams. The letter comes on the heels of China's newly revised Regulations on Religious Affairs, which came into effect in February and prompted rights groups to voice concern for religious freedoms.

The new regulations intensified punishments for unsanctioned religious activities and increased state supervision of religion in a bid to "block extremism" and tackle what Beijing sees as internal threats. Mosque staff should organize study of the Chinese constitution and other relevant laws - particularly the new religious regulations, the letter said. They should also study Chinese classics and



KASHGAR: This file picture taken on June 26, 2017 shows police patrolling as Muslims leave the Id Kah Mosque after the morning prayer on Eid Al-Fitr in the old town of this city in China's Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region. — AFP

set up courses on traditional Chinese culture, while being sure to focus only on Muslim sages of Chinese rather than foreign origin, it added.

The goal, it said, was for mosques to become "a solid platform for the study of the party and the country's laws and policies" in addition to houses of worship, and thereby develop among Muslims "an understanding of a common Chinese identity" with the majority Han. Islam is one of the five religions officially recognized by the atheist Communist party. The country is home to some 23 million Muslims.

But restrictions on them are intensifying, particularly in the northwestern province of Xinjiang which is home to the mostly Muslim Uighur minority, where there are bans on beards and public prayers. Tens of thousands of Uighurs have been sent to shadowy detention and re-education centers for perceived offences and can be held indefinitely without due process. Authorities say the restrictions and heavy police presence in Xinjiang are intended to control the spread of Islamic extremism and separatist movements, but analysts say the region is becoming an open-air prison. — AFP

Army enters Yarmouk after IS evacuations

BEIRUT: Evacuations of Islamic State group fighters from their final stronghold in Syria's capital ended yesterday, bringing President Bashar Al-Assad closer to a major milestone in the seven-year war. With a blend of military pressure and negotiated withdrawals, Assad has flushed rebels out of key territory around Damascus in recent months, leaving a last pocket of IS fighters in the capital's south. His troops and allied Palestinian militiamen have fought since April 19 to recapture the area covering the Palestinian camp of Yarmouk and the adjacent districts of Qadam, Tadamon and Hajar al-Aswad.

A ceasefire at the weekend ushered in a brief wave of evacuations that wrapped up at around midday yesterday, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. "The evacuations are over, after 32 buses took 1,600 people including IS fighters and their relatives out of southern Damascus on Sunday and Monday," said Observatory head Rami Abdel Rahman. He said Syrian troops then entered IS-held parts of Yarmouk for combing operations. Abdel Rahman said IS sleeper cells may remain in Yarmouk, however, and further military operations

could lie ahead before the area is declared secure.

Under the deal, the first buses of IS fighters and civilians left southern Damascus early Sunday morning and a second batch evacuated the following night. The Britain-based monitor said they headed towards Syria's Badiyah, a vast stretch of desert in the country's center and east where IS still controls some territory. Once Yarmouk and adjacent areas are under its control, Syria's government will have fully secured Damascus and its outskirts from any military threat for the first time since 2012. The regime has not confirmed any deal with IS.

But in a first official comment on evacuations, a military source said yesterday that a brief ceasefire had allowed some civilians to be transferred out overnight. The source told state news agency SANA that women and children were bussed out, but pledged the government would resume its operations at noon (0900 GMT) yesterday. AFP's correspondent in Damascus saw black smoke emerging from the capital's southern skyline around that time.

The latest evacuations, according to the Observatory, leave the government in control of Tadamon, Qadam and Hajar al-Aswad. But the secretive nature of the withdrawals meant it was not immediately clear how many IS fighters or civilians - if any - remained in Yarmouk. Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. —AFP

International

Trump 'demands' probe of 'spying' on his campaign

Russia election meddling probe may end by Sept 1: Giuliani

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump demanded Sunday that the Justice Department investigate whether his presidential campaign was "infiltrated" or spied on for political purposes, prompting it to announce it would look into those issues. Trump has described the infiltration allegations as being potentially "bigger than Watergate", but Democrats say he is attempting to undermine the year-old investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and possible collusion with his campaign, headed by special counsel Robert Mueller.

"I hereby demand, and will do so officially tomorrow, that the Department of Justice look into whether or not the FBI/DOJ infiltrated or surveilled the Trump Campaign for Political Purposes - and if any such demands or requests were made by people within the Obama Administration!" Trump tweeted. Trump's angry order came amid building pressure from the year-old Russia meddling investigation, and as US media reported that the Federal Bureau of Investigations sent a Britain-based American professor to speak separately with Trump campaign advisers in 2016.



Obstruction in broad daylight



A New York Times report described the professor as "an informant," saying the federal agency was looking into evidence that Carter Page and George Papadopoulos had suspicious contacts with Russia. The Washington Post called him "a longtime US intelligence source", and said he met with a third campaign adviser - Sam Clovis - as well as Page and Papadopoulos. Trump and his supporters have cast the man as a mole possibly sent by the Obama administration to burrow into his campaign.

The Justice Department tasked its internal watchdog with looking into the issues raised by Trump. But it paired that inquiry with an existing "review" of the application process for FISA national security warrants, which Republicans allege

was abused in connection with the surveillance of Page.

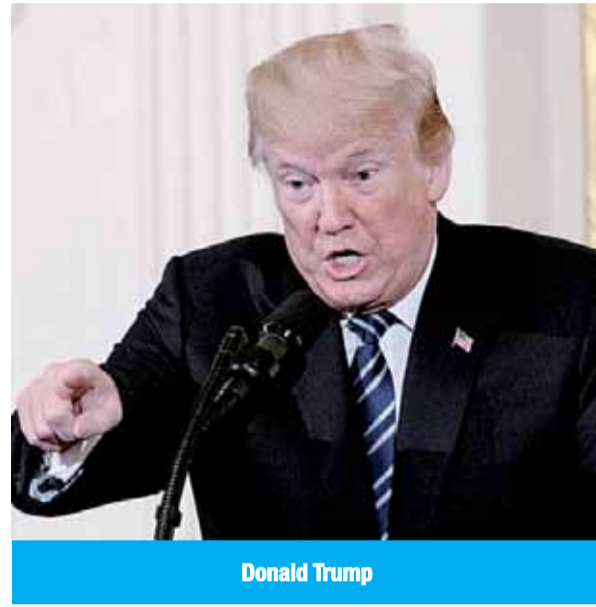
Expanding an 'ongoing review'

"The department has asked the inspector general to expand the ongoing review of the FISA application process to include determining whether there was any impropriety or political motivation in how the FBI conducted its counterintelligence investigation of persons suspected of involvement with the Russian agents who interfered in the 2016 presidential election," spokeswoman Sarah Isgur Flores said in a statement.

Deputy attorney general Rod Rosenstein, who oversees the Russia investigation, said: "If anyone did infiltrate or surveil participants in a presidential campaign for inappropriate purposes, we need to know about it and take appropriate action." While Trump allies in Congress have demanded more information about the informant, law enforcement officials have refused, saying the source - not yet officially identified - could be in danger if named.

Efforts to identify the FBI informant - and Trump's claims - have drawn fire from Democratic lawmakers. "It would be at best irresponsible, and at worst potentially illegal, for members of Congress to use their positions to learn the identity of an FBI source for the purpose of undermining the ongoing investigation into Russian interference in our election," said Senator Mark Warner, the Senate Intelligence Committee's top Democrat.

"Trump's claim of an embedded 'spy' is nonsense. His 'demand' DOJ investigate something they know to be untrue is an abuse of power, and an effort to distract from his growing legal problems," tweeted Adam Schiff, the ranking Democrat on the House Intelligence Committee. Joaquin Castro, another House Democrat, responded to Trump's demand for Justice



Donald Trump



Rudolph Giuliani

Department action by tweeting: "@realDonaldTrump - Let Mueller do his job. Stay out of it. You need to be subpoenaed for obstruction of justice/conspiracy/money laundering." "Obstruction in broad daylight," Democratic lawmaker Eric Swalwell wrote.

Trump lawyer Rudolph Giuliani, a former Justice Department prosecutor and assistant attorney general, told CNN on Friday that it was unclear whether an FBI informant had been embedded in the campaign, while adding that the agency "should tell us if there was". Giuliani also said the investigation into Russian interference in the 2016 election and possible collusion with Trump's campaign could end by Sept 1. Giuliani said the office of Mueller plans to end the investigation by then, and had shared the timeline some two weeks ago, The New York Times reported

Sunday. Fox News quoted Giuliani as saying that Mueller told Trump's legal team the investigation could be over by Sept 1, although the timeline was contingent upon the special counsel interviewing the president by mid-July.

Giuliani said he wants the investigation over by that time so it does not affect Republicans' chances in congressional mid-term elections in November, Fox reported. "You don't want another repeat of the 2016 election where you get contrary reports at the end and you don't know how it affected the election," Giuliani told the Times. Former FBI director James Comey - fired by Trump last year - announced that the bureau would reopen an investigation into Hillary Clinton's misuse of a private email server just 11 days before the 2016 presidential vote, a move that may have helped cost her the election. —AFP

Bereaved father weeps for lost son at Grenfell inquiry



LONDON: Marcio (second right) and Andrea Gomes, the parents of victim Logan Gomes arrive yesterday with survivor Nicholas Burton (left) for the opening day of the Phase 1 Inquiry hearings into the causes of and circumstances around the deadly fire at Grenfell Tower. —AFP

LONDON: A bereaved father gave a heart-breaking tribute to his baby son yesterday at the start of public hearings into the Grenfell Tower fire which killed 71 people in London last year. Marcio Gomes was the first of the family and friends of people who died in the blaze to pay tribute to a lost loved one - his baby son Logan who was stillborn in hospital hours after his heavily pregnant wife Andrea escaped from the fire.

Only a charred, gutted ruin remains of Grenfell Tower, a 24-storey social housing block in a deprived pocket of the rich west London borough of Kensington and Chelsea, since it was engulfed by flames in the middle of the night of June 14, 2017. The Grenfell Tower fire shocked Britain and led to an outpouring of angst over whether poor quality social housing and neglect by the authorities of a deprived, ethnically diverse community had played a part in the tragedy.

Separately from the public inquiry, the police are conducting a criminal investigation which could result in charges against organizations or

individuals involved in the construction, maintenance or refurbishment of the tower. The inquiry faces the daunting task of establishing the root causes of the fire from eye-witness accounts, videos and photos, expert evidence and the paper trail of the tower's history since it was built in 1974. But before it delves into the details of what happened, the inquiry wants to give those bereaved by the disaster an opportunity to pay tribute to those they lost by talking about them publicly, or by showing photos or videos if they wish.

Marcio Gomes, who lived with his wife and two daughters on the 21st floor of the tower, went first with a highly emotional tribute to baby Logan. Sitting alongside his wife Andrea, Gomes talked about the family's happiness about the baby they were expecting and recounted how hard he had worked to prepare a nursery for Logan. He spoke briefly about the family's terrifying escape down the burning tower in the middle of the night, and about the moment in hospital hours later when he was told the baby had been stillborn. —Reuters

Migrant door barely ajar as populists prepare to rule Italy

ROME: The impending arrival of an anti-establishment, far-right government in Italy heralds even more controversy over how to deal with the flow of migrants as it raises the spectre of mass expulsions. With a coalition of the anti-system Five Star Movement (M5S) and the nationalist League party poised to take power, the prospects for migrants reaching Italy after a hazardous sea crossing from Libya look even dimmer. The outgoing center-left government has already all but closed the maritime border following controversial accords signed with the Libyan government as well as local authorities, including armed groups, in an effort to curb the migrant influx. Nearly 700,000 people have landed on Italian shores since 2013.

To stem the tide of human misery, Italy with EU support has also trained and equipped the Libyan coastguard so it can intercept vessels before they reach international waters. Since the start of this year, Italy's interior ministry has tallied 7,100

arrivals via Libya and 3,500 more via Tunisia, Algeria or Greece. According to the UN migration agency IOM, the Libyans have themselves intercepted 6,500 people seeking to reach the southernmost tip of Europe.

Now the new, populist government has signalled it will push EU partners to shore up the bloc's external frontiers and accept an automatic and more equitable share-out of migrants across the continent. It also wants to speed up asylum procedures and repatriate those rejected and those from countries deemed "safe".

Arrivals down 'but not suffering'

To help fund the process the government would reallocate some of the budget - euro 4.2 billion (\$4.8 billion) in 2017 used in rescues, providing sanitary assistance and running reception centers. Arrivals of migrants to Italy slowed by some 80 percent from July 2016 to July 2017 after Marco Minniti, a veteran secret services coordinator who became interior minister in Dec 2016, reached an accord with Tripoli to keep migrants in detention centers on Libyan soil. Human rights groups and the United Nations have blasted most of the centers for their "inhuman" conditions. —AFP

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International

Nearly a year since fall of Iraq's Mosul, hunt for bodies goes on

Bodies of militants sometimes still clad in suicide belts

MOSUL: Atop an enormous mound of rubble under blistering sun in Iraq's second city Mosul, fire crews and police chip away at a grim but vital task. Some 10 months after dislodging the Islamic State group, they are still extracting bodies from the ruins of the shattered Old City. "Over three days, 763 bodies have been pulled from the rubble and buried," Lieutenant Colonel Rabie Ibrahim tells AFP. Despite the overpowering stench, the men work relentlessly, braving unexploded munitions in an area devastated by the nine-month battle.

"The operations will continue until all the corpses are extracted" from the heart of the city, Ibrahim says. Civilians' bodies that can be identified are handed to their families, while the remains of IS combatants are buried in a mass grave on the western outskirts of Mosul. Some of the putrefied corpses are sent to Nineveh province's health services, Ibrahim adds.

Booby traps

The workers, their faces covered with masks or scarves, move with great caution. The bodies of militants are sometimes still clad in suicide belts. Grenades, homemade bombs and other crude contraptions left by IS fighters during their retreat to Syria pose a

constant threat. The improvised booby traps are hidden under multiple layers and obstacles - the rubble of collapsed homes, dismembered furniture and uprooted trees, in some places subsiding into the waters of the Tigris that meander murky below.



The task is titanic

Where a maze of cobbled streets was once lined with homes and market stalls, there is now a formless mess populated by stray animals, insects and disease. The destruction is so great that some residents cannot pinpoint the remnants of their homes or even their street as they try to direct salvage workers to the remains of loved ones. The rubble makes it impossible to bring in heavy construction

machinery, says General Hossam Khalil, who leads Nineveh province's civil defense force. His men therefore have to rely on smaller vehicles, but Mosul "only has a few," he says.

Nearly 3,000 bodies

There is a pressure to work as quickly as conditions will allow: Residents are exhausted by three years of IS rule, nine months of brutal urban combat and now the slow pace of reconstruction. "But it's impossible, with this stench, this pollution and the epidemics they can cause," says Othmane Saad, an unemployed 40-year-old whose home in the old city is entirely destroyed. Another resident, 33-year-old Abu Adel, wants the authorities "to clear all the corpses as quickly as possible" and to "compensate residents so they can rebuild, then establish public services".

But the task is titanic. Since Mosul was retaken in July, "2,838 bodies, including 600 IS members, have been retrieved from the rubble," governor Naufel Sultane tells AFP. Even after the corpses are taken away and buried, they leave harmful bacteria which the Tigris can carry far beyond the old city. The authorities insist drinking water stations are unaffected and that they pump water from the



MOSUL: Iraqi civil defense recover a body in this northern Iraqi city on May 16, 2018. — AFP

Tigris' central depths, avoiding the banks and other shallows.

But gastroenterologist Ahmed Ibrahim advises caution. "You must boil water before

drinking it and don't use river water, either for bathing or washing," he tells AFP. Birds and fish "can carry typhus, bilharzia and gastroenteritis," he adds. — AFP

Malaysia sets up task force to probe IMDB scandal

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia yesterday set up a task force to probe allegations that billions of dollars were looted from sovereign wealth fund IMDB in an audacious fraud overseen by ousted leader Najib Razak. New Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad led a reformist alliance to a shock victory at the May 9 polls over Najib's coalition, which had governed Malaysia uninterrupted for over six decades. A major reason for the success of 92-year-old Mahathir was public disgust at allegations of endemic corruption among the country's ruling elite, and in particular an explosive scandal surrounding state fund IMDB.

The fund, 1Malaysia Development Berhad, was set up in 2009 ostensibly to promote the development of the Malaysian economy. But it is alleged that Najib, his family and cronies looted the investment vehicle in a massive fraud stretching from the Cayman Islands to New York, with stolen funds used to buy everything from real estate to artworks. Since Najib's ouster, Malaysians have been gripped by a series of police raids on properties linked to the ex-leader, which have yielded a stash of hundreds of luxury handbags believed to belong to his despised wife Rosmah Mansor, as well as suitcases stuffed with cash and jewels.

Mahathir - who first served as premier from 1981-2003 and came out of retirement to take on Najib - had pledged to reopen probes into IMDB. The new task force will be charged with seizing back assets and pursuing legal action against those suspected of breaking the law in relation to the fund, said the prime minister's office. "The government hopes the setting up of this task

force, comprising a multi-agency enforcement unit, will help restore the dignity of Malaysia that has been tainted by the IMDB kleptocracy scandal," said Mahathir's office. The task force will include representatives of the anti-graft agency, the police and the attorney-general's office. Some of those on the body were part of previous probes into the controversy but were pushed out by Najib's regime as he moved to shut down domestic investigations.

Complex web of transactions

Several current and former senior government officials will lead the task force, including Abdul Gani Patail, the former attorney-general who was removed from his post in 2015 as he was leading investigations into IMDB. Huge sums of money from the fund are believed to have been funnelled round the world in a complex web of transactions, and the task force's remit will include reaching out to law enforcement agencies in other countries, including the US, Switzerland, Singapore and Canada, according to Mahathir's office.

The US Statement Department alleges in civil lawsuits that \$4.5 billion was stolen from IMDB and sent to the United States, where it was spent on funding the Hollywood film "The Wolf of Wall Street" and lavish purchases including Monet and Van Gogh paintings. Najib and IMDB have consistently denied any wrongdoing. The ex-leader, 64, sought to mount a fightback over the weekend, insisting he had not stolen any public money during a speech to hundreds of supporters in the constituency where he has been an MP for decades.

Mahathir, a former mentor of Najib who turned on him over IMDB, is determined to breathe new life into democratic institutions that suffered under the ex-premier's increasingly authoritarian rule and usher in a new dawn for the country. In a speech to civil servants yesterday, Mahathir said that Malaysia's debt had ballooned to more than one trillion ringgit (\$251 billion). "We must realize that before our country was respected, but now it is no longer respected," he said. — AFP

Son found guilty of murdering family with axe

CAPE TOWN: A South African judge yesterday found a man guilty of killing his wealthy parents and brother in a frenzied axe attack that also left his sister severely injured. Henri van Breda, 23, had denied murdering his 21-year-old brother Rudi and parents Martin, 54, and Teresa, 55, and leaving his sister Marli struggling with near-fatal injuries to her head, neck and throat. During the trial, he told the court that a late-night intruder had entered the family's home on an exclusive highly-guarded estate in Stellenbosch, outside Cape Town.

But judge Siraj Desai systematically took apart the defense case in a five-hour summary of the trial before delivering a verdict that Desai said "as a family man, it's difficult" to deliver. "After considering all the evidence, the result is inescapable," Desai said, finding van Breda guilty on three counts of murder and one count of attempted murder, as well as obstructing justice. "That the accused was the perpetrator of the crime is the only reasonable conclusion," he said.

"No evidence of a typical house robbery or breaking is evident. Four of five members of family found brutally attacked in similar fashion and left for dead... The accused was left standing, having lived through the events." Van Breda, standing in the dock, showed little emo-



CAPE TOWN: Henri van Breda sits in the dock at the Western Cape High Court to hear his girlfriend in his trial yesterday. — AFP

tion as the verdict was read out, while his girlfriend wept in the back of the court.

Believing he was about to be arrested, van Breda turned himself in at a local police station 18 months after the killings. The trial has generated fevered interest over a privileged son allegedly unleashing a savage attack on his family, whose fortune - estimated at \$16 million - was derived from property. Van Breda's claim of an intruder had echoes of the defense used by Oscar Pistorius, who said he thought a burglar was hiding in the toilet to explain why he fired four times through the door, killing his girlfriend. In a recording of van Breda's call to emergency services, he said his family members were "bleeding from the head" before he appeared to giggle briefly. With close-shaven hair and a beard, Van Breda was accompanied to the packed courtroom by his girlfriend. — AFP

French police arrest 3 after teens beat man to death

PAU, France: French police have arrested three people after a man was beaten to death in broad daylight by a gang of teenagers in Pau, a town in southern France. A 32-year-old was murdered early on Friday evening in a notorious area of the town by a group of youths, whom witnesses described as being in their early teens and aged 16-17 at most. The victim, who had a history of violent crime and drug dealing, was repeatedly kicked and punched by a group of up to 12 teenagers, and was also beaten with a plastic chair leg and a piece of wood in front of horrified witnesses, local media reported.

Pau prosecutor Cecile Gensac confirmed Monday that three people had been arrested

over the murder of the victim, a French national born in Burkina Faso in west Africa who had moved from Paris to Pau in recent years. "The man died Friday in the street in an area of Pau after a group attacked him," Gensac told AFP. The housing estate in the Saragosse area of Pau, where the crime took place, is known for its high crime rate and is typical of many deprived, high-immigration urban neighbourhoods in France.

But murders committed by minors are rare and the man's death on a grassy public area was widely reported on Monday, with Le Parisien newspaper describing it as a "terrifying lynching". "They're very young: 12, 13, 14 years old. It's a gang around here that smokes weed, that causes problems," one local told La Republique des Pyrenees newspaper. The death came as French President Emmanuel Macron prepares to unveil his long-awaited strategy for tackling the entrenched social problems found in many poor areas in the country's towns and cities. The 40-year-old leader has faced criticism from some associations for failing to put tackling crime, unemployment, poverty and Islamism at the heart of his agenda since his election in May 2017.

Thai politicians charged as dissent grows before coup anniversary

BANGKOK: Three politicians from the party ousted by Thailand's generals were charged on Monday with sedition for holding a press conference, as dissent grows before the fourth anniversary of the junta's 2014 coup. The military filed a case after senior Pheu Thai figures railed against the coup organizers at their party's headquarters last week, blasting the generals for breaking repeated promises to restore democracy. The party supports former premiers Thaksin Shinawatra and his sister Yingluck, whose elected governments were both toppled by coups but who remain popular among many rural Thais despite both being in self-exile.

The military now says it will allow elections in February but has refused to lift its ban on politics or on gatherings of more than five people. But critics are increasingly testing the limits of the ban, which they say is intended to give the generals time to build a political coalition before the vote without any public debate. On Monday Pheu Thai's Watana Muangsook, Chaturon Chaisang and Chusak Sirinil were all charged with sedition for speaking at the press conference, while five other party leaders were charged with violating the ban on gatherings for attending. "They were summoned to hear charges that were filed by the (junta) on Thursday," said deputy national police chief Srivara Rangsihramanukul.

The Pheu Thai veterans kept up their criticism of the military as they cut through a crowd gathered outside the police office and shouting "Fight, fight!" in support. "This government abuses the laws. They use laws to prevent people from investigating (them),"

Danish minister says fasting can be 'dangerous'

STOCKHOLM: A Danish minister known for her strong anti-immigration views yesterday called for Muslims to take time off work during the fasting period of Ramadan, saying the practice can be "dangerous for all of us". The comments from immigration and integration minister Inger Stojberg, a member of the center-right Liberal Party, come after Ramadan, one of Islam's most revered holidays in which



BANGKOK: Pheu Thai party leaders leave the crime suppression division after being charged with sedition and violating the ban on gatherings yesterday. — AFP

said Pheu Thai's secretary general Phumtham Wechayachai.

Coup anniversary

The regime is taking a harder line as it gears up for protests on the coup's fourth anniversary on Tuesday, with activists vowing to march on Government House in the morning. Police have warned they will enforce a "restricted area" around the building. The pro-democracy movement, which is led by a dedicated cohort of student activists, said they have come under increasing surveillance before their planned march. In a statement the activists said their sound technician was taken to a military camp on Sunday night.

Muslims around the world fast from dawn until dusk, began last week.

"I want to call on Muslims to take leave from work during the month of Ramadan to avoid negative consequences for the rest of Danish society," Stojberg wrote in a column for the BT tabloid. "I wonder if a religious order commanding observance of a 1,400-year-old pillar of Islam is compatible with the society and labor market that we have in Denmark in 2018." She said she feared the fasting could affect "safety and productivity", giving as an example bus drivers who have "neither had a drink nor eaten for more than 10 hours". "This can be dangerous for all of us," she said. Stojberg stoked controversy last year when she posted to Facebook a photo of

'Doing badly'

Presidential aides have said Macron will avoid announcing a new strategy based on massive increases in public spending. "The aim is not to reinvent grand projects" that are "top-down", an aide told reporters last week, but to "be efficient and succeed in bringing on board locals" to encourage community projects. Macron is likely to insist on his government's record of investing in schools in poor areas, creating a new community police service for crime-hit zones, and economic reforms which he believes will generate more jobs.

