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7 Lebanon parliament reelects Hezbollah ally Berri speaker



27 Arsenal appoint 'progressive' Emery as Wenger successor



Ramadan Kareem

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Al Mawashi looking beyond Australia for sheep imports

Australia restricts live sheep exports after shocking treatment

Ramadan Kareem

Roll up your sleeves, Holy month is here

By Hassan Twaha Bwambale

From the Islamic perspective, according to Al-Imam Al-Menawi, laziness means inadvertence, negligence and carelessness in doing things that are imperative where activeness is mandatory. This kind of negligence is dispraised and disparaged - (Al-Tawfeeq 281). Al-Imam Al-Raghib said, "Whoever gets accustomed to being lazy and indolent and decides to lean towards luxury and rest most of the time, will eventually lose that rest and luxury as a consequence, and will pay a high price." For example, if someone does a sedentary work where he rarely moves, time will come when he will contract some preventable diseases as a result of his inactivity, which will cost him money, effort and time.

Laziness categories

First, sluggishness of the mind in that you don't use it in critical thinking, pondering, and looking at the blessings and bounties of Allah Almighty, and abandoning the consideration of and seeking things that may benefit you in this temporal life, on the other hand. Since everything was created for us (Al-Quran 2: 29), it behooves us to learn how to tap into the resources that Allah (SWT) created for us and benefit from them categorically and effectively, all the while keeping them safe for generations to come.

Second, physical inactivity: This entails carelessness and lassitude in performing physical exercise. This vice leads communities and individuals into backwardness. If you neglect your body in that you are so lazy to work out, you will face the consequences. Due to the fact that there is a correlation between the body and the mind, when the body feels pain, it affects the mind - thus the level of concentration dwindles.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) discouraged laziness: Ibn Abbas (RA) narrated that the Prophet (PBUH) said, "I mobilized a neighborhood of Arabs to carry out a mission related to protecting Islam, and they slackened in their response. Allah (SWT) withheld rain from them as a punishment (for being lazy)." (Al-Hakim rated it as Saheeh (authentic) in Al-Mustadrak 2/118. See also As-Silsilah As-Saheeha 6/129.)

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would always seek refuge in Allah (SWT) from faults and deficiencies, including laziness. Zaid Bin Arqam narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) used to supplicate saying, "O Allah, I seek refuge in You from inability, laziness, cowardice, miserliness, senility, and the punishment of the grave..." (Muslim 2,722). If Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) would seek refuge in Allah (SWT) from laziness, this means it is a terrible vice that we ought to distance ourselves from after asking Allah (SWT) to keep us away from it.

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KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah hold talks with the leader of Iraq's National Wisdom Movement Ammar Al-Hakim. — KUNA

Iraq's Ammar Al-Hakim extols Kuwait, leaders

By Nawara Fattahova, Agencies

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday received the leader of Iraq's National Wisdom Movement Ammar Al-Hakim and his accompanying delegation. Ammar Al-Hakim held

talks with HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince, and other officials to discuss the challenges in the region and the bilateral relations between Kuwait and Iraq. Ammar Al-Hakim has been visiting Kuwait for the past 15 years.

On this occasion, the Kuwait Journalists Association (KJA) held a press conference at the Crowne Plaza Hotel yesterday to meet with the local and Arab media. "I'm glad to be in Kuwait again for the 15th year. This visit during the holy month of Ramadan has become a habit. We will always appreciate the role of Kuwait in supporting the Iraqi people in all fields including political, social and humanitarian," Ammar Al-Hakim said during the press conference.

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Saddam's superyacht winds up as sailors hotel

BASRA: The king size bed in Saddam Hussein's superyacht is made, the silk curtains around it have been drawn back and, in the gold-rimmed bathroom next door, a barber's chair awaits its occupant. But the Iraqi dictator never boarded the 82-metre "Basrah Breeze" built for him in 1981 - and its amenities will now be enjoyed by the pilots who guide shipping in and out of the port of Basra, the main southern city. In common with other treasures left by Saddam, toppled in 2003 during the US-led invasion of Iraq and hanged three years later for crimes against humanity, the governments that succeeded him have been

struggling to find a use for the ship.

Since Iraq got it back in 2010 following a court battle and a three-decade odyssey abroad, it has been mostly moored in Basra. Equipped with a presidential suite comprising Saddam's private quarters, dining rooms and bedrooms, as well as 17 smaller guest rooms, 18 cabins for crew and a clinic, the opulently equipped and decorated vessel was put on the market for \$30 million. The government failed to find a buyer, and for the past two years the "Basrah Breeze" has served Basra University, hosting researchers on trips to study marine life.

"The presidential yacht is in a very good condition. Its two engines and generators are functioning," said Abdul-Zahra Abdul-Mahdi Saleh, its captain. "It only needs periodic maintenance." But authorities have now decided to moor it permanently as a hotel and recreation facility for the southern port's pilots, many of whom live in distant cities. "The port needs the boat to be a station

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Photo shows Saddam Hussein's superyacht 'Basrah Breeze'

Filipino domestic workers return to Kuwait next week

MANILA: Domestic helpers from the Philippines will be allowed to travel to Kuwait starting next week, Philippines government officials have announced. "Deployment guidelines will come out next week. Skilled workers can fly to Kuwait anytime but the household service workers can fly next week, pending their visa application approval," said Philippines Labor Secretary Silvestre Bello III during a senate hearing in the Philippines capital yesterday.

New guidelines for the deployment of household service workers to Kuwait will also be issued. A total ban on the deployment of Filipino workers to Kuwait was lifted May 16, following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between the two coun-

tries regarding the employment conditions and protection for domestic workers. The agreement ended a two-month crisis sparked by reports that abuse by employers in Kuwait had driven several Filipinos to suicide. The Philippines stopped sending workers to Kuwait in January after the body of a Filipina maid, Joana Demafelis was found in a freezer - the latest incident in what Manila called a pattern of abuse of domestic helpers in Kuwait.

Kuwait Foreign Ministry official said the two sides agreed that domestic workers from the Philippines will have the right to retain their passports as well as the right to refuse being transferred to other employers. A Filipino request to obtain any criminal

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Pogba on Makkah pilgrimage ahead of the World Cup

RIYADH: French midfielder Paul Pogba has posted a video of himself at the holiest site of Islam in Saudi Arabia, as he prepares to join his French squad for the World Cup next month. "Only the person that comes here can understand the feeling," the 25-year-old Manchester United star said in an Instagram video from the holy city of Makkah.

"This a beautiful place-beautiful, beautiful, beautiful. And the feeling... I cannot even explain to you." The Frenchman posted the video of himself standing in front of the Kaaba, a black cube towards which Muslims turn for their five daily prayers. Pogba, who will be a key member of France's World Cup team in Moscow, made a similar pilgrimage last year during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan. He told the BBC last week that he and his France team-mates must approach the



YVELINES: France's national football team's midfielder Paul Pogba arrives at the team's training camp ahead of the 2018 World Cup yesterday. — AFP

World Cup finals with the right mindset, as that counts more than technical ability.

The French-World Cup winners in 1998 and finalists in 2006 - are in Group C with Denmark, Australia and Peru and kick off their campaign in the Russian city of Kazan against the Australians on June 16. Away from the World Cup, and despite speculation over

his future at Manchester United, Pogba is determined to lift the Champions League with them in what is his second spell there. Since his move from Italian giants Juventus in 2016, for which Manchester United paid a club-record fee of £89 million (\$119 million), Pogba has won Europa and League Cup medals. — AFP

Local

PHOTO OF THE DAY



KUWAIT: The sight of Arabic coffee pots becomes common during the holy month of Ramadan. — KUNA

Multinational firm ordered to pay KD 4 million in taxes

KUWAIT: The cassation court ordered a multinational company that markets its product in Kuwait through a local agent to pay accumulated taxes of more than KD 4 million. Although the government announced lately that its economic sustainability program does not include imposing taxes on local companies, it was revealed that the finance ministry, the second party in the case, started to demand KD 4 million from the local agent, who is the distributor the foreign company deals with.

An informed source said the finance ministry demanded the company's local agent to pay the tax that was approved by the court. He said concerned authorities have started preparations to demand other foreign companies to pay taxes for their activities in Kuwait through indirect distribution and sale of their products.

Income tax

The source said the law is clear in banning the collection of income tax from local companies other than zakat and advancement of science and labor levies, so the demand of the finance ministry that the distributor should pay clashes with the laws that ban this. He said foreign companies carry out their activities through a local agent, and having the finance ministry ask the agent to pay income tax is unprecedented in Kuwait's taxation history, the source explained. "Contradicting financial and investment statements in this regard is strange," the source said. "While the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority gives incentives to foreign investors in Kuwait, the finance ministry goes after them demanding taxes even before they arrive in Kuwait."

The source said the tax department at the finance ministry faces a problem in determining the nature of foreign companies present in Kuwait, and whether they are doing business directly or through an agent. He said the finance ministry's demand from foreign companies for their indirect activities in Kuwait will victimize the consumer, who will bear this tax as its value will be added to the price. Also, if the foreign company refrains from payment, and the finance ministry demands the local agent to pay on behalf of the company, it will lead to the same result.

Environment law

In other news, environment police issued 20 citations against violators of the environment law after they were seen smoking at Kuwait international airport and a mall. Separately, Nuwaiseeb customs officers discovered 554 cartons of cigarettes in two vehicles. An inspector suspected the two vehicles while in the car inspection area, so they were searched and the 554 various types of cigarettes were found, according to assistant supervisor Bilal Al-Khamees. Meanwhile, Hawally police arrested an Egyptian pickpocket who was caught by another Egyptian, who handed him to police. The thief used to frequent crowded places and tried to pick an Egyptian's pocket, who realized what was going on and caught the suspect. Seven wallets were found with him. — Translated from the Arabic press

PM affirms govt continued efforts to find missing citizen

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah affirmed yesterday the government's continued efforts to find Saud Faisal Al-Musallam, a citizen who has been lost at sea since May 18. The interior, defense, and foreign ministries, in addition to Kuwait Fire Service Directorate are making maximum efforts in their search operations at regional waters, His Highness the Premier said while meeting with Musallam's father and siblings at Seif Palace.

The government is also keeping in touch with neighboring countries to cooperate and assist in finding the lost citizen, His Highness the Prime Minister said, expressing his sincere sympathy to the missing Kuwaiti's family. Meanwhile, His Highness the Premier lauded the popular reaction towards the painful incident and called it a source of pride that reflects the Kuwaiti people's solidarity and unity among each other. It also showed the Kuwaitis' fast response in handling any emergency situation that may endanger other people's lives, said His Highness the Prime Minister. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Saud Faisal Al-Musallam's family. — KUNA

Two injured in Hadiya Co-op blaze

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A huge fire broke out at Hadiya Co-op Society yesterday, said security sources, noting that four fire brigades had to be dispatched to the scene to fight the flames and prevent them from spreading further into the main supermarket.

At least two co-op workers were injured and treated by medics onsite, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said in a statement. Firefighters arrived to the scene shortly after receiving an emergency call at 1:57 pm, and they found out that the fire had started in some dry trees adjacent to the co-op's building. The flames spread to the building's exterior lining, some administration offices and a limited part of the main supermarket, KFSD said.

Both the co-op's staff and customers fled in a stampede to escape the fire that was spreading fast due to wind and inflammable substances like cardboard, according to the security sources. The cause of the fire is not yet known and further investigations are in progress to determine whether it was an act of arson or the result of a short circuit. Meanwhile, the Green Line Group held the Environment Public Authority (EPA) responsible for any possible health problems



KUWAIT: Firefighters tackle a blaze at Hadiya Co-op Society yesterday.

Hadiya residents might suffer from as a result of inhaling the smoke and toxic fumes resulting from the fire.

20,000 Captagon found

Customs inspectors at Abdaly border outlet discovered 10 bags containing 20,000 Captagon tablets abandoned outside the inspection area. Investigations are underway.

Water supply

Responding to outrage resulting from disconnecting some citizens' water supply in Ramadan, Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheed stressed again that Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) would never disconnect water or power supplies from subscribers with unpaid bills during Ramadan. Speaking during an annual ghabka held at the diwaniya of engineer

First phase of railway to be awarded next year

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait Authority for Partnership Projects (KAPP) still needs to invite more specialized companies to apply for the national railway project's contract before the end of the year. The first phase of the project covering the area between the Saudi borders to the center of Kuwait City is expected to be given to the winning consortium by next year. Meanwhile, official reports said relevant authorities had almost removed the last obstacle facing the railway project in Kuwait and that the finance ministry has prepared the compensation amounts to be paid to owners of farms and lands located on the railway route.

Boubyan Island

A local economic study stressed that turning Kuwait into an international hub for storing and transforming data is a very significant vision to be achieved by the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA). The study added that Boubyan Island would be an integral part of the project that is expected to cost KD 1.418 billion and make expected revenues of KD 3.215 billion.

The study explained that the information technology sector at Boubyan would host 600 small and big companies that will all use renewable energy, such as solar and wave energy, to make Boubyan environment-friendly. The study also noted that two 500-megawatt solar power plants will be built on the island, costing KD 196 million each.

Moreover, the study said total revenues expected from recycling projects due to be built over an area of 20 km will be KD 78,280,977. The study also stressed that developing the northern areas of Kuwait will save KD 4.4 billion by having citizens fill 75 percent of the jobs there with an average salary of KD 1,200.

Road 306

Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Hossam Al-Roumi yesterday inspected the road between Mina Abdullah and Wafra. The Ministry of Public Works' (MPW) public relations department said the minister's visit came in response to complaints by Sabah Al-Ahmed residents concerning trucks driven along road 306, which were reported by MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei. The statement added that the roads authority had been urged to find alternative routes for the trucks and protect residents.

Local

Amir hails Army for its efforts in Saudi-led campaign in Yemen

Amir commends Kuwait National Guard for 2020 strategy



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials pose for a group photo with Kuwait National Guard's leadership and officers during His Highness's visit to the KNG Officers Club. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah commended on Tuesday Kuwait Army and soldiers for their efforts as part of the Saudi-led campaign in Yemen. During his annual visit to Kuwait Army Officers' Club, His Highness the Amir accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Deputy President of the National Guard Sheikh Mishaal Ahmad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Hamad Al-Sabah, congratulated the soldiers on the holy month of Ramadan, wishing Almighty to protect them in their task and mission. His Highness the Amir also expressed his confidence in all officers and soldiers who were the great national defense shield to the country. On this such blessed occasion, His Highness the Amir expressed admiration and pride to the progress in all army sectors and combat units, which in turn reflected on the country's keenness to bring the best military equipment available to them, including enhancement of capabilities of Kuwait's army.