A host of local lawmakers from the hardest-hit urban areas of France have warned about the problems of crime, poverty and Islamism that blight the lives of local families. The mayor of the gang-plagued region of Seine-Saint-Denis north of Paris published a column at the weekend urging Macron not to miss the opportunity to send a signal about his intentions. "The suburbs are doing badly," wrote Laurent Ruisseau. Ten people were in police custody yesterday in Seine-Saint-Denis after a 41-year-old man was stabbed to death at the weekend at a shop. — AFP

He was released yesterday, according to a group of human rights lawyers, who say more than 50 people have been visited, called or monitored by security officers since May 17. A junta spokesman could not be reached for comment. Titipol Phakdeewanich, a politics professor based in Thailand's rural northeast, said officers had been visiting local activists in the region, a Pheu Thai stronghold. "They are also using their network in local areas as well... having some of their military going into villages and asking people not to go (to the Bangkok demonstration)," Titipol told AFP, adding that he himself received a phone call from the military asking if he planned to attend the march. — AFP

her smiling and holding a cake to celebrate Denmark's 50th measure for toughening immigration laws. One of the strongest measures came into force in 2016, allowing police to seize valuables from refugees. The government's guidelines exempted wedding and engagement rings after the measure prompted international outrage and drew comparisons to Nazi Germany. Stojberg also drew criticism by launching a series of adverts in Lebanese newspapers in 2015 warning would-be migrants of the difficulties of seeking asylum in Denmark. Over the past 15 years, the country has tightened its immigration policies, insisting that migrants learn the country's customs and language in order to adapt to the labor market. — AFP

International

Maduro wins disputed vote as Venezuela mulls bleak future

Election rejected by opposition as a farce

CARACAS: Venezuela was facing the threat of fresh international sanctions and intensified domestic unrest yesterday following President Nicolas Maduro's re-election in a vote rejected by the opposition as a farce. Election officials said Maduro won 68 percent of the votes cast in Sunday's presidential poll, far ahead of the 21 percent won by his nearest rival, ex-army officer Henri Falcon. In an address to cheering supporters outside Miraflores Palace in Caracas, Maduro hailed his victory for another six-year term as a "historic record".

"We won again! We triumphed again! We are the force of history turned into a permanent popular victory!" Maduro told those gathered to celebrate his "knockout" victory. But the vote was marred by a 52 percent abstention rate - a historic high - following a boycott called by the Democratic Unity Roundtable (MUD) opposition coalition, which slammed the ballot as a "farce". And even before it took place, the United States, Canada, the European Union and a dozen Latin American countries said they would not recognize the results.

Vote buying allegations

Falcon, a loyalist of the late leftist firebrand Hugo Chavez who was neck-and-neck with Maduro in pre-election surveys, said the vote lacked "legitimacy" and accused the government of vote buying. "For us, there were no elections," he told reporters. "We have to have new elections in Venezuela." And third-placed Javier Bertucci, an evangelist preacher who polled around 11 percent, also joined the call for new elections.

Maduro may have won, but the near future appears bleak. Venezuela is isolated and deep in

the worst economic crisis of its history, with its people enduring food and medicine shortages, and a mass exodus of hundreds of thousands simply leaving the country. The IMF estimates that Venezuela's GDP will continue to shrink this year, with the inflation rate expected to reach 13,800 percent. Venezuela has always relied on its oil, but global prices are low and production has dropped to its lowest level in 30 years. "The upcoming scenario is clear: political tension and radicalization,

Critics however blame him for gross economic mismanagement. In his victory speech, Maduro acknowledged that "changes" were necessary. "I will dedicate myself entirely towards economic recovery," he said, but gave few details.

No succor from the US

Venezuela can expect no help from Washington: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo denounced the election as a "sham". The US market is crucial, as one third of Venezuelan oil exports go to the United States. But Washington has threatened to stop buying Venezuelan oil. US officials have already slapped sanctions on Maduro and his senior aides, and banned US entities from buying any more debt from Caracas or state oil company PDVSA. Venezuela's crippled oil industry lacks investment and its assets are increasingly prey to debt settlements as the country defaults.

Maduro is placing his trust in allies China and Russia. And since his many countries view his reelection as illegitimate, "he will have no capacity for maneuvering in the area of international finances or diplomacy," warned analyst Andres Canizalez. In Beijing, the foreign ministry said Venezuela's people and their government "have the ability to deal with their own internal affairs, while the parties concerned should also respect the choices made by the people of Venezuela." If there is any dispute, the dispute should be settled within the current legal framework of Venezuela," it said.

Falcon's failure

At his victory rally, Maduro called for a "national dialogue", even though the MUD oppo-



Poll marred by poor turnout

repression, massive international rejection, a sharpening of sanctions, and a climax to the economic crisis," said analyst Luis Vicente Leon.

'Changes' necessary

Maduro, a former bus driver, union leader, foreign minister and Chavez's hand-picked political heir, has presided over an implosion of the once-wealthy oil producer's economy since taking office in 2013. The socialist leader says Venezuela is the victim of an "economic war" waged by the conservative opposition and external powers including the United States aimed at toppling him.



CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro holds the political constitution after the National Electoral Council (CNE) announced the results of the voting in the presidential election on Sunday. —AFP

sition coalition said it would step up pressure for "legitimate elections" later in the year. But the opposition is deeply divided, with Falcon stirring up a hornet's nest when he left the coalition to run for president, and has yet to shake off the stigma of being labeled a traitor. "Falcon failed to defeat Maduro or the MUD," political observer Luis Salamanca told AFP. "His call for a new

election is late."

Analysts said the opposition's greatest challenge is to coalesce around a strategy that will create pressure for change after nearly two decades of socialist "Chavista" rule. As for Maduro, his biggest risk is an "implosion" if government officials are cornered and pressed by the international sanctions, Leon said. —AFP

Volcano's gassy, glassy 'laze' new threat for Hawaii

PAHOA, Hawaii: Hawaii faced a new hazard on Sunday as lava flows from Kilauea's volcanic eruption could produce clouds of acid fumes, steam and glass-like particles as they reach the Pacific, authorities said. Civil defense notices cautioned motorists, boaters and beachgoers to beware of caustic plumes of "laze" formed from two streams of hot lava pouring into the sea after cutting across Highway 137 on the south coast of Hawaii's Big Island late on Saturday and early Sunday. The bulletins also warned that reports of toxic sulfur dioxide gas being vented from various points around the volcano had tripled, urging residents to "take action necessary to limit further exposure".

Laze - a term combining the words "lava" and "haze" - is a mix of hydrochloric acid fumes, steam and fine volcanic glass specks created when erupting lava, which can reach 2,000 degrees Fahrenheit (1,093 degrees Celsius), reacts with sea water, Hawaii County Civil Defense said in a statement. "Be aware of the laze hazard and stay away from any ocean plume," the agency said, warning that potential hazards include lung damage, as well as eye and skin irritation.

Under Sunday's conditions, with strong winds and copious amounts of lava hitting the ocean, the laze plumes could extend as far as 24 km, mostly along the coast and offshore, though the hazard would diminish the farther out to sea it blows, according to USGS geolo-

gist Janet Babb. Authorities cautioned, however, that wind patterns can change abruptly. The US Coast Guard was "actively monitoring" the area to keep away all vessel traffic except permitted tour boats, the civil defense office said.

Laze killed two people when a lava flow reached the coast in 2000, and even a wisp can cause eye and respiratory irritation, the US Geological Survey said. Acid rain from laze has corrosive properties equivalent to diluted battery acid, the agency said. The section of coastal Highway 137 and a nearby state park in the area where lava was pouring into the ocean were both closed, and another road in the vicinity was restricted to local traffic as a precaution due to elevated levels of sulfur dioxide gas. An air quality index for Kona, about 64 km northwest of the eruption site, was at "orange" level, meaning that older individuals and those with lung problems could be affected.

Earthquakes, ash eruptions

Kilauea, one of the world's most active volcanoes, began extruding red-hot lava and sulfuric acid fumes through newly opened fissures on the ground along its eastern flank on May 3, marking the latest phase of an eruption cycle that has continued nearly nonstop for 35 years. The occurrence of new lava-spewing vents, now numbering at least 22, have been accompanied by flurries of earthquakes and periodic eruptions of ash, volcanic rock and toxic gases from the volcano's summit crater.

The lava flows have destroyed dozens of homes and other buildings, ignited brush fires and displaced thousands of residents who were either ordered evacuated or fled voluntarily. The volcano has also fed a phenomenon called vog, a



PAHOA: A man points as a steam plume rises while lava enters the Pacific Ocean after flowing from a Kilauea volcano fissure, on Hawaii's Big Island on Sunday. —AFP

hazy mix of sulfur dioxide, aerosols, moisture and dust, with fine particles that can travel deep into lungs, the USGS said.

On Saturday, authorities reported the first known serious injury from the eruptions - a homeowner whose leg was shattered by a hot, solid lump of lava called a "lava bomb" while standing on the third-floor balcony of his home. Mark Clawson, a friend of the victim who did not want his name used, lives near where his friend was staying as caretaker, and heard screaming and saw the harrowing aftermath, he told Reuters.

Apparently a fiery 5-pound "lava bomb" about the size of a dinner plate was launched from a fissure about 200 yards from the house, Clawson said. "Most of them (lava bombs) arc high in

the air, but every now and again there's one that gets shot like a rifle, more horizontal and that's what happened here," he said. It also started a small fire, which Clawson helped douse. He said doctors had to pick sharp, hardened fragments of lava out of the wound, but the prognosis is good for his friend.

With Highway 137 severed, authorities were trying on Sunday to open up nearby Highway 11, which was blocked by almost a mile of lava in 2014, to serve as an alternate escape route. The Hawaii National Guard has warned of additional mandatory evacuations if more roads become blocked. Officials at the Hawaii Volcano Authority have said hotter and more viscous lava could be on the way, with fountains spurting as high as 600 feet (182 m), as seen in a 1955 eruption. —Reuters

Mexican rivals attack leftist, Trump hovers over debate

MEXICO CITY: The chasing pack of Mexican presidential candidates attacked front-runner Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador in a second televised debate on Sunday without landing major blows in exchanges that often returned to fraught relations with the United States. Leftist Lopez Obrador sought to deflect questions, as he did in the first debate last month ahead of the July 1 election. He stuck to many of his stock responses to defend his sizeable opinion poll lead, rarely rising to the bait and occasionally mocking his rivals. The debate, focused principally on trade, migrants, the Mexico-US border and the fight against criminal gangs, drew several rebukes of US President Donald Trump, whose broadsides against Mexico have stirred widespread animosity. The second-placed challenger, 39-year-old Ricardo Anaya, crossed the stage to address Lopez Obrador face to face in a bid to rile the former Mexico City mayor.

But the 64-year-old Lopez Obrador brushed off the attacks, dismissively calling Anaya a "liar and a fraud". "Anaya is a little

bum demagogue," Lopez Obrador said, at one point laughingly telling the audience in the northern city of Tijuana he was watching out for his wallet when Anaya approached him to challenge his record as mayor of the capital.

Anaya, who is heading a right-left coalition, emerged as the victor of the first debate in some polls. He tried to paint Lopez Obrador as out of touch, ill-informed and beholden to outdated economic models. But Lopez Obrador showed fewer signs of irritation than in the first debate, remaining in good humor and rarely wandering from his script.

'Alliance for progress'

Lopez Obrador, who in some polls has a lead of 20 percentage points over Anaya, recycled much of his campaign rhetoric, and pledged to make Trump respect Mexico if he is elected. "I want a friendly relationship with the government of the United States, but not one of subordination. Mexico is a free country, it is a sovereign nation," Lopez Obrador said. "We will not be subject to any foreign government."

Lopez Obrador said he would propose an "alliance for progress" that included Mexico, the United States, Canada and Central America to foster job creation, grow the economy and pacify the region. He did not offer details on his plan. In his third tilt at the top job, Lopez Obrador has capitalized on widespread disenchantment with the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) over corruption, rising levels of violence and sluggish economic growth.



TIJUANA: Mexico's presidential candidate for the MORENA party Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador waves upon arrival at the Universidad Autonoma de Baja California (UABC) to take part in the second presidential debate on Sunday. —AFP

The PRI candidate, former finance minister Jose Antonio Meade, has struggled to make an impact, and again found himself defending the unpopular government of President Enrique Pena Nieto. Lopez Obrador came close to winning the presidency in 2006 and was runner-up again six years later. This time around, Lopez Obrador has cut a more relaxed figure on the campaign trail, largely avoiding the kind of outbursts that in the past helped adversaries

depict him as a threat to the stability in Latin America's No. 2 economy.

Despite softening his tone, Lopez Obrador has butted heads with Mexico's business community, calling several tycoons influence traffickers who benefit from corruption. Lopez Obrador has already caused concerns with threats to walk back the liberalization of the country's oil and gas business and to scrap a new \$13 billion Mexico City airport. —Reuters

Spurned advances provoked Texas school shooting

SANTA FE, Texas: A teenage boy charged with fatally shooting eight students and two teachers during a gun rampage at a Houston-area high school had been spurned by one of his victims after making aggressive advances, her mother told a newspaper. Sadie Rodriguez, the mother of Shana Fisher, 16, who was killed in the attack, told the Los Angeles Times that her daughter rejected four months of aggressive advances from Dimitrios Pagourtzis, 17, who is in jail accused of murdering 10 people early on Friday at the high school in Santa Fe.

Fisher finally stood up to him and embarrassed him in class, the newspaper quoted her mother as writing in a private message to the Times. "A week later he opens fire on everyone he didn't like," she said. "Shana being the first one." Rodriguez could not independently be reached for comment. If true, it would be the second school shooting in recent months driven by such rejection. In March, a 17-year-old Maryland high school student used his father's gun to fatally shoot a female student with whom he had been in a recently ended relationship. Police said Pagourtzis confessed to Friday's killings after he was taken into custody, but authorities have offered no motive yet for the massacre, the fourth-deadliest mass shooting at a US public school in modern history.

The Santa Fe Independent School District (ISD) denied accounts from some classmates that Pagourtzis had been bullied, including by a football coach. "Administration looked into these claims and confirmed that these reports are untrue," it said on Saturday in a statement. Classmates at the school, which has some 1,460 students, described Pagourtzis as a quiet loner who played on the football team. He wore a black trench coat to school in the Texas heat on Friday and opened fire with a pistol and shotgun. In Santa Fe on Sunday, many churches and businesses had signs outside with messages such as "Santa Fe strong" and "Santa Fe ISD we are here for you". About 100 people attended an emotional service at the Aldersgate United Methodist Church. Service dogs were in a nearby hall to help console grieving victims. Jared Black, one of the students killed, attended a youth group at the church, and many of its members embraced his mother Pam when the family arrived. —Reuters

News in brief

British woman back in court

LONDON: Nazanin Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian woman jailed in Tehran for two years, has appeared in court to face a new charge, her husband said yesterday. Zaghari-Ratcliffe was summoned to a court in Tehran on Saturday, according to a statement from Richard Ratcliffe, who runs the Free Nazanin campaign group. The charge is for "spreading propaganda against the regime", which she denies, he said. On Sunday, she was allowed to speak to the British ambassador to Tehran, Rob Macaire. "This is the first time that she has been allowed any contact with the embassy in over two years," he said. Zaghari-Ratcliffe, a British-Iranian dual national who works for the Thomson Reuters Foundation - the media organization's philanthropic arm - was arrested at Tehran airport in April 2016. —AFP

Spain acts to maintain Catalonia rule

MADRID: Spain acted to maintain direct rule on Catalonia yesterday after the government objected to the choice of councillors by fervent separatist leader Quim Torra, who has vowed to recreate the administration fired by Madrid for declaring independence. Madrid and Barcelona are engaged in a stand-off after regional elections called by the government in December returned a majority of seats for pro-independence parties. Madrid has imposed direct rule until a new regional government is in place. Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy said yesterday he hoped Catalonia would soon form a viable government that would obey the law. The Spanish government yesterday recognized the powers of newly-elected leader Torra but refused to ratify his choice of councillors - four of whom are facing charges linked to last year's independence drive, official documents showed. —Reuters

Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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Nazi hunters in final straight of race against time

Tucked away in the picturesque German city of Ludwigsburg, a tiny team of investigators tracks the last surviving Nazi war criminals across the globe and through the better part of a century, in an urgent race against time. "We put together the smallest pieces of information, like the pieces of a puzzle, to work out who was employed in what role, from when until when" in Adolf Hitler's totalitarian killing machine, says prosecutor Jens Rommel. He has since 2015 led the eight-strong Central Office for the Investigation of National Socialist Crimes, at a time when the last perpetrators, accomplices, witnesses and survivors are finally vanishing.

Once all the perpetrators are gone, Germany will close the judicial side of its coming-to-terms with the Nazi government's extermination of six million Jews and hundreds of thousands of others in the Holocaust. In the meantime, the spectacle of frail defendants aged in their 90s appearing in courtrooms to answer for crimes dating back to 1945 or earlier has renewed vigorous debate about the country's dark history. For decades after the war, the German government and justice system showed little haste to track down many of those involved in the organized mass murder.

A landmark change came with the 2011 sentencing of John Demjanjuk, who served as a guard at the Sobibor extermination camp in occupied Poland in 1943, to five years in prison. The ruling opened the way to prosecuting anyone who worked at a concentration camp—from soldiers to accountants—as an accomplice in mass murder. Before that judgment "we never cast an eye over the smallest cogs in the machine," said lawyer Andrej Umansky, author of a book on the Holocaust in Eastern Europe. The changed legal landscape since then, he said, offers a chance "to give victims a voice, their families, and to bring the facts back into the public consciousness".

Moscow to Buenos Aires

The team's probes into the dust-shrouded past have taken Rommel's team of five prosecutors, two judges and one police officer across the world in search of their quarry. Many German Nazis fled to South America immediately after the war, among them one of the main architects of the Holocaust Adolf Eichmann, who landed in Buenos Aires. He was captured by the Israeli secret services in 1960 thanks to information passed on by German prosecutor Fritz Bauer, who was outraged by the inching progress of his own country's justice system. As for less notorious Nazis, "all the boats that arrived there were registered. We have combed the passenger and crew manifests" and followed up on any German-sounding names, Rommel said.

Officials scoured immigration registers, applications to be naturalized in Argentina, and the records of the German embassy. "We owe it to history" and to the millions of victims to "battle against forgetting", said Peter Haeblerle, of the justice ministry in Baden-Wuerttemberg state, where Ludwigsburg sits just outside its capital, Stuttgart. The team's travels halfway around the globe—at a time when there remains no chance of tracking down a living high-ranking Nazi official—have not escaped criticism in the press, such as from Die Welt daily, over their sometimes exorbitant cost.

1.7 million files

Many have criticized the comparatively small number of Nazi war criminals ever brought to justice. By 2012, some 6,498 people had been convicted for their part in the Holocaust. The monumental weight of history is clear from the smell of aged paper lingering behind the security doors of the former women's prison where the investigation team is based. One million seven hundred thousand cardboard files are stored in rigorous alphabetical order in rows of imposing metal cupboards—a unique full-size database of Nazi criminals and details of their acts. From Hitler to the lowliest soldier or helper, every Nazi wrongdoer identified up until the present day is recorded here, along with the places of their crimes.

Rommel carefully withdraws file 3 AR-Z 95/59 for Dr Mengele, Josef. Known as the "Angel of Death", the Auschwitz doctor carried out horrific experiments on those held at the camp. The record, prepared in the late 1950s, reads that his location is "presently unknown, likely in Argentina". Mengele died in 1979 in Brazil, having evaded capture—and justice—for the remainder of his life. However many more Nazis enter the dock or end up behind bars before all trails finally run cold, Rommel and his team know the overwhelming majority of perpetrators' stories will have ended similarly. Nevertheless, he insisted, "we have to put every day to use if we want the chance to bring someone else to justice". —AFP



As Asians get rich, healthy, 'smart crops' replace rice

Lunchtime in Taipei's Ximending district is a test of wills and patience as tourists and locals jostle at restaurants and street stalls to choose from steamed and fried dumplings, flat and thin noodles, stuffed pancakes, grills and desserts. In this foodie haven, one item makes only an occasional appearance on menus and on plates - rice. Once a staple of Taiwanese diets, rice consumption per person has fallen more than two-thirds in 50 years, according to the United Nations' Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), as "smart crops" and "super foods" muscle their way onto plates.

It is the steepest drop in Asia but a trend across the continent as urbanization, rising incomes, climate change and concerns about health and food supplies drive a push for alternatives for the future such as millets and more protein. "I ate a lot of rice when I was younger but now I eat more vegetables, fish and meat. It's healthier," said Guan-Po Lin, 24, who moved to Taipei for university. "People are spending more on food, and they want to eat healthy, and rice is not seen as a healthy choice." About 90 percent of global rice production and consumption is in Asia, home to 60 percent of the world's population. Yet, as trends in Taiwan, Japan, South Korea and Hong Kong show, consumption is set to drop significantly as diets change. Per capita consumption has fallen about 60 percent in Hong Kong since 1961, and by almost half in Japan. In South Korea, it has slid 41 percent since 1978, FAO data showed. Alongside that the consumption of fish, meat, dairy, fruits and vegetables has risen significantly.

Rice will still be the single most important crop in the region, key in diets and a symbol of Asian culture, but it will not be as dominant in coming years as new foods are snapped up, said David Dawe, a senior economist at the FAO in Bangkok. "It is the future for Asia - well-nourished people who can perform better. You can-

not get that by filling up on rice; you need more fish, meat, fruits and vegetables," he said.

Ritual status

Rice is said to have first been domesticated in the Yangtze River valley in China more than 10,000 years ago. In Asia, rice was consumed mostly by the wealthy and did not become as ubiquitous until the Green Revolution of the 1960s, when governments introduced higher yielding seeds and better fertilizers to improve output and feed expanding populations. In Taiwan, millets were the staple of indigenous and rural people, and had a higher status in ritual ceremonies than rice.

In India, malnutrition is one reason the government is pushing millets which are richer in protein, fibre and micronutrients than rice or wheat, said SK Gupta, a principal scientist at the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-Arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in Hyderabad. Also millets need less water and can grow in saline soil and withstand warmer climate, crucial factors as temperatures and sea levels rise in South Asia. "Historically, a large section of the population was eating millets and maize, but when they moved to urban areas, they switched to rice and wheat," Gupta said. "Consumers can be encouraged to go back to millets if they are more readily available, and farmers will grow more if they get better prices. It's already happening," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Craft beers

The shift away from rice in wealthier Asian nations is explained by Bennett's Law, which argues that as income increases people spend proportionately less on starchy staples such as rice, FAO's Dawe said. Rice is regarded as inferior when per capita income reaches \$2,364 in Asian nations, according to FAO's estimates. Changes are already evident in mainland China



TAIPEI: Photo shows a street vendor in Taipei - where urbanization, rising incomes and concerns about health are driving a move towards more protein-rich alternatives to the staple food, rice. —Reuters

and some southeast Asian countries, where people are eating a more protein-rich diet with more meat and fish, Dawe said.

In the Philippines, one of the world's biggest importers of rice, the government has considered substitutes such as corn, banana, sweet potato, cassava, taro and adlai - an heirloom grain also known as Job's Tears or Chinese Pearl Barley. At the other end, food companies and chefs are responding to the demand for healthier diets with millets in bread, pasta, even craft beers.

"It took some time to get people excited about these lesser known, stereotypically inferior

grains like ragi (finger millet), jowar (sorghum) and kodo," said Thomas Zacharias, chef partner at The Bombay Canteen, among Asia's top restaurants. "We showcased them in new and interesting ways that appealed to the current generation, and there's definitely been a shift," said Zacharias, whose barley and jowar salad with a hung curd dressing is a hot favorite of diners in Mumbai. Marketing helps. Production of quinoa increased by more than 70 percent from 2000 to 2014 in the top growing countries, according to the FAO, because it was sold as a "super food". —Reuters

Shorter, hotter: Shrinking spring slashes Pakistan harvests

Adil Khan's hopes for a good harvest are fading again this year as he inspects his orchard of apricot and loquat trees in the mountains of Pakistan's northwest Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. Usually, fruit in the five-acre family orchard is ready to pick only by the last week of May. But this year, and in other recent years since 2013, much of the harvest has ripened by mid-April - nearly a month ahead of schedule.

With less time to grow, the fruit is half its normal size - and his income is shrinking too, the 34-year-old farmer told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We are really at loss," he said, pulling down a branch of tiny apricots. "The fruits have ripened in the middle of their growth." Pakistan's farmers are struggling to bring in a harvest as the country's weather patterns change as a result of climate change. Warm spring weather, now coming as early as March, has led to fruit trees flowering before bees arrive to pollinate them, for instance, or fruit and vegetables ripening at unusual times.

Farmer Muntazir Khan - who is not related to Adil - has seen his harvest of beets and tomatoes fall by 40 percent this year on his 3-acre family farm in Taxila, about 35 kms (22 miles) from Islamabad, despite planting seeds on time and applying the right fertilizer. That huge drop, due the crops ripening in late March instead of late April, "means nearly no profits", he said. "I am scarcely able to recover the expenditures with such low yields," Khan said, clutching a handful of freshly harvested beets.

The problem, the farmers agree, is that spring is getting shorter, hotter and earlier. "We are clearly noticing that springs are not cool anymore and are increasingly becoming

warmer, which is not good for our seasonal vegetable crops," Adil Khan said. His fruit requires cool weather from January to March to grow well, he said, but warmer days in February and March are now disrupting old patterns.

Record heat

Pakistan's weather officials say they've also noticed the shift. "We have clearly observed through our weather monitoring stations all through Pakistan that springtime has not only warmed by more than 3 degrees Celsius in recent years but also shrunk from 45 days to less than 10 days over last two decades," said Ghulam Rasul, director general of the Pakistan Meteorological Department. "This is in no way a good omen for springtime vegetable and fruit farmers," he said.

He said at least 34 meteorological stations broke temperature records for March this year in most parts of the country, with temperatures sometimes more than 10 degrees Celsius above the monthly long-term average between 1981 and 2010. Nausherwan Nawab, a senior science officer at a vegetable research centre of the state-run National Agricultural Research Council, said lower spring temperatures of 20 to 25 degrees Celsius a decade ago resulted in slow and steady ripening of spring fruits and vegetables. "But such is not the case anymore," said Khuda Bakhsh, an agro-economy professor at the COMSATS Institute of Information Technology in Pakistan's Punjab province. Once spring temperatures hit 35 degrees Celsius, "vegetable production declines heavily", he said.

Growing imports

One consequence of the decline in production is soaring vegetable and fruit imports from China, India, Afghanistan, Thailand and New Zealand, said Yusuf Zafar, chairman of the National Agriculture Research Council, an arm of Pakistan's Ministry of National Food Security and Research. "Over last five to seven years, production of citrus and other fruits and vegetables has shown a notable declining trend", with fruit harvests down an estimated 25-28 percent and vegetables down 22 percent, he said.

Aslam Pakhali, chair of the All Pakistan Fruit and Vegetable Exporter and Importers Association, said nearly 30 percent of



MARDAN: Adil Khan's hopes for a good harvest are fading again this year as he inspects his orchard of apricot and loquat trees in the mountains of Pakistan's northwest Khyber-Pakhtunkhwa province. —Reuters

the vegetables and fruits consumed in Pakistan are now imported. Pakistan used to export surplus vegetables and fruit prior to 2010, he said. Imports have increased over the last five years "as low production of these farm items is insufficient to meet domestic needs", he said in a telephone interview.

To adapt to the changing conditions, farmers need access to hardy new fruit and vegetable varieties that can grow over a shorter season, Bakhsh said. "The role of agricultural scientists and extension department officials in this regard is of unprecedented significance," he said, with farmers needing help to learn how to adopt and grow new heat-resistant and short-season crops.

Meanwhile, some farmers - like Muntazir Khan - are adjusting to changing spring weather by cutting out some of their vegetable production altogether and turning to things like raising chickens. Lack of resources makes such shifts difficult for many, however. Khan would like to set up a commercial half-acre poultry farm, but that will happen only "whenever I have enough financial resources", he said. —Reuters

Business

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018

12 Trump trade threat looms large as Merkel heads to China**13** DAE signs landmark financing loan facility with ABK, FAB and Noor Bank**14** Toyota Corolla adds a new feather to its cap, bags 'Best Small Sedan' award

NANTONG: A worker using a crane to lift a roll of steel at a shipyard in Nantong in China's eastern Jiangsu province. Washington and Beijing have agreed to abandon any trade war and back off from imposing tariffs on each other. —AFP

Trump: China to buy more US products

Beijing relieved US trade war is 'on hold'

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday said China had pledged to buy "massive amounts" of American agricultural products but gave no other details about planned commitments from Beijing following US-China trade talks last week.

"Fair Trade, plus, with China will happen!" Trump wrote in a series of posts on Twitter that came a day after US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said a trade war between the world's largest economies was "on hold."

"China has agreed to buy massive amounts of ADDITIONAL Farm/Agricultural Products - would be one of the best things to happen to our farmers in many years!" Trump wrote. "On China, Barriers and Tariffs to come down for first time," he added. Trump offered no specifics about what steps US and Chinese officials had agreed to after talks on Thursday and Friday in Washington. The negotiations followed earlier meetings in Beijing aimed at diffusing the trade spat spurred by the Trump administration's threat to slap tariffs on Chinese goods, and a counterproposal by China to levy US products.

Over the weekend, Beijing and Washington pledged to keep talking about how China could import more energy and agricultural commodities from the United States to narrow the \$335 billion annual US goods and services trade deficit with China.

Meanwhile, US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross will travel to China next week to help finalize a trade agreement after

Washington and Beijing reached an initial framework last week, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said yesterday. "Secretary Ross has to go over and turn that into a signed piece of paper with companies," Mnuchin told reporters at the White House. "This is not a government-to-government purchase order, but we have an agreement with them as to what will be executed."

China relieved

China yesterday praised a significant dialing back of trade tension with the United States, with the government saying agreement was in the interests of both countries while state media trumpeted what it saw as China's refusal to surrender.

The cooling of tension elicited mixed reactions from US business leaders dealing with China, with some happy to see the prospect of damaging tariffs fade, while others said it would be difficult for Washington to rebuild momentum to address what they see as troubling Chinese policies. A trade war was "on hold" after the world's largest economies agreed to drop their tariff threats while they work on a wider trade agreement, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday.



Wilbur Ross to travel to China next week

WeChat account of the overseas edition of the ruling Communist Party's official People's Daily that the agreement preserved

China's right to develop its economy as it sees fit, including moving up the value chain. The deal also focused on China's "positive position" to increase imports rather than a "negative position" of getting it to cut exports, Mei said.

The previous day, Beijing and Washington said they would keep talking about measures under which China would import more energy and agricultural commodities from the United States to narrow the \$335 billion annual US goods and services trade deficit with China.

Speaking at a daily briefing, Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said both countries had clearly recognized that the reaching of a consensus was good for all.

"China has never hoped for any tensions between China and the United States, in the trade or other arenas," Lu said. But Chinese media was also quick to point out how the country had successfully defended its interests. Mei Xinyu, a commerce ministry researcher, wrote on the

'quiet glee'

The official China Daily said everyone could heave a sigh of relief at the ratcheting down of the rhetoric, and cited China's chief negotiator, Vice Premier Liu He, as saying the talks had proved to be "positive, pragmatic, constructive and productive". "Despite all the pressure, China didn't 'fold', as US

President Donald Trump observed. Instead, it stood firm and continually expressed its willingness to talk," the English-language newspaper said in an editorial.

"That the US finally shared this willingness, means the two sides have successfully averted the head-on confrontation that at one point seemed inevitable", it said. During an initial round of talks this month in Beijing, the United States demanded that China reduce its trade surplus by \$200 billion. No dollar figure was cited in the countries' joint statement on Saturday.

Some in US business groups who had been pushing for tougher measures to pressure China to ease long-standing market barriers on US companies expressed disappointment. James Zimmerman, a Beijing-based lawyer and a former chairman of the American Chamber of Commerce in China, said the Trump administration's move to walk back its threatened trade actions was premature, and a "lost opportunity" for American companies, workers and consumers. —Agencies

Hedge funds exit crude oil but stay bullish on fuels

LONDON: For all the bullish commentary about oil prices at the moment, hedge fund managers have continued to take profits after the recent rally and are trimming their net long positions rather than adding to them. Focusing on what people do rather than what they say is one of the most important lessons for any good analyst (actions always speak louder than words).

Hedge funds and other money managers cut their net long position in the six most important petroleum futures and options contracts by 16 million barrels in the week to May 15. Fund managers have cut their net long position in the petroleum complex in each of the last four weeks by a total of 71 million barrels, according to records published by regulators and exchanges.

Liquidation has been concentrated in crude oil, where the net long position in Brent and WTI has been reduced by a total of 124 million barrels over the last four weeks. Net long positions in Brent have fallen by 84 million barrels over five consecutive weeks, while net length in NYMEX and ICE WTI has dropped by 53 million over four weeks.

But, while portfolio managers have been reducing their bullish exposure to crude, they have been boosting their net long positions in refined fuels. Net length in refined fuels has risen by 53 million barrels since the middle of April, with increases in

US gasoline (+26 million barrels), U.S. heating oil (+24 million) and European gasoil (+2 million). Portfolio managers have accumulated record net positions of 124 million barrels in US gasoline and 160 million barrels in European gasoil, as well as a near-record 86 million barrels in US heating oil.

The rotation of positions from crude to fuels reflects strong consumer demand and shrinking inventories of products, coupled with profit-taking in crude oil after a strong rally since the end of June 2017.

The rotation away from crude also likely explains the weakening of the nearby calendar spreads in Brent in recent trading sessions.

The first three contract months nearest to expiry account for more than 42 percent of all open contracts in Brent futures and options, according to the Intercontinental Exchange.

Assuming hedge fund positions are distributed in the same proportion, then the liquidation of hedge fund positions will have been concentrated in nearby months. In fact, hedge funds tend to focus disproportionately on nearby contracts, where liquidity and turnover is greatest, so the impact of hedge fund selling on nearby months will have been magnified. Momentum-following funds are especially likely to focus on nearby contract months because of the greater liquidity.

As hedge funds accumulated a record long position in Brent and WTI between June 2017 and the first three months of 2018, the concentration of buying nearby helped push futures prices deeper into backwardation. But as fund managers trim those positions, it has removed much of the support for nearby prices, and caused the backwardation to narrow sharply. —Reuters

Moody's revises Gulf Bank's outlook to 'Positive' from 'Stable'

KUWAIT: Moody's Investors Service, the international credit rating agency, has just announced the change of Gulf Bank's outlook to "Positive" from "Stable" and affirmed the Bank's long-term ratings at A3. The Rating action is driven by the improvement in Gulf Bank's asset quality and profitability over the next 12-18 months and potentially lower through-the-cycle portfolio losses resulting from reduced loan concentration to single borrower and more volatile sectors, along with improvements in the Bank's underwriting standards over years, said Moody's in their recently published press release.

The positive outlook reflects Moody's expectation of further improvement in the bank's asset quality, with low problem loan levels in line with the Kuwaiti banking sector average, and strong provisioning coverage. This expectation is supported by the rating agency's expectation for a relatively benign operating environment in Kuwait over the next 12-18 months, supporting low new problem loan formation.

Commenting on Moody's credit rating announcement, Dalal Al-Dousari, Gulf Bank's Head of Investor Relations said: "Gulf Bank continues to achieve international recognition for the sustained

improvement in its assets quality. We are proud to witness Gulf Bank's revised outlook from "Stable" to "Positive" and affirmation of its A3 rating by Moody's. With this recent credit opinion, Gulf Bank is now rated "A" by all four leading credit rating agencies with two positive outlooks". "The upgrade is an affirmation of Gulf Bank's sustained improvement in loan asset quality and profitability, solid capital and sound liquidity position," added Al-Dousari.

Gulf Bank continues to be well recognized in terms of its credit worthiness and financial strength internationally. In addition to Moody's recent upgrade, S&P Global Ratings last year revised their outlook on the Bank to "Positive" from "Stable" and affirmed its issuer credit rating at "A-" in June 2017. Similarly, Fitch Ratings has upgraded Gulf Bank's viability rating from "bb" to "bb+" and affirmed the bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating at 'A+' with a "Stable" Outlook. Capital Intelligence on the other hand recently upgraded the Bank's rating to "A-" from "BBB+" with a "Stable" outlook.



Dalal Al-Dousari

Business

Trump trade threat looms large as Merkel heads to China

Merkel to defend multilateralism and nudge Beijing on business

BERLIN: Germany's Angela Merkel faces a delicate diplomatic balancing act when she travels to China this week on a visit clouded by US President Donald Trump's trade threats...

The trip will be Merkel's eleventh to China since becoming chancellor in 2005. Accompanied by an industry delegation of roughly 20 German executives, she will hold a news conference with Chinese premier Li Keqiang on Thursday before attending a dinner hosted by President Xi Jinping.

On Friday, she will travel to Shenzhen for talks with local Chinese officials, before attending the opening of an "innovation hub" hosted by the German chamber of commerce and

German companies continuing to do a booming business in China, Merkel's government faces internal pressure not to adopt a confrontational stance, as Trump has done by threatening China with billions of dollars in trade tariffs.

Thorsten Benner, director of the Global Public Policy Institute in Berlin, said the German government's preference would be to work with the US administration to wring concessions from Beijing on trade and investment.

"At a time when the Trump administration does not appear interested in the transatlantic partnership, Europe must look after its own interests," said Michael Schaefer, a former German ambassador to China who is chairman of the BMW Foundation.



Trip clouded by Trump threats, Iran pullout

industry, visiting a Siemens plant and a Chinese start-up. In Germany, there is growing concern about the role of the Chinese state in the economy under Xi, from a new cyber security law, to the influence of Chinese communist party officials in joint ventures and the "Made in China 2025" initiative which some see as a threat to German manufacturing dominance.

Still, with

Celebrate 'Peace of Mind' Ramadan offers from Nissan Al-Babtain

KUWAIT: In lieu of the Holy month of Ramadan, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, is pleased to announce its latest offers on the popular 2018 models.

came with an exclusive experience that entitles all with free test drives to explore the dynamic features of its Nissan vehicles coupled with special offers and Ramadan gifts on purchase.

The "Peace of Mind" offers grants deals to suit everyone's needs and gives the convenience of choice to the customer. Those opting for Nissan vehicles such as Nissan Altima, Nissan Kicks, Nissan Maxima, Nissan X-trail, Nissan Pathfinder and Nissan Patrol will be rewarded with the best prices and packages in accompaniment with the highest trade-in values.

The Nissan Altima and Nissan Maxima comes with a free 1 year service while the Nissan Kicks is provided with a 2 year service and 3 year free service on the Nissan X-Trail in addition to a comprehensive insurance, in addition to third party insurance and cost-free traffic registration.

Nissan Al-Babtain wishes its customers a joyous Ramadan and invites customers to seize the opportunity to enjoy high quality concepts and great performance vehicles this season.

Ryanair predicts profits fall on surging oil prices

LONDON: Ryanair is forecasting a drop in profits on surging oil prices, the no-frills Irish airline said yesterday after it posted a 10-percent jump in annual earnings despite a crisis that forced it to cancel thousands of flights.

and spurred by a nine percent increase in passengers, or "guests" as the airline now describes its paying customers, net profit jumped to 1.45 billion euros.

This was despite "a three percent cut in air fares, during a year of overcapacity in Europe", O'Leary said. The jump in profits came also despite "rising fuel prices, and the recovery from our September 2017 rostering management failure", he added.

Meanwhile for Ryanair's current financial year, the company on Monday said it expected profit after tax to fall to between 1.25 and 1.35 billion euros, despite it hoping to "grow traffic by seven percent to 139 million" passengers.

Flights chaos

Ryanair's 2017/18 financial year was meanwhile dominated by a crisis triggered by staffing problems that resulted in it cancelling some 20,000 flights between September and March. Ryanair suffered a troubled end to 2017, mainly because of botched holiday scheduling for pilots. The debacle resulted in significant



changes at Ryanair, with the company hiking salaries for pilots and recognising pilot unions for the first time, in a bid also to prevent widespread strike action. The airline has reached agreements with pilots in Britain and Italy but is still working towards deals with unions in other major centers such as Ireland and Spain.

Having already warned repeatedly about the risk of flight disruptions following Britain's departure from the EU next year, Ryanair added that it plans "to restrict the voting rights of all non-EU shareholders in the event of a hard Brexit". The company said in its earnings statement: "We remain concerned at the likely impact of a hard Brexit. — AFP

National Bank of Kuwait Financial Markets Daily Report At 02:00 PM Previous Day

Table with 6 columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %. Rows include Dow Jones, NASDAQ, S&P 500, etc.

Table with 6 columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %. Rows include Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Dubai, etc.

Table with 8 columns: Currency, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, US Dollar, Euro, Sterling Pound, Swiss Franc, Japanese Yen, Australian Dollar.

Table with 8 columns: Currency, US Dollar, Kuwaiti Dinar, Saudi Riyal, Bahraini Dinar, Qatari Riyal, Omani Riyal, Emirates Dirham, Egyptian Pound.

Table with 6 columns: Currency, 1-Week, 1-Month, 3-Month, 6-Month, 1-Year.

Table with 5 columns: Country, 2-Year, 5-Year, 10-Year, 30-Year.

Table with 6 columns: Index, Previous Close, Last Price, Change, Daily Performance %, Yearly Performance %. Rows include Kuwait Oil, Brent, West Texas, Gold, Silver.

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

Table of exchange rates for various currencies including Japanese Yen, Indian Rupees, Saudi Riyal, etc.

Table of exchange rates for Euro, Sterling Pound, Canadian dollar, etc.

Table of gold prices for 20 Gram, 10 Gram, 5 Gram.

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Table of exchange rates and rates for transfer for various currencies and gold.

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

Table of exchange rates for various currencies under BUY, SELL, AUSTRALASIA, AMERICA.

Table of exchange rates for various Asian and Arab currencies like Bangladesh Taka, Chinese Yuan, etc.

Business

DAE signs landmark financing loan facility with ABK, FAB and Noor Bank

DAE executes a \$480m credit facility with a syndicate of banks

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK), First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and Noor Bank have announced the signing of a landmark financing facility for Dubai Aerospace Enterprise (DAE) for an initial amount of \$480 million, expandable to \$800 million. The facility has a four-year tenure and features both conventional and Islamic tranches.

The facility has been arranged through a syndicated structure with ABK serving as the Coordinating Mandated Lead Arranger and Bookrunner, together with UAE-based FAB acting as Mandated Lead Arranger and Bookrunner and Noor Bank as Mandated Lead Arranger. FAB will also act as the Global Agent, Facility Agent and Investment Agent, whilst Noor Bank will act as the Islamic Structuring Agent. The financing will support DAE's purchase of the aircraft, spare engines and pre-delivery financing that the Borrower intends to dispose of or refinance. DAE currently has a fleet of nearly 400 Airbus, ATR and Boeing aircraft with a fleet value of over \$14 billion.

"The financing facility for DAE is one of the largest transactions of its kind involving conventional and Islamic tranches, making it a landmark deal for the region," said Michel Accad, Group



ABK acts as lead arranger and joint bookrunner

CEO at ABK. Speaking on the transaction, Firoz Tarapore, Chief Executive Officer of DAE said: "We are pleased to sign this landmark regional transaction led by ABK, FAB and Noor Bank. This

transaction underlines both the regional liquidity available to top quality names and the strength of the DAE franchise. This facility further diversifies our funding sources and adds to the unsecured component of our liquidity profile increasing our unsecured revolving credit facilities to \$1,125 - \$1,445 million depending on the final committed amount of this facility. On a pro forma basis as of December 2017, if this facility is fully drawn and if the proceeds are used to pay down secured indebtedness, DAE's percentage of unsecured debt would increase from 26 percent to a range of 31 percent-34 percent." Dubai Aerospace Enterprise is a globally recognized aerospace corporation and one of the largest aircraft leasing companies in the world. Headquartered in Dubai and with over 30 years of experience, DAE's leasing and engineering divisions serve over 125 airline customers around the world from its six offices in Dubai, Dublin, Singapore and the US. Legal Counsel for the lenders were Clyde & Co and for the borrowers Clifford Chance.



New Ford 'Weather Factory' simulates any weather, anytime

KUWAIT: The air is shimmering like in the desert, while just a few meters away, it's so cold you can build a snowman. And there's a category 5 hurricane in the next room. Welcome to the "Weather Factory". Ford's new state-of-the-art Environmental Test Centre puts all the world's weather under one roof, enabling engineers to test forthcoming vehicles - from a small Ford KA+ to a two-tonne Ford Transit in the most demanding conditions and make whatever weather they want at any time of the day. Altitudes higher than Mont Blanc, the tallest Alpine peak, vehicle and wind speeds of up to 250 km/h (155 mph), snow, glaring sunlight and rain are among conditions that are a push of a button away in Europe's most advanced automotive environmental test center.

On an area the size of a football pitch, engineers can now take vehicles on demanding journeys around the world, from the desert heat of the Sahara, to the arctic cold of Siberia and the heavy humidity of Costa Rica. "The vast range of punishing simulation tests will enable Ford drivers to be confident their vehicles can handle whatever climate zone they live in," said Joe Bakaj, vice president, Product Development, Ford of Europe. "Travelling to the

four corners of this building is like taking a trip to the four corners of the world, and our engineers will do that around the clock, every day, to continue to develop future best-in-class vehicles."

The subject of a €70 million investment, the test centre offers the first automotive wind tunnel to simulate heavy snow and altitudes of 5,200 meters, the same elevation as the Mount Everest North Base Camp. The facility can also cool two rooms to -40° C and heat them up to 55° C, as well as generate 95 per cent humidity. The temperature extremes make the facility at Ford's John Andrews Product Development Centre in Cologne, Germany, the hottest, coldest and most humid place in Europe, and home to the highest point in Western Europe.

Now fully operational, engineers can work on up to ten different vehicles simultaneously. Testing covers comfort, safety and durability, as well as electrical performance, braking, air conditioning, trailer towing, cabin heating and traffic jam situations. Engineers analyze the effects of high speed winds on exterior parts, check the robustness against rain and snow, and see how fast a windscreen defrosts at different temperatures. "The Environmental Test Centre represents a significant investment for Ford of Europe that will help enable the company here to develop vehicles for global markets," said Bakaj.

All Ford vehicles will be tested in the facility, which features three climate wind tunnels, including a high-altitude lab, and four temperature-controlled test chambers, one of which will also facilitate humidity testing.

Wind Tunnel 1 is set up for hot and cold immersion testing. The 28 spotlights with 4,000-watt bulbs help to simulate the powerful sun beams that enable engineers to check how fast

the cabin can be cooled. This wind tunnel can also evaluate the interior noise from vehicle systems at different speeds, temperatures and humidity levels, to check the heating and air conditioning noise.

Wind Tunnel 2 is also set up for hot and cold immersion testing. Engineers can use this wind tunnel to make snow and rain to check the effect on visibility, engine starts and how long it takes to heat the cabin.

Wind Tunnel 3 is the altitude lab, where engineers can test vehicles at wind speeds of up to 120 km/h (75 mph) at up to 5,200 meters. The high altitude cold start and durability tests ensure the vehicle's liquids don't burst their lines when working under higher pressure. More than half of Ford vehicles worldwide are sold in territories with roads above 1,000m.

"We can see how windshield wipers function in Arctic temperatures, how engine performance changes in extreme heat and cold, and even how much snow falls on the driver's head when they open the door. It's an engineer's dream," said Michael Steup, project manager, Environmental Test Centre, Ford of Europe.

Overall, the facility requires 11 megawatts of electricity, enough to power a small town of 2,400 inhabitants, that comes from a fully renewable, environmentally-friendly source. The electricity provided by RheinEnergie originates from certified sustainable sources in Scandinavia and covers the complete electric power demand of Ford's facilities in the city.

The ground-breaking test center complements testing facilities that include Ford Lommel Proving Ground, in Belgium, home to a specific pothole-testing track, side-wind tests, and salt-water and mud baths.

How Canada's Brookfield snatched bargain assets amid Brazil panic

SAO PAULO: Rampant corruption scandals and a deep recession soured many foreign investors on Brazil in recent years, but one Canadian group saw opportunity.

Brookfield Asset Management Inc and its subsidiaries have made nearly a dozen major acquisitions there since 2013. The companies have spent about \$10 billion on energy, infrastructure and real estate assets few others would touch due to the legal, political and economic risks involved. "A crisis is a good time to find value," said a person close to the group, who called Brookfield a "contrarian investor." That includes buying assets from companies entangled in the blockbuster "Car Wash" investigation, which jailed dozens of businessmen and politicians. The deals confirmed Brookfield's reputation as one of the strongest-stomached investors in Brazil.

In 2016, for example, Brookfield Infrastructure Partners LP led a \$5.2 billion acquisition of a pipeline operator from Petroleo Brasileiro SA, the state-controlled oil company at the heart of the Car Wash scandal. Recently, another Petrobras pipeline network with half the capacity fetched a top bid of around \$8 billion from other investors. Bargain-hunting Brookfield gave that deal a pass.

The Canadians' savvy is built on nearly 120 years of experience in South America's largest economy. But the recent buying spree pushed the company to new extremes of due diligence and bulletproofing, according to interviews with six people involved in the deals.

The company declined to comment on investments in Brazil, which account for about 15 percent of its \$286 billion portfolio and represent its biggest market after the United States.

Chief Executive Bruce Platt, whom some call the Warren Buffett of Canada for his value-investing approach, called recent Brazil acquisitions "quality businesses from sellers in need of capital" in a February letter to investors. Brookfield's purchase of gas pipeline operator Nova

Transportadora do Sudeste SA (NTS) from Petrobras was part of a controversial divestment program aimed at trimming the oil firm's massive debt load. Critics have decried the privatizations, and Ciro Gomes, a leading leftist presidential candidate, has pledged to reverse sales of state energy assets if elected this year. Foreseeing the risk, Brookfield tasked dozens of lawyers with drafting an ironclad agreement. Brookfield has a right to compensation if Petrobras changes the contracts in a way that hurts the Canadians' cash flow, according to three people with knowledge of the matter. The head of Brazilian investment banking at a global bank, who was not involved in the NTS deal, said it was an example of Brookfield's willingness to bet big while protecting itself.

"Everyone was stunned by their \$5 billion bid at the time," the banker said. That successful deal persuaded other investors to consider bidding on the other Petrobras pipeline unit, the person added. Analysts at Saibus Research raised their target price for shares in Brookfield Infrastructure Partners after the NTS deal, citing a boost to its recurring profit margins. Shares have climbed 18 percent to more than \$38 in New York since the deal was reported. Started in 1899 as the Sao Paulo Railway, Light and Power Company, Brookfield grew into a diversified global investment firm. Until 2005, it went by the name Brascan, a reflection of its roots as a Canadian investment firm in Brazil.

Pricing in corruption risk
Brookfield, too, has grappled with graft allegations in Brazil. Its homebuilding unit was among around 30 developers accused of paying bribes to building inspectors in Sao Paulo between 2010 and 2012. Former employees of the unit, which later changed its name to Tegra, confessed to paying bribes and were cooperating witnesses in the trial of the building inspectors.

Brookfield said the company was not a target of the investigation and cooperated with authorities. In a separate case, the US Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) opened an investigation in 2012 into accusations that Brookfield's Brazil shopping mall unit bribed Sao Paulo officials to win construction permits. The SEC dropped the case in 2015 without bringing any enforcement action. Brookfield denied wrongdoing. One of Brookfield's toughest recent deals will test its ability to avoid fallout from another municipal graft scandal. Last year it agreed to pay \$1 billion for a 70 percent stake in a sewage and water utility owned by Odebrecht SA, an engineering group ensnared in the Car Wash probe. — Reuters

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<p>Midea AC120-S Multifunction Fan</p> <p>4 IN 1</p> <p>24 <small>الدين</small> <small>قبل</small> 29 <small>الدين</small></p> <p>4 <small>وفر</small> <small>SAVE</small></p>	

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Business

Toyota Corolla adds a new feather to its cap, bags 'Best Small Sedan' award

2018 Middle East Car of the Year awards

KUWAIT: Adding a new feather to its cap, the 2018 Toyota Corolla has been recently honored with the recognition for the best car in the 'Small Sedan' category at the 2018 Middle East Car of the Year (MECOTY) awards, the biggest and most prestigious awards program for the regional automotive sector.