His Highness the Amir added that "our region has been witnessing for several years grave developments and their repercussions have been felt directly on security and stability not only in the Gulf, but also in the whole region, which compelled us to be cautious and ready to maintain security and stability of the country." Finally, His Highness the Amir asked Allah Almighty to protect Kuwait and its people and all those who work relentlessly to secure its safety and stability, asking Allah Almighty to forgive Kuwaiti martyrs who sacrificed everything for the country. His Highness the Amir was received upon his arrival by First Deputy Premier and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, Army chief of Staff Lt General Mohammad Al-Khodhr and Defense Undersecretary Sheikh Ahmad Mansour Al-Sabah.

Wise foreign policy
Khodhr lauded His Highness the Amir's wise foreign policy. "The State of Kuwait - through its foreign policy and its distinguished world standing and the strategic vision of Your Highness - has been dealing with sisterly and friendly countries to enhance the principles of mutual respect, fruitful cooperation to sever common interests, and to employ its relation with all world countries, without interfering in their internal affairs, to promote peace, security and stability in the region." He went on to say that Kuwait had suffered from the plight of occupation in 1990 and thus it believes that peace is the right option which helps nations avoid destruction and resources squandering.

He acclaimed His Highness the Amir's role in overcoming many regional challenges. "Your efforts to heal the Gulf rift and reunite Gulf states, has given the world the brightest example of political wisdom and statesmanship which made Your Highness a role model for world leaders," he said. He recalled His Highness the Amir's milestone speech at the recent emergency summit of the Organization of the Islamic Cooperation in Istanbul. This speech had sent a brave message from the State of Kuwait about its historic and clear stance in support to the Palestinian cause, he said.

Khodhr asserted that the rapid changes and emerging challenges in the region, required vigilance and alert



Amir's wise foreign policy commended



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech during his visit to the Kuwait Army Officers' Club.

towards anything that could threaten the state security and stability. "It also necessitates closing ranking and joining forces to retain our national unity and confront anything that could jeopardize it through adhering to the tolerant teachings of our religion that is based on tolerance and love as well as to embody Your Highness's keenness on unity and fraternity," he stressed. He also shed light on the efforts of the Kuwaiti Army to build capacities and enhance efficiency.

"With the help of God and Your support and in line with Kuwait's 2035 Vision, the Kuwaiti Army is moving steadily towards boosting and developing defense, armament and training capabilities," he said. "The First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense (Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah) is employing all resources and means as well as removing all obstacles to help upgrade and beef up the armament and defense systems, especially those related to cyber security with a view to elevating the Kuwaiti Army potential to that of the advanced armies in the world."

In this regard, Khodhr stated that Kuwaiti Army was preparing for several armament and development projects to enhance its defense potential. "This needs more attention to build capacities and train military cadres to be able to use the modern systems in a professional manner to reach the highest level of combat readiness that lives up to the aspiration of the our country and Your Highness as well as to maintain the state sovereignty and resources," he said. He expressed pride of the heroism and sacrifices of Kuwaiti armed forces deployed in Khamis Mushait and Jizan, Saudi Arabia, as well as the Forces of Mubarak and Forces of Sabah "who are serving the dear homeland on fronts inside the country or overseas." "We pledge to God, Your Highness and Kuwaiti people to do all in power and to sacrifice ourselves to defend our dear homeland," he concluded. His Highness the Amir was also accompanied



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and top state officials are seen during His Highness's visit to the Kuwait Army Officers' Club.



Army chief of Staff Lt General Mohammad Al-Khodhr delivers his speech.



Kuwait National Guard's Undersecretary General Hashem Al-Rifae delivers his speech.

by Minister of Amiri Diwan Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

National security protection

Meanwhile, His Highness commended Tuesday leadership of Kuwait National Guard (KNG) for their 2020 strategy, which aimed at strengthening KNG's role in protecting and maintaining national security. His Highness the Amir was speaking during a visit to the KNG Officers Club, accompanied by His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister. His Highness the Amir was received by KNG President His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, his Deputy Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and KNG Undersecretary General Hashem Al-Rifae.

His Highness the Amir commended His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali and Sheikh Mishal for their relentless efforts to improve KNG efficiency by providing servicemen with state-of-art military equipment. He said the KNG leader-

ship was also supporting development of an advanced administrative system, which supported the 2020 strategy. He affirmed KNG was an important back-up to the security and military institutions, and has been protecting national and vital facilities. His Highness the Amir also praised KNG's social role among the youth.

KNG Undersecretary Rifae said meanwhile that the national guard witnessed a great military advancement and has been embarking on a vital social role. Rifae said KNG has been working hard to develop its human resources and infrastructure as well as applying modern technology in the military installations. KNG, said Rifae, has assumed control over protection of the central oil sector, in addition to training KNG soldiers on combat and support missions. He said KNG was about to join the International Association of Gendarmeries and Police Forces with Military Statues (FIEP). Al-Rifae said KNG participated in military drills and international tournaments. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah speaks with Kuwait National Guard's President His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah.

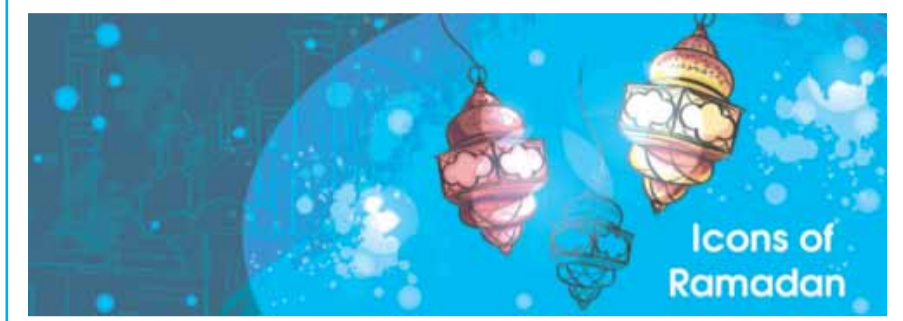


His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives to the Kuwait Army Officers' Club.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah arrives to the KNG Officers Club.

Local



History of Kuwait



KUWAIT: Open markets of the early 1960s. The picture shows an open market in Kuwait City with its traditional mud brick buildings and mosque. (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)

Ghabka: A big part of Kuwait's Ramadan tradition

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.

The ghabka is about enjoying food and the spirit of bonding. Ghabkas are a big part of Kuwait's Ramadan tradition. Companies and families organize ghabkas to welcome visitors in a festive atmos-

phere, and traditional Kuwaiti music is played. The gathering is like a diwaniya where people chat and exchange pleasantries. Some companies in Kuwait organize ghabkas for their employees to recognize their performance. Raffles are usually held and gifts and cash are distributed to guests after the event. Sometimes, light games are organized to lighten up the night. The ghabka is usually held a few hours after iftar.

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



Palms Beach Hotel and Spa hosts ghabka for media



KUWAIT: To welcome the holy month of Ramadan, the Palms Beach Hotel and Spa honored its tradition of hosting an annual ghabka night for the media community, editors, representatives, photographers, TV professionals and Influencers in Kuwait's first bazaar inspired theme tent.

Inspired by the heritage bazaar the Palms Beach Hotel and Spa transformed the tents live cooking station and buffet area into a beautiful souk complimented with vibrant blue and gold color scheme and Bedouin inspired market stalls for live cooking stations

from all over the world with chefs demonstrating their expertise. Enhancing the festive dining experience, with a sumptuous buffet featuring delicious international and Middle Eastern dishes, traditional Ramadan delicacies, beverages and mouthwatering desserts. The Media Community enjoyed dining in an area of 800 square meters, embellished with lantern and ambient lighting setting the mood for a memorable evening with shisha and tunes from the palms live oriental band. The evening commenced with a number of entertainment activities, competitions and distri-

bution of valuable gifts and prizes.

Rabih Alatrash, the general manager of the hotel expressed warm and heartfelt welcome to the invitees. Thanking the media community for its generous efforts they have given over the years of covering The Palms Beach Hotel and Spa's activities and events and hoping for a stronger tie in the future. The Palms Beach Hotel and Spa is known for its strive to present innovative and memorable experiences to its guests. Renowned celebrity salon, Mounir Salon at the Palms Beach Hotel and Spa offers ladies the best

services from hair transformations to cleansing facials with exclusive hair dyes and products handled by experienced stylist and staff in order to make its customers the most beautiful and happiest ladies in town. The hotel also boasts itself with The Palms Beach Club, the first club in Kuwait fully equipped with modern and state of the art equipment. Nestled on the sandy beach of the Arabian Gulf. Little guests can enjoy a joyous stay in Little Palms, the children hub where kids can unleash their creativity and energy in the daily activities provided by well trained and

professional staff. Men can enjoy special discount at Orchid Spa, a male only spa with modern and elegant design, the perfect sanctuary to get rid of daily stresses and restore energy.

Last but not least the hotel offers exclusive hassle free smart parking for its guests with a capacity of more than 420 cars. The media community received great authentic hospitality and expressed their admiration towards the Palms Beach Hotel and Spa initiative for its one of a kind tent with unique Ramadan ambience and delicious varied cuisine.





Farwaniya Governor receives Ramadan well-wishers



KUWAIT: Farwaniya Governor Sheikh Faisal Al-Humoud Al-Malik Al-Sabah received well-wishers on the advent of the holy month of Ramadan. Senior state officials, sheikhs, governors, mayors, diplomats and others attended the reception which took place recently at the Farwaniya Governorate's diwan.



Al-Manshar Rotana partners with Kuwait Food Bank

KUWAIT: Al-Manshar Rotana, a five-star hotel in Fahaheel directly connected to Al-Kout Mall, recently contributed and partnered with Kuwait Food Bank's Ramadan box donation to the indigent families in Kuwait. Every year, Al-Manshar Rotana is carrying out different corporate social responsibilities and activities engaging different people and non-profit

organizations in the county. Pierre Zayoun, General Manager of Al-Manshar Rotana commented by saying: "We are very pleased to partner with Kuwait Food Bank on their noble initiative this Ramadan and share the abundance of happiness to the families in need in Kuwait." "We are very committed to social responsibility in the country and have done numerous CSR activities in the past years. Our aim is not only to share our blessings to others but also to extend our brand promise to them, a treasured time for them in every way that we can," he continued. A total of 150 basic food items were donated with an aim to providing those in need sufficient enough to cover each family's need for approximate a week.



Zain Humanitarian Partner of KRCS campaign

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading telecommunications company in Kuwait, announced its Humanitarian Partnership to a new campaign launched by the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) to offer essential food supplies and medical aid to underprivileged families inside Kuwait during the holy month of Ramadan. Zain's Humanitarian Partnership to this campaign came as part of its comprehensive Ramadan social campaign as well as its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy that closely focuses on supporting humanitarian initiatives with the aim of supporting all segments of the community, including underprivileged families that are in most need of help during the Holy Month. The new campaign aims at offering essential food supplies as well as medical aid to underprivileged families inside Kuwait during the holy month of Ramadan. Zain donated the full amount of donations it collected from its charitable initiative 'Ya Baghi Al Khair Aqbel' last year to support this initiative. The company also sent awareness messages through SMS and social media to raise awareness about this campaign



and encourage the public to donate via the official channels. A number of Zain volunteers also participated in distributing food supplies and medical aid to the families. During Ramadan of last year 2017, Zain launched its charitable initiative 'Ya Baghi Al Khair Aqbel' for the second consecutive year, where the company donated 500 Fils each time a customer paid their bill anytime during the holy month of Ramadan through one of Zain's electronic or direct channels. The collected donations were donated to KRCS's latest campaign to improve the living conditions of underprivileged families in Kuwait. Zain's support to this initiative comes in line with its Corporate Sustainability and Social

Responsibility strategy that seeks to contribute to the welfare of the society in several ways. Zain prides itself on its long track of records and contributions it has put in philanthropic areas. The company strongly believes that such initiatives help infuse a sense of responsibility into members of the society, and help support those who are in need of help. Zain is proud of its long list of programs and contributions that serve noble causes through strategically partnering with entities that adopt humanitarian work, including the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), as well as other non-profit organizations, governmental institutions, and global entities.



Seeking history, women advance in US midterms

Indian child killer sentenced to death 23 days after arrest

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DAMASCUS: Members of the Syrian pro-government forces inspect the damage in a street in the Hajar al-Aswad neighborhood on the southern outskirts of the capital on Tuesday. —AFP

Cracks emerging in Russia-Iran alliance?

Tehran determined to maintain influence in Syria

TEHRAN: Russia's recent call for foreign forces to leave Syria was seen as a possible turning-point in its tricky alliance with Iran, though analysts say their partnership still has a long way to run. "With the start of the political process in its most active phase, foreign armed forces will withdraw from Syrian territory," President Vladimir Putin vowed after meeting his Syrian counterpart Bashar al-Assad in Sochi on Friday. Putin's envoy to Syria, Alexander Lavrentiev, later said this included Iran. Up to now, the two countries have worked in fairly close tandem, with Russia providing the air power and Iranian forces doing the heavy lifting on the ground.

Henry Rome, Iran researcher for the Eurasia Group in Washington, said Putin's comments were "not game-over in the Russia-Iran alliance in Syria by any means, but it is a pretty serious bump in their road". Iranian officials reacted testily, with foreign ministry spokesman Bahram Ghasemi telling reporters: "Nobody can force Iran to do something against its will". Syria's deputy foreign minister tried to defuse the tension yesterday, saying the departure of Iran, or its Lebanese ally Hezbollah, was "not even on the agenda for discussion".

But Putin tends to choose his words carefully, and analysts say he was sending a message that the Syrian conflict must not evolve into an even deadlier war between Iran and Israel. Unnerved by the presence of so many Iranian forces to the north, Israel has launched a series of deadly air raids on Iranian positions in Syria in recent weeks. Russia is the only power with close ties to both, and seen as crucial to keeping the pot from boiling over. "The Russians are playing a delicate balancing act between different regional allies," said Julien Barnes-Dacey of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

He said the Russian statement about removing foreign forces was a message to Iran that there would be limits to its influence in Syria. "But they will have extreme difficulty in enforcing it," he added. "We've seen a whole series of statements from Russia over the last couple years about an

impending drawdown of foreign forces, none of which have materialized."

Iran is deeply entrenched militarily in Syria, and wary of Russia trying to edge it out of the country and reap all the spoils of reconstruction. "Iran fought a very difficult war - is still fighting it - and expects long-term concessions out of that in terms of energy contracts and so on," said Rome. "There has been consternation in Tehran, he said, that Russian and Turkish firms are winning key contracts instead of them, and even more so that Russia appeared to give Israel the green light for its recent air strikes on Iranian positions.