The most successful production car model ever built was chosen by a judging panel comprised of 16 independent senior editors from leading automotive publications representing the Middle East and North Africa.

The 12th generation Toyota Corolla emerged as the winner after impressing the judges on ten aspects that have been set as the selection criteria for the fifth edition of MECOTY. These included design and quality; exterior and interior; handling and drivability; safety and durability; performance and capability; technological innovation; emotional appeal and driver satisfaction; value for money (new purchase and resale); environmentally friendly; regional appeal; and comfort and practicality.

Yugo Miyamoto, Chief Representative of Middle East & North Africa Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "We are extremely proud and honored to

continue to be recognized at the most coveted regional automotive awards. The recognition of an experienced panel is a true testimonial for the outstanding appeal of the Toyota Corolla and its consistent offering of quality and value. The most sought-after car, which is synonymous with reliability, affordability, and fuel economy, has built a compelling reputation over the last five decades to become the favored compact sedan of our customers across the world and this region in particular. On this occasion, we would like to thank our customers and are extremely grateful to them for their continuous support and loyalty, and for making Toyota one of the most popular automotive brands in the region."

The new 2018 Toyota Corolla was launched in the region in July last year with a choice of 1.6-liter and 2.0-liter four-cylinder engines and is available with a Multidrive 7S transmission to offer improved efficiency and driving pleasure. The Toyota Corolla also features a modern and dynamic design, a premium interior and an array of safety features such as Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-Lock Brake System (ABS), Electronic Brake-Force Distribution (EBD), A Tire Pressure Warning System (TPWS), Rear Fog Lamps, and is



The panel chooses the vehicle based on ten different criteria



also available in eight different exterior colors. All these features help the Toyota Corolla stand out in its segment.

Since its launch in Japan in 1966, more than 44 million units of Corolla have been sold globally to date to establish

itself as the best-selling nameplate in the world. With its 16 manufacturing plants, Toyota currently produces 1.5 million Corolla cars each year to reach its customers in more than 150 different markets.



Turkish Airlines adds Krasnodar to its flight network

KUWAIT: Krasnodar has become the 10th destination of the flag carrier which operates its flight to Moscow, St Petersburg, Sochi, Rostov, Kazan, Ekaterinburg, Voronezh, Samara and Ufa in Russia currently.

Krasnodar flights will be operated 5 times per week in both directions, as starting from

today. At the opening ceremony, Chief Marketing Officer of Turkish Airlines Ahmet Olmüstür stated that: "Turkish Airlines flying to the most countries of the world; continues to work on growth plans by adding new aircraft to its fleet and expanding its flight network. With the flights that we launched to Krasnodar, we have presented Turkish Airlines quality and service concept to this beautiful city. We will operate direct flights to Krasnodar from Istanbul 5 times a week in both directions. So, we are glad to launch flights to Krasnodar which has become the 10th destination in Russia".

Round trip fares are available from Istanbul to Krasnodar starting at \$280,

including all taxes and fees. Established in 1933 with a fleet of five aircraft, Star Alliance member Turkish Airlines is a 4-star airline today with a fleet of 327 (passenger and cargo) aircraft, flying to 303 destinations worldwide with 254 international and 49 domestic.

The Star Alliance network was established in 1997 as the first truly global airline alliance to offer worldwide reach, recognition and seamless service to the international traveller. Its acceptance by the market has been recognized by numerous awards, including the Air Transport World Market Leadership Award and Best Airline Alliance by both Business Traveller Magazine and Skytrax.



Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, the second largest in terms of assets, announced yesterday the names of the daily draw winners of its Yawmi account draw, each taking home a cash-prize of KD 5,000.

The lucky winners are:

1. Madhi Shabab Khalaf Alotaibi
2. Mohammad Anas Mohammad Ahmad
3. Mohammad Abdullah Ali Alwazzan
4. Yasmeen Anwar Alhamait
5. Majid Hilal Abdulhussein Altamimi

In addition to the daily draw, Burgan Bank also offers a quarterly draw with more chances to win higher rewards, offering the chance to one lucky customer to win KD 125,000 every three months. The Yawmi Account offers daily and quarterly draws, wherein the quarterly draw requires customers to maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 in their account for two months prior to the draw date. Additionally, every KD 10 in the account will entitle customers to one chance of winning. If the account balance is KD 500 and above, the account holder will be qualified for both the quarterly and daily draws.



Burgan Bank encourages everyone to open a Yawmi account and/or increase their deposit to maximize their chances of becoming a winner. The higher the level of the deposit, the higher the likelihood to win.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks.

The bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

away from its dependence on oil, a Herculean task in a country that is over-reliant on the sector. Last week, Nigeria's parliament passed a record 9.12-trillion-naira (\$29.8-billion) budget designed to bump growth ahead of presidential polls in 2019. Today, the central bank will announce its decision on interest rates, with lower inflation in recent months making room for a cut in borrowing costs.

The bank has kept its key rate at 14 percent since 2016 in a bid to quell inflation and prop up the naira.

Nigeria's outlook is still positive as the economy gains momentum after exiting its first recession in two decades last year. The economy is expected to get a boost from higher oil prices, lower inflation and implementation of the 2018 budget. — AFP

Nigeria economy grows with bump in oil production

ABUJA: Nigeria's economy grew slower than expected in the first quarter, official statistics showed yesterday, with an expansion in oil production offset by a sputtering non-oil sector. The economy grew by 1.9 percent year-on-year in the three months to March, compared with growth of 2.1 percent in the fourth quarter of 2017, said Nigeria's National Bureau of Statistics.

Nigeria's oil production—which generates the bulk of the country's government revenue—is up to 2.0 million barrels per day, the highest level in over a year, according to the statistics bureau. But growth in the non-oil sector was a meager 0.8 percent despite slowing inflation and higher oil prices, surprising analysts who predicted stronger growth.

"It's a bit of a depressing result," said John Ashbourne of London-based Capital Economics to AFP.

"Consumer spending is incredibly weak. Nigerian consumers are holding back either because incomes have fallen more than we thought or because people are worried about the future," Ashbourne said.

Nigeria's President Muhammadu Buhari has worked to try and pivot the economy

US commodity exports to China to rise amid trade talks

SINGAPORE/BEIJING: China has pledged to buy more US goods to reduce America's huge trade deficit and help avoid exacerbating a trade war between the world's two biggest economies, with energy and commodities high on Washington's list of products for sale.

The US trade war with China is "on hold" after the governments agreed to drop tariff threats and work on a wider agreement, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said on Sunday. Washington is especially keen to sell more of the United States' surging oil and gas production. Yet infrastructure bottlenecks mean energy and commodity exports can grow only gradually, and only if US oil, gas and other goods remain cost attractive against global competition. Morgan Stanley estimates it could take up to three years to increase Chinese purchases of US goods by \$60 billion to \$90 billion, with a rise in agricultural imports in the near term followed by energy.

Oil & gas

Total US oil and gas exports to China in 2017 were worth \$4.3 billion, based on average prices, a far cry from a deficit reduction target of \$200 billion. But US exports are rising, and China has spent \$2 billion on US oil in the first quarter of 2018 alone. Increased purchases of US oil will help China replace Iranian supplies, which are expected to fall as the United States re-imposes sanctions on Tehran. "Buying U.S. crude would help with the Iranian situation in ... that these barrels from the US would provide additional supplies at a time when buyers will be expected to cut Iranian volumes," said Michal Meidan of consultancy Energy Aspects. China's US oil import bill this year could rise to \$9 billion to \$11 billion with purchases rising to 300,000 to 400,000 barrels per day (bpd) in the second half of 2018, according to Energy Aspects.

That would still be only a fraction of China's import needs of 9.6 million bpd in April, worth around \$20 billion. And while US exports may grow somewhat, infrastructure bottlenecks for the time being hold back sales. US oil export ter-

minals are small by global standards and the biggest tankers - Very Large Crude Carriers (VLCCs) - don't fit through the Panama Canal. Having to take the detour around Africa, they are at a cost disadvantage against producers from the Middle East, Africa and Europe.

Washington also wants the United States to export more liquefied natural gas (LNG) to China. While LNG shipments have increased, there are only two US export facilities, both of which have largely contracted out their supplies. There are also restraints in China due to pipeline and terminal capacities. US LNG exports to China could eventually surge if Chinese companies become partners in many of the US export projects that still seek financing.

Agriculture

China could direct its state-owned soybean crushers to buy more of America's surplus oilseed, said Paul Burke, North Asia regional director for the U.S. Soybean Export Council. That would potentially add 14 million tons of imports worth \$6 billion to this year's trade bill, at the expense of major exporters, Brazil and Argentina. Soybeans were the United States' second-largest export to China by value, worth \$12 billion last year. China easing controls on processing imports of genetically modified strains of corn and fully allocating its low-tariff import quota for wheat would also add to grain shipments. Analysts reckon buying more poultry, beef and pork would be another way to boost trade, but tough import regulations would likely limit volumes without big concessions from Beijing. Beijing removed anti-dumping tariffs on US poultry in February after eight years, but a ban due to avian influenza remains in place. Without the ban, the US-China poultry business could be worth up to \$600 million, an industry expert estimated.

China has in the past made large purchases of American pork for its strategic reserves. There is also strong demand for imported meat among the country's middle class consumers.

But China has zero tolerance on the use of growth promoter beta-agonist ractopamine, widely used by US pork farmers, and synthetic hormones used in US beef. The government lifted a 14-year-old ban on US beef last year, but it has only approved a dozen processors for export.

In the first quarter, US imports accounted for less than 1 percent of China's total beef imports, but a pick-up in purchases would challenge Australia, Brazil and Uruguay.

"Big (meat) purchases and shipments need time to put together. You can't just turn on the spigot," said an industry source who declined to be identified. — Reuters

Technology

Extreme cold experiments head to space aboard Cygnus cargo ship

Thirty-four new experiments are on board

TAMPA: Food for astronauts, new space gardening gear and experiments to test extreme cold and how cement forms in weightlessness blasted off yesterday to the International Space Station aboard Orbital ATK's unmanned Cygnus spacecraft. The white Antares rocket, emblazoned with a US flag, rumbled and roared into the dark night sky over Wallops Island, Virginia at 4:44 am. The spacecraft is carrying 7,800 pounds of cargo on the ninth of a series of launches by Orbital ATK, under a \$1.9 billion contract with NASA to resupply the orbiting outpost. SpaceX also runs supply missions using its Falcon 9 rocket and Dragon cargo vehicle.

Thirty-four new experiments are on board, including one that will create the coldest man-made temperatures anywhere in the universe, called the new Cold Atom Lab (CAL) facility. The US space agency hopes that CAL will lead to new breakthroughs in modern physics. "CAL creates a temperature 10 billion times colder than the vacuum of space, then uses lasers and magnetic forces to slow down atoms until they are almost motionless," NASA said in a statement. "Results of this research could potentially

lead to a number of improved technologies, including sensors, quantum computers and atomic clocks used in spacecraft navigation."

Plug and play

Also on board is the first European commercial system aimed at increasing researchers' access to



Experiment aims to test how cement acts in space

space lab by offering "plug-and-play" experiment cubes that are low-cost and easy to install and remove. The International Commercial Experiment, or ICE Cubes Service, is a joint venture of the European Space Agency (ESA) and the Belgian company Space Application Services. For

human explorers to set up camp on Mars, they will need to build habitats to live in and places to protect their gear, and one experiment aims to test how cement acts in space and whether it will harden up and set like it does on Earth.

Plant Habitat-01, an experiment that could boost astronauts' ability to grow their own food, is also on board. It contains "a closed environment unlike any other plant growth we have had to date on the station," said Kirt Costello, ISS chief scientist. "This will really allow us to look at all the variable parameters in an investigation and get down to the brass tacks of what is going on in microgravity." Three other plant boxes, where astronauts grow lettuce to eat, are already on board the ISS.

The cargo ship is scheduled to arrive Thursday morning at the space station. During the rendezvous, NASA flight engineer Scott Tingle will grapple the spacecraft using the space station's robotic arm, called Canadarm2. Cygnus will remain in space until July 15, when it will be loaded with trash and sent off to burn up on re-entry into Earth's atmosphere. — AFP



VIRGINIA: In this image released by NASA, the Orbital ATK Antares rocket, with the Cygnus spacecraft on board, launches from Pad-0A, at NASA's Wallops Flight Facility in Virginia. — AFP

Blow for scammers as EU tightens data protection law

LONDON: When London accountant Arvind Verma got a call in April from someone posing as a salesman for the British retailer Carphone Warehouse, the offer was too enticing to refuse and he saw no reason not to hand over his credit card details. It wasn't until the real Carphone Warehouse called that he realized scammers had gained access to his private information in the company's database and used it to take out a contract with the extra details he had provided.

Now Verma hopes a new European law designed to give people more control over how their data is held and used will stop such scammers in their tracks. "It's not uncommon for a company to call you and offer you better services or a better contract and for you to commit to that service over the phone," he said. "What had happened is this (fake) company had gathered as many of my details as possible, called me up to get the rest of the details, and then called up Carphone Warehouse to take a contract out in my name." The European Union's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has been billed as the biggest shake-up of data privacy laws since the birth of the web and is the largest change in data protection law in Europe for more than 20 years. It gives EU citizens more control over how their personal data are stored and used. Companies breaching the new rules on how they handle people's data could incur fines of up to 4 percent of their annual revenue.

Carphone Warehouse, which is owned by Dixons Carphone, said it had reviewed how it stored customers' information ahead of the new law, which comes into effect on May 25. The mobile phone retailer was fined in January by Britain's Information Commissioner's Office for a 2015 cyber attack which exposed the personal data of over 3 million customers.

Under GDPR, companies will have to report serious data breaches within 72 hours and have to be able to provide European customers with a copy of the personal data they hold. "Citizens will now have greater rights to know what is being held by corporations, organizations," said Richard Benham, founder of The Cyber Trust, which aims to protect those most vulnerable from cyber fraud. "They will have the right not only to access that information but also have the right for that information to be deleted if appropriate." Businesses around the world have been racing to make sure they comply with the rules, which apply to all companies that do business with Europeans. The industries most affected will be those that collect large amounts of customer data, including technology companies, retailers, healthcare providers, insurers and banks. "It's not just a tech sector issue. Data protection is key to all organizations of every size and every sector," said Jeremy Lilley, policy manager for data protection at trade association TechUK.



RIPE NCC, Kuwait CITRA organize training program

DUBAI: The RIPE Network Coordination Centre (NCC) and the Kuwait Communication Information Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (CITRA) recently held a training program for telecommunications and Internet service providers (ISPs) to educate them on how to work with Internet Protocol version 6 (IPv6) and deploy it on their networks. The training, held in Kuwait, forms part of a CITRA initiative aimed at encouraging the development of a roadmap for the deployment of IPv6 in Kuwait.

Network operators now find themselves running extremely low on unused IP addresses, thanks to a rapid growth in the number of devices connected to the Internet. As IP addresses are essential for identification and location purposes, this has the potential to restrict the ongoing growth of the Internet and associated services in myriad ways. To address this challenge, the shift from IPv4 (with a total of 4.3 billion addresses) to IPv6 (with 340 trillion,

trillion, trillion addresses), which will ensure the future growth of the Internet, is being facilitated through efforts by industry stakeholders from around the world.

Paul Rendek, Director of External Relations at the RIPE NCC, said: "We are working with our members and various governmental and non-governmental authorities to simplify the latest technological developments involving the Internet. The RIPE NCC is keen to further strengthen collaboration with all related entities, including governments and Law Enforcement Agencies (LEAs), to jointly develop solutions to effectively tackle cybercrime and other challenges. One of these objectives is to support the transition to IPv6 through efforts such as workshops, seminars, conferences and dedicated meetings that bring stakeholders together".

As Internet services continue to develop rapidly and make a growing contribution to social and economic development, the RIPE NCC works to help network operators future-proof their networks by sharing its expertise, thereby playing a significant role in driving sustainable development and economic growth across the Middle East. The organizing of the recent workshop in partnership with CITRA once again reflects the non-profit organization's commitment to engaging with governmental authorities to support their understanding of technical fundamentals that ensure the growth and safety of the Internet.

Lu resignation a blow for Baidu's push into AI

BEIJING: The resignation of a senior Baidu executive is a major setback to the Chinese internet giant's push into artificial intelligence, an analyst said yesterday, as the company tries to diversify away from its search engine business. The loss of chief operating officer and AI expert Lu Qi is the latest blow for the company, often referred to as China's Google, which has invested heavily in its deep learning efforts.

Lu was overseeing Baidu's move into AI-related businesses, from autonomous driving to facial recognition, and his departure last

week saw the firm's share price slump almost 10 percent in New York Friday. Baidu has spun off non-core assets such as its movie streaming platform iQiyi and financial services arm as it moves to make AI central to its future, plans that dovetail with Beijing's strategic goal of dominating the field.

His departure followed the loss of Baidu's chief scientist Andrew Ng last year, when the firm also lost its driverless car unit head Wang Jing, among other key AI scientists. "Lu Qi's departure, like those of Wang Jing and Andrew Ng, is a significant setback to the progress of Baidu's AI program," said Mark Natkin, managing director at technology consultancy Marbridge Consulting.

Natkin believes Baidu will be able to recruit other talent but said the departure would slow the company down. The speed bump sets the company back at a critical time as it races against Chinese peers

Tencent and Alibaba and even Silicon Valley giants like Amazon and Google to launch driverless cars and the next generation of AI-enabled products. Investment Bank Credit Suisse lowered its outlook for the company, with its analyst citing Lu's importance to Baidu's future. "We view Dr Lu as instrumental to Baidu's transition to becoming an 'All in AI' company," said the analyst Thomas Chong in a widely-cited research note.

Lu's arrival in Beijing from Microsoft was seen as a major coup for Baidu. His departure to spend more time with his family in the US and move to "research and investment" projects followed a similar jump by Ng last year. Baidu CEO Robin Li thanked Lu and said the firm's "strategy to transform into an AI-first company (was) firmly in place". The tech giant has since promoted the current manager of its AI Group, Wang Haifeng. — AFP

From airlines to pizza parlors, EU businesses adopt data law

LONDON: Lisa Meyer's hair salon is a cozy place where her mother serves homemade macarons, children climb on chairs and customers chat above the whirr of hairdryers. Most of the time Meyer is focused on hairstyles, color trends and keeping up with appointments. But now she's worried about how the European Union's new data protection law will affect her business as she contacts customers to seek permission to store their details. Even though she supports the law,

Meyer fears it may cut her mailing list by 90 percent as people choose to withhold their data or simply overlook her emails. "It will be difficult to market upcoming events," she said at her shop, Lisa Hauck Hair & Beauty in London. Businesses from pizza parlors to airlines across the EU's 28 countries are bombarding customers with emails seeking consent to use personal data as they rush to comply with the bloc's General Data Protection Regulation, which takes effect May 25.

While much of the attention has focused on how technology giants like Facebook and Google will comply with the rules, consumers are learning firsthand that they apply to any firm, large or small, that stores personal data. The new rules, called GDPR for short, are designed to make it easier for EU residents to give and withdraw permission for companies to use personal information, requiring consent forms that are written in simple language and no more than one-page long.

Companies that already hold such data have to reach out to customers and ask for permission to retain it. Authorities can fine companies up to 4 percent of annual revenue or 20 million euros, whichever is higher, for breaching the rules. As a result, email boxes all over the continent are being swamped with messages from opticians, hotels, greeting card companies and even charities that fear stiff penalties for non-compliance.

In an effort to rise above the clutter, some companies are trying to spice up their approach as they try to ensure continued access to information vital to their businesses. The St. Pancras Hotels Group promises that "only nominated people have access to your details, and they are kept really safe, guarded by our very own British Bulldogs. And a rude punk rocker." Britain's Channel 4 television offered up a video featuring one of the country's best-known comedians explaining GDPR and how it will affect viewers.

Many are using animations, like this one from like France's mobile operator Bouygues, to explain the rules. Regulators say the law applies to anyone who collects, uses or stores personal data. That can be a burden for small businesses that are forced to hire outside lawyers or consultants because they don't have the staff or expertise to deal with the law.

Wake-up call

The EU's one-size-fits-all approach is one of the flaws in the law, according to Max Schrems, an Austrian privacy advocate who has formed a

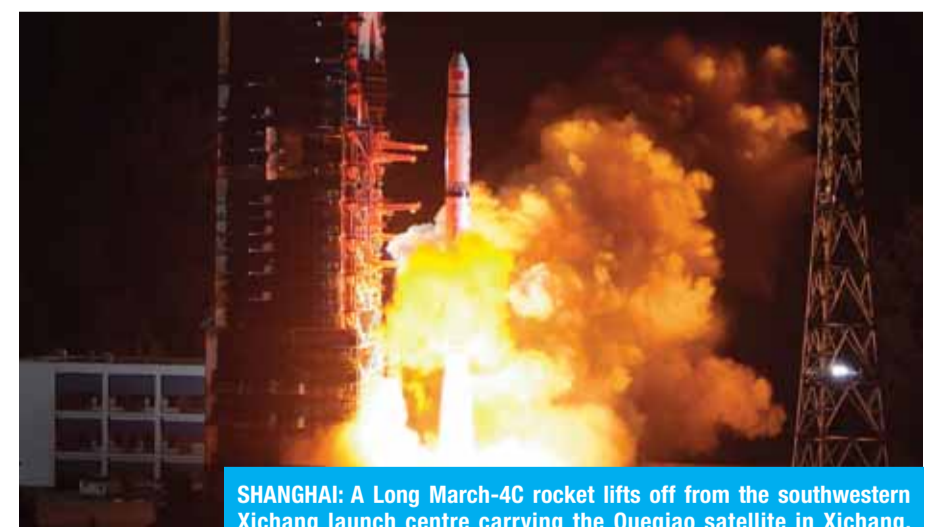


LONDON: Lisa Meyer blow dries the hair of a client at her Hair and Beauty shop in London. — AP

non-profit to take action against big companies that deliberately violate the new rules. When the rules were being discussed, industry lobbyists sought to weaken the law by creating uncertainty, and as a result there are no clear guidelines that exempt small companies. Schrems told the BBC recently, "GDPR is a prime example of cor-

porate law gone wrong, because it's helpful for big companies," he said. "They have to do all of this anyways and they can use the uncertainty in the law to kind of get around things. But it leaves small companies that don't ... have a law department, or something like that, in a situation with a lot of uncertainty." — AP

China launches satellite to explore dark side of moon



SHANGHAI: A Long March-4C rocket lifts off from the southwestern Xichang launch centre carrying the Queqiao satellite in Xichang, China's southwestern Sichuan province. — AFP

SHANGHAI: China launched a relay satellite early yesterday designed to establish a communication link between earth and a planned lunar probe that will explore the dark side of the moon, the official Xinhua news agency said. Citing the China National Space Administration, Xinhua said the satellite was launched at 5:28 am on a Long March-4C rocket from the Xichang launch centre in the southwest of the country.

"The launch is a key step for China to realize its goal of being the first country to send a probe to soft-land on and rove the far side of the moon," Xinhua quoted Zhang Lihua, man-

ager of the relay satellite project, as saying. It said the satellite, known as Queqiao, or Magpie Bridge, will settle in an orbit about 455,000 km from earth and will be the world's first communication satellite operating there.

China aims to catch up with Russia and the United States to become a major space power by 2030. It is planning to launch construction of its own manned space station next year. However, while China has insisted its ambitions are purely peaceful, the US Defense Department has accused it of pursuing activities aimed at preventing other nations from using space-based assets during a crisis. — Reuters

Health

Kuwait Chest Hospital honors doctors, employees for their service

Old doctors honored for the first time for their contribution



KUWAIT: The Chest Hospital in Kuwait honored a group of distinguished doctors and outstanding employees for their role in serving the hospital and country. The celebration was held in the presence of Sheikha Awrad Al-Sabah, Hospital Director Dr Reem Al-Asousi said the hospital is used to recognizing outstanding doctors and employees. She said, this time old doctors are being honored for the first time for their contribution to the hospital development.

She said that this will motivate the employees to work harder, while appreciating their work and efforts. Dr Al-Asousi said, "8259 patients were admitted to the hospital in 2017, while 1712 heart and chest surgeries were performed in addition to 8044 catheterization procedures both treatment and diagnostic were performed."

The clinical teams that were honored are:

- Heart valves replacement team that is led by an elite group of Kuwait doctors, as 230 cases were performed through catheterization.
- Robot chest surgeries team, which does not need opening of the chest which reduces complications, and reduce patient's stay in hospital.
- Robot heart surgeries, where some cases do not need opening the heart, through making minute openings to change valves and arteries using a robot.
- Heart Tissue Oxygenating procedures that were done in cooperation



with heart surgery and anesthesia department.
● Heart Rehab team.

New death in DR Congo Ebola outbreak-toll at 26

MBANDAKA, DR Congo: The death toll from the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo has risen to 26 after a person died in the northwest city of Mbandaka. Health Minister Oly Ilunga said yesterday. "A death was recorded (on Sunday), while two people who had been confirmed as ill with the Ebola virus were cured on Saturday," he said. "The two people who were cured have returned to their families," he told reporters.

Those two cases occurred at Bikoro, a remote rural area where the outbreak was announced on May 8 and then spread to Mbandaka—an event that has deeply worried health experts. The current toll is 49 cases, comprising 22 confirmed by laboratory tests, 21 probable cases and six suspected cases, Ilunga said. Three new cases had been reported on Saturday. Authorities in the DRC on Monday were to launch a program to immunize first responders with an experimental Ebola vaccine.

The first phase will unfold in Mbandaka on Monday, followed on Saturday in Bikoro, about 150 kilometers away. Donors have promised 300,000 doses of the vaccine, a government spokesman said, of which around 5,400 have already been received. The World Health Organization (WHO) has dispatched 35 immunization experts, including 16 mobilized during the last deadly outbreak in West Africa which occurred in 2013. The rest of the team is made up of newly trained Congolese staff.