'Using each other'

But for all the bad blood, Russia and Iran are still working closely. Iran relies on Russian air support and anti-aircraft equipment, while Iranian forces and proxies will be

crucial to a ground war that is still far from over. "They will both use each other as much as possible, for as long as possible," said Rome. For analysts in Iran, claims of divisions are over-blown, and they insist Iran has no interest in maintaining a long-term presence in Syria. "Iranians are fine with leaving Syria," said Mohammad Marandi, a political analyst at the University of Tehran. "They weren't there in the first place and if the Americans and their allies hadn't created this mess in Syria, they wouldn't be there now," he said.

Russian analyst Vladimir Sotnikov said Putin had no interest in damaging the "strategic partnership" with Iran. "Although Iran is not an easy partner for Russia, the two countries will not break their close ties," he told AFP. He said Putin's comments about foreign forces referred to countries without clear authorization from Assad, which Iran currently has. But all analysts agree the major parties are maneuvering for position in the post-war landscape. "My sense is that Assad won't want to be left with an autonomous military sub-system that reports to Tehran from inside his country," said Barnes-Dacey. "But the bottom line is that the Iranians are in Syria to stay, with some degree of military presence." —AFP



Putin seeks to avoid war between Iran and Israel

Pakistan buries teen killed in Texas shooting

KARACHI: Hundreds mourned a Pakistani exchange student killed in a mass shooting at a Texas high school last week during her burial in Karachi yesterday. Sabika Sheikh was among the 10 people gunned down at a high school in Santa Fe last Friday when a heavily armed student opened fire on classmates. Relatives sobbed and hugged as Sheikh's remains arrived at her family home in a casket draped with a Pakistani flag. The body was then taken to a public meeting ground where hundreds gathered to say prayers and pay their respects before the burial at a nearby cemetery. "My daughter is a martyr and martyrs don't die," Sheikh's father Abdul Aziz said after the prayers.

Officials participating in the ceremony labelled her killing an act of terrorism. "The whole nation stands by the Pakistani girl who was martyred in a terrorist attack in the US. May God give patience to her parents and family," provincial governor Mohammad Zubair told reporters after the funeral. Hours earlier, a Pakistani honor guard escorted Sheikh's casket off a plane at Karachi's Jinnah International airport during a ceremony overseen by government officials and US consul John E. Warner.

Following the funeral, Pakistani Nobel laureate Malala Yousafzai - who was shot by the Taliban in 2012 for advocating girls' rights to education - also weighed in, calling for an end to school violence. "I hope leaders in the US, Pakistan and around the world



KARACHI: Relatives, residents and government officials offer funeral prayers for slain Pakistani exchange student Sabika Sheikh following her body's arrival from the United States yesterday. —AFP

will do justice to the lives of Sabika, her classmates and their teachers by doing more to stop violence in schools," said Yousafzai in a statement.

Sheikh had been in the US on a State Department-sponsored exchange program but was due to return home in mere weeks ahead of Eid al-Fitr, the holiday marking the end of the holy Muslim month of Ramadan. Despite strained relations between Washington and Islamabad, the US has long been a favoured destination for Pakistani students studying abroad, with thousands

enrolling in American schools every year.

Sheikh's death came just three months after another school massacre in Parkland, Florida killed 17 people, sparking an unprecedented grassroots, student-led gun control movement. The shooting in Santa Fe was the 22nd such incident at a US school this year, according to media reports, a disturbing statistic in a country where firearms are part of everyday life and there are more than 30,000 gun-related deaths annually. —AFP

US claims envoy tricked over altered Jerusalem picture

JERUSALEM: The US embassy in Israel has said ambassador David Friedman was duped into being pictured receiving a provocative photo of annexed east Jerusalem when the revered Al-Aqsa mosque erased, an episode that provoked Palestinian anger yesterday. Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas's adviser for religious affairs, Mahmoud Habbash, called Friedman a "terrorist settler" in comments published by official news agency Wafa. The Palestinian spokesman was unconvinced by the embassy's explanation, with a spokesman calling the incident an example of "reckless and racist arrogance", according to Wafa.

In a picture published Tuesday night by ultra-Orthodox Jewish news site Kikar Hashabbat, the Al-Aqsa mosque, on a flashpoint site holy to both Muslims and Jews, is replaced by a simulation of a Jewish temple. The picture further inflamed anger amongst Palestinians, already furious over last week's transfer of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem after Washington recognised the disputed city as capital of Israel.

A US embassy statement said the doctored image was pushed in front of Friedman without his consent during a visit to a charitable institution in Bnei Brak, near Tel Aviv. "Ambassador Friedman was not aware of the image thrust in front of him when the photo was taken," it said. "He was deeply disappointed that anyone would take advantage of his visit to Bnei Brak to create controversy."

It said it had demanded an apology from the charity Achiya, an official of which had presented the picture to Friedman. In a statement published in Israeli media, the group said a member of its staff had presented the picture on his own initiative without consulting others. "We regret that a petty political gesture spoiled this event," it added. —AFP

International

Lebanon parliament reelects Hezbollah ally Berri speaker

Lawmakers elect Ferzli as deputy speaker

BEIRUT: Lebanon's new parliament yesterday elected veteran speaker and Hezbollah ally Nabih Berri to a sixth consecutive term, making him one of the longest-serving parliamentary heads in the world. His election followed the country's May 6 parliamentary poll, the first in nine years after the deeply divided legislature repeatedly extended its own term. Yesterday, the body met for its inaugural session to elect its speaker to a four-year term. Few expected any surprises: the only candidate was incumbent Berri, a savvy politician from the country's south who has held the position since 1992.



Hariri expected to return as PM

The vote by paper ballot saw 98 of the parliament's 128 members pick Berri. One vote was disqualified and the rest were blank. Berri, 80, heads the Amal Movement. It and powerful Shiite movement Hezbollah hold all but one of the 27 Shiite-allocated seats in Lebanon's parliament. Lebanon's confessional system divides seats in parliament equally among Muslims and Christians, then further splits them among the various sects. The speakership is reserved for a Shiite Muslim, while the other two top positions of prime minister and president go to a Sunni Muslim and Maronite Christian, respectively. Born in 1938, Berri rose to power as a militia boss in the civil war (1957-1990) before transitioning to politics. He was simultaneously elected member and speaker of parliament in 1992. In his offi-

cial role he calls and runs Lebanon's parliamentary sessions.

A 'bulwark'

Yesterday, parliamentarians submitted anonymous paper ballots which were then read out loud. Berri's name was read 98 times, and "blank" was read 30 times. First-time parliamentarian Paula Yaacoubian, a journalist who is close to Prime Minister Saad Hariri but ran as an independent, objected. She said she had voted for Lebanese director Nabine Labaki, who won the Jury prize at the Cannes film festival at the weekend, but her name was not read out. Yaacoubian's vote was subsequently disqualified.

After his election yesterday, Berri addressed legislators by saying "thank you" six times, in reference to his sixth term. He pledged bills on major legislative issues, notably on potential maritime oil and gas reserves. Beirut in February signed its first deal to drill in a pair of offshore zones, including one that is disputed between Lebanon and its southern neighbour Israel. "Parliament will be a bulwark for the country's sovereign land and maritime borders - a national response by the state, army, people, and resistance to Israel's aggressions and violations," Berri said. He suggested draft laws on establishing a sovereign wealth fund and national oil company.



BEIRUT: Lebanese Parliament Speaker Nabih Berri casts his vote during a session in the parliament to elect the new speaker of the house yesterday. — AFP

The new parliament also elected Elie Ferzli, 68, as deputy speaker, a post allocated to a Greek Orthodox Christian. Ferzli, who hails from the eastern city of Zahlé, served as deputy speaker from 1992 to 2004 and is also a close ally of Hezbollah and Syria's government. The long delay preceding this

month's parliamentary elections was blamed on political divisions, the war in neighboring Syria and an unsatisfactory voting law. President Michel Aoun is now set to consult MPs to name Lebanon's next prime minister. Hariri is expected to return for his third term in that role. — AFP

News in brief

Palestinians join OPCW

THE HAGUE: The Palestinians have joined the global convention to halt the spread of toxic arms, the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) announced yesterday. "The state of Palestine deposited on 17 May 2018 its instrument of accession to the Chemical Weapons Convention," the OPCW, based in The Hague, said in a statement. "This means that Palestine will become the 193rd state to join the CWC" when its accession enters into force on June 16, 2018, an OPCW official told AFP. The chemical arms watchdog said its technical secretariat received a notice from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres last week to inform it that the Palestinian authority has "deposited its instrument of accession". Only four countries, including Israel, have yet to sign up to the CWC, which aims to eliminate an entire category of weapons of mass destruction. — AFP

Cameroon summons US envoy

YAOUNDE: Cameroonian authorities summoned the US ambassador in the country yesterday, sources said, days after he accused government forces of abuses against separatists in English-speaking regions. Government and diplomatic sources told AFP that the foreign ministry had summoned Ambassador Peter Barlerin. Barlerin alleged on May 18 that government forces had carried out "targeted killings" and other abuses against militants demanding independence for two English-speaking regions. "On the side of the government, there have been targeted killings, detentions without access to legal support, family, or the Red Cross, and burning and looting of villages," he said in a statement. — AFP

Mattarella summons PM candidate

ROME: Italy's president yesterday summoned Giuseppe Conte as he prepared to announce whether he will appoint the little-known lawyer to lead a government formed by far-right and anti-establishment groups. Italian media said claims that Conte had exaggerated his CV had delayed President Sergio Mattarella's decision on whether to approve him as premier. The anti-establishment Five Star Movement (M5S) and the anti-immigrant League nominated Conte, 54, for premier on Monday. But scandal soon struck over doubts about his claims to have studied at certain top world universities. Conte's official CV says that he "furthered his juridical studies" at Yale, New York University (NYU), Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, the Sorbonne and Cambridge, but some entries have been called into question. — AFP

Mugabe a no-show at hearing

HARARE: Former Zimbabwean president Robert Mugabe yesterday failed to turn up for a parliamentary hearing where he was due to give evidence on corruption in the diamond mining industry. The 94-year-old, who is in frail health, had been summoned to a session at 9:00 am (0700 GMT), but when he did not show up, lawmakers rescheduled the session for Monday. Committee head Temba Mliswa, an independent lawmaker, told reporters that the parliamentary committee was "cognizant of the fact that 9:00 am was a bit too early" for the former president to show up. He said the Monday session had been set for 2:00 pm, although no-one in Mugabe's office would say whether or not he would attend. Lawmakers want to question him over his 2016 claim that Zimbabwe lost \$15 billion in revenue due to corruption and foreign exploitation in the diamond sector. — AFP

Leftist firebrand seeks to end Turkey oppn losing streak

CORUM, Turkey: Turkey's opposition is fielding a leftist candidate known for impassioned speeches and even anti-American rhetoric in a bid to pose a serious challenge to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan in June's elections. With the election just over a month away, the Republican People's Party (CHP) - a bastion of secular Turkey founded by Mustafa Kemal Ataturk - is hoping to reverse its electoral fortunes which has seen it struggling to win more than a quarter of the vote. This time, party chief Kemal Kilicdaroglu decided not to run for the presidency on June 24, instead tapping Muharrem Ince, a senior MP and former physics teacher who has twice tried to oust him as leader.

A gifted speaker who is unafraid of mimicking Erdogan's tactics, Ince is a total contrast to mild-mannered Kilicdaroglu who, since taking over in 2010, has failed to dent the president's armor. Since his nomination earlier this month, Ince has crisscrossed the country giving impassioned speeches, riding a bike, driving a tractor and wearing a flatcap in a bid to show he is close to the people's concerns.

And many of his rallies have been well outside of the CHP heartland. "He has been combative in his political career, has close contacts with the people in a similar way to Erdogan and is above all witty and tolerant," Tanju Tosun, a professor at Ege University, told AFP. Such things, he said, are "key" for competing against Erdogan.

'Reconcile this nation'

At a pre-election rally in Corum, an Anatolian city east of Ankara, Ince struts onto the stage in his trademark informal style, not wearing a tie. Seeking to go beyond polarizing party politics, CHP branding is not encouraged with supporters just waving Turkish flags. "I want to reunite and reconcile this nation, bring it under one big umbrella," he promises, criticizing Erdogan's polarizing rhetoric and saying he will not be a "ranting and raving" leader.

In November 2015 parliamentary polls, over 61 percent of Corum voted for Erdogan's ruling party but CHP officials claim to be making inroads. On his way to the rally, Erdal Uzunakaya agrees the country



SAMSUN, Turkey: Presidential candidate of Turkey's main opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) Muharrem Ince greets supporters during an election campaign rally on May 19, 2018. — AFP

needs a fresh face in leadership, pointing to the weakening Turkish lira and rising petrol prices. "Ince is a brave person. He makes me proud." But not everyone is convinced, with tradesman Adnan Ercan still undecided. "It will become clearer at the end," he said.

Breaking new ground

In another break with tradition, Ince has sought to build bridges with groups who for years have been well outside the CHP's regular support base. In one of first acts as candidate, he went to meet Selahattin Demirtas, the imprisoned presidential candidate for the pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP). The CHP has often had uneasy relations with the Kurds, who make up an estimated one fifth of the population but who have seen the party as nationalist and not concerned with their interests.

Fuat Keyman, director of the Istanbul Policy Center think-tank, said both Ince and nationalist candidate Meral Aksener of the İyi (Good) Party have been "quite open" on the Kurdish question in the campaign. Symbolically, Ince's first election rally was in Edirne in Thrace close to the border with Greece but his second was in Hakkari, a Kurdish-majority city at the opposite end of the country on

the border with Iraq and Iran. And tearing a page straight out of Erdogan's book, Ince has adopted a more antagonistic stance towards the West that is at odds with the traditional outlook of the CHP. Raising eyebrows in Turkey, he threatened to shut down a US airbase if the United States does not extradite Fethullah Gulen, the Pennsylvania-based Muslim preacher accused by Ankara of being behind the failed 2016 coup.

'Competitive in second round'

Ince's strategy in the election will be to emerge as the strongest opposition candidate to Erdogan and hope the president polls less than 50 percent, forcing a run-off on July 8 where the rest of the opposition will rally around him. Tosun said Ince was the only candidate who could "come close" to challenging Erdogan if there was a second round by harvesting Kurdish votes. He said that Ince's appearance in the race was squeezing the votes of Aksener and her new party, who some analysts previously fancied to make a breakthrough. And Ince himself believes he can rally a wide consensus. "I am the leftwing child of a conservative family," he told Fox News Turkey in an interview. "The family is a coalition!" — AFP

UK mother found guilty of forcing daughter to marry

LONDON: A mother who tricked her teenage daughter into travelling to Pakistan to marry an older man has become the first person in England to be convicted of forced marriage. Campaigners said Tuesday's landmark conviction would send a strong message to families planning to coerce their daughters into marriage, and would empower more girls to speak out. The jury at Birmingham Crown Court in central England heard the girl was betrothed to a man 16 years her senior on a visit to Pakistan when she was 13. The man had sex with her and the girl underwent an abortion on her return to Britain, prosecutors said.

The mother, who cannot be named for legal reasons, took her daughter back to Pakistan in 2016 under the guise of a holiday, but after they arrived the girl was told she would be married. When she protested, her

mother assaulted her and threatened to burn her passport, the court heard. On the day of the wedding - just after her 18th birthday - an Islamic ceremony was performed and the girl made to sign a certificate proving the marriage had occurred, prosecutors said. The mother returned to Britain without her daughter. When a High Court judge ordered the girl's return her mother threatened her with black magic if she told anyone what had happened, prosecutors said. Britain banned forced marriage in 2014. It is also a crime to take someone abroad to be married against their will. The maximum penalty is seven years. Karma Nirvana, a charity supporting forced marriage victims, hailed the verdict as "very significant". "It sets a massive precedent," said Natasha Rattu, a lawyer at Karma Nirvana. "If you are not prosecuting anybody under the law it will not have any deterrent effect."

Campaigners said the verdict would encourage girls from communities that practise forced marriage to speak out. "Many victims don't actually acknowledge that they are being abused because they are conditioned to believe that when they get to an age of marriage their parents choose who they marry," Rattu said. — Reuters

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International

Indian child killer sentenced to death 23 days after arrest

Police probe completed in a week, court trial in 7 working days

INDORE, India: Naveen Gadke was arrested on April 20 and charged with the rape and murder of a baby girl in central India. Three weeks later a court sentenced the 26-year-old odd-job man to death in the fastest such trial known to have happened in modern India, a nation where public outrage is running high because of a series of rapes and related killings. Police, prosecutors and the district court in the city of Indore worked at a furious pace to get the conviction quickly, amid a backlash on the streets, including marches in this city of about 2 million, 550 miles south of Delhi.

This is in a country where Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government last month introduced the death penalty for rapes of girls under 12 years in response to public pressure but which has a notoriously slow court system, with cases taking at least six years on average to final ruling, according to governance tracking group Daksh. But the pace of the trial, the intensifying push for speedy hearings in rape cases, and questions about the legal defense provided to Gadke - who pleaded not guilty - have raised concerns among some legal rights advocates.

They are fearful there will be wrongful convictions and hangings when a defendant cannot afford to hire a good lawyer. "While expeditious trials are ideal, these should not be at the cost of fair trial safeguards like the right to adequate time to prepare a defence and the presumption of innocence," said Leah Verghese, senior campaigner at human rights group Amnesty International India, in an email response to questions.

Senior Supreme Court lawyer Rebecca John said she was concerned. "As a principle, I am opposed to rushing through investigative processes and trial processes" she said. But reflecting the mood of the nation, well-known Supreme Court lawyer Dushyant Dave, a vocal supporter of capital punishment, said India "needs to send at least

500 people to death in the next one year to end this endemic" of rape. "Our system is archaic and extremely inefficient," he added.

Such views have resonated with the mother of the dead three-month-old girl as she sat on the front yard of a 200-year-old palace where her homeless family sleeps in the open. She told Reuters she was happy with the swift verdict but her daughter would get justice only when Gadke is hung to death, just as quickly. "Once such men are hanged, no one will dare to do anything like this to any girl," she said. Sachin Verma, Gadke's lawyer, said his client told him that his estranged wife "framed" him, but said little else. Reuters could not trace Gadke's wife to seek comment.

Slapping and shoving

At trial, the mother, police officers and the prosecution lawyer said security cameras showed Gadke taking away the infant as she lay asleep by her parents. Fifteen minutes later, he was seen coming out of the basement of a nearby building, where her blood-smear body was found, police said. Medical tests, completed quickly under instructions from government officials, confirmed she was raped, and the semen from a vaginal swab was found to be a DNA match with Gadke, according to court documents reviewed by Reuters.

Gadke's lawyer Verma, who specializes in matters related to crimes against children, said he reluctantly took the case on state government orders. That was after four other lawyers refused to defend Gadke, Verma said. In a sign of

how high temperatures were rising in the community, around a dozen lawyers attacked the defendant outside the court when he first arrived, slapping and shoving him, according to police.

Prosecutors presented 29 witnesses, including police and shopkeepers who found the victim's body, and "everybody supported the prosecution", said Verma. He presented no witnesses for Gadke's defense. Verma said he could have done better if he had more time to prepare for the case. "They had to create a story and they had to decide quickly," said Verma, who is expecting to receive 4,000

rupees (\$58) from the state government for representing Gadke. "My client told me: 'Everyone has already decided I am guilty. What's the point of all this?'"

Special prosecutor Mohammad Akram Shaikh said that they had "conclusive evidence" against Gadke. Judge Varsha Sharma, who deals with matters related to crimes against children and ruled on the case, declined to comment.

Sending a message

Police pressed charges against Gadke within seven days of the crime, said Police Inspector Shivpal Singh Kushwah. "All of us wanted to send a message that the law can work fast, and we succeeded," he said. The court sat for seven straight working days to hear the case, unusual in India where one court is often dipping in and out of several cases on the same day. A government-run laboratory conducted tests on forensic evidence within four days of a police

request. This usually takes more than a month, Kushwah said. After hearing details of his crime from Shaikh and the witnesses, Judge Sharma found Gadke guilty and ordered his death by hanging. "This falls under the rarest of rare case and it would be appropriate to hand such a criminal the toughest punishment," the judge declared. The sentence has to be confirmed by a higher court, for which Gadke will be provided a different lawyer by the state government. The court's decision can be challenged in the Supreme Court. An appeal to India's president is the last resort. The entire process can take years.

Acceleration demanded

Even before Gadke's trial, there were growing calls to speed up child rape trials. Lower courts take an average of five years to complete cases of prisoners sentenced to death, high courts one year and four months, and the Supreme Court two years and one month, according to a 2016 report by the Centre on the Death Penalty in the National Law University of Delhi. The university study found that 74 percent of 373 death row prisoners they interviewed were economically vulnerable. The majority were from low castes and religious minorities. In the Indore case, Gadke did various jobs like cleaning utensils in eateries.

By contrast, trials involving India's rich and powerful sometimes take more than 10 years. Gurmeet Ram Rahim, a wealthy self-styled godman who had many followers, was convicted last year on charges of raping two followers - 15 years after the case was registered. Government statistics show that since 2012, when a young woman was gang raped in a moving bus in Delhi igniting national uproar, reported rape cases have climbed 60 percent to around 40,000 in 2016 - about one every 15 minutes - with child rape accounting for about 40 percent. — Reuters



Fears raised over trial's fairness

News in brief

Nipah feared in Karnataka

KOCHI/MUMBAI: Indian health officials were checking yesterday if a rare, brain-damaging virus had spread to a second state after two suspected cases reported in southern Karnataka, as the death toll in adjacent Kerala, where the outbreak began, rose to 11. There is no vaccine for the Nipah virus, carried by fruit bats and spread through contact with bodily fluids, the World Health Organization (WHO) says. Treatment for the virus, which has a mortality rate of about 70 percent, is supportive care. Symptoms of the virus surfaced in a 20-year-old woman and a 75-year-old man in the port city of Mangalore after they travelled to neighboring Kerala and had contact with infected patients, said Rajesh B V, a health official in Karnataka. "They are not confirmed Nipah cases yet, so there is no need to panic," he said by telephone. — Reuters

Rohingya militants killed Hindus

YANGON: Rohingya militants massacred Hindu villagers during last year's uprising in Myanmar's Rakhine, Amnesty International said yesterday in a report that sheds fresh light on the complex ethnic rivalries in the state. The killings took place on Aug 25, 2017, the report said, the same day that the Rohingya insurgents staged coordinated deadly raids on police posts that tipped the state into crisis. Myanmar's military responded to the insurgent raids with harsh reprisals that forced some 700,000 Rohingya Muslims out of the mainly Buddhist country where they have faced persecution for years. The UN says the army crackdown amounted to "ethnic cleansing" of the Rohingya, with soldiers and vigilante mobs accused of killing civilians and burning down villages. But the Rohingya militants have also been accused of abuses. — AFP

US staffer suffers brain injury

BEIJING: The US embassy in China issued a health alert yesterday after a US government employee experienced an "abnormal" sound and suffered a mild brain injury - in an incident reminiscent of a mysterious illness that hit diplomats in Cuba. US and Chinese authorities are investigating the matter after the employee, who was assigned to the southern city of Guangzhou, was diagnosed with mild traumatic brain injury (MTBI), said embassy spokeswoman Jinnie Lee. In an alert emailed to US citizens in China, the embassy said it does not know what caused the symptoms or of any similar situations in the country. The embassy's health alert says the government employee "recently reported subtle and vague, but abnormal, sensations of sound and pressure". Lee said the employee experienced "a variety of physical symptoms" between late 2017 through April 2018. — AFP

Donor 'linked to UN bribery scandal'

SYDNEY: A billionaire businessman previously accused of meddling in Australian politics on China's behalf was co-conspirator in a plot to bribe a top United Nations official, a senior Australian politician has claimed. Andrew Hastie, who chairs Canberra's intelligence and security committee, used the legal protection of parliamentary privilege to say that Chinese-Australian Chau Chak Wing was a figure codenamed CC-3 by the US Federal Bureau of Investigation. "CC-3 is Dr Chau Chak Wing," Hastie said in a speech on Tuesday evening, further fuelling fears about Chinese efforts to shape policy and opinion in democratic institutions. "The same man who co-conspired to bribe the UN president of the General Assembly, John Ashe. The same man with extensive contacts in the Chinese Communist Party," he said. Hastie's allegation follows recent meetings with US intelligence and security agency officials, who he said confirmed the identity. — AFP

5 killed on sixth day of India-Pak border clashes

SRINAGAR: A mortar and gunfire battle between Indian and Pakistani forces along their Kashmir frontier killed five civilians yesterday, taking the death toll in the six-day confrontation to 16, officials said. At least 80,000 people from dozens of villages along the 200-km long border between the Jammu region in Indian-administered Kashmir and Pakistan's Punjab province have fled their homes since Friday, an Indian government official said. "Some have gone to their relatives and for others we are arranging shelter, food and water," local divisional officer Hemant Kumar Sharma told AFP.

Indian authorities have closed all schools within five kilometres of the border and government forces used

armored vehicles to evacuate panicked residents who left behind homes and cattle. The Indian and Pakistan militaries held talks this week but failed to calm one of the deadliest flare-ups this year. "Five residents have died in the cross border shelling so far," Sharma said. Indian Kashmir's director general of police, Shesh Paul Vaid, had earlier said that 30 were wounded overnight in Pakistani firing.

On Tuesday an Indian soldier and an eight-month-old baby were killed. Another nine people died on the first day of hostilities on both sides of the border, just before a visit to Kashmir by India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "People are helping each other to flee. Police are also helping in evacuating vulnerable border residents," Vaid said. Another police officer, speaking on condition of anonymity, described the flare-up as a "war-like situation" in the affected districts of Samba, R S Pura, Akhnoor and Arnia.

The border where the clashes broke out is not disputed between the two nations, even though both lay claim to all of Kashmir. The Himalayan territory has

Protester dead in second day of south India clashes

TUTICORIN, India: A protester was killed by a rubber bullet in southern India yesterday, a day after 10 were shot dead when police opened fire on a rally demanding the closure of a copper plant, officials said. Tuesday's police firing, which also left about 80 people injured, sparked intense criticism. Amnesty International said police had "many questions to answer" and those responsible should be brought to justice.

Yesterday, police fired rubber bullets at the crowd and sent volleys of live ammunition overhead, officials and witnesses said, after protesters in the port city of Tuticorin hurled home-made bombs and pelted them with stones. "We fired live ammunition in the air to disperse the protesters. But the mob continued to pelt stones and bombs. They were setting fire to vehicles," a police officer told AFP. "We were forced to fire rubber bullets which unfortunately hit one man in the spine and he died," he added. Another police officer at the scene also said a 22-year-old man had died.

A video on social media yesterday showing a police officer atop a bus pointing an assault rifle at the crowds has fuelled fresh anger. The demonstrators are demanding the closure of a copper plant on the outskirts of Tuticorin in the southern state of Tamil Nadu owned by British-based mining giant Vedanta Resources, which they say is causing environmental damage. Witnesses said demonstrators set fire to a police bus yesterday and ransacked a liquor shop. TV footage showed police in riot gear patrolling streets littered with stones and burnt tyres. Traders shut down shops as authorities imposed a curfew in parts of the city.

'Mass murder'

Tamil Nadu chief minister Edappadi K Palaniswami ordered a judicial inquiry into Tuesday's shootings but defended the police response. M K Stalin, leader of the main Tamil Nadu opposition party the DMK, said police were guilty of "atrocities". "Mass Murder of Innocent People," he tweeted yesterday. "Who ordered the police firing on protesters? Why were automatic weapons used to disperse the crowd and under what law is this permitted?"



An Indian villager stands next to the damaged ceiling of his home following cross-border firing between India and Pakistan in Arnia sector about 35km from Jammu yesterday. — AFP

been divided between India and Pakistan since the end of British colonial rule in 1947. Pakistan Rangers and Indian Border Security Force officers spoke by

telephone on Monday. The rival militaries often accuse each other of initiating battles in violation of a 2003 border ceasefire. — AFP



TUTICORIN, India: Indian police officials run towards protesters in this southern Indian city on Tuesday. — AFP

Rahul Gandhi, the national leader of the opposition Congress party, on Tuesday described the deaths as "a brutal example of state-sponsored terrorism". "These citizens were murdered for protesting against injustice," he said. Police said Tuesday that 12 people had died but later revised the toll. P Mahendran, superintendent of Tuticorin district police, said 18 officers were wounded in the clashes. The Madras Union of Journalists complained of police heavy-handedness. "A group of policemen and rogue elements snatched and damaged the cameras," said journalist S Raghunathan.

The plant is currently closed as Vedanta's Sterlite Copper subsidiary seeks a new license so it can be expanded. The deaths came on the 100th day of demonstrations against the plant, which environmentalists and residents say is contaminating water sources - a charge the company denies. The protests intensified after Vedanta, owned by Indian billionaire Anil Agarwal but with its head office in London, sought to double the 400,000-tonne annual capacity of the plant. It was shut briefly after an alleged gas leak in March 2013 that left hundreds with breathing difficulties, nausea and throat infections.