"I'm pleased to say that vaccination is

starting as we speak," Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, the WHO's director-general, said on Monday as the UN's health agency met in an assembly. Alarm bells sounded on Thursday when a first case was reported in Mbandaka, a city of around 1.2 million people located on the Congo River. A major transport hub, the city is located upstream from the DRC capital Kinshasa and Brazzaville, the capital of the Republic of Congo, and downstream from Bangui, the capital of the Central African Republic, one of the poorest countries in the world.

One of the world's most notorious diseases, Ebola is a virus-caused hemorrhagic fever that in extreme cases causes fatal bleeding from internal organs, the mouth, eyes or ears. It has a natural reservoir in a species of tropical African fruit bats, from which it is believed to leap to humans who kill and butcher the animals for food. Transmission among humans then typically spreads through close contact with the blood, body fluids, secretions or organs of someone who is sick with Ebola or has recently died. The average fatality rate is around 50 percent, varying from 25 percent to 90 percent, according to the WHO.

As there is no licensed drug to treat or prevent the disease, doctors use time-honored methods of identifying and isolating patients, and tracing people who have been in contact with them. The job, which requires strict safety protocols, is exhausting and requires mustering large numbers of personnel. —AFP

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What's On

Ooredoo holds open day for volunteer program members



Ooredoo Kuwait welcomed the Holy Month of Ramadan with an open day for the members of its award-winning volunteer program which sees the launch of its fourth edition this year. The event was held at the JW Marriott Hotel, and included introductory presentations for the new members of the program in addition to a detailed walkthrough of this year's agenda, which saw more than 450 applicants this year.

Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub lauded the participants for their commitment to embodying the values of the Holy Month of Ramadan, which coincide with the launch of the volunteer program. He noted, "I would like to extend a warm welcome to all the new participants of the program. I have complete faith that you will benefit greatly from the volunteer program and the spirit of giving that it fosters. I would also like to thank the familiar faces that have been with us since the start of our program: your passion is what drives us to do this year after year."

On her part, Dr. Fatema Almousawi, founder of Spread the Passion, the partner of the volunteer program, underscored the rich activities included in the program which aim to hone the skills of participants and provide them, with the necessary training they need for excelling in various volunteer-related activities. She also thanked Ooredoo Kuwait for being an untiring supporter of youth and volunteerism, and for feeding their passion for giving



Mijbil Alayoub

back to the community.

The event included a number of informative and inspiring talks presented by senior members of the program. Senior volunteers Saba Badawi, Noura Al Jazzaf, Nouf Al Enezi, Bader Al Arbeed, Wafa Shuwaiter, Hajar Al Eidan, and Anoud Al Ali spoke about their experience volunteering with the program over the years, highlighting what they have learned from their participation. Ooredoo also held a special training session for registered members that

focused on professional photography, with specialized cameras and advanced smartphone cameras. The session, which was presented by Ooredoo's Social Media Team, covered the basics of photography, photo editing, in addition to the best ways to angles of lighting.

Ooredoo aims to hold several other training sessions throughout the course of the program aimed at enriching participants and helping them take their passion to the next level. Ooredoo's volunteers have participated in

more than 120 activities since the inception of the program four years ago, including iftar meal distribution in the company's iftar tent opposite the company's head office, in addition to its charity truck which drives to different locations across Kuwait to deliver meals to those in need. Members of the program also contribute regularly in organizing visits to care centers for the elderly, the orphanage, and hospital wards throughout the holy month and around the year.

KAMCO organizes annual blood drive

KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, organized its annual blood drive reflecting its humanitarian duty and social responsibility towards society titled "Be a superhero and donate blood." In collaboration with the Kuwait Central Blood Bank, enthusiastic employees and other participants donated to the cause.

The slogan for KAMCO's blood donation campaign this year focused on the idea that not all superheroes have superpowers, by donating blood you too can be a

superhero. KAMCO organizes a blood donation campaign every year with an aim to enhance and promote such noble causes amongst its employees.

Speaking on the occasion, Chief Business Development Officer at KAMCO Faisal Hasan, said, "This campaign is a reemblance of our philosophy at KAMCO. We are keen to give back to society and be the first initiators to contribute in all aspects related to our corporate social responsibility."

"We appreciate the enthusiasm of our employees and everyone who participated in such an honorable cause. This demonstrates the steady and highly motivated employees who are ready to give back to those in need. KAMCO will continue to associate itself with organizations such as the Kuwait Central Blood Bank to achieve its maximum potential in expanding our corporate social responsibility agenda," he added.



ACK organizes Innovation and Entrepreneurship in SME



The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) organized the 2nd competition for Innovation and Entrepreneurship in Small and Medium Enterprises (SME). Fifteen teams of students from School of Engineering and School of Business presented a number of small and medium projects, which provides innovative and unique solutions to existing environmental, educational, health and social issues. Professor Isam Zabalawi - President of ACK- delivered an opening speech on the objectives of education and the significance of the academic programs in supporting innovation and entrepreneurship.

He stated that "ACK has always adopted the latest project-based educational techniques, covering on-site visits, and hosted entrepreneurs and specialists in the areas of innovation, SME management and marketing. Furthermore, ACK organizes an exhibition for students' graduation projects at the end of each semester, where students exhibit their projects based on innovative concepts of scientific applications that serve the community in various fields. Those concepts pave the road for entrepreneur students to convert their creative ideas into real projects."

Following, Dr. Husain Talafha, Undersecretary of Arab Planning Institute (API), spoke about the role of API in providing courses to support and qualify the entrepreneurs by hosting specialists and experienced entrepreneurs, thus helping the young entrepreneurs acquire expertise from the owners of real projects and benefit from their experience and recommendations. On behalf of the National SME Fund, Mr. Abdul Aziz Al-Hazzaa spoke about the effective role of the fund in encouraging and supporting the owners of SMEs and the range of facilities provided by Kuwait government to encourage the youth in their projects and become an effective element in building the national economy.

Dr. Hamad Al-Hasawi, Secretary General of Kuwait Banking Association (KBA) stressed that private sector is the main pillar for creating genuine expertise and capacity, and that the initiative to establish SMEs would create entrepreneurs who are capable of facing the market challenges and add value to the national economy. In an intervention, Dr. Joakim Timlon, Professor of Innovation and Entrepreneurship Strategies from the University of Applied Sciences in Vienna, Austria, stated via Skype that creating an added value for the consumer is through innovation in saving resources and under appropriate circumstances.

Green Hands participates in 'Ramadan Aman' campaign

Green Hands Environmental Team with great enthusiasm participated in Ramadan Aman (Safe Ramadan) Campaign in Salmiya. Green Hands Environmental Team created awareness amongst drivers and by asking them to contribute towards minimizing the number of road accidents that occurs during this period by using safety precautions. The campaign under the slogan "Together for a Ramadan without accidents", aims at reducing road accidents during Iftar time and distributes Iftar meals to drivers at intersections, traffic signals and roads during Iftar.



BSK holds annual Sports Awards

This month, BSK held their annual Sports Awards Evening, an opportunity for 106 BSK students to celebrate their sporting achievements in front of 150 guests including Madam Vera Al-Mutawa MBE and Olympian Adel Al-Ghaith who represented Kuwait in swimming the 100m Butterfly stroke in the 1984 Los Angeles Games.

BSK has had another excellent year of sport. Out of eighteen ISACK team championships, BSK made the semi-finals on fourteen occasions, competed in eight finals and won four of these. As well as winning the Boys U15 Football Championship, Girls U15 Volleyball Championship, Girls U15 Basketball Championship and Girls Open Age Basketball Championship, BSK have also won the Under-15 and Open Age Girls Football Championships, plus securing multiple medals in ISACK Swimming galas. Many students also represent high level club teams in Kuwait, in their home countries and some even compete internationally.

BSK has also experienced international success when competing in the British Schools of the Middle East (BSME) Games: the competing teams have claimed silver medals in netball as well as a gold medal for our U13 Javelin thrower. During the ceremony, each squad was presented with certificates to celebrate individual excellence, improvement and dedication to their sports, which was a running theme from the slogan of the evening from retired baseball legend Derek Jeter "There may be people that have more talent than you, but there's no excuse for anyone to work harder than you do."

A regular motivating factor for students to attend their numerous



practices throughout the year is to qualify for Sports Colors: an elite group of students, claiming a unique Sports Colors Tie, who are distinguished by achieving a minimum of two of the following criteria:

- A gold medal in an ISACK competition (team or individual).
- A gold medal in a BSME competition as part of a team.
- Any medal in an individual BSME event.

The evening was capped off with some individual awards for students who surpassed all expectations regarding their involvement in BSK sport, either as a key member of their teams or students who regularly help out with vital roles such as score keeping. The numerous successes of departing teacher, coach and friend Georgi Knjazev, was also celebrated.

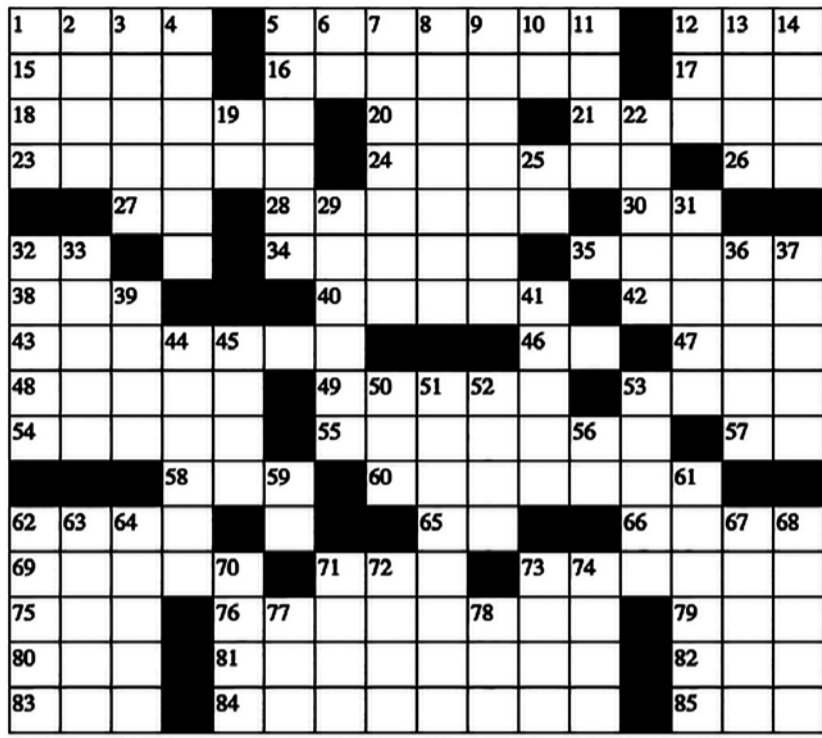
During his 13 year stay at BSK, Knjazev lead BSK teams to 33 basketball championships, leaving behind a legacy at BSK having taught hundreds of children. Ex-students from around the world had sent video messages that were played for Mr Georgi, all sharing a common theme of thanks and gratitude towards an individual that will be sorely missed at BSK. It was a fantastic celebration of student achievement, setting a very high standard for the 2018-2019 season teams.

NOTICE

The TIES Center is hosting a free iftar for female visitors, students, teachers and volunteers. Enjoy a catered buffet in the company of other ladies at a well-deserved, relaxing evening on May 31, 2019 at 6:30pm. For further details call to register: 25231015 or mail us at info@tiescenter.net

Stars

CROSSWORD 1915



ACROSS

- 1. A compact mass.
5. Someone who drinks liquor repeatedly in small quantities.
12. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
15. Qualities that attract by seeming to promise some kind of reward.
16. Exploitation to the point of diminishing returns.
17. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
18. In the same place (used when citing a reference).
20. A Spanish title of respect for a gentleman or nobleman.
21. The capital and largest city of Bangladesh.
23. African tree having an exceedingly thick trunk and fruit that resembles a gourd and has an edible pulp called monkey bread.
24. Russian choreographer (1834-1905).
26. A state in northwestern North America.
27. The 13th letter of the Greek alphabet.
28. Harmony of people's opinions or actions or characters.
30. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
32. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
34. Of a yellowish brown color similar to olive drab n.
35. God of wealth and love.
38. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
40. At right angles to the length of a ship or airplane.
42. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
43. A member of the Mayan people of the Yucatan peninsula in Mexico.
46. A public promotion of some product or service.
47. Of inferior or mixed breed.
48. Place in a line or arrange so as to be parallel.
49. Red Bordeaux wine from the Medoc district of southwestern France.
54. A spoon-shaped vessel with a long handle.
55. A member of the Caddo people who formerly lived in the Dakotas west of the Missouri river.
57. A state in midwestern United States.
58. The basic unit of electric current adopted under the System International d'Unites.
60. A member of any of various Indian peoples of central Mexico.
62. A steep rugged rock or cliff.
65. A chronic progressive nervous disorder involving loss of myelin sheath around certain nerve fibers.
66. A member of a North American Indian people speaking one of the Hokan language.
69. Australian shrubs and small trees with evergreen usually spiny leaves and dense clusters of showy flowers.
75. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
76. Having a sophisticated charm.
79. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
80. A trivial lie.
81. Giving off light or heat or radiation.
82. Any of various dark heavy viscid substances obtained as a residue.
83. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
84. A widely distributed perennial sedge having small edible nutlike tubers.
85. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

- 1. Marked by lack of intellectual depth.
2. A Bantu language spoken in southern Zaire.
3. (Greek mythology) A giant Boeotian hunter who pursued the Pleiades and was eventually slain by Artemis.
4. Bug of temperate regions that infests especially beds and feeds on human blood.
5. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
6. Being one more than three.
7. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
8. Call forth.
9. Small genus of European herbs.
10. A radioactive transuranic element produced by bombarding plutonium with neutrons.
11. Make anew.
12. An enclosed space.
13. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
14. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
19. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
22. A genus of Indrididae.
25. A yellow trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
29. Grayish baboon of southern and eastern Africa.
31. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
33. Scale-like structure between the base of the wing and the halter of a two-winged fly.
36. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
37. The large trunk artery that carries blood from the left ventricle of the heart to branch arteries.
39. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
41. A Portuguese province on the south coast of China and two islands in the South China Sea.
44. An organ in its earliest stage of development.
45. Be teeming, be abuzz.
50. Bulky grayish-brown eagle with a short wedge-shaped white tail.
51. Adornment consisting of a small piece of shiny material used to decorate clothing.
52. United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
53. The act of swimming.
56. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.
59. A small digital computer based on a microprocessor and designed to be used by one person at a time.
61. Ctenophore having tentacles only in the immature stage.
63. Insectivorous usually semiaquatic web-footed amphibian with smooth moist skin and long hind legs.
64. Jordan's port.
67. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
68. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
70. Chief port of Yemen.
71. A notice of someone's death.
72. A large number or amount.
73. The last imperial dynasty of China (from 1644 to 1912) which was overthrown by revolutionaries.
74. An instinctive motive.
77. Any of various systems of units for measuring electricity and magnetism.
78. A resource.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A new cycle brings attention to security, home, finances and other property or investments. Being wise with what you have creates abundance and self-discipline. Longevity matters and creating a legacy for those you may leave behind is of utmost importance to you now.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Tuning in to trending topics brings information that interests you: if you work in advertising or entertainment this helps your position. Communicating via writing, speaking or other means is effective for you in reaching out on important topics.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Caretaking seems to fall in your lap in more than one instance: this could include people, animals or plants! You could find yourself seeking out a forever home, a place you can move into and never leave.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're polishing yourself and your habits to become a better person and lead a happier life. You may have a tendency to be a people pleaser during this cycle, but you could find that this gets you nowhere: be who you are, no matter what!



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Figuring out how to win is easy for you now; you've laid plans for this all along the way! You have information that gives you a heads up before something happens: someone might be very embarrassed by this.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You become self-disciplined and as a result your self-esteem rises; seeing what you can actually do when you apply yourself does a world of good! Learning how to use your gifts to help you prosper is noticeable by what you create.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You turn to the mystic for comfort and support: there's no doubt in your mind that the heavens hold more peace than the earth. Looking at all sides equally is the natural path of your sun sign and you call on this now when seeking what's fair.



Scorpio (October 23-November 19)

You may seek to have control over a situation that needs your guidance. Becoming aware of some new facts puts you on the right path. When you hear a rumor about someone you know, you may have a tough decision to make.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 19)

If a piece doesn't fit, you don't use it and continue searching until you find the right place to put it. Someone you suspect could mess up and hang themselves with the truth: a certain person could blame you in some way, be prepared!



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Your change in behavior could irritate others, but you're not interested in what others think. Being independent is a priority for you now and you distance yourself from anyone or anything that blocks or interferes with this in any way.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Your practical nature wins against temptation to overspend on something that's not truly needed. You know how to manage a difficult situation when it crops up; this could involve family or close friends.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You've been heartsick over a loss, but with the phase you're entering you find peace and healing. Moving forward becomes easier and you make positive strides toward your goals. A new relationship brings the intimacy you crave and the intellectual match that works for you.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Musical Instruments 1

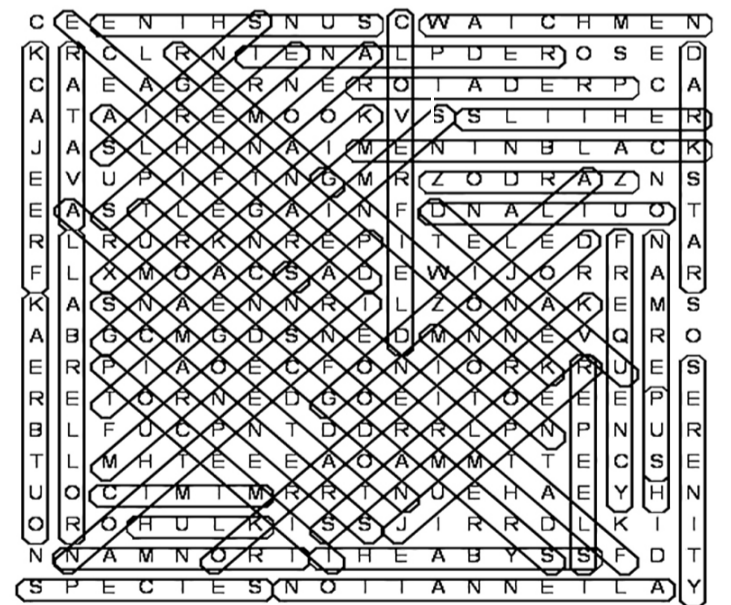
Find and circle all of the musical instruments that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- ACCORDION, BAGPIPE, BALALAIKA, BANJO, BASS, BODHRAN, CABASAS, CELLO, CHIMES, CITTERN, CLARINET, CONGA, CORNET, COW BELL, DIDGERIDOO, DRUM, EUPHONIUM, FLUTE, FRENCH HORN, GUITAR, HARP, HURDY-GURDY, LAOUTA, MANDOLA, MARACAS, MELODICA, MIZMAR, OBOE, OUD, PENNYWHISTLE, PICCOLO, SAZ, SITAR, TARKA, TRIANGLE, TROMBONE, UKULELE, VEENA, VIBRAPHONE, VIOLIN, XUN.

Yesterday's Solution

Movies: Science Fiction 2



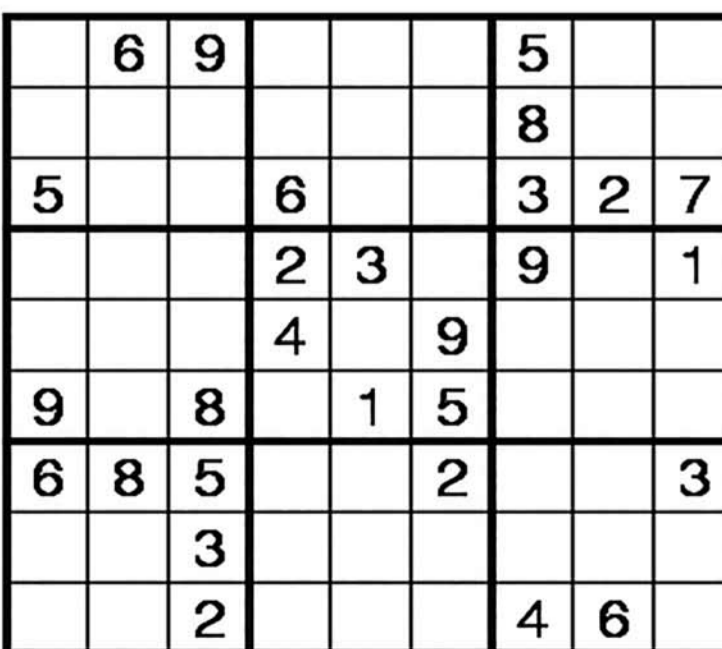
- AEON FLUX, ALIEN NATION, ALIENS, ARMAGEDDON, AVATAR, CLOVERFIELD, DARK STAR, DEATH RACE, DEJA VU, DONNIE DARKO, FLATLINERS, FREEJACK, FREQUENCY, GAMER, GODZILLA, HULK, INCEPTION, IRON MAN, JUMPER, KING KONG, KNOWING, MEN IN BLACK, MIMIC, MOON, OUTBREAK, OUTLAND, PANDORUM, PREDATOR, PUSH, RED PLANET, ROLLERBALL, SCANNERS, SERENITY, SIGNS, SLEEPER, SLITHER, SPECIES, SPHERE, STAR TREK, SUNSHINE, SUPERMAN, THE ABYSS, TIMECOP, TIMECRIMES, TRANSFORMERS, WATCHMEN, ZARDOZ.

Hidden movie: CLOSE ENCOUNTERS OF THE THIRD KIND

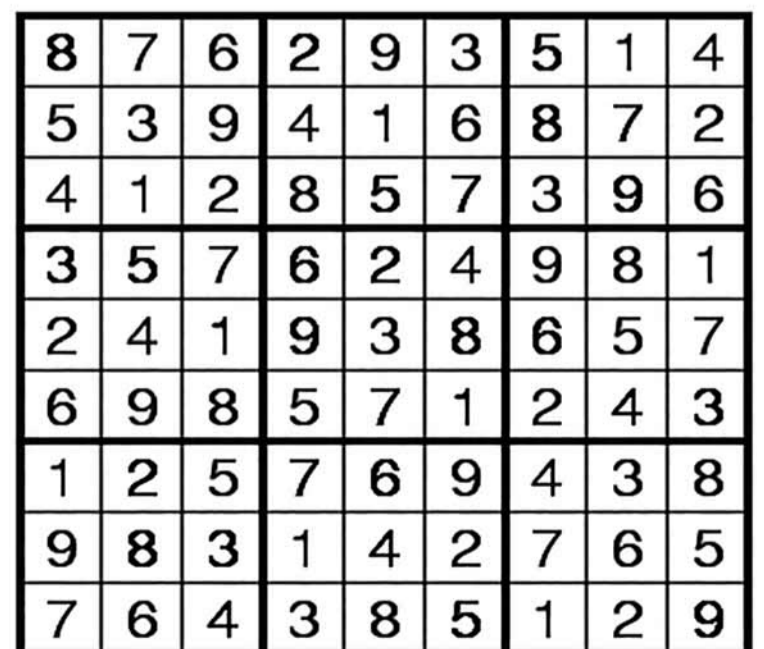
Yesterday's Solution



Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, MAY 22, 2018



A man followed by a cat walks in front of the Bani Hashim mosque in the Emirati capital Abu Dhabi during the holy fasting month of Ramadan. — AFP

Tinting silk a fading craft on a Damascus rooftops



On a rooftop in Syria's capital, Mohammad Al-Rihawi plunges silk threads into emerald green dye, preparing it to be woven into the city's famed brocade. But with civil war raging, he knows it is a dying trade. "Nobody works in silk dyeing anymore. We must be two or three to do it nationwide," said the 53-year-old, who sports a salt-and-pepper moustache. But without their ability to cast silk into a range of luminous colors, the brocade Damascus is famous for would cease to exist. The shimmering fabric, which is the product of hours of work on a wooden loom, is said to have been worn by Britain's Queen Elizabeth II on her wedding day.

Folklore has it that in 1947, Syria's first president, Shukri Al-Quwatli, gave a piece of the material to then princess Elizabeth, who included it in her wedding gown. But civil war has ravaged Syria since 2011, killing more than 350,000 people and forcing more than half the country's population to flee their homes. The conflict has ripped artisans away from their workshops and kept the tourists away. "The trade is fighting for its life," said Rihawi, his cheeks flushed with effort as he labored in his open-air workshop on the roof.

'No more tourists'

"We have no more tourists, no more foreign visitors," said the artisan, who wears a black T-shirt and rubber gloves. Shielded from the sun by a light tarpaulin sheet, he and his 15-year-old son, Nour, stand on either side of a large cauldron in their boots. Over a billowing cloud of steam, they rhythmically heave large wooden sticks draped with silk coils up and down over the boiling water.

As he helps his father clean the threads of impurities, Nour, dressed in jeans and with reading glasses, is one of very few eager to take on the craft. "No one wants to learn the trade anymore. It earns you very little," Rihawi said, a red apron knotted around his waist. Once rinsed, Rihawi hangs the silk coils up to dry from the ceiling of his small workshop, whose wooden lattice walls let the air and sun through.

Beyond a potted plant, small white plastic tubs of natural pigments—magenta, turquoise, brown, turmeric and sanguine red—sit on a shelf. Rihawi throws a thimbleful of turquoise and a dash of orange into a pot, and dilutes the color in a large metal saucepan. Using his hands, he bathes the threads in it. The final result is a coil of supple silk, turned a brilliant shade of emerald green.

'Swathed in silk'

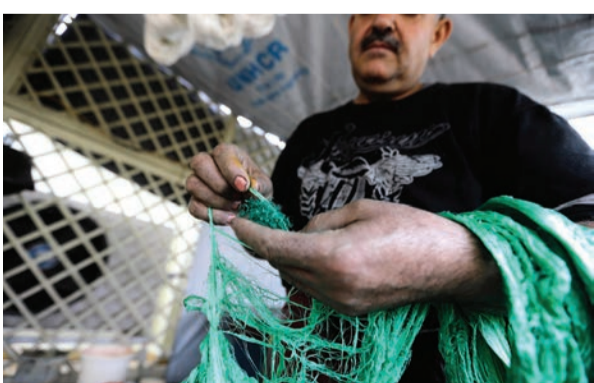
Before Syria's war broke out with the brutal repression of anti-government protests, Rihawi had a much larger workshop and employed 14 people. But when clashes reached Ain Terma, a suburb just east of the Damascus taken over by rebels in 2012, he sought refuge in the capital.

His former staff have all now either fled the country, or been drafted to serve in the army. The trade has suffered, especially because fewer and fewer people are buying the silk material it is used for. "Before the war, I worked every single day of the week," Rihawi said. "But now, it's sometimes just one or two days a week because of the low demand."

And the silk threads once produced in Syria now come from India or China as the conflict has disrupted silkworm farming at home. "This craft is like an old man waiting for his death," he said. "But we're doing everything we can to keep it alive." His day done, Rihawi examines his calloused hands, dyed a bluish-green and worn by years of manual labor. But he sees the bright side. "My hands will always be beautiful as long as they are swathed in silk," he said, with a sly smile. — AFP



“The trade is fighting for its life”



Mohammad Al-Rihawi dips fresh silk threads into green dye on January 23, 2018 at his atelier in the Syrian capital. — AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features



This May 12, 2018 picture shows room rental user Max Ikeda, a Ukrainian-Japanese living in Hiroshima, relaxing in his room at a rental house. — AFP photos



A Japanese traditional tatami-mat room in short-term accommodation operated by Hyakusenrenma's rental house.



A shoe rack adorned with Japanese decorations.



An exterior view of short-term accommodation operated by Hyakusenrenma's rental house.



Max Ikeda, a Ukrainian-Japanese living in Hiroshima (L), talking with rental house owner Nobuhide Kaneda (R) and his partner Hitomi Watanabe (C) in Tokyo.



A shoe rack adorned with Japanese decorations.

JAPAN'S NEW 'AIRBNB LAW': A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

Rental platforms like Airbnb are hoping for a boost from a new law coming into force next month in Japan ahead of an expected surge in demand for the 2020 Olympics, but experts warn it could actually hamper business in the short-term.

Currently anyone renting out a room risks falling foul of the law but short-term rentals will be legalized on June 15, clearing up a legal grey area. But the new law also introduces fresh restrictions, dismayed many who rent out rooms to tourists via Airbnb or similar platforms. Would-be renters will have to register their lodgings with the authorities and the new law limits total overnight stays to 180 days per year. The new legislation allows local authorities to impose their own restrictions too.

The tourist-magnet of Kyoto, for example, has said it will only permit rentals in residential areas between mid-January and mid-March, the low season for tourist arrivals. Jake Wilczynski, Airbnb spokesman for Asia-Pacific, told AFP the new laws are a "clear sign that Japan is buying in to the idea of short-term rentals for individuals". But many have cancelled reservations or simply taken their lodgings off the platform.

"Under the new law, Airbnb hosts will not be able to accommodate guests as easily as before. I hope this doesn't put the bar too high for us," 41-year-old Nobuhide Kaneda, who rents out a room in Tokyo, told AFP. On an Airbnb discussion forum, an Australian host identifying

herself as Narelle wrote: "I am... becoming frustrated that no one knows what is required." "I also feel the three-month timeframe to organize a notification number is unrealistic."

'Waiting for instructions'

Airbnb does not say how many properties on its platform already comply with the new laws but does not deny there have been some teething problems. Wilczynski said the firm was "in the process of discussing the issue with the

“ I HOPE THIS DOESN'T PUT THE BAR TOO HIGH FOR US ”

Japanese Tourism Agency". "We are waiting for instructions," said the spokesman for Airbnb, which has informed its members of the legal changes.

Despite the new restrictions, there is a huge potential market for short-term rentals as the country gears up for Tokyo 2020 and the Rugby World Cup the previous year. Airbnb rentals have boomed in recent years, driven by an increase in tourism and a surprising lack of hotel infra-

structure. With around 60,000 listings, Airbnb dominates the Japanese vacation rental market, even though it lags far behind many countries in Europe-France, for example, has 450,000 listings.

And demand is poised to rise as Japan targets an influx of 40 million visitors in 2020 when it hosts the Summer Olympics-up from 29 million last year. Yasuhiro Kamiyama, CEO of Hyakusenrenma, a local firm that manages 2,000 private rentals, said the new law will begin to "normalize Japan's Airbnb market". He hopes to have 30,000 rental

properties on his books by 2020. Mizuho, a research institute, said that "vacation rental services are unlikely to rapidly expand after (the law's) introduction. But the potential needs are great among foreign tourists, particularly from Asia." However, the loosening of the law will also open the door to fierce competition.

E-commerce giant Rakuten is planning to launch a property rental site as soon as it comes into effect and

telecom group KDDI has also set up a reservation platform. Hotel chains will also be stepping up their game, building new sites to counter "the risk of a shortage" come 2020, according to a recent research note from Mizuho.

'Noisy neighbors'

An additional problem faced by potential hosts is opposition from neighbors, who worry about noise from holidaymakers or security. According to Japanese media, there have been several cases of management companies or co-owners banning sub-lets in their buildings. Soichi Taguchi, a Japanese tourism official, said the new laws were "urgently needed to ensure public health and prevent trouble with local residents".

But Airbnb called such incidents "extremely rare", and Hyakusenrenma's CEO said "all the problems have stemmed from illegal rentals because neighbors did not know who was operating them". In a bid to overcome such local difficulties, some platforms offer extra services to manage rentals, such as providing the welcome to guests, handing over keys and showing them around the property. Airbnb has forged a partnership with a service provider which registers properties with local authorities, and arranges wireless internet and cleaning after the rental. — AFP

Allan Carr: The rise and fall of a Hollywood hedonist

Armed with a bulging contacts book and a luxury pad with its own disco overlooking Beverly Hills, bombastic impresario Allan Carr threw the Hollywood parties that defined the 1970s. The producer launched countless careers with stage and screen hits like "La Cage aux Folles" and "Grease" but was as notorious for his diamond-encrusted caftans, garish yellow Mercedes and life-long battle with obesity.

The mogul and bon viveur hosted debauched soirées where the cocaine, free champagne and even freer love attracted a galaxy of stars, from Rita Hayworth to Warren Beatty and Mick Jagger. "Glamor is entertainment. That's what entertainment is about... It's the American Dream come true," Carr, who died in 1999, says in an archived interview unearthed in a new documentary.

Available from video streaming services from June 5, "The Fabulous Allan Carr" doubles as a history of the gay experience in Hollywood, both in the carefree pre-AIDS 1970s and in the dark days that lay ahead. Carr's kitschy parties often turned into all-gay affairs after the stars went home, where entertainment industry bigwigs would mingle with the young, muscular, flaxen-haired men he called his "twinkies."

"Although it was no secret that Allan Carr was gay, he never formally acknowledged it publicly. The word 'flamboyant' was used to describe him, a code word," says the film's Emmy-winning director Jeffrey Schwarz. "Using humor and outrageousness

to gain entry into a conservative industry, Allan Carr furthered the acceptance of gay identity just by being himself."

Star-maker

Born Allan Solomon to a Jewish family in Chicago, Carr worked at Playboy before reinventing himself as a party planner, arranging a black-tie evening for Truman Capote in an abandoned Los Angeles jail. His talent agency managed Tony Curtis, Peter Sellers, Joan Rivers and "Mama" Cass Elliot, and he is credited with discovering numerous other stars, including Olivia Newton-John, Mark Hamill and Steve Guttenberg.

Carr impressed with his marketing know-how on several of Bee Gees manager and Hollywood producer Robert Stigwood's movies, including rock opera "Tommy" and "Saturday Night Fever." For his



next project, an unfancied musical called "Grease," Stigwood entrusted Carr not only with the marketing and premiere party, but also writing the screenplay and co-producing.

Shot over two months in LA for \$6 million, it was eviscerated by critics but ended up grossing \$400 million and was the most successful movie musical of all time until "Mamma Mia!," 30 years later. Carr's showmanship was never in doubt but his instincts as a producer were notoriously inconsistent. Among his biggest flops was the flamboyant, spectacularly awful \$20 million Village People origin story "Can't Stop the Music," a big screen musical brought out in 1980, long after disco went out of vogue. In 1983 Carr came back fighting with a hugely successful musical version of the Broadway play "La Cage aux Folles" that ran for five years, picking up six Tony Awards.

Cringeworthy

"It was a revolutionary portrayal, made more poignant by the fact that it was released at the height of the AIDS crisis. Allan Carr was the last great showman of the 20th Century," said Schwarz. His reputation for lavish parties brought ABC calling, and in 1989 he created a 61st Annual Academy Awards that he promised would be a transformation from the dry, staid production it had always been.

Instead it was a laughing stock, culminating in a cringeworthy duet with squeaky-voiced Eileen Bowman and a tone deaf Rob Lowe that prompted the New York Times to award it "a permanent place in the annals of Oscar embarrassments." Crushed by the criticism, Carr became a recluse. Despite enjoying a degree of success on other projects, such as Paramount's 1998 re-release of "Grease," his reputation never recovered.

Morbidly obese, recovering from a kidney transplant and suffering from years of hard living, Carr died on June 29, 1999 from liver cancer, as he was preparing a new Broadway show. "Allan was from the last era of the big dreamers: 'Let's do this big, that's not big enough, let's do it bigger,'" said TV personality and socialite Nikki Haskell. "He was a one of a kind. There isn't anyone like him. There'll never be another Allan Carr." — AFP



This undated handout photograph obtained May 16, 2018 courtesy of The Film Collaborative shows flamboyant Hollywood filmmaker and party animal Allan Carr. — AFP photos





A visitor sits beneath a display of flowers at the floral market at the 2018 Chelsea Flower Show in London yesterday. The Chelsea flower show, held annually in the grounds of the Royal Hospital Chelsea, opens to the public today.



A harp is removed from the VTB Capital Garden, the "Spirit of Cornwall", during a visit to the 2018 Chelsea Flower Show in London.



Flowering during Rebutia cacti are pictured during a visit to the 2018 Chelsea Flower Show.



A visitor takes a photograph of a display of Lupinus.



A flowering bonsai tree is pictured during a visit to the 2018 Chelsea Flower Show.

The 2018 Chelsea Flower Show



Models pose for a photograph as they stand at the Primrose Hall peony display.



A performer poses in front of the Blue Forest Tree Houses.



A Chelsea Pensioner poses at the Driftwood Sculptures by James Doran Webb.

Monet sister paintings reunited in US for first time

For the first time since they were painted more than a century ago, two oil paintings of Claude Monet's garden in Vetheuil have been reunited, in Washington. Monet moved to this village in the Paris suburbs in 1878 with his sickened wife Camille and their two young children as they faced financial difficulties, along with the family of one-time patron Ernest Hoschede.

The period that ensued was one of the most prolific for the French Impressionist, who produced in just three years nearly 300 paintings, including "The Artist's Garden at Vetheuil" (1881). Until August 8, the National Gallery of

Art is presenting two of four known works of this lush summer scene with huge sunflowers, including its own, larger piece and another temporarily on loan from California's Norton Simon Museum.

"It's a turning point in terms of his career, his struggles, he's turning more toward landscape, he's becoming more interested in atmospheric effects," National Gallery curator of 19th century French paintings Kimberly Jones said in an interview. The Norton Simon's version, believed to have served as a model for its companion, is more heavily worked in most areas.

New findings

"Before these two pictures were together, we always described the handling of this one as quite loose because we didn't have another example, and we had always believed ours was a study for the larger picture," said Norton Simon assistant curator Emily Talbot. "All of the things that have been published about these two pictures we're starting to question just by having them in the same space."

Where Monet layered meridian green thickly on top of cobalt blue to give more interest to the sky in the Norton Simon's picture, in the compan-

ion piece it's defined instead by contrasts of thick and thin, and patches of exposed canvas ground. The National Gallery's senior conservator of paintings Ann Hoenigswald spent months removing a discolored natural resin varnish from the museum's masterpiece that had flattened the work visually.

"The minute I got the varnish off, it just soared," she said. "What I find really exciting is the energy of the brushwork. You see the richness of the impasto and the speed at which he moves his brush across, and all the bristles of the brush, or a little lip of paint that just comes straggling there." It was not until almost 10 years later, in 1890, that Monet began painting formal series each comprised of dozens of works depicting a single subject—the Rouen Cathedral, London's Houses of Parliament or water lilies—at different seasons or times of the day usually from the same vantage point. The garden proto-series "could be the germ of an idea that's just starting to develop in his mind," said Jones. — AFP



Ann Hoenigswald, senior conservator of paintings at the National Gallery of Art, looks at "The Artist's Garden at Vetheuil" (1881) by Claude Monet, unframed, with a version held by the Norton Simon Museum in the background, at the National Gallery of Art's conservation laboratory in Washington.



Two paintings by Claude Monet, both painted in 1881 and titled "The Artist's Garden at Vetheuil" are seen unframed at the National Gallery of Art's conservation laboratory.



Solvents and conservation tools are seen in front of "The Artist's Garden at Vetheuil" (1881) by Claude Monet.— AFP photos

Lifestyle | Features

Childish Gambino: America's new favorite Donald?

Hollywood's latest sensation Donald Glover, eyebrow arched with the detached insouciance of a rockstar but the poise of a chess grandmaster, is trying to guess which surname Google auto-suggests when his first name is typed. "Trump? Glover? I mean, are we going in order? Trump, Duck and then Glover," he asks.

“ ‘Solo’ has elevated him to global superstardom ”

Whisper it in Alabama, Kentucky or Oklahoma—shout it in his home state of Georgia—but the answer is Glover, not Trump, and entertainment's latest Renaissance man looks pleasantly surprised. An accomplished actor, Glover is better known to rapt teenagers the world over as US hip hop phenomenon Childish Gambino.

"Oh, wow. I did it," he laughs, practicing the ear-to-ear grin he'll need if he ever adds an Oscar or a Tony to a

trophy cabinet already groaning under the weight of Emmys, Golden Globes and a Grammy Award. It has been quite a week for the 34-year-old actor, writer, producer, director, rapper, singer, DJ and comedian as he sits down with AFP to discuss his role as a young Lando Calrissian in "Solo: A Star Wars Story."

At the time of the interview, Glover's latest graphic music video "This is America" had racked up 100 million views in a week on YouTube, with its powerful takes on gun violence, racism and police brutality. Every entertainment publication worth its salt has contributed to the white noise on what the enigmatic Glover could possibly have meant and how to interpret his edgy imagery. "I haven't been on the internet since last Thursday," the normally prolific Twitterer laughs, adding that he prefers just to enjoy the moment and leave the navel-gazing to others.

Galaxy's sexiest gambler

As the awards roll in, Glover guards against reveling too much in past successes or daydreaming of possible future glories because a show business career is "kind of like surfing." "You just take that wave and that pulse and you just let it carry you," he says in his phlegmatic, not-quite-Southern drawl. "Because it's like freestyling in any art form: the second we start thinking, 'Man, I'm really doing it,' you'll start to mess up."

Glover has tried his hand at sketch and stand-up comedy, been a writer on "30 Rock," an actor on "Community" and head writer, occasional director and star of acclaimed FX comedy "Atlanta." Previously just a



British actress Thandie Newton (R) and US actor Donald Glover pose as they leave the Festival Palace on May 15, 2018 after the screening of the film "Solo: A Star Wars Story" at the 71st edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP photos

promising actor with small but impactful parts in "The Martian" and "Spider-Man: Homecoming," Glover's turn as the galaxy's sexiest gambler in "Solo" has elevated him to global superstardom.

Next up is another huge, iconic movie role, as Simba in Jon Favreau's live-action version of "The Lion King," not to mention a fourth and final Childish Gambino album. He has been a fan favorite pretty much from the moment the first "Solo" trailer dropped, and Lucasfilm has said that a standalone Lando movie might happen one day—but not any time soon.

Glover—who divides his time between Atlanta, a couch at his studio in Los Angeles and the Hawaiian island of Kauai—was at his brother's house when he got the top secret news that he'd landed the part. He celebrated by

getting a pizza, going home and watching "The Empire Strikes Back." But he couldn't keep his excitement from his father, with whom he shares a first name and a deep love of all things "Star Wars."

Like a 'Springsteen song'

"They were like, 'You can't tell anybody,' but I had to tell my dad. I felt like I would be betraying him if I didn't. I wouldn't have the part without him," Glover recalls. The "Solo" script impressed, says Glover, because it featured not just rich, privileged, swashbuckling adventurers, but also the kind of unsung, everyday heroes who make society work.

"I love it because I think it's an honest reflection of, like, in order for you to have this nice fancy party with all this food, all that stuff, somebody is slaving away somewhere else," he says. "They're working hard. And I just love that, and I think that theme is also in 'Atlanta.' There's an outside world that we're trying to get to. And right now, we're on the bottom."

For Glover, the most interesting aspect of the origin story of Han Solo and his childhood crush Qi'ra—played by Alden Ehrenreich and Emilia Clarke—is the extent to which people compromise their values to get a seat at the top table. "It becomes 'you or them' at a certain point. And I think that's why I like this movie so much, because Han learns that. He's so naive and sweet at the beginning," he says. "He's like... a Bruce Springsteen song: 'I'm gonna get outta this town, take my girl and we're going to fly into space.' And it's like, 'Yeah, it's not that simple.' Things change and you grow up." "Solo: A Star Wars Story" hits US theaters on Friday. — AFP



Donald Glover (L) and Alden Ehrenreich participate in a press conference in Los Angeles on May 12, 2018 for "Solo: A Star Wars Story".



Donald Glover attends the Heavenly Bodies: Fashion & The Catholic Imagination Costume Institute Gala at The Metropolitan Museum of Art on May 7, 2018 in New York City.

'Deadpool' sequel surges to box office lead



Espolon presents a special screening of Deadpool 2 at Alamo Drafthouse Cinema on May 16, 2018 in New York City. — AFP

Another weekend, another \$100-million-plus superhero opening: This time it was 20th Century Fox's "Deadpool 2," with an estimated \$125 million take in North American theaters and a huge debut overseas, box office tracker Exhibitor Relations said Sunday. The Marvel Comics film netted \$176 million abroad, the biggest foreign debut ever for an R-rated title, according to the Hollywood Reporter.

The movie features Ryan Reynolds playing the foul-mouthed and irreverent title character as he forms an X-Force team to protect a young mutant from the evil Cable (Josh Brolin). For an uber-bad guy, Brolin is having a very good week. He also plays world-destroying villain Thanos in "Avengers: Infinity War," which led North American ticket sales before "Deadpool" bumped it off. Still packing a decent punch, "Avengers"-starring Robert Downey Jr., Benedict Cumberbatch, Scarlett Johansson and Chris Hemsworth—took in \$28.7 million over the three-day weekend, pushing its global take past \$1.8 billion.

Third in theaters was Paramount's new rom-com "Book Club," at \$12.5

million. The film stars Jane Fonda, Diane Keaton, Candice Bergen and Mary Steenburgen as aging friends who decide to read the steamy "Fifty Shades of Grey" and find it, um, expanding their literary and personal horizons. In fourth was "Life of the Party," a Warner Bros. comedy, at \$7.7 million. Melissa McCarthy, who co-wrote the script with director Ben Falcone, plays a newly divorced mother who returns to college, only to find herself in class with her (deeply embarrassed) daughter.

And in fifth was Universal's thriller "Breaking In," at \$6.5 million. Review website Rotten Tomatoes dismissed the film as a "disposable action thriller" but praised Gabrielle Union's performance as a mother trying to protect her children from hostage-takers. A weekend surprise (see below) was Magnolia's "RBG," about US Supreme Court justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg, a feisty 85-year-old, with unusually strong ticket sales for a documentary. — AFP

Hugh Grant finally getting married

Veteran bachelor Hugh Grant, star of a string of romantic comedies including "Four Weddings and a Funeral", is finally getting married for the first time to his Swedish girlfriend. Wedding bans for 57-year-old Grant and Anna Eberstein, 39, were published at the registry office of Chelsea Old Town Hall near the couple's home in Notting Hill.

"This is a day none of Hugh's friends ever thought would come," The Sun quoted a source as saying. "He will soon be a pensioner and has finally become a family man," the source told the tabloid. The wedding is to take place in the coming weeks. Grant and Eberstein already

have three children. He also had two children with former partner Tinglan Hong following a long relationship with actress Liz Hurley.

The British actor has been a leading privacy campaigner after his phone was hacked by Mirror Group reporters and he received a six-figure compensation earlier this year. He received rave reviews on Monday for his performance as British politician Jeremy Thorpe, who was tried in 1979 for conspiring to murder his boyfriend, in the TV series "A Very English Scandal". — AFP



In this file photo taken on February 12, 2017 British actor Hugh Grant (L) and Swedish producer Anna Eberstein (R) pose upon arrival at the BAFTA British Academy Film Awards at the Royal Albert Hall in London on February 12, 2017. — AFP

'Girl from Ipanema' singer Gilberto suffers the blues

His gentle voice in "Girl from Ipanema" still charms, but for Joao Gilberto, the sunny days of his bossa nova prime half a century ago have been replaced by financial ruin and family strife. As one of the pillars of bossa nova, the breezy, melodious Brazilian style that took root in the 1950s and '60s, Gilberto, now 86, earned his place in musical history. But the romance and youthfulness of his most famous song about a head-turning beauty on Rio de Janeiro's Ipanema beach could not be more distant.

Short on funds, sick and living in a borrowed house in Rio, Gilberto is caught up in a family feud in which two of his children accuse his latest ex-wife Claudia Faissol, a journalist 40 years his junior, of exploiting the elderly artist. And Gilberto's difficulties have been brewing for years. "In his obsession to keep control over everything, Joao Gilberto wanted to stop the outside world so that he could focus on his art," Gilberto biographer Ruy Castro told Folha de S Paulo newspaper. "In front of the microphone he succeeded, but off stage it was the opposite: he had no control over his life. He got used to delegating to others."

Reclusive genius

Obsessive perfectionism and eccentricity have long marked the singer of "Desafinado," "Corcovado" and "Chega de Saudade," which he often sang as a duet with his first wife Astrud Gilberto. He is known for living in his pajamas and for reclusiveness, only opening the door of his home to get restaurant deliveries. Bernardo Araujo, O Globo daily's music critic, said Gilberto's importance is "incalculable."

"He was the principal voice of the best known Brazilian style in the world and a revolutionary without even really meaning to be," Araujo told AFP. "He was the first singer, at least in Brazil, to demonstrate that you don't need a big voice, that you can sing quietly, like in a whisper, while accompanied by virtuosos guitar." But Gilberto had to juggle that smooth style with his demons. "Like Michael Jackson or Prince, he's a wonderful and strange artist, but this strange side of him has taken him to today's terrible situation," Araujo said.

Downfall

The man who along with composer Tom Jobim and poet Vinícius de Moraes put Brazilian music on the international map was declared legally incapacitated in 2017 at the

request of his daughter Bebel, who like her brother Joao Marcelo is a musician. "I wanted my father to have a happy, calm end to his life," the son told Veja magazine.

Since April, Gilberto has been living alone in housing said to have been loaned by Paula Lavigne, wife of another Brazilian musician Caetano Veloso. He was forced to leave his previous lodgings in the seaside Leblon neighborhood because he had missed months' of rental payments. Things really started going wrong back in 2011, when his wife Claudia persuaded him to go on tour to mark his 80th birthday and he then pulled out, citing health problems. He was ordered to return an advance of about \$600,000.

Caught in a dispute with his first recording label, with no new album since 1989 and no public concert since 2008, Gilberto ended up having to sell 60 percent of his royalties on his first four albums to pay off the debts. That deal prompted his children to accuse his now ex-wife of having tricked the artist in full knowledge that he was no longer capable of managing his affairs.

For most Brazilians, the last glimpse of the former star was a video in 2015 where he appeared in his customary pajamas and looking weak, playing "Girl from Ipanema" with his daughter Lulu, aged nine at the time. It's a sad fate that Brazil's music community would love to see end on a higher note. "Brazil owes a lot to Joao Gilberto and we have to find a way to help him," said agent Nizan Guanaes, who is trying to rally support. — AFP



ALEXANDRIA: Youth members of 'Je Suis' football academy, an initiative to protect the rights of Christians in the sport, exercise on a pitch in the country's second city of Alexandria. — AFP

Coptic Christian battles prejudice in Egypt football

ALEXANDRIA: Mina Bendary dreamed of becoming a professional footballer in Egypt, but found his Coptic Christian name was an insurmountable barrier in the Muslim-majority country. Such discrimination prompted him to hang up his boots and instead establish an academy to protect the rights of Christian footballers.

He opened the "Je Suis" ("I am") academy nearly three years ago in Alexandria, Egypt's second city, where he now trains a group of players aged 15 to 27. At 22, Bendary declares he is "the youngest football coach in

Egypt". Wearing blue shirts depicting a football with a crown and a cross, the footballers race around the small pitch under the scorching midday sun. The academy tries to offer solutions to Christians who "get rejected from teams they apply to as soon as they utter their names, regardless of their performance," Bendary says.

"This happened in more than one club, which forced me to stop playing and to focus on solving the problem of Christians in football in Egypt," Bendary soon realised he was not alone in being asked to play under a Muslim name. His eyes sparkling, he points to a player dubbed Cristiano on account of the similarity of his looks and style to Portuguese superstar Cristiano Ronaldo. The 17-year-old midfielder, Mina Samir, explains his experience at a high-profile club. "After I was picked in the playoffs, my coach asked about my name, and I told him 'Mina' and he lost his enthusiasm telling me that they will be calling me." The coach never called.