The company maintains that it adheres to environmental standards and said it was the victim of "false propaganda" about its operations. Tamil Nadu is one of India's most industrialized states and similar protests over environmental concerns have turned deadly in the past, including in Tuticorin. Vedanta's share price closed at 250 rupees (\$3.65) after losing more than seven percent on the Bombay Stock Exchange. The stock had opened at 263 rupees per share. — AFP

Mahathir widens graft crackdown, MH370 search to end next week

KUALA LUMPUR: Ninety-two-year-old Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad held his first cabinet meeting yesterday as officials widen a probe into corruption linked to the previous government with raids on sites linked to the head of a Muslim pilgrimage fund. Mahathir led an opposition coalition to a shock victory in elections this month after campaigning on rising living costs and a promise to clean up corruption and yesterday vowed to cut the national debt of 1 trillion ringgit (\$251.67 billion).

Police on Tuesday raided five sites linked to Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim, the former government-appointed chairman of Tabung Haji, a fund for Muslim pilgrims to Makkah, an MACC official told Reuters. A number of documents, jewellery and cash were confiscated, said the source, who declined to be identified due to the sensitivity of the issue. The Star newspaper reported on its website that the cash found totalled 120 million Malaysian ringgit (\$30 million). Abdul Azeez Abdul Rahim was not immediately available for comment.

Mahathir, who was also prime minister for 22 years from 1981, said after his first cabinet meeting his government would try to cut the national debt, which he put at 65 percent of GDP, by reviewing projects and a 10 percent reduction in cabinet ministers' salaries. The previous government had said the national debt had been below its self-imposed ceiling of 55 percent of GDP.

Mahathir also said he would review the search by a US firm for Malaysia Airlines Flight MH370 which disappeared on its way from Kuala Lumpur to Beijing on March 8, 2014, with 239 people on board in one of the world's biggest aviation mysteries. The new transport minister later said the search would end on Tuesday. Grace Nathan, a Malaysian lawyer whose mother Anne Daisy was on the plane, said the news was not a surprise but said the government should leave the "no find, no fee" offer on the table in case a company wants to take on the search in future. "We can't tell (the government) what to do but for me and the families... finding the plane is important for many reasons," she told AFP.—Agencies

International

Trump says summit with Kim could be delayed

US president blames Xi for Korean leader's about-face

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump warned Tuesday his landmark summit with Kim Jong Un may be delayed, but insisted the North Korean leader is "serious" about denuclearization. Hosting South Korean President Moon Jae-in at the White House, Trump did little to quell speculation about the wavering prospects of a historic first summit between US and North Korean leaders. "It may not work out for June 12," Trump said of the Singapore meeting, adding in a now familiar non-committal riff: "if it does not happen, maybe it will happen later."

"There are certain conditions we want to happen. I think we'll get those conditions. And if we don't, we won't have the meeting," he said. Politically, Trump has invested heavily in the success of the meeting, so most US officials, as well as outside observers, privately expect it will go ahead. But as the date draws near, Trump's divergence from his top aides, the differences between the two sides and the astronomically high stakes are coming into sharp relief.

Success could lead to peace on the Korean peninsula and end the threat of a nuclear conflagration. Failure could all but destroy hopes of a peaceful solution to the crisis. "You never know about deals," Trump said. "I've made a lot of deals. You never really know." North Korea's willingness to denuclearize - the very basis for the talks - was recently plunged into doubt when the government denounced US demands for "unilateral nuclear abandonment". Pyongyang also canceled at the last minute a high-level meeting with the South in protest over joint military drills between Seoul and Washington.

Despite the North's move, Trump said he believes Kim is willing to give up nukes. "I do think he is serious. I think he is absolutely very serious," the US president said. He suggested that the North Korean leader's apparent about-face may have been at the behest of Chinese President Xi Jinping. "There was a

difference when Kim Jong Un left China the second time," Trump said. "There was a different attitude after that meeting and I was a little surprised. And I think things changed after that meeting so I can't say that I am happy about it." And Trump again raised the prospect of a windfall for Kim if he mothballs weapons programs. The North Korean leader "will be extremely happy" if the deal works out, Trump said. "He will be very happy."

Rescue mission

Moon's trip to the White House represented an effort to salvage the rare diplomatic opening. The dovish Moon deployed a tactic frequently used by foreign leaders who meet this most mercurial of presidents: Flattery. "Thanks to your vision of achieving peace through strength as well as your strong leadership," Moon said in the Oval Office, "we find ourselves standing one step closer to the dream of achieving denuclearization on the Korean peninsula." "All this was possible because of you, Mr President," Moon added, taking pains to stress the concrete results of diplomacy so far - most notably the release of three US prisoners from North Korean jail.

Trump praised his guest, but also indicated that a separate, second round of high-level talks between Moon and Kim may also be on ice. "Right now, he doesn't know whether or not he has a meeting," Trump said of Moon. South Korea - deeply worried about Kim's bellicose weapons testing and Trump's similarly aggressive warnings about "fire and fury" - was instrumental in convincing the two Cold War foes to sit down and talk.

Moon sent his own national security advisor to the White House in March, carrying an offer of talks and word that North Korea may be willing to abandon nuclear weapons, an enticing prospect. Trump surprised his guests, his own aides and the



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump and South Korean President Moon Jae-in meet in the Oval Office of the White House on Tuesday. —AFP

world by summarily accepting the meeting, seeing an opportunity to "do a deal" and avoid military confrontation. Analysts saw North Korea's perceived slow peddling as evidence of what they feared all along, that Pyongyang may have been playing for time - hoping to ease sanctions and "maximum pressure", or of South Korea over torquing the prospects of a deal.

"The current episode of tension reflects a wide and dangerous expectation gap between the United States and North Korea," said Eric Gomez of the CATO Institute. "Denuclearization is not off the table for the North, but it expects the United States to end the so-called 'hostile policy' as a precondition for denuclearization." It is far from clear what

that means concretely, but it could include the withdrawal of 30,000 US troops from the Korean peninsula.

Trump has been similarly unclear about his own policy. He indicated the United States may not demand North Korea give up its nuclear program before getting sanctions relief - a sequencing he said was a fatal flaw of the Iran nuclear deal he scrapped. "It would certainly be better if it were all in one. Does it have to be? I don't think I'm going to totally commit myself," Trump said. Pyongyang is on the verge of marrying nuclear and missile technology, allowing it to hit the continental United States with a nuke, a capability Washington has said is wholly unacceptable. —AFP



Moon lavishes praise on Trump



Stacey Abrams

Seeking history, women advance in US midterms

DETROIT: Democratic voters in Georgia nominated a candidate on Tuesday who could make history as the first African-American female governor in the United States. Stacey Abrams won her party's nomination in a closely watched race showcasing divergent Democratic strategies on how to win in a Republican-dominated southern state. She was among a slate candidates being selected by voters in four states to advance to the November midterm elections.

In Texas and Kentucky, contests were also pushing women to the forefront of the fight for the House of Representatives, where Democrats need to wrest 23 seats from Republicans to gain control. Several races were also a referendum on long-simmering divisions within the Democratic party. Kentucky Democrats picked a female former

Marine fighter pilot, Amy McGrath, in a snub to the party establishment for a US House seat district that Democrats hope to put into play.

The Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (DCCC) had promoted the candidacy of Lexington Mayor Jim Gray, who conceded the race and urged his supporters to support McGrath. McGrath will face US Representative Andy Barr, the Republican incumbent, in November. Record numbers of women are running across the nation, especially on the Democratic ticket, in the first election since Republican President Donald Trump won the White House in 2016. In Georgia, Abrams became the first black female in the United States to win a major party's nomination for governor, according to the Gender Watch project, a nonpartisan group tracking elections. —Reuters

Maduro expels US diplomats, rejects sanctions

CARACAS: Venezuela ordered the expulsion of the top two US diplomats in the country Tuesday, charging it was the victim of a "political and financial lynching" after Washington tightened sanctions over Nicolas Maduro's reelection. Maduro announced the expulsions in a televised speech after being officially proclaimed the winner of Sunday's election in the South American nation mired in an acute economic crisis and facing growing international isolation. The vote was boycotted by the main opposition parties and widely condemned by the international community, including the United States, which denounced it as a "sham".

The Venezuelan president declared US charge d'affaires Todd Robinson and deputy head of mission Brian Naranjo "personae non gratae". "They must leave the country in 48 hours in protest and in defense of the dignity of

the Venezuelan homeland... Enough of conspiracies!" he said. The United States immediately threatened to retaliate. A State Department official told AFP that Washington had "not received notification from the Venezuelan government through diplomatic channels," but that if the expulsions are confirmed, "the United States may take appropriate reciprocal action".

In anticipation that Venezuela's charge d'affaires in Washington, Carlos Ron, would be expelled, he was appointed vice minister of foreign affairs for North America. On Monday, President Donald Trump tightened sanctions against Caracas, making it harder for the Maduro regime to sell off state assets. "I repudiate all the sanctions that are sought against the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, because they harm it, they generate suffering for the people of Venezuela," Maduro said in the speech.

He promised to present "evidence" that both diplomats were engaged in a political, military and economic "conspiracy". Robinson denied the allegations. "We strongly reject the accusations against me and against" Naranjo, he told journalists in the western city of Merida, promising to return there even despite Maduro expelling him. —AFP

Calls mount for USC president to quit over scandal

LOS ANGELES: Two hundred professors at one of California's top universities on Tuesday demanded the resignation of the school's president over a widening sexual abuse scandal involving a campus gynecologist. The faculty members of the University of Southern California (USC) said they wanted to "express their outrage and disappointment over the mounting evidence of president (C.L. Max) Nikias's failure to protect our students, our staff and our colleagues from repeated and pervasive sexual harassment and misconduct."

In their letter to the board of trustees, the professors said Nikias had lost the "moral authority" to lead the private institution or to oversee an investigation into decades of alleged sexual abuse by George Tyndall, a gynecologist formerly employed at the school. "USC kept a physician in

a position of power and trust who abused that power and trust to sexually assault and degrade women students, targeting for abuse the most vulnerable international and minority students," the letter says. "The university's conduct is as much at issue in this case as the physician's."

Contain fallout

USC has come under seething criticism as it tries to contain fallout from the growing scandal that erupted after the Los Angeles Times detailed how Tyndall was allowed to continue practicing for years despite complaints of misconduct going back as far as the year 2000. The university's board of trustees - which includes billionaires, real estate developers and Hollywood power players such as Steven Spielberg - rejected calls for Nikias to step down, saying that while it was "troubled" by the scandal, it fully supported him.

"The executive committee of the board has full confidence in president Nikias's leadership, ethics and values, and is certain that he will successfully guide our community forward," a statement said. So far, six women have filed lawsuits against the university and Tyndall, with more expected to follow. —AFP

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Mexico stumbles in race against global obesity time-bomb

Children at school already mock six-year-old Yatzryi by calling her "fatty", fuelling her mother Ana Laura Martinez's worries about her daughter's health if she does not lose about 16 kg (35lb). As Yatzryi fidgeted with a large pink hair bow, Martinez explained that tests so far have shown no signs of the 38 kg child having the illness that plagues her family - and ranks as Mexico's biggest killer - type 2 diabetes.

"I'm diabetic. My dad died very young of diabetes at 39, my grandmother also died, my mother has it, my brother has it. It's something in the family," said Martinez, in the obesity clinic at the Federico Gomez Children's Hospital. "She needs to cut out some of what's causing her harm so she doesn't suffer from this ugly disease." She hopes the clinic will develop a diet plan for Yatzryi, who loves spaghetti, corn, and maize snacks sold on the street. As one of the world's fattest nations with over 70 percent of adults and a third of children overweight or obese, Mexico is acting as an early warning for countries around the world struggling to cope with a future of soaring obesity levels.

Globally, around 40 percent of adults are overweight and 13 percent obese, says the World Health Organization (WHO), with the surge in obesity in the last three decades presenting a major public health epidemic in both poor and rich nations. While some Mexicans joke about their carbohydrate-heavy "Vitamin T" diet of tacos, tortas and tamales, the nation's waistbands are being stretched by an addiction to cheap and ubiquitous junk food and increasingly sedentary lifestyles.

Add its standing as one of the world's top soft drink guzzlers, and health professionals are bracing for a time bomb scenario with a high economic and social cost. "When you get to treat obesity, you're one day too late. The only way to solve this is prevention," said Salvador Villalpando, a specialist doctor who runs the child obesity clinic where the image of a chubby boy is drawn on his window. "There is no way of solving the problem of a population that is already obese. Those kids are very, very unlikely to lose weight in their own hands."

While abuse or family breakdown are some of the many complex factors affecting obesity clinic patients, Villalpando said most Mexican children are eating adult foods by age two. Most of the children at the clinic, who largely come from low-income families, already show signs of insulin resistance, said Teresa Siliceo, paediatric nutritionist at the hospital. By the time they become teenagers, around a third are likely to develop preventable diseases such as type 2 diabetes, which can cause blindness, kidney failure and amputations.

Killing with kindness

The availability of junk food at schools and insufficient restrictions on advertising to children compound Mexico's weight problem, said those working to tackle obesity, highlighting the heavy influence of major food companies. Other culprits are found close to home with children growing up with extended families plied with treats by relatives. "It's a language of care, when we need to change or modify the habits, we have a lot of problems with the grandmothers or fathers," said Siliceo, in a consulting room at the hospital. Having money to eat at street stalls and buy snacks also carries a status value for many, said the nutritionist, who helped develop an app to aid obese children shed weight.

Ramping up public health campaigns and education around nutrition is crucial, said those working to tackle obesity. "A kilo of mandarins costs you the same as 600 ml (20 ounces) of Coca-Cola or a few grams of potato chips. It's education and access," said Alejandro Calvillo, head of consumer group El Poder del Consumidor. His group is taking the government to court over Mexico's food labeling system it claims is tricky to grasp, fails to meet WHO guidelines and violates the right to health. Unless Mexico sheds its excess weight, the nation faces hefty health bills in the future. The United Nations estimates the cost of dealing with an overweight population will be \$13 billion a year over the next six decades.

Diabetes alone - which affects up to 14 percent of adults and kills around 100,000 a year - costs Mexico almost \$5 billion annually, straining public health budgets and families facing expensive treatments such as dialysis, said think tank IMCO, the Mexican Institute for Competitiveness. "It's a complete drama for families without full or effective access to healthcare to treat these sort of diseases, they are families that could be sent to poverty," said Fatima Masse, IMCO public health consultant. Compounding Mexico's nutritional nightmare is the dual-edged sword of obesity and under-nutrition, particularly in children chewing on the empty calories of fast food.

Rural communities are particularly at risk as some swap traditional diets for processed alternatives, said Calvillo, urging greater promotion of nutritional staples such as beans. Children could swap sugary breakfast cereals, he said, for the cheaper, healthier amaranth grain, prized by the Aztecs. A greater focus on "sustainable diets" would also help farmers better employ technology to grow a wide variety of crops with a low environmental impact. For Yatzryi, however, there's still time to change her diet to stop her falling victim to the disease plaguing her family. "The doctor told me that she's very little to be suffering something like that ... We're in time," said her mother. — Reuters



The nuke test site North Korea plans to destroy

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un's promise to dismantle his country's only known nuclear test site has shone the spotlight on the secretive facility near the Chinese border. The Punggye-ri test site, located beneath a mountain in the country's north-east, hosted all six nuclear tests Pyongyang has conducted-most recently last September. Earlier this month the North announced it would blow up the site's access tunnels between May 23-25 in front of invited foreign media. The announcement came as the diplomatic push for Pyongyang to give up its nuclear weapons gathered pace with an unprecedented summit between Kim and US President Donald Trump announced for June 12 in Singapore. But both sides have since cast doubt on whether that meeting will take place.



Activities closely watched through satellite imagery

The site is located deep inside mountains in the northeastern North Hamgyong province, which borders China. Surrounded by high, craggy peaks and carved deep into a granite mountain more than 2,000 metres (6,500 feet) high, the test site is said to be an ideal venue to withstand the huge forces unleashed by nuclear blasts. The site's location only became known in 2006 when the North conducted its first nuclear test under Kim's late father Kim Jong Il. Activities have been closely watched through satellite imagery since then. Tunnels can be seen entering the site from different directions. The first test was staged in the eastern tunnel, the second and third in the western tunnel and the remainder in the northern tunnel, according to intelligence authorities.

Powerful blast

Tests staged at the site have demonstrated the country's rapid progress in its nuclear program-especially since Kim took power in 2011 and oversaw four atomic tests in only six years. The country's first test was largely seen as a failure and produced an estimated yield of only about one kiloton, compared to as much as 250 kilotons in the sixth-an explosion 16 times more powerful than the US atomic bomb dropped on Hiroshima in 1945. But Punggye-ri's proximity to China has become a source of concern for Beijing, as the tremor from the sixth test was felt across the border and prompted many residents to flee their homes in panic.

Collapse claims

The growing impact of the blasts raised safety con-

cerns, with some Chinese scientists warning that the site could pose a major radioactive threat to the wider region. A recent study by seismologists at the University of Science and Technology of China suggested rock had collapsed under the Mantap peak, making it unusable.

Kim himself has disputed those claims in conversations with his South Korean counterpart Moon Jae-In. "If they come and see, they will understand that there are two bigger tunnels than the existing test facilities and that they are in a very good condition," Kim said, according to comments released by the South.

Empty gesture?

Sceptics have said the move to destroy the site is an empty concession by Kim as the site is already suffering from "tired mountain syndrome" and may be obsolete. Others say North Korea has learned all it needs from the nuclear tests conducted there. "They already collected the necessary data through six nuclear tests and unless they discard that data, there are suspicions over how

significant the dismantling of a nuclear test site that has already run its course is," said Go Myong-Hyun, an analyst at the Asan Institute of Policy Studies. But Jeffrey Lewis of the Middlebury Institute of Strategic Studies says there is "no basis" to conclude Punggye-ri is no longer usable and the promised closure is "not a case of passing off damaged goods".

Radiation fears

The North has long claimed that its nuclear tests posed no environmental threats, saying there was "no radioactive leak" after conducting tests. But some South Korean and Japanese media reported that workers at the site or residents from the area suffered from radioactive exposure and symptoms including cancer and the births of deformed babies, citing the North's defectors and researchers.

Such concerns prompted Seoul's unification ministry to run medical checkups on 30 defectors who hailed from the region for potential radioactive exposure last year. Four of them-from the county of Kilju that includes Punggye-ri-showed symptoms that could be attributed to radiation exposure, but researchers involved in the study said they could not conclude that the health problems had been caused by a nuclear test.— AFP



North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un (center) speaks while attending the first Enlarged Meeting of the 7th Central Military Commission of the Workers' Party of Korea (WPK) in Pyongyang. — AFP

Algeria stadiums, violent outlets for frustrated youth

Football stadiums across Algeria have turned into venues of almost weekly clashes, reflecting what commentators see as the frustrations of young Algerians faced with bleak prospects. Violence peaked in 2014 with the death of Albert Ebosse, a Cameroon striker with Algeria's JS Kabylie, who was killed on the field by a projectile thrown from the stands.

But sanctions and fair play campaigns have since failed to quell the phenomenon. This season's matches-both professional and amateur-have been regularly interrupted by pitch invasions, clashes between young fans and police, and attacks on referees. Club suspensions and bans on spectators have changed little. Last December, clashes between rival fans at an amateur derby in eastern Algeria left one person dead.

In mid-April, more than 100 people were injured in

clashes at an Algeria Cup semi-final, pushing the interior ministry to set up a commission of inquiry, determined to "put an end" to the violence.

'Only free spaces'

Sociologist Nouredine Bekkis said the unrest in Algeria's stadiums is "proportional to the level of frustration in society," he said. Nearly a quarter of the workforce under 30 are unemployed in Algeria, where political life is monolithic, taboos rife and distractions rare. "Young people go to the stadium with a rage fuelled by a feeling of inability to express themselves, of powerlessness to shape their future," said Bekkis. Inside the stadiums, dilapidated facilities and poor organization keep youth frustrations at a boil. "Some stands have no seats, others don't even have a toilet," said Aberahamane, a 17-year-old fan.

Fans regularly arrive at stadiums several hours before the match begins, often using the time to rile each other up. "The slightest mistake by a referee, the

lack of a goal, or the behavior of a fan of the opposing team can make them explode," said Aberahamane. For the cup semi-finals last month, fans eager to secure the best seats started to arrive nearly nine hours before kick-off. Algeria's professional football body regularly accuses clubs of providing poor organization, security and facilities, said Amar Bahloul, a member of its executive board.

'Security gaps'

Bahloul said he wants stadiums to be equipped with surveillance cameras "to identify troublemakers... and prevent them from entering", like in some European countries. The interior ministry's investigation will home in on "security gaps" that allowed fans to smuggle fireworks and knives into the semi-finals, a police source said. Searches at stadium entrances yield few results, however, as weapons are often already hidden inside by employees linked to the home club or its fans, according to a second police source. Former Algerian football star Mahmoud Guendouz, who played in the 1982 and 1986 World Cups, called on clubs to talk to their fans. "Club leaders have to involve the fans," he said. "Don't sell them fantasies so that disappointment doesn't turn into violence." — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2018

12 The GCC banking is in a very strong spot, says Al-Fulaij**13** Foxconn unit to raise \$4.2bn in China IPO**14** Az-ZAD signs distribution deal with Egyptian Group Americana

ISTANBUL: People pass next to a board displaying US dollars and euros exchange rates in Turkish liras yesterday in Istanbul. —AFP

Turkish lira 'in freefall', eyes on CB

Slump in lira squeezes Istanbul businesses

ISTANBUL: Turkish business is feeling the pain of the dramatic slump in the lira, with many firms squeezed by higher rents and import bills and consumers holding back on spending in the hope the currency will rebound.

The embattled lira yesterday lost over 3.5 percent in value to hit new historic lows against the US dollar, as markets watched to see if the central bank will take emergency action to buttress the currency. Following sharp losses on Tuesday, the lira continued to underperform all other emerging market currencies, after suffering a hammering in Asian trade overnight when Japanese investors sold Turkish assets. It lost 3.6 percent against the dollar to trade at 4.84, only slightly paring losses after earlier for the first time ever testing the 5.0 ceiling by hitting 4.92 lira to the dollar. The currency has lost a fifth of its value this year, fuelling Turkey's double-digit inflation and hitting many store-holders who pay their rent in dollars. In Istanbul's Cevahir Mall, which sells a mix of high end and affordable clothing and electronic goods, retailers said their businesses, which run mainly with dollar-denominated overheads, were suffering.

Nedim Soy, owner of a franchise for the Turkish white goods producer Vestel, said the weak lira had pushed up costs, much of which were priced in foreign currency. "Every

month, there is a price increase of 4-5 percent due to the instability in the exchange rate," he said. Soy was one of nine retailers in large and medium-sized firms who spoke to Reuters in the mall whose goods are both locally made and imported. The mall was quiet at mid-morning during a visit this week. Several of them, pointing to largely empty halls, said sales were down and customers, hit by higher exchange rates, were unable to afford price increases.

Some shoppers in the mall said they were tired of the rapidly increasing prices in dollar-based goods, especially in technology products where Turkey is almost completely reliant on imports.

"During these times, as consumers, we stay away from dollar-based products," said Mutlu, a portfolio manager. Speaking outside the mall, he said he was holding off buying expensive foreign products until the lira stabilized.

"I'm waiting for the election and after," he said.



Erdogan remarks on economy sparked lira sell-off

President Tayyip Erdogan sparked a sell-off in the already weakening lira last week when he said he planned to take greater control of the economy after next month's election, deepening concerns about his influence on monetary policy. The lira's losses, which have eroded the purchasing power of ordinary Turks, could bode ill for his chances in the June 24 parliamentary and presidential elections.

The Turkish Statistical Institute said yesterday that consumer confidence had fallen in May to its lowest level this year. Its confidence index hit 69.9 points this month, from 71.9 points in April. Anything below 100 reflects a pessimistic outlook.

'Arab Spring'

An association of Turkish retailers called on the government in November to grant tax breaks after their profits and growth was hit by the weak lira, saying that

several large retailers had scaled back expansion plans last year. The slide in the lira accelerated yesterday as it slipped 5 percent to a record low of 4.929 to the dollar, driven by a lack of trust in the central bank's ability to rein in inflation. Erdogan, a self-described "enemy of interest rates", has called repeatedly for rates to be lowered.

Bilal Sayan, deputy manager at clothing retailer Sarar, said his store was having problems meeting its dollar-denominated rent - the biggest problem facing mid-size companies now in Turkey. The number of local Turkish customers had also fallen steeply, leaving businesses increasingly reliant on tourists benefiting from the exchange rate, he said.

In 15 years of rule, Erdogan and his AK Party have encouraged the building of malls around Turkey, driving economic expansion through construction and retail growth. Istanbul evolved into a travel destination for shopping, especially for tourists from the Middle East, who now offer one of the glimmers of hope for Turkish businesses. "We're experiencing an Arab spring. Unfortunately, that's the life we're living," department store employee Tolga said. —Agencies

Mobile payment firms struggle to dethrone cash in Southeast Asia

SINGAPORE/HANOI: Bui Mai Phuong is an avid online shopper, ordering anything from clothing to personal-care products from her smartphone. But she prefers to pay with cash. She is among hundreds of millions of people whom firms such as Softbank Group-backed Grab and China's Tencent want to win over as they try to tap into Southeast Asia's burgeoning internet sector.

More than 70 percent of the region's 600 million-plus people do not use banks - higher than the global average of about 30 percent - and e-commerce is projected to hit \$88 billion by 2025. But convincing consumers like Phuong, who lives in Hanoi, could be tricky. "I have never tried using mobile payments because I don't know how to use it and it seems a bit complicated to use," said Phuong, 36, a manager at a construction material supplier in Vietnam.

Mobile payments are ubiquitous in China: a consumer can spend a day without using cash at all in Beijing or Shanghai, and even some beggars accept mobile payments. But cash remains king in Southeast Asia. Hard currency, paid on delivery, accounted for 44 percent of total e-commerce transactions last year and is likely to remain the most popular payment option for at least the next three years, according to data by research firm IDC.

"The biggest challenge for users and merchants to adopt cashless is the fact that cash remains ubiquitous, easy to use and inexpensive," said ride-hailing firm Grab, which has ventured into e-wallets. And the mobile payment marketplace in Southeast Asia remains wide open, with no dominant players. Indonesia's ride-hailing firm Go-Jek's Go-Pay, Singapore-based Grab's GrabPay, Japan's mes-

saging app Line's Line Pay, Momo e-wallet owner M_Service in Vietnam and Voyager Innovations, which operates Paymaya in the Philippines, have all entered the fray. The gaming company Razer Inc has also indicated it is eager to play a role.

Cash on delivery costs e-commerce businesses more than other payment methods, said Alibaba Group Holding-backed e-retailer Lazada Group.

For example, sometimes a customer does not have enough cash on hand, or is not home to pay for the delivery. In those cases, the product must be sent back to the seller, adding logistical costs, Lazada said. Mobile payments address some of those problems. They can also benefit buyers by keeping payment in escrow and releasing it only on delivery.

But it can be difficult to persuade users to switch from cash when they earn about \$200 on average a month in economies like Vietnam and Indonesia, according to economic data provider CEIC. "To break habits of using cash, Grab is creating more daily use cases for cashless payment - commuting, food delivery, paying at food and retail stalls - to drive more usage of the GrabPay e-wallet," Grab said in an email. Mobile payment companies bet they can transform their platforms into financial supermarkets, offering everything from loans to insurance on top of payment options.

Slow going

At the moment, usage is spotty. E-wallets will account for 16 percent of total e-commerce transactions in Southeast Asia by 2021, up from last year's 9 percent, according to IDC. In countries like Vietnam, where the informal economy has long been a key part of the social fabric, many consumers do not bother to get a bank account.

Some want to stay under the taxman's radar or, like Quang Thi Si, simply do not see the need for a bank. Si, a 48-year-old scrap collector near Ho Chi Minh City, said her business is all cash. "Sometimes I need to send money to my relatives at home, and I often send in cash through

my friends," she said. "I don't think I will have a bank account in the future because I don't think I need it." But Si does have a smartphone. More than 90 percent of Southeast Asia's internet access comes through mobile devices, according to a Google-Temasek study.

Even so, in countries like the Philippines, which is known for having some of the slowest Internet speeds in Asia-Pacific, connectivity is a major hurdle for digital payments to clear.

'Late to the party'

Such challenges are likely to pose a setback to Ant Financial and Tencent, which are looking outside China for growth. Ant, which has 600 million customers and aims to reach 2 billion worldwide in the next decade, has stepped up investments in the region, including a stake in Thai financial technology firm Ascend Money.

But its services are largely limited to Chinese tourists. "Most of our customers are from China and they are usually very happy to know that we accept AliPay and WeChat Pay. This makes them more willing to spend money too," said Daphne Tan, a staff member at a shop selling durian-flavored coffee and snacks in Singapore's Chinatown.

Tencent plans to make its first foray outside China with an e-payment license in Malaysia for local transactions. The Chinese players are "kind of late to the party," said Michael Yeo, research manager for IDC. "By the time they come in with a local version, if they do, the local players will have a significant advantage," said Yeo.