Egyptian professional clubs and the national team are currently void of Coptic players. Hany Ramzy is one Coptic player who did represent his country—he was captain of the national side in the late 1990s before playing abroad. Former Egypt international and Tottenham Hotspur striker Ahmed Hossam, known as Mido, made a rare public statement in April about such prejudice. Egyptian football embraces "some people who have a lot of discrimination that they do not hide," he told Egypt's DMC channel. "How is it possible that in the history of Egyptian football for there to only have been five Christian players in the top level?" he asked, in comments that went viral.

"There are Christian players who stop playing at a young age because of the discrimination of some of the coaches," said Mido. Copts make up around 10 percent of Egypt's population of 96 million and have long complained of discrimination in the workplace, education sys-

tem and state institutions. The Egyptian Football Association denies such prejudice extends to the sport. "First thing we learn in the association (is that there is) no discrimination," says Magdy Abdelghany, who sits on the FA's board. For the North Cairo Electricity youth team, including talented Christian players has led to on-pitch success in the Egyptian capital.

With three Christians in its main line-up, the team won the city's youth tournament this year. But the club's coach, Mohamed Khalifa, says discriminatory practices nevertheless continue in Egypt. "But they do not come from religious differences, and instead from a lack of understanding or acceptance of the other," he says. Back on the pitch in Alexandria, 27-year-old Mina Shokry Ismail is dumbfounded at the discrimination he and his fellow players face. "Our house was the only Christian one and was very loved. First and foremost we are Egyptians," he says. "I do not understand, why this intolerance in football?" — AFP

Paraguay opens Israel embassy in Jerusalem

JERUSALEM: Paraguay opened its Israel embassy in Jerusalem yesterday, the second country to follow the United States in making the politically sensitive move from Tel Aviv. Paraguayan President Horacio Cartes and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu attended the inauguration ceremony. The United States relocated its embassy to Jerusalem a week ago, drawing Palestinian anger.

It was followed by Guatemala on Wednesday. The status of Jerusalem is one of the thorniest obstacles to forging a peace deal between Israel and the Palestinians, who with broad international backing want East Jerusalem, captured by Israel in the 1967 Middle East war, as their capital. Israel regards all of the city, including the eastern sector it

annexed after the 1967 conflict, as its capital.

"This is a historic day that strengthens ties between Paraguay and Israel," Cartes said at the ceremony. "A great day for Israel. A great day for Paraguay. A great day for our friendship," Netanyahu responded. "You have not only the support of our government but the profound gratitude of the people Israel." Hanan Ashrawi, an official of the Palestine Liberation Organization, denounced Paraguay's move.

"By adopting such a provocative and irresponsible measure that is in direct contravention of international law and consensus, Paraguay has conspired with Israel, the United States and Guatemala to entrench the military occupation and to seal the fate of occupied Jerusalem," Ashrawi said in a statement. In December, US President Donald Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital, reversing decades of US policy and upsetting the Arab world and Western allies. Most world powers do not recognize Israeli sovereignty over the entire city and says its final status should be set in peace negotiations. — Reuters



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (right) shakes hands with Paraguayan President Horacio Cartes during their meeting at the Prime Minister's office in Jerusalem yesterday. — AFP

Kuwaiti investor targets former...

Continued from Page 1

But trade has picked up in recent years as foreign firms use Kuwait's port to ship goods to Iraq due to its

better security. Up to 200 vehicles cross the border at the Safwan post every day, an Iraqi officer said. Kuwaiti visitors are also trickling back to the Shiite Muslim holy cities of Najaf and Kerbela. A third of Kuwaitis are Shiites. In the other direction there is little private traffic as Kuwait rarely grants visitor visas for Iraqis for security reasons. "I come twice a year. There are no problems for Kuwaitis now," said a Kuwaiti who gave his name as Mohamed after crossing the border to make a pilgrimage to Nawaf. — Reuters

Saudi intercepts ballistic missile

RIYADH: Saudi air defenses yesterday intercepted a ballistic missile over southern city Jizan fired from rebel-held territory in neighboring Yemen, a spokesman for the Saudi-led coalition said. Debris from the missile landed in residential areas of Jizan, but without causing casualties, coalition spokesman Turki Al-Maliki said in a statement released by the official Saudi Press Agency.

Yemen's Iran-allied Houthi rebels have in recent months ramped up missile attacks against neighboring Saudi Arabia, which leads a military coalition against them. Two rebel missiles targeted the southern city of Khamis

Mushait on Saturday, according to Maliki. One missile was intercepted and destroyed by Saudi forces, while the other crashed in an unpopulated desert area, he said. Saudi Arabia earlier this month tested a new siren system for the capital Riyadh and the oil-rich Eastern Province, in a sign of the increased challenge posed by the rebels' armaments.

Riyadh accuses its regional rival Tehran of supplying the Houthis with ballistic missiles, a charge Iran denies. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other allies intervened in Yemen in 2015 with the aim of pushing back the rebels and restoring the internationally recognized government to power. The conflict has left nearly 10,000 people dead and more than 55,000 wounded, according to the World Health Organization. More than 2,200 others have died from cholera and millions are on the verge of famine in what the United Nations says is the world's gravest humanitarian crisis. — AFP



SANAA: Men inspect a damaged petrol station after it was hit by alleged Saudi-led airstrikes on the outskirts of the Yemeni capital yesterday. — AFP

Quran and Ramadan...

Continued from Page 1

in order to focus on reciting the Quran in the blessed month of Ramadan. Ramadan furnishes the ground to initiate an inner state of spiritual renewal. It is a time when Muslims are encouraged to get a deeper understanding of the teachings of the Quran which is the ultimate source of guidance and knowledge. Fasting and feeling the suffering of the needy, reading

and listening to the Quran help Muslims get back to the right course in their journey to Allah.

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

Assembly panel rejects bill on...

Continued from Page 1

married to foreign husbands like (widow) Kuwaiti women with regards to a housing loan.

In another development, the Council of Ministers said yesterday that government bodies which grant financial assistance to Kuwaiti citizens do so in accordance with rules and regulations and without intermediaries. It said

in a statement following the weekly Cabinet meeting that the money is paid directly to the beneficiary after confirming certain requirements and the funds are not paid through anyone including lawmakers.

The Cabinet statement comes a day after MP Riyadh Al-Adasani threatened to grill the prime minister if the government does not issue a statement regarding the involvement of MPs in securing government financial aid to needy citizens. Adasani's threat came after a video was posted on social media of pro-government MP Ahmad Al-Fadhli saying that the government was going to pay lawmakers before the summer. Fadhli later explained that several MPs mediate for needy citizens with certain government bodies to secure cash assistance.

Sports

Buttler relishing 'another Test debut' with England

Set to bat at number seven in Test series against Pakistan

LONDON: Jos Buttler had said getting a recall to England's Test squad feels as if he had been given "another debut". Buttler played the last of his 18 Tests in December 2016, against India in Chennai.

But despite becoming a white-ball specialist in the intervening 18 months, he has been included in England's squad for the first Test against Pakistan at Lord's starting Thursday. It is Buttler's form in the Twenty20 Indian Premier League, rather than English cricket's first-class County Championship that has propelled him back into the Test arena following a run of five successive fifties, including two unbeaten 90s, for the Rajasthan Royals.

Now he is set to bat at number seven in the first of a two-Test series against Pakistan. "It's a fantastic surprise and an incredible opportunity afforded to me," Buttler told reporters at Lord's yesterday. "Any time you turn up here at Lord's it's special, and all of those emotions are arriving today. It feels like another debut really," he added.

"It wasn't particularly on my radar," Buttler, 27, admitted he had contemplated that his Test career might be done and dusted. "You always think maybe that race is run and will never happen again," the innovative ball-striker added.

"It's not that you live with regrets, but you definitely miss it... To get that call the overriding emotion was excitement... Turning up here on England duty to play a Test match is unbelievable." Buttler has not played a first-class innings since appearing for Lancashire against Essex in September.

But he insisted he had no plans to radically alter his approach for Test cricket, having been encouraged to play his natural game by England's new national selector Ed Smith and captain Joe Root. "It's going to be a challenge, but from the conversations I've had with Joe and Ed Smith, it's very much that they want me to play the way that suits me and in the fashion they believe will get the best out of me in that number seven role," Buttler said.

"For me it's about expressing myself, trusting my instincts and allowing that to flourish rather than fight it," added Buttler, who averages just over 31 in a Test career that has yielded six fifties.

'PINNACLE'

Asked if playing Test cricket was still the "ultimate" level of the sport, Buttler replied: "Yes it is. And I think it always will be for players of my generation." Buttler also cited the example of India captain Virat Kohli signing for Surrey to prepare himself for a Test series in England later this season.

"Virat signing for Surrey to get used to playing in England, to play well in Tests, shows that in the forefront of players' minds, Tests are still the pinnacle." And Buttler was adamant that Tests remained the measure of a player's worth as he reflected on the career of Kevin Pietersen, the former England batsman.

"It was really interesting when Kevin Pietersen retired, I remember watching Ian Ward speak to David Lloyd (on Sky Sports). "They were talking about his career, and all



KOLKATA: File photo shows Rajasthan Royals cricketer Jos Buttler plays a shot during the 2018 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Kolkata Knight Riders and Rajasthan Royals at The Eden Gardens Cricket Stadium in Kolkata on May 15, 2018. — AFP

they spoke about was his Test match knocks... his hundred against South Africa, his hundred at The Oval in 2005, Mumbai or Sri Lanka.

"He played some fantastic white-ball knocks. I think he was player of the tournament when England won the

(2010) World Twenty20 — but for those guys, it was Test matches they were talking about, and I think people still feel that Test matches are the real true test of cricketers. "I won't leave with any regrets if it doesn't work out, but I feel like the best players can play all formats." — AFP

“It wasn't particularly on my radar”

Gulf Bank makes football fun for women this Ramadan

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank is proud to announce that it will be sponsoring the 'Women's Football Tournament' for the second consecutive year. The tournament kicked off on Saturday, while the championship match and closing ceremony are scheduled to be held on Thursday 31 May 2018. The games will take place at Jaber Al Ahmad Stadium, with 16 teams and 192 players from Kuwait and the GCC scheduled to play.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Mrs Lujain Al Qanaei, Management Associate at Gulf Bank said: "Health, fitness and the support of youth form key elements of Gulf Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility strategy. This tournament is being organized by Eighty Percent, a socially driven sports company established by three young Kuwaiti women dedicated to sports and fitness. Gulf Bank's sponsorship of this tournament is in line with its mandate to support their initiative and the message of the importance of leading active and healthy lifestyles."

Mrs Rabaa Al Hajery, member of the tournament's organizing committee said: "We are very pleased to be organizing this tournament for the third consecutive year. We are happy with our success in previous Ramadans, and we are confident that this year will be an even bigger success with the support of our partners and sponsors. We would like to give special thanks to Gulf Bank who are helping us achieve our goal of creating a professional platform for women's sports in Kuwait."



During the Holy Month of Ramadan, Gulf Bank will be supporting and conducting several other activities. These include the distribution of food boxes, visits to hospitals to celebrate 'Girgi'an' with children, in addition to launching

Ramadan themed television commercial. To find out more about Gulf Bank's initiatives, please visit bank's bilingual website at www.e-gulfbank.com, or see its social media channels.

News in brief

Athletes, officials seek asylum

SYDNEY: Nearly 200 people who travelled to the Gold Coast for last month's Commonwealth Games have applied for asylum in Australia, an official said yesterday. Several participants from Africa vanished during the international event held on the east coast from April 4-15. A handful of African athletes resurfaced and sought legal advice on how to apply for asylum last week after their Games visas expired on May 15, refugee advocates said at the time. Some 205 competitors or support staff "are now lawfully in the country because they've applied for a visa of some type", Malisa Golightly from the Home Affairs Department told a parliamentary hearing in Canberra. She said some 190 "have applied for a protection visa", while around 10 to 15 had sought other types of visa.

Axelsen leads in Thomas Cup

BANGKOK: World badminton number one Viktor Axelsen led Denmark's Thomas Cup 5-0 demolition of Algeria yesterday, as Japan's women also breezed past Canada without dropping a set. Axelsen was in unflinching form, losing just 12 points in a 16-minute demolition (21-4, 21-8) of Youcef Sabri Medel to begin the rout of Algeria. Anders Antonsen dispatched Mohamed Abderrahime Belarbi 21-5, 21-9 in the second singles match, while Denmark's doubles pairs also blitzed their unfancied rivals. Elsewhere in Group D, Malaysia steamrolled Russia 5-0 with Lee Chong Wei setting the tone in the first game during a 21-9, 21-6 win against Vladimir Malkov.

Sarri undecided in Napoli

MILAN: Coach Maurizio Sarri is still uncertain if he will stay at Napoli after leading them to second place in Serie A with a club record points haul. "It's a complicated situation," he told reporters after his team beat Crotone 2-1 in their final game of the season to finish with 91 points from 38 games. "I can't say that I will go ahead and try again with this group because I still don't know if they will stay together. "I don't know if the club intends to use buyout clauses to offer the players to the big clubs." Napoli, who finished four points behind Juventus, have managed two runners-up spots and one third place in Sarri's three seasons in charge, also becoming the first team to amass more than 90 points and not win the title.

Vegas 'Golden Misfits' into Stanley Cup final

LOS ANGELES: The Vegas Golden Knights moved within sight of making National Hockey League history on Sunday, completing a 4-1 series victory over the Winnipeg Jets to become the first expansion team in 50 years to reach the Stanley Cup Finals in their debut season.

A deflected goal in the second period from Ryan Reaves clinched a 2-1 victory for the Knights, who were written off as 500-1 no-hopers before the start of season but who could now become the first expansion team ever to win the Stanley Cup at the first attempt.

The newly minted Western Conference champions from Nevada will face either the Tampa Bay Lightning or Washington Capitals in the finals of the NHL showpiece. The Lightning could claim the Eastern Conference crown with victory over the Capitals on Monday in game six of a series they lead 3-2.

Neutrals will almost certainly be rooting for the Knights however. Barely a year ago the team's roster had not been assembled, and the franchise compiled their squad from players who had mostly been overlooked or discarded by other franchises. The hodgepodge nature of the team has led to players from the franchise cheerfully

referring to themselves as the "Golden Misfits", but they have hardly put a foot wrong through their debut campaign. "It's insane. If you go back to the beginning of the season, your goal is always to make the playoffs," said Knights defenceman Deryk Engelland. "But if I were to guess I would be sitting here doing this right now, you would be a little skeptical at the time. "But once we got rolling, we saw we have a team that can do some damage ... It's been an amazing ride. We just want to keep it going now."

'NEXT MAN UP'

Against the Jets on Sunday, the Knights again produced another fiercely determined performance, embodied by a defiant display from goaltender Marc-Andre Fleury who stopped 31 of 32 shots. The Knights' relentless harrying of Winnipeg helped force the opening goal. Jets defenceman Josh Morrissey carelessly turned over possession under pressure from Joel Armia, with his pass deflecting into the path of Knights forward Alex Tuch who rammed home the opener for 1-0. Morrissey made amends for his error with 2min 47sec left in the first, his long-range effort flying into the roof of the net to make it 1-1. Luca Sbisa then helped the Knights take a 2-1 lead in the second period, with his shot from distance deflecting off Reaves to silence the home crowd at Winnipeg's Bell MTS Place arena.

The Knights then produced a superb defensive performance in the face of relentless Winnipeg pressure in the third to close out a famous victory. "The whole mentality of this team is next man up," Reaves said. "We've got a deep team, we've got a lot of good players. —AFP

through the group stage while Switzerland scraped into the quarter-finals with the weakest record. But they stunned Group B winners Finland and then Canada to take their place in a third world championship final.

Five years ago they had lost to Sweden, who beat them 5-3 in the group stages too. Switzerland twice took the lead, in each of the first two periods, but were pegged back by the favourites before the end of each stanza.

Minnesota Wildis Nino Niederreiter had given them a 16th minute lead but Gustav Nyquist of the Detroit Red Wings equalised a minute later. On 23 minutes Timo Meier of the San Jose Sharks put the underdogs in front again, but that was wiped out by New York Ranger Mika Zibanejad on 34 minutes. With no scores in either the third period or overtime, the final was decided by a shoot-out where Switzerland once again took the lead. But Oliver Ekman-Larsson cancelled out Sven Andrighetto's successful strike, allowing Forsberg to become the hero. —AFP

Aaron clinches first PGA Tour win

TEXAS: South African-born American Aaron Wise became the youngest winner on the PGA Tour in more than a year when he clinched a three-shot victory at the AT&T Byron Nelson in Texas on Sunday. The 21-year-old, playing with a poise beyond his years in only his 26th start on tour, eased away from Marc Leishman and carded a closing six-under-par 65 to take his maiden title.

"I was super calm. I was more nervous yesterday oddly enough," Wise said in a greenside interview at Trinity Forest in Dallas. Two weeks after finishing equal second in Charlotte, Wise started the final round tied with Leishman but notched six birdies in a seven-hole stretch from the fourth in front of a gallery including former US president George W. Bush.

He was never challenged thereafter and finished at 23-under 261, well clear of Australian Leishman whose final-round 68 was only good enough for second place on 20-under. PGA Tour rookie Wise, who moved with his parents to the US at the age of three, had an outstanding amateur career and won the American collegiate championship in 2016 before turning pro.

He said his runner-up finish in Charlotte had boosted his self belief and helped him deal with the pressure down the stretch on Sunday. "I felt oddly calm all day long and to pull that off and play as good as I did, bogey free, was awesome," Wise said.

He is the first 21-year-old to win on tour since Kim Si-woo at last May's Players Championship. Wise's performance certainly impressed six-times major champion Nick Faldo, who offered up some free advice. "With a swing like that, don't mess with it," Faldo said during the CBS coverage.

Scores on Sunday were low after heavy morning rain took the fire out of the course and delayed the start of play by four hours. South African Branden Grace took full advantage of the conditions to match his career-low round of 62 on his 30th birthday.

"To come in with nine under is pretty special, a great birthday present," said Grace, who tied for third on 19-under. Grace made history at the British Open at Royal Birkdale last year when he became the first player to shoot 62 in a major championship. — Reuters

Sweden beat Swiss to win world title in shoot-out drama

COPENHAGEN: Sweden retained their world championship title with a dramatic penalty shoot-out victory over plucky Switzerland in Copenhagen on Sunday. Filip Forsberg of the NHL's Nashville Predators scored the winning penalty as Sweden came back from 1-0 down in the shoot-out to win 2-1 following a 2-2 draw after overtime.

Surprise finalists Switzerland had been aiming for their first ever world title, while Sweden claimed an 11th crown. Sweden had been the only unbeaten team

England defence coach Gustard joins Harlequins

LONDON: Premiership club Harlequins confirmed the appointment of England defence coach Paul Gustard as their new head of rugby yesterday. Gustard, 42, will take up his new post with the club after England's tour to South Africa next month, replacing John Kingston. "Harlequins is delighted to announce that England defence coach Paul Gustard will join the London club as head of rugby, following the conclusion of England's summer tour to South Africa," the club said in a statement. Former Leicester, London Irish and Saracens flanker Gustard has worked alongside England head coach Eddie Jones since January 2016 and is under contract with the Rugby Football Union until after the 2019 World Cup. "Opportunities like this don't come along very often," said Gustard. "To be given the chance to lead a club as rich in talent, heritage and support as Harlequins is hugely exciting.

"My relationship with Eddie is strong and positive. He has supported me in accepting this new role and I will continue to have a strong relationship with him on our tour to South Africa and beyond." Gustard helped England to a first series win in Australia, plus back-to-back Six Nations titles in 2016 and 2017, but Jones's side had to settle for fifth this year. Harlequins finished 10th in the Premiership after winning just seven of their 22 matches. — AFP

Sports

Shohei Ohtani pitches Angels to skid-snapping win over Rays, 5-2

Darvish beats Reds 6-1 for first win with Cubs

ANAHEIM: Shohei Ohtani struck out nine over 7 2/3 innings, allowing two runs, as the host Los Angeles Angels snapped the Tampa Bay Rays' six-game winning streak and avoided a four-game sweep with a 5-2 win Sunday. Ohtani (4-1) allowed six hits and walked one. Martin Maldonado hit a solo homer, his second, and had two RBIs. Zack Cozart added two RBIs and Luis Valbuena had one for Los Angeles, which snapped its season-high five-game skid. Johnny Field clubbed a solo blast for his fourth homer of the year and Denard Span also had an RBI for Tampa Bay, which couldn't build on its major league-leading win streak. For the second straight day, Tampa Bay started reliever Sergio Romo. He pitched 1 1/3 hitless innings with two walks and three strikeouts. Matt Andriese (1-2) followed Romo and gave up two unearned runs on no hits and two walks while striking out one.

BRAVES 10, MARLINS 9

Dansby Swanson's two-run single with the bases loaded in the ninth inning capped a six-run rally and gave Atlanta a wild win over Miami at SunTrust Park. Swanson had been 0-for-8 since returning from the disabled list on Saturday. He drove a 2-2 pitch from reliever Tayron Guerrero (0-2) into the left field corner to bring home Tyler Flowers and Kurt Suzuki with the tying and winning runs. Swanson struck out to start the inning, but the Braves began to peek away against reliever Brad Ziegler. Ronald Acuna Jr. drove in a run with a sacrifice fly, Freddie Freeman's hustle on an infield single plated another, and Nick Markakis drove in a run with a single to center field. Miami brought in Guerrero, who walked Flowers and surrendered an RBI hit to Suzuki. He walked Johan Camargo to load the bases with two outs, setting up Swanson's game-winning heroics.

CUBS 6, REDS 1

Kyle Schwarber, Javier Baez and Ben Zobrist homered to back the strong pitching of Yu Darvish, sending Chicago past host Cincinnati. Darvish (1-3) allowed a first-inning run, but then shut out the Reds over the next five innings as the Cubs won three games of the four-game series, which included a split of a day-night double-header on Saturday. After Scott Schebler's infield hit had given the Reds a 1-0 lead in the first, the Cubs responded immediately against Reds starter Tyler Mahle (3-6) with back-to-back homers by Schwarber and Baez after Ian Happ had walked to lead off the top of the second. Zobrist increased the lead to 4-1 in the fifth.

CARDINALS 5, PHILLIES 1

Rookie Tyler O'Neill hit his second major league home run, one day after his first, and fellow rookie Jack Flaherty struck out 13 over 7 2/3 innings for his first major league victory as host St. Louis knocked off Philadelphia to split a four-game series at Busch Stadium. O'Neill, starting in left field as the Cardinals gave a day off to struggling Marcell Ozuna, led off the bottom of the sixth inning with a home run to center field off Phillies starter Aaron Nola (6-2), who had given up only three home runs in 58 2/3 innings before Sunday and saw his winning streak halted at five games. Flaherty (1-1), who recently returned to the rotation with the injury to Adam Wainwright, gave up just two hits, one of them Rhys Hoskins' sixth home run of the season. He walked just one while throwing 120 pitches.

RED SOX 5, ORIOLES 0

J.D. Martinez blasted two home runs and finished with three RBIs to supplement a strong start by Eduardo Rodriguez as Boston silenced visiting Baltimore. It was the

first multi-homer game with the Red Sox for Martinez (2-for-4), who tied teammate Mookie Betts for the major league lead with 15 home runs. Andrew Benintendi went 3-for-5 and slugged a two-run shot as Boston won three of four in the series. Rodriguez (4-1) claimed the victory, striking out seven over 5 2/3 scoreless innings while allowing nine hits and walking none. Baltimore starter David Hess (1-1) was charged with five runs on eight hits and two walks with four strikeouts in 4 2/3 innings. Adam Jones went 3-for-4 for the Orioles, who lost for the 15th time in 16 road games.

MARINERS 3, TIGERS 2 (11 INNINGS)

Jean Segura singled in the winning run in the bottom of the 11th inning as host Seattle rallied to defeat Detroit, spoiling an outstanding start by Francisco Liriano. Dee Gordon led off 11th by grounding a single into right field off right-hander Buck Farmer (0-3). Gordon stole second base, his American League-leading 16th of the season, and Segura grounded a single to right field. Nick Vincent (2-1) pitched a scoreless inning of relief for the victory. Liriano allowed one hit in eight scoreless innings. He walked three and struck out five, but the Mariners tied it in the bottom of the ninth on Mitch Haniger's two-run homer off closer Shane Greene.

METS 4, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Asdrubal Cabrera and Amed Rosario homered on consecutive pitches in the seventh inning as New York completed a three-game sweep of Arizona at Citi Field. The sweep for the Mets is their first at Citi Field since September 2016. The Diamondbacks have lost four straight and 10 of 11. Arizona left-hander Jorge De La Rosa (0-2) retired the first two batters he faced in the seventh, but Tomas Nido singled and Cabrera, pinch-hitting for starting pitcher Noah Syndergaard (4-1), smacked his third career pinch-hit homer. Rosario, who homered for the Mets' first run in the sixth, followed by completing his first two-homer day as a major leaguer.

GIANTS 9, ROCKIES 5

Brandon Belt and Nick Hundley hit back-to-back homers in the seventh inning to give host San Francisco the lead for good over Colorado at AT&T Park. With their second straight win, the Giants salvaged a split of the four-game series and kept the Rockies from moving into first place in the National League West. Gorkys Hernandez, who began the Giants' comeback with a two-run homer in the fifth, led off the seventh by singling against Bryan Shaw (1-2). Evan Longoria drew a one-out walk, after which left-hander Jake McGee entered to face the left-handed-hitting Belt. But Belt beat the percentages by homering on a 1-0 pitch for his first round-tripper against a southpaw this season.