Razer, which said last month it would buy the remaining stake in payments processor MOL Global that it did not already own, also signed a deal with Singtel to link its e-payments network with that of the telco.

Other recent deals in the sector include Go-Jek's acquisition of three financial technology businesses, while Grab's purchase of a handful of companies as well.

"It's a highly fragmented market. Later on, there will be acquisitions, there will be shutdowns, there will be mergers," IDC's Yeo said. "The market will consolidate." —Reuters

IMF urges Saudi to contain spending as deficit widens

DUBAI: The International Monetary Fund has called on Saudi Arabia to keep public spending under control, even as a partial recovery of oil prices helps the economy emerge from recession. The lender called on the world's top oil exporter to continue "bold structural changes" but to "resist the temptation to re-expand government spending in line with higher oil prices", in a statement late on Tuesday.

Saudi Arabia has embarked on an ambitious reform drive, known as Vision 2030, as it seeks to reduce dependence on oil, diversify its income streams and modernize the economy. But figures released by the finance ministry last week show spending soared 18 percent to \$53.5 billion in the first quarter of this year, outstripping a 15 percent increase in revenues, which hit \$44.3 billion.

This created a quarterly budget shortfall of \$9.2 billion, up 31 percent on the first three months of 2017. Despite the rising deficit, the IMF also congratulated the Kingdom for measures designed to boost non-oil revenues, in the wake of the 2014 crash in crude prices.

"Saudi Arabia is making good progress in implementing its ambitious reform program," the Fund said, at the end of a visit to the country. Bolstering the national purse, the government has hiked local fuel and electricity prices, levied heavy charges on expatriate families and introduced a value-added tax (VAT) at the start of this year. "The VAT is a milestone achievement in strengthening the tax culture and tax administration of the country," said the IMF, while adding "further gradual energy price increases should continue" for local consumers. —AFP

Business

Mastercard and Burgan Bank bring Mastercard World Elite card to Kuwait

New premium card offerings promise a host of exclusive benefits

KUWAIT: Unlocking a new world of privileges and offers for cardholders in Kuwait, Mastercard and Burgan bank have launched the Mastercard World Elite card for Burgan Bank's Private Banking customers.

The exclusive Mastercard World Elite card offers an unrivaled array of specially selected travel, lifestyle and insurance rewards, including exclusive access to handpicked luxury experiences and shopping opportunities in cities around the world, together with a range of discounts on accommodation packages, airline offers and car rentals. In addition, personalized concierge assistance is available 24/7 to World Elite cardholders, helping them get the most from the extensive collection of lifestyle benefits available. Khalid Elgibali, Division President, MENA, Mastercard, said: "We are pleased to collaborate with Burgan Bank for the launch of the card, which offer a tremendous range of value-added propositions for affluent consumers in Kuwait. Kuwait is a key market for Mastercard and continues to enjoy

sustained economic growth. These packages have been tailored specifically to provide an attractive range of benefits for affluent and place a world of exceptional experiences at their fingertips."

Hameed Mohammed Abul, Acting Group Chief Private Banking Officer of Burgan Bank, welcomed the launch, commenting: "Burgan Bank is delighted to offer the card, which provide an unprecedented range of benefits for our valued customers, in addition to the convenience and security that Mastercard's trusted technology brings to every transaction. We look forward to delivering greater value for our affluent cardholders and enriching their lives with this dazzling collection of travel and lifestyle rewards."

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 MENA

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.

The bank was re-certified with the prestigious ISO 9001:2008, making it the first bank in the GCC, and the only bank in Kuwait to receive such accreditation for the third consecutive year. The Bank also has to its credit the distinction of being the only Bank in Kuwait to have won the JP Morgan Chase Quality Recognition Award for twelve consecutive years.



Foxconn unit to raise \$4.2bn in China IPO

SHANGHAI: A unit of electronics manufacturing giant Foxconn said it will launch an initial public offering in China today aimed at raising \$4.2 billion, in the biggest mainland debut in nearly three years. Taiwan's Foxconn Industrial Internet, which makes electronic devices, cloud service equipment and industrial robots, will float 10 percent of its total shares, according to a prospectus filed late Tuesday with the Shanghai stock exchange.

Taipei-based Foxconn itself, which is also known as Hon Hai Precision Industry Co, is the world's largest electronics contract manufacturer, a major supplier of components and assembler of products by international brands such as Apple and Sony.

Foxconn Industrial Internet will issue 1.97 billion new shares at 13.77 yuan per share to raise 27.1 billion yuan (\$4.2 billion). The IPO would be the biggest in mainland China since a market crash in 2015 and one of the largest ever for the country's stock exchanges. Foxconn said it will use the funds raised to upgrade its smart manufacturing, build internet platforms to connect factories and invest in cloud computing and fifth-generation communication technologies in its mainland factories.



This file picture shows a young man walking past a Foxconn recruitment point in Shenzhen, south China's Guangdong province. — AFP

The IPO will be the largest in mainland China since June 2015, when Guotai Junan Securities raised more than \$4.8 billion. After that, a prolonged bout of Chinese stock market turbulence, which saw the key Shanghai index tumble nearly 40 percent in a little more than two months, put a chill on big-ticket listings. The IPO comes as Beijing is pushing to attract more listings

on mainland markets by domestic Chinese technology companies. Analysts say that push is part of broader plans to become a global tech leader. Foxconn, which is one of China's largest single employers, has around a million workers at its factories across the country, plus operations in more than 10 countries including Vietnam, Brazil and Mexico. — AFP

Italy bond sell-off resumes, German yields tumble

LONDON: German 10-year bond yields hit five-week lows yesterday, after news of a slowdown in euro zone business activity cast doubt on the timing of the ECB's planned exit from its hefty stimulus program. While most top-rated eurozone bond yields fell, Italy's bond market succumbed to selling again with the weak data encouraging investors to dump the euro zone's riskiest assets.

Italy's 10-year bond yield, pushed up by growing political risks, hit a 14-month high - widening the gap over German Bund yields by 18 basis points. IHS Markit's Euro Zone Composite Flash Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI), considered a good guide to economic

health, sank in May to an 18-month low of 54.1 from 55.1, below all forecasts in a Reuters poll, which predicted a dip to 55.0. That followed weaker-than-expected PMIs in Germany and France, the two biggest eurozone economies, which alongside soft inflation suggested a stiffer policy challenge for a European Central Bank hoping to exit monetary stimulus.

"We had expected some stabilization (in the PMIs). Clearly, we have not seen that, and the deceleration has increased downside risks to Q2 growth, which is a worry," said Peter Kinsella, senior currency and rates strategist at CBA. "We had anticipated that the ECB would give us some forward guidance in June. They may put a hold on that or give just a modest form of guidance."

Ten-year bond yields in the single currency bloc, with the exception of southern Europe, fell 3 to 6 basis points. Doubt over whether a North Korea summit next month would take place also gave investors another incentive to buy German bonds, considered

one of the world's safest assets. Bund yields fell to five-week low of 0.496 percent.

But Southern European bonds were hit by new signs of momentum slowing. Portuguese, Italian and Spanish bond yields all rose. Italy, also whacked in the past week by concern a spendthrift coalition government was taking shape in Rome, looked the most vulnerable. Its 10-year bond yield shot up more than 10 bps to 2.46 percent, while 2-year Italian yields hit their highest since July 2015 at 0.306 percent.

The cost of insuring exposure to Italian and Spanish debt rose to multi-month highs on concerns over Italy's political risks and broader pressure on markets. "The PMIs were certainly surprising to us this morning," said Investec economist Ryan Djasaputra. "It now also raises questions over the timing of the next move on the ECB, whether there actually will be a rate hike in the summer of 2019." Money market pricing yesterday suggested investors were scaling back bets the ECB would raise rates by mid-2019. — Reuters

Can Lebanon's next government rise to the economic challenge?

BEIRUT: After Lebanon's first parliamentary election in nine years, the dire economic situation and unsustainable public debt levels are top priorities for the next government.

Before the May 6 vote, leaders from across the deeply divided political establishment sounded the alarm about the state's finances and economy. They agree a new government, which is expected to contain the main parties, must be formed quickly, although wrangling over cabinet portfolios could take time, even months.

"The risk is if they really don't form a government and don't make any headway with policy in the remainder of this year," Toby Iles of ratings agency Fitch said.

Why the urgency?

Lebanon is the world's third-most indebted nation with a debt-to-GDP ratio of more than 150 percent. It climbed from around 130 percent in 2011, before war in neighboring Syria, and the arrival of more than a million refugees, depressed growth and paralyzed government decision-making.

The International Monetary Fund has said Lebanon's debt trajectory is unsustainable and needs immediate action, otherwise debt-to-GDP could hit 180 percent by 2023. Annual growth rates have fallen to between 1 and 2 percent, from between 8 and 10 percent in the four years before the Syrian war. Two former pillars of the economy, Gulf Arab tourism and high-end real estate, have suffered. Outgoing Prime Minister Saad Al-Hariri has said the unemployment rate exceeds 30 percent and UNDP says the number of people in poverty has risen by nearly two-thirds since 2011.

"I believe everyone has realized now that the ship might sink with everyone aboard," leading Christian politician Samir Geagea said in a recent interview, describing the economic risks. Absent an effective government, the central bank has for years maintained stability using stimulus packages and unorthodox financial operations, made possible by the billions of dollars deposited into Lebanese banks by the large diaspora.

Attracted by high interest rates and confidence in the country's resilience and banks, diaspora deposits have helped Lebanon's

finances survive shocks including the assassination of Rafik al-Hariri - Saad's father - and conflicts between Hezbollah and Israel. But the risk of an increasing dependence on remittances became clear in November when Saad al-Hariri resigned unexpectedly. Some Lebanese moved their money out of local currency or overseas.

Central bank foreign assets fell by \$1.6 billion that month as it defended the Lebanese pound's peg to the dollar, according to released data. The crisis was short-lived, but the increasingly poor state of national finances has increased the risk that Lebanon might not weather a larger shock so well.

The quicker the government is formed and gets to work, the more support this gives to vital financial inflows. Despite losing more than a third of his MPs, Hariri is expected to lead the next government. Central bank policies have kept growth ticking over and foreign reserves high, but they have increased risk in the financial system. The central bank and IMF say such policies should not continue long-term and government policymaking needs to step in. The finance ministry has met its foreign currency financing needs for 2018 through a \$5.5 billion debt swap with the central bank. The transaction will reduce debt-servicing costs and boost central bank reserves, the government said.

What next?

Sectarian politics and corruption have for years stalled reforms needed to boost growth and bring down debt. International donors want to see reforms to release more than \$11 billion of investment pledged in April to boost the economy. "It will be extremely challenging for the next Lebanese government to live up to these reforms. We know how hard it is to change the way things work here, and addressing the vested interests is hard. But there is no alternative way forward," a western diplomat said. Beirut hailed the money pledged in Paris as a sign of confidence in the government. Donors want to preserve stability as war drags on in Syria, but say assistance depends on Beirut working to a credible economic plan and under international oversight to ensure reforms happen. — Reuters

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Business

Az-ZAD Limited signs distribution deal with Egyptian Group Americana

Az-ZAD becomes the sole distributor of Americana olives in Kuwait

KUWAIT: As part of its dedication to provide Kuwait's food market with carefully picked consumer products, Az-ZAD Limited Foodstuff General Trading Co (LLC), the emerging Kuwaiti supply and distribution chain, announced its new partnership with The Egyptian Canning Company Group AMERICANA responsible for the production of Americana Olives, one of Americana Group's most distinctive brands.

Shortly after Az-ZAD Limited was founded, the company was able to achieve big through its insatiable quest for excellence and unflinching commitment to ensure utmost satisfaction to Kuwaiti customers bringing high quality food products to the market at very reasonable prices. Today, Az-ZAD

Limited adds to its success story yet another achievement becoming the exclusive distributor of Americana Olives featuring whole, sliced, pitted and stuffed California-style black olives, as well as Spanish-style green olives.

Commenting on the deal, Ihab Jalal, Sales and Marketing Manager in Az-ZAD Limited, said: "Our journey towards success forges ahead today as we walk hand in hand with Egyptian Canning Company, the market leader in the field of dried and canned foods. We are confident of establishing new milestones of favorable outcomes in the modern evolving market of Kuwait with our long list of the finest goods that adds-on season after season. Furthermore, Az-ZAD Limited Foodstuff General Trading Co. (LLC) promises

to keep on prioritizing the utmost customers' satisfaction in each and every deal we make." Launched in early 2016, Az-ZAD Limited Foodstuff General Trading Co. (LLC) earned for itself an enviable position in the Kuwaiti food market within a short span of time. With the sole aim of providing premium selected products, the company's team of experts is keen to promote first-rate international brands. Az-ZAD Limited is the exclusive agent in Kuwait for consumer products inclusive of grains, cheeses, sun flower oils, olive oils, sugar, flour, and fruits available in all Kuwait's super-market, COOPs, and hypermarkets.

The Egyptian Canning Company Group AMERICANA offers a wide range of superior quality products of olive oil, green olive, natural black olive and black olive products. ECC was established in Egypt in 1995 and is considered one of the most successful export focused companies, capitalizing on one of Egypt's most important crops - olives. The company's hand-harvested products guarantee high standards of quality and hygiene compatible with



Company optimistic about establishing new milestones



HACCP and certified with ISO 9001, ISO 22000, OHSAS 18001, YUM, BRC, KOSHER, FDA and HALA. For more information, news and updates, follow Az-ZAD Limited on Instagram and Twitter @azzadkw or visit www.az-zad.net.

Skyline to visit Kuwait with 22 homes across Kerala

KUWAIT: Team Skyline is visiting Kuwait with a wide variety of 22 luxury projects across Kerala. The builder's 143rd luxury apartment Skyline Rhythm, opposite to Mar Baselious School at Devalokam, Kottayam is launching in Kuwait. In addition to this, the team is showcasing a host of other luxury projects that includes the new launch, ready to occupy and soon to be completed homes. The team consisting of Sebin (Deputy Manager - Sales), Fomin (Assistant Manager - Sales) and Shabin (Sr Officer - Sales) will be available to provide expert advice, market trends and financing options in various cities. Team Skyline will be available at the Kuwait Continental Hotel, Farwaniya from the 21st of May to 2nd of June 2018.

Backed by a host of post-sales services collectively known as SkyCare, the builder further assures consumers of the best care. Under SkyCare are the Home Care Division that takes care of the utilities, support services, rental and resale, the After-Sales division that repairs and maintains homes, and the Interior Design Division that creates unique designs. In addition, Skylineage provides fully furnished air conditioned transit homes, in six major locations across Kerala, which every Skyliner can use absolutely free of cost, year after year.