WHITE SOX 3, RANGERS 0

Wellington Castillo had two hits and a homer and right-hander Reynaldo Lopez pitched eight scoreless innings to help Chicago win its first series since late April with the win over Texas at Guaranteed Rate Field. Leury Garcia had two hits and drove in two runs and Lopez (1-3) gave up two hits and retired 17 of the last 19 he faced in his longest career outing. It was his first victory since Sept. 22, 2017. Lopez struck out eight and did not allow a hit after Carlos Perez opened the third inning with a double. Texas left-hander Mike Minor (3-3) gave up six hits and three runs in five innings, with a season-high nine strikeouts.

TWINS 3, BREWERS 1

Logan Morrison's two-run single in the eighth inning put



ANAHEIM: Mike Trout #27 of the Los Angeles Angels of Anaheim beats the throw to Joey Wendle #18 of the Tampa Bay Rays for a stolen base in the fifth inning of the game at Angel Stadium on Sunday in Anaheim, California. —AFP

Minnesota ahead for good in an interleague victory over visiting Milwaukee. Morrison came within feet of a grand slam as his single with the bases loaded, off Brewers reliever Boone Logan, was high off the right field wall. A sharp rebound prevented him from extra bases. The go-ahead hit came after Logan intentionally walked Eduardo Escobar. All three Twins baserunners aboard when Logan delivered his hit reached via walk, two against Logan and one against reliever Taylor Williams (0-2), who took the loss.

PADRES 8, PIRATES 5

San Diego rode a four-run ninth inning to its third straight win against host Pittsburgh. The Pirates took a 5-4 lead in the eighth, but in the ninth, Jose Pirela and Christian Villanueva opened with singles against Pittsburgh closer Felipe Vazquez (2-1). Pinch hitter Cory Spangenberg reached and Pirela scored for a 5-5 tie on shortstop Jordy Mercer's throwing error. Freddy Galvis' bunt single brought home pinch runner Franchy Cordero for the go-ahead run. After a double steal, A.J. Ellis hit a two-run single to make it 8-5.

ATHLETICS 9, BLUE JAYS 2

Marcus Semien had a two-run home run and three RBIs. Daniel Mengden pitched seven scoreless innings and visiting Oakland defeated Toronto to complete a four-game sweep. The Athletics took advantage of four Toronto errors and other miscues to score five unearned runs. Oakland finished a 10-game road trip 7-3 to move three games over .500 for the first time this season at 25-22. The Blue Jays fell to three games below .500 for the first time this season at 22-25.

ASTROS 3, INDIANS 1

Lance McCullers carried a perfect game into the sixth inning and Brian McCann snapped a scoreless tie with a home run in the seventh as Houston claimed the rubber match of its weekend series with Cleveland at Minute

Maid Park. McCullers (6-2) breezed before Indians second baseman Jason Kipnis led off the sixth with a single to right field, completing his first five frames on 57 pitches. He leaned on his third pitch, a changeup, in his last outing but found his primary weapon against Cleveland, wielding his knuckle curveball to positive results while recording six strikeouts through three innings. The Astros fashioned a rally on McCullers' behalf in the bottom of the seventh, with Yuli Gurriel recording his second hard-hit ball off Indians right-hander Carlos Carrasco (5-3) to open the inning. Two batters later, Brian McCann followed the Gurriel single with a home run to the back of the Astros' bullpen in right-center field, his fourth dinger of the season, finally ending the stalemate.

DODGERS 7, NATIONALS 2

Yasmani Grandal, Enrique Hernandez and Yasiel Puig all homered as Los Angeles defeated Washington at Nationals Park. Left-hander Alex Wood (1-4) went six innings and gave up two runs on three hits and even helped on offense with his first career stolen base. Josh Fields got the final four outs for this second save. Washington right-hander Stephen Strasburg (5-4) allowed just five hits in 6 2/3 innings-but two of them were homers and gave the Dodgers three runs.

YANKEES 10, ROYALS 1

Sonny Gray retired the first 14 hitters and pitched eight outstanding innings while Tyler Austin hit a pair of two-run homers as New York beat Kansas City at Kauffman Stadium. Gray (3-3) scattered four hits, struck out five and issued one walk. He threw 92 pitches and recorded first-pitch strikes on 22 hitters. Gray did not allow a baserunner until Hunter Dozier blooped a single to center field with two outs in the fourth inning. He allowed two more baserunners when he opened the seventh by hitting Jorge Soler with a pitch and then Mike Moustakas singled. — Reuters

Serena sounds French Open alarm for rivals

PARIS: Fresh from attending the Royal wedding, Serena Williams will take aim at the upstarts who have been honeymooning at the majors in her absence when she makes her long-awaited Grand Slam return at Roland Garros. The 36-year-old American, who first played the French Open in 1998, has been the champion in Paris three times. Should she win a fourth Roland Garros, it will take her level with Margaret Court's all-time Grand Slam record of 24 majors. But there are question marks over her fitness and readiness for the 2018 tournament which starts on Sunday. She has played just four matches on the WTA Tour all year, the last of which was a first round loss in Miami at the end of March. Her last appearance at a Slam was at the 2017 Australian Open which she won while pregnant.

Having then missed the rest of the season as she gave birth to daughter Alexis Olympia in September, Williams' world ranking has slumped to 454 from its dizzy heights of undisputed number one. "I'm not just coming back to come back. I'm coming back to win," she said defiantly in an HBO documentary 'Being Serena' which aired last week. Her longtime coach Patrick Mouratoglou, who oversaw her first training session on Court Philippe Chatrier at Roland Garros on Sunday, has no doubts that Williams' competitive streak has not been blunted by the priorities of motherhood.

"Serena will play the French Open to win it," he told the WTA Tour. "Can she do it? Serena can achieve anything-after being her coach for six years, I'm even more sure of that statement." — AFP

Nadal back at number one ahead of French Open

ROME: Rafa Nadal returned to the top of the world rankings yesterday after winning his eighth Italian Open title at the weekend to confirm once more his status as the king of the clay court. Sunday's 6-1 1-6 6-3 victory over German Alexander Zverev on the Rome dirt ensured the 31-year-old would leapfrog Roger Federer and become world number one for a sixth time ahead of the French Open.

If the rankings were based solely on claycourt play, however, the Spaniard would rarely have left the pinnacle in the 13 years since he won the first of his 10 Roland Garros crowns. With Federer skipping the clay-court season and top seeding long assured, Nadal will head to Paris next week a strong favourite to get his hands on the Coupe des Mousquetaires for a record-extending 11th time. "Everything will be different in Paris," Nadal said somewhat disingenuously after his victory at the Foro Italico. "Of course a win like this helps but in Paris the conditions will be different in every respect. Today is the time to enjoy this victory, not for thinking about Roland Garros." Despite losing his first service game on Sunday, Nadal removed any doubts over his fitness and form for the year's second major in the opening set. "I played one of the best sets that I played on clay this year. First set was fantastic, in my opinion, in terms of everything," he added.

"Feeling, good shots, tactically-everything was, in my opinion great in the first set, no. Returning great. All the things that I wanted to do happened. So, it was a



ROME: Spain's Rafael Nadal poses with the trophy after winning the Men's final against Germany's Alexander Zverev at Rome's ATP Tennis Open tournament at the Foro Italico, on Sunday in Rome. — AFP

great set." Zverev, who had won back-to-back clay-court titles over the previous two weeks in Munich and Madrid, hit back to win the second set but a rain delay disrupted his rhythm and Nadal reeled off the last five games to seal his 78th career title.

The 21-year-old German will be second seed at Roland Garros and he took some positives from his performance in Rome. "I was not far away from beating Rafa on a clay court in a Masters final," he said. "So I guess I can take that to Paris." — Reuters

Sports

Andres Iniesta, Torres depart Barcelona and Atletico in style

Iniesta walked off to a standing ovation

MADRID: Two Spanish giants bid farewell to their boyhood clubs on Sunday as Andres Iniesta waved goodbye to Barcelona and Fernando Torres went out with a bang at Atletico Madrid. Torres scored twice on his final appearance for Atletico, even if a Lucas Hernandez red card helped Eibar claim a 2-2 draw on the last day of the La Liga season.

Iniesta's 22-year association with Barcelona, meanwhile, ended with a victory as the player marked out as the Spaniard's successor, Philippe Coutinho, proved the difference in a 1-0 win over Real Sociedad. With a tear in his eye, Iniesta walked off to a standing ovation from the Camp Nou in the second half, having unfastened his captain's armband and handed it to Lionel Messi.

He hugged the Argentinian and then embraced the rest of his colleagues. The 34-year-old clapped the crowd, blew them a kiss, before exhaling and ducking into the dug-out. An extravagant post-match ceremony followed, celebrating both Iniesta and the winning of La Liga and the Copa del Rey. Barca's players returned to the pitch all wearing shirts with Iniesta's name on their backs. "It is a difficult day," Iniesta said in a speech to the crowd. "But it has been a wonderful 22 years. It has been a privilege and a pleasure to defend and represent this club, for me the best in the world. I will keep you in my heart forever."

Barca's players then huddled beneath Iniesta and tossed him into the air. "I feel privileged," coach Ernesto Valverde said. "Just as they all do to have been a part of it. He is a unique, unrepeatable player. There is none like him."

After 22 years at the club and 16 in the first team, Iniesta's 674 appearances for Barcelona is bettered

only by Xavi Hernandez, who was also on the pitch before kick-off to join in the tributes. Real Sociedad welcomed Iniesta with a guard of honour while the crowd formed an impressive mosaic to spell out 'Infini Iniesta' on the two sides of the stadium, with an infinity symbol, doubling up as number eights, at the ends.

A giant flag behind one of the goals read 'Gracies Per Tant', 'thank you for so much'. Torres' swansong was less emotional, perhaps because his fairytale ending had already arrived on Wednesday, when he lifted his first Atleti trophy after the Europa League final against Marseille.

But his double against Eibar added some extra sparkle in front of his own supporters, who stayed on after the final whistle to watch the team from another guard of honour as the striker left the pitch. On his 404th appearance for Atletico, Torres' goals were his 128th and 129th for the club, coming 17 years after his first, scored against Albacete in the Segunda Division in 2001.

"I thank the whole Atletico family," Torres said afterwards. "I knew I wanted to play here and it has been an honour and a privilege to wear this shirt more than 400 times. You have made me the happiest person in the world." Torres, like Iniesta, has yet to declare his next move but this display—speedy, sharp and clinical—will have caught the eye of any interested parties.

He had walked out before kick-off, with his three children, through a corridor formed by the Eibar players as Atletico's fans displayed the words, 'De Nino A Leyenda', meaning 'from a kid to a legend'. Outside the ground, fans had posed for photos next to life-size Torres cut-outs and peered at message boards, detailing the player's greatest moments. This, after all, was a

“ But it has been a wonderful 22 years ”



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Spanish midfielder Andres Iniesta (C) raises the Liga trophy during a tribute at the end of the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Real Sociedad at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on Sunday. Iniesta, who joined Barcelona's academy 22 years ago, played his final game for the club. — AFP

boyhood Atletico fan, who first watched his team with his grandfather as a child, and who, when he returned to the club for a second spell in 2015, drew a crowd of more than 40,000 just for his presentation.

Atletico coach Diego Simeone predicted Torres will

one day be back again. "His return was something I'd never seen before and today's farewell was equal to that," Simeone said. "I have no doubt he will return to the Atletico, maybe we will meet again at some point. A life in football is very long." — AFP

Relaxed Tuchel embraces PSG challenge

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain did not waste time turning the page on Unai Emery's time in charge, and the arrival of the fresh-faced Thomas Tuchel marks the start of a new era. Less than 24 hours after Emery bowed out as the Ligue 1 champions played out a soporific goalless draw in Caen without a host of their biggest names, Tuchel appeared at the Parc des Princes for the first time. The German looked confident and relaxed as he was unveiled to the French media and then photographed on the pitch on a perfect Parisian spring evening. After a year out following his departure from Borussia Dortmund, where he won the 2017 German Cup, the 44-year-old was linked to the Premier League. But he was clearly seduced by the French capital.

"This is Paris, it's magnificent, the city of love, the city of light. It is a romantic city and a city for adventure," he said. "I would love our supporters to fall in love with the team and that the brightest players play here." Tuchel spoke mainly in excellent English, but he showed a willingness to speak in French and a grasp of the language that his predecessor never reached in his two years in charge. Emery won seven out of eight domestic trophies in his time at the helm, but his credit expired with Champions League exits against Barcelona and Real Madrid in the last 16.

NO PROMISES

Tuchel's own experience of the highest level is limited, meaning many were surprised by his appointment. And he was not in the mood for making promises. "It's too early to talk about it," said the German, who will not officially start work until pre-season training begins in early July.

"Of course we have the most exciting players, we are one of the biggest clubs in one of the most exciting cities, and this attracts the best players. "But to be in the end where everybody wants to be, it's not about talking before the first training session has happened or the first game is played.

Italy football shakeup offers hope to Juve's rivals

MILAN: The shakeup in Italian football promised by Roberto Mancini following the Azzurri's World Cup flop has offered hope to Juventus's rivals that it could impact the Serie A next season. Juventus coach Massimiliano Allegri met with club bosses yesterday to discuss his future contract and potential summer signings after claiming a fourth league and Cup doubles in as many years in Turin. Napoli challenged Juventus for much of the season but the Turin giants again came out on top by a four-point margin to extend their dominance for a seventh consecutive season.

The 2017-2018 Serie A season was overshadowed by the drama playing out within a national side in tatters after their shock failure to qualify for the World



PARIS: French Ligue 1 football club Paris Saint-Germain's newly appointed coach German Thomas Tuchel (R) poses with club's president Nasser Al-Khelaifi after a press conference to officially present him as the club's new recruit on Sunday at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP

"I want to have an atmosphere where a Cup game is on the same level as a Champions League game. "You cannot predict the results, so it makes no sense to talk too early, but if you ask me in spring I will tell you very clearly if we are ready or not."

Tuchel has admitted his admiration for Pep Guardiola, although he insisted he would impose his own style in Paris. He will wait anxiously in the hope that UEFA do not complicate his task by imposing sanctions for potential breaches of their Financial Fair Play rules. And he will hope that rumours over Neymar's possible departure after just one injury-hit season prove to be nothing more than that.

In any case, Tuchel is in no doubt his limited track record will not prevent him from settling into a dressing room of stars, from the world's most expensive player

to Kylian Mbappe, Thiago Silva and Marco Verratti.

"I am not afraid at all of stars because in my experience they are the hardest workers and know exactly what it takes to be successful. "I am very happy to have the opportunity now to win titles with this kind of team." At home, PSG's main rivals next season will be the same. Lyon and Monaco are boosted enormously by qualifying directly for the

Champions League group stage, while Marseille will hope to be stronger again after falling just short, coming fourth in the league and losing the Europa League final. It remains to be seen how quickly Tuchel settles, but his side will be clear favourites to dominate in France again next season. He will not be as relaxed as this, though, if he oversees another poor showing in Europe. — AFP

Cup for the first time in six decades.

Goalkeeping legend Gianluigi Buffon, defender Andrea Barzagli and midfielder Daniele De Rossi—three players who helped Italy to a fourth World Cup in 2006 — announced they were retiring after a 1-0 aggregate loss to Sweden in a playoff last November.

Six months later Mancini, who left Zenit Saint Petersburg to take the job, was appointed national coach promising a "rebirth" in the national side, and to restore pride in the demoralised Azzurri. It leads to hope of a shakeup in the league for next season with no Buffon in goal for the first time in 24 years.

Nice striker Mario Balotelli, who has been recalled and will play for the first time since Italy's humiliating group-stage exit at 2014 World Cup, has said he would like to return to play club football in Italy this summer. Five players from Serie A outsiders have been given a first call-up, including Torino's Daniele Baselli, Crotone's Rolando Mandragora, Sassuolo striker Domenico Berardi and Atalanta defender Mattia Caldara. Along with defenders Alessio Romagnoli and Daniele Rugani, midfielder Lorenzo Pellegrini and strikers Federico Chiesa and Federico Bernardeschi are among the promising youngsters who are expected to put Italy back on the road to victory. Lazio's Ciro Immobile finished joint top of the Serie A scorers with

29 goals. For Napoli boss Maurizio Sarri the Serie A challenge could end this year with his future in doubt, but Roma coach Eusebio Di Francesco insists he wants to build on a season where his side finished third, albeit 18 points behind Juventus, and reached the Champions League semi-finals. Juventus were eliminated by Real Madrid in the quarter-finals. "We need to do lots of work and build on what we've done. Juventus have won a great deal and not just with Massimiliano Allegri," said Di Francesco, who believes that Juventus's rivals lack ambition.

"They have a mentality whereby winning becomes a habit. Roma have always been just slightly behind over the past few years. "I don't believe in teams that plump for one competition and that's it. "If we want to become a top side, we must always be competitive, rotating the squad where necessary and building on the change in mentality we've seen in everyone at Trigroria.

"It's not easy to find the right remedy. I think Juventus set an example in the way they handle less-important games, with the same approach." Allegri's first season in charge in 2014-2015 saw Juventus finish 17 points ahead of second-placed Roma, the following season Napoli were runners-up nine points adrift. The past two seasons the difference has been just four points on Roma and Napoli respectively.—AFP

Belgium leave out Nainggolan for World Cup

BRUSSELS: Belgium have left midfield creator Radja Nainggolan out of their World Cup squad, coach Roberto Martinez said yesterday.

The absence of Nainggolan, who scored twice for Roma in the second league of the Champions League semi-final against Liverpool this month, was the biggest surprise in the 28-player list that will be reduced to 23 before the tournament.

Belgium face England, Panama and Tunisia in Group G at the World Cup. The heavily tattooed 30-year-old has played 30 times for his country and is popular with supporters, but his relationship with Martinez has often been strained.

The Spanish former Everton manager said: "It was a sad and difficult decision. He is a player with a lot of class and he was voted Roma's best player, but I've made my decision for purely tactical reasons. "I have put in place a specific system that works. I can't use Radja in a secondary role." Martinez said he had travelled to Rome to explain his choice to the player. In Nainggolan's place, Martinez has picked 21-year-old Youri Tielemans, who has had a low-key season at French club Monaco.— AFP

Morata left out of Spain's World Cup squad

MADRID: Chelsea striker Alvaro Morata was left out of Spain's World Cup squad, announced on Monday. Morata paid the price for a disappointing debut season in the Premier League as Spain coach Julen Lopetegui picked Iago Aspas and Rodrigo Moreno up front, along with Atletico Madrid's Diego Costa.

"The decision is always difficult because of the talent of the players we have," Lopetegui said. "We have opted for three other players who had different assets and including four players up front was not something we wanted to do." Two more Chelsea players also missed out as Marcos Alonso and Cesc Fabregas were not included in the 23-man group.

Morata's absence was the stand-out decision, however, even if it was not an entirely surprising one given the 25-year-old's dramatic dip in form. After scoring seven goals in his first seven games for Chelsea, a back injury seemed to affect his confidence. Morata has scored only three times in 22 games since the turn of the year.

"I've talked to the players I had to talk to," Lopetegui said. "I'm not going to name anybody, but there are players who had to find out from me that they were not going to be on the list."

In contrast, Aspas and Moreno have been in excellent form for Celta Vigo and Valencia respectively, with Aspas the top Spanish scorer in La Liga on 22 goals.

Costa is expected to start when Spain open up against Portugal in Group B on June 15 but Aspas, with his speed and direct running, remains an attractive option. Alonso only made his debut in a friendly against Argentina in March and lost out to Arsenal's Nacho Monreal. Fabregas fell behind Spain's impressive wealth of options in midfield, which will include Sergio Busquets, Saul Niguez, Koke, Thiago Alcantara, Andres Iniesta, David Silva, Isco, Marco Asensio and Lucas Vazquez. —AFP

25 Buttler relishing 'another Test debut' with England



26 Shohei Ohtani pitches Angels to skid-snapping win over Rays, 5-2



27 Andres Iniesta, Torres depart Barcelona and Atletico in style



Warriors rout Rockets to take lead

Curry silences critics with a 35-point display



OAKLAND: Joe Johnson #7 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Golden State Warriors during Game Three of the Western Conference Finals during the 2018 NBA Playoffs on Sunday at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, California. — AFP

OAKLAND: Stephen Curry silenced his critics with a 35-point display as the Golden State Warriors thrashed the Houston Rockets 126-85 to take a 2-1 series lead in the NBA Western Conference finals on Sunday.

Curry, targeted relentlessly by Houston as the Rockets levelled the series in game two, overcame a sluggish first-half display to lead a Warriors blowout in game three.

The two-time NBA Most Valuable Player exploded for 18 points alone in a devastating spurt of scoring in the third quarter that took the game away from Houston. The reigning champion Warriors now have the opportunity to take a commanding 3-1 lead with a further victory in front of their home fans in game four on Tuesday as they chase a fourth straight NBA finals appearance. Curry was relieved to have rediscovered his scoring touch, even if he had been unfazed by the criticism of his game two performance. "That's what I expected to do," Curry said afterwards. "My approach

to every game is the same—you don't get too high on the highs, or too low on the lows.

"I'm just thankful I managed to hit some shots tonight, eventually. But there's a long way to go. I'm just going to stay focused on that." Warriors coach Steve Kerr meanwhile said he had never doubted Curry even after a shaky first half display.

"We've seen this so many times with Steph," Kerr said. "All it takes is one. I was never concerned. This guy's a two-time MVP and he bounces back from bad games as well as anybody I've ever seen. It didn't surprise me."

'THEY GAVE US A HAYMAKER'

The win was a record 16th straight playoff victory at home for the Warriors at Oracle Arena. Perhaps more significantly, the 41-point margin of defeat was Houston's heaviest in a playoff game.

Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni admitted his team had

been battered-but insisted they could recover.

"They gave us a haymaker and we went down," D'Antoni said. "We've got short memories, it's 2-1. We've got to get one up here and this next one we've got to go get it."

"We played soft, actually, and you can't do that with these guys." As well as Curry, every other Warriors starter made double figures, with Kevin Durant finishing with 25 points and Klay Thompson 13. Rockets star James Harden meanwhile was kept relatively quiet, with 20 points, while Chris Paul finished with 13.

The Warriors had edged into a nine-point lead in the first quarter, building momentum steadily to go 31-22 clear. While Curry had a slow start to the night, making just one of seven three-point attempts in the first half, Durant gradually began to impose himself.

The towering forward had 15 points in the first half, and pushed the Warriors' lead to 54-41 with just under 30 seconds left in the half. Durant was in the thick of

the action early in the third quarter, as the Warriors stitched together a trademark burst of scoring. Eight unanswered points suddenly saw the Warriors jump into a 21-point lead at 64-43.

The Rockets responded bravely to the onslaught, going on a 10-2 run to slash the home side's lead to 13 points. But just when it looked as if the Rockets were hauling themselves back into contention, the Warriors exploded with a 13-0 run that saw them surge into a 27-point lead. Curry was the architect, suddenly finding his range and raising the roof with a three-pointer past the covering Harden followed by an impish one-handed layup to make it 80-56.

A Durant three-pointer rubbed salt into the wound and took Golden State 27 points clear. From there it appeared the only question to be settled would be the margin of victory, but the Warriors showed no inclination to ease up, with Quinn Cook adding 11 points off the bench in five minutes. — AFP

KFA elects Sheikh Ahmad Al-Sabah as president



KUWAIT: Newly elected chairman of Kuwait Football Association Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Football Association's General Assembly members elected Sunday Sheikh Ahmad Yusuf Al-Sabah to chair KFA, in an extraordinary session attended by representatives from FIFA and Asian Football Confederation (AFC). The General Assembly members also elected Ahmad Oqla as vice-president. Saad Enad, one of the members, told reporters the rest

of KFA board were Ahmad Ajab, Maan Al-Rushaid, Jaber Al-Zanki, Khaled Al-Shemmeri, Fahad Al-Mutairi, Ibrahim Al-Ansari, Salem Saadoun, Fahad Al-Hamlan, Ali Al-Mutairi, Abdulkhaleem Al-Kanderi and Sabeeh Abul.

Fatma Hayat has been elected for the women seat. Thirteen clubs attended the General Assembly meeting. Qadsia was absent. Sheikh

Ahmad, in a statement following his election, said KFA's hands would be open to all clubs and that a meeting would be held today to discuss a strategy. Sheikh Ahmad was KFA president in 2004-07 and between October 2017 until last February. FIFA announced last February appointment of a committee to run KFA until May 20. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Newly elected board member Fatma Hayat.

Saudi return to top table

HONG KONG: Saudi Arabia make their return to the finals of the World Cup for the first time since Germany in 2006 in a situation that is all too familiar to those who know the game in the Gulf state.

Juan Antonio Pizzi will lead the Green Falcons into their opening match in Group A of the 2018 tournament but he is removed by some distance from the coaching team that earned Saudi Arabia their spot at the finals.

It was Dutchman Bert van Marwijk who managed to build a side that was much stronger than the sum of its parts and ended a decade of disappointment for Saudi Arabia to return the team to the upper levels of the Asian game.

Habitual hirers and firers of coaches, Saudi Arabia will be appearing at the finals for the fifth time, with their

best performance coming on their debut in 1994 when they reached the last 16. Since they last appeared at the World Cup finals, though, Saudi Arabia have lost their place among the leading lights of the continent, exiting the Asian Cup in the group phase in both 2011 and 2015 and missing out on the last two World Cups.

Van Marwijk, however, harnessed the talent that had seen club sides such as Al Hilal and Al Ahli impress in Asian competition and fashioned a team capable of finally returning to the World Cup. The departure of the Dutchman at the end of his two-year contract in September 2017 saw Edgardo Bauza take over for a short-lived, three-game spell before Argentina-born former Spain international Pizzi was put in place in late November.

With little more than six months to work with the team, the former Chile coach has been set a tough task-one made more demanding by a decision to send several key players on loan to Spanish clubs in the lead-up to the finals. — Reuters