The company is also the first builder in India to get the ISO 9001:2015 certification and is the highest rated builder in Kerala to be accredited with CRISIL DA2+. These are some of the facts that allow Skyline Builders to deliver on its promises with utmost trust, quality and assurance to more than 6900 of its customers across 53 countries.

Ooredoo Kuwait reveals Ramadan offer

KUWAIT: In line with its mission to enrich people's lives with services that meet all their demands, Ooredoo Kuwait announced a special Ramadan offer that enables cus-



tomers to get the latest smartphone devices with the exclusive benefits of Shamel plans starting at KD 19 per month.

The special Ramadan offer includes the biggest flagship devices in the market: the iPhone X and iPhone 8 from Apple, and the

Galaxy S9 and Galaxy S9+ from Samsung. The bundles include 500 local minutes, 30 GB of high-speed mobile internet, and boast a variety of exclusive perks available only with Shamel postpaid plans.

The benefits include carrying over unused internet to the following month, which give customers more value for their money; freezing contracts in case of travel for up to 3 months, during which the customer doesn't have to pay the monthly subscription fee, giving them more flexibility with their usage, in addition to Ooredoo Passport roaming plans, and the ability to add a new device to the same contract and transfer contract ownership - all of which are ultimately aimed at giving customers services that suit their needs.

The Ramadan offer is available throughout the holy month in Ooredoo's branches and its authorized resellers, in addition to the online store shop.ooredoo.com.kw

Ramadan's most delicious food moments captured best on this smartphone camera

KUWAIT: Looking to make your food memories stand out from the crowd? Capture the delectable flavors of your favorite dishes with super slow-motion - a must for food photography enthusiasts!

When food arrives to the table, what is the one thing most people do before they start eating? They take a picture or a short video! And during Ramadan, this is no exception. Food photography and videography has evolved from simply taking a quick snap of your favorite dish to now capturing the most creative and visually appealing elements of our food, making it look even more delicious on camera. When it comes to food photography and videography, there is one thing that can help make your posts stand out from the rest: the quality of your smartphone camera. We have already seen the exceptional quality photographs taken by the new HUAWEI P20 Pro, but there's another feature that this device has that sets it apart from other smartphone cameras - its super slow-motion video and ultra-snapshot function.

Whether you are seasoning your iftar dishes with a sprinkle of salt and pepper or drizzling sugary syrup on your kunafa, HUAWEI'S new P20 Pro's slow-motion mode will capture details that cannot be seen with the naked eye, thanks to its 960fps super slow motion, which is 4x higher than the standard 240fps. Each element of a dish, from the mixing of ingredients, to the final dusting of spices, is brought to life with exceptional detail and clarity, emphasizing the delicious quality of each item. With its ultra-snapshot mode, the phone can also capture an image in as little as 0.3 seconds, so you don't have to miss a memorable food moment ever again.



The super slow-motion feature is ideal for capturing recipe creation, as well as the final dish. Re-creating your mother's famous technique for kneading dough? Following her steps have never been easier with the precision and accuracy captured with the slow-motion feature. With the HUAWEI P20 Pro, your camera expertise will have friends and family eager to join you at home for iftar and suhoor.

See the new HUAWEI P20 Pro on 'Aghla Min Aldahab' this Ramadan

This Ramadan, Huawei has also collaborated with prominent TV show 'Aghla Min Aldahab', which is running for the third con-

secutive season. The show, which will be airing on a number of TV stations across the region, showcases exclusive interviews with regional celebrities, providing never-before-seen insights into their personal lives, their work and their passions. This season, elements of the show have been shot on the new HUAWEI P20 Pro smartphone - this is the first TV Show in the Arab world to be filmed using a smartphone camera. The show uses the device's exceptional 40 MP Leica triple camera powered by AI technology, AI Night Mode, 5X Hybrid Zoom and selfie 3D portrait lighting features to capture incredible shots with exceptional detail, clarity and vibrant color.

26 new winners in Al-Hassad Islamic account this week

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank recently conducted its Al-Hassad Islamic account weekly draw. Kuwait's leading sharia-compliant rewards program that offers a broad range of prizes to the largest number of winners, on the yesterday. The account provides 26 weekly prizes that are comprised of KD 25,000 as a grand prize and 25 other prizes valued at KD 1,000 each. AUB also offers four quarterly prizes that are valued at KD 250,000 to each winner allowing them to achieve their dreams of travelling, studying abroad, or owning their dream home or car.

On this occasion Ahli United Bank announced, "With this draw, we are adding 26 new winners and prizes to the Al-Hassad

Islamic account whereby, the total number of winners annually will include more than 1300.

The weekly grand prize winner of KD 25,000 Mariam Omran Hussain. 25 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Mohammad Taher Mohammad Al-Baghli, Yaser Hussain Eissa Al-Sayegh, Ahmad Abdullah Mejbil Al-Azmi, Yousef Sayed Abdulwahab Sayed Abdullateef Al-Refaei, Ali Saad Eid Al-Azmi, Merfat A Mustafa, Khaled Zaid Mohammad Al-Tawari, Fahad Jassim M Alhassawi, Ahmad Saleh Naser Aba Al-Khalil, Ahmad Ruwaished Hamad Al-Azmi, Khaled Nazhan Ramdhan Al Shammani, Intiaz Ali Kagzi Imdad Ali Kagzi, Najat Abdulla Baqer Ashkanani, Qtaim Mekhled Qtaim Al-Mutairi, Hadeel Mohammad Hussain Ghloom, Qais Saleh Yousef Al-Duwairi, Naser Khaled Saleh Al-Hajri, Fahad Mohammad Faleh Al-Shelahi, Ahmad Abbas Agha Ali, Zaid Fahad A Al-Zaid, Fadi Saleh Mahmoud Qadan, Husain Ali Husain Dashti, Walid Elhou, Taklam Fateel Hasan Abdulla and Ebtihal Alawi.

Al-Hassad Islamic account's customers in Kuwait and Bahrain are eligible to participate in the draw in line with the program's terms and conditions. Ahli United Bank added,



"There are increased opportunities that await our current customers and those who are interested in opening an Al-Hassad Islamic account to benefit from the wide range of prizes and opportunities offered this year."

Individual customers can open their accounts with a minimum deposit of KD 100, qualifying them to enter the draw.

M&S says must modernize urgently to survive

LONDON: Britain's Marks & Spencer said it needed to modernize urgently to survive after a second straight annual profit fall and a 321 million pound (\$429 million) charge for a major store closure program. Shares in the 134-year-old clothing and food retailer rose as much as 6.5 percent yesterday after its underlying profit for 2017/18 beat analyst forecasts, it held its dividend payout and investors covered short positions. However M&S, one of the best known names in British retail, faces unrelenting competition from supermarkets and discounters, fashion chains like Zara, H&M and Primark, as well as Amazon, while pressure on consumer spending is hampering efforts to revive its business.

In November, two months after retail veteran Archie Norman joined as chairman, M&S detailed its latest attempt at a turnaround after over a decade of false dawns - a five-year pro-

gram of store closures and relocations to cut excess selling space in its clothing business and moves to make its misfiring food business more competitive. On Tuesday, M&S said it would close 100 UK stores by 2022, as it strives to make at least a third of clothing and home sales online. At the end of 2017/18 M&S had 1,035 stores in the United Kingdom, with 300 clothing, home and food, 696 food-only and 39 outlet stores. "If anything the need for change has become more urgent. Accelerated change in the business is therefore our only option," Chief Executive Steve Rowe told reporters.

FTSE 100 relegation?

Prior to yesterday's announcement M&S shares, had fallen 26 percent over the previous 12 months, putting the stock in danger of being booted out of the prestigious FTSE 100 index. It is now worth less than both online grocer Ocado and online fashion website ASOS, starkly illustrating how shopping habits have changed in only a decade. Rowe, an M&S lifer who has been CEO for two years, said M&S was now tackling the structural issues it faces at pace.

"The new organization, really largely two (clothing and food) businesses, will be in place by July," he said. "And we're concentrating on tackling the culture of the business, making M&S a faster, lower cost and more commercial digital

business." In addition to the accelerated store overhaul, M&S is improving its website and investing to increase its e-commerce capacity. Rowe said it was targeting sustainable, profitable growth in three to five years' time. "These changes come with short term costs which are reflected in today's results," he added. M&S made a pretax profit before one-off items of 580.9 million pounds in the year to March 31, particularly hurt by a decrease in the food gross margin.

That was ahead of analysts' average forecast of 573 million pounds, but down from 613.8 million in 2016-17. After taking account of special items of 514.1 million pounds, including the charge relating to store closures, pretax profit was 66.8 million pounds, a 62 percent fall. Turnover was broadly flat at 10.7 billion pounds, though the dividend was held at 18.7 pence.

'Perpetual transition'

M&S lost more ground in its fourth quarter, with like-for-like clothing and home sales down 3.4 percent, worse than the previous quarter's 2.8 percent drop, and same store food sales down 0.6 percent, against a third quarter fall of 0.4 percent. Prior to yesterday's update, analysts were on average forecasting an underlying pretax profit of 555 million pounds for 2018-19, which would be a third straight year of decline. "The business ... is starting to make decisions that



LONDON: Pedestrians walk past a Marks and Spencer (M&S) shop in central London yesterday. — AFP

have arguably been needed for many years," said Shore Capital analyst Clive Black, who has a "hold" stance on M&S.

"The frustration for long-only investors is that M&S has been in perpetual transition but there remains the need for more patience."

M&S is not the only retailer finding the going tough in Britain. New Look, Mothercare, Carpetright and House of Fraser are all shutting stores. And Toys R Us, electricals group Maplin as well as drinks wholesaler Conviviality have all collapsed this year. — Reuters

Technology

'Overwatch League' eSports dreams of rivaling mainstream standards

The league has developed its own stars and legions of followers

LOS ANGELES: The Los Angeles Gladiators becoming as well known as the Los Angeles Lakers? Or the Boston Uprising one day rivaling the New England Patriots for prestige? It may seem like a distant, unlikely prospect, but the founders, participants and fans of the Overwatch League eSports dream of it one day becoming a reality. In a relatively short space of time, the league has developed its own stars and legions of followers who follow the tournament either virtually or in person at live events. Launched in January, the 12-team competition comprises franchises representing three continents, with nine teams from the United States and one each from Britain, China and South Korea.

The league's models are the major US professional sports leagues such as the National Football League or the National Basketball Association, with a post-season culminating in a July 26-28 grand final where a \$1 million prize will be up for grabs. "The business model for the Overwatch League is no different than the business model for any sports league," Nate Nanzer, the league's commissioner, told AFP. "We create content, we put on matches, we put on 12 matches a week, we build an audience around those matches and we monetize that audience through media rights, merchandise, sponsorship, ticket sales, etc." Overwatch itself is a first-person shooter video game which sees teams of six players battle rival teams in a fast-paced, futuristic setting. The game was developed by Blizzard Entertainment, the California-based company best known for creating the "World of Warcraft" online phenomenon.

Global ambitions
The popularity of the Overwatch League can be seen during a screening of a game at the Blizzard Arena in the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank. Hundreds of spectators, some dressed in the colors of their chosen team and others dressed as characters from the game itself crowd into the arena to watch the two six-member teams go head-to-head in the videogame which is shown on a giant overhead screen.

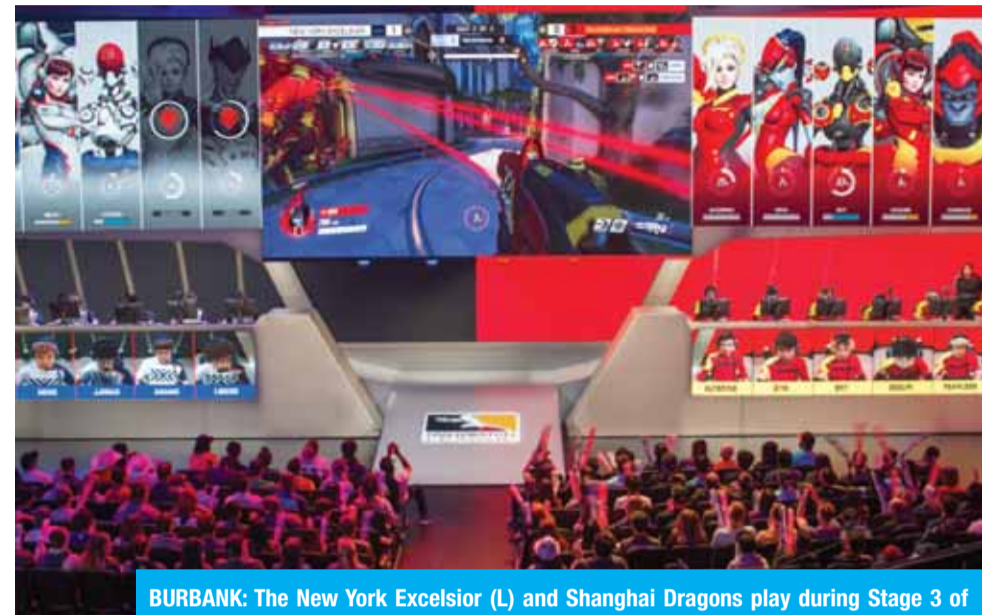
“ Being here, I get it. You care about the game ”

In addition to the fans who crowd into the venue to watch live, hundreds of thousands of fans across the United States and the rest of the world watch the action unfold online via the Twitch social media video platform, anxiously following the exploits of players with names like Verbo, sinatraa or Munchkin.

"I never considered myself a sport person, I am not a fan of traditional sports (...) I never got why everyone is so into sports," said Alex Parrish, a fan from Houston, Texas. "Being here, I get it. You care about the game, the players, I understand what the feeling is to be a sport person. There is also an element where you feel you are at a theme park, with all those big screens, the beautiful set. When the game starts, it gets you so pumped."

The grand plan for the Overwatch League is to create a true global competition, expanding to 28 teams, and featuring regular matches between teams on opposite sides of the world, such as Paris taking on Beijing. "That's something which is unique not only for eSport but for sport," Nanzer says. "There is not a sports league in the world where you have that sort of global competition. It makes sense because Overwatch is a truly global game. "The dream is not a one-off event in a big stadium. The dream is week-in week-out to have millions fans around the world to have the opportunity to engage with this content live.

Professional players
Unsurprisingly, the Overwatch League has already attracted attention from the titans of the traditional US sports league. Robert Kraft, the billionaire owner of the NFL's New England Patriots, and Stan Kroenke, the tycoon whose sports franchises include English Premier League side Arsenal, have reportedly spent around \$20 million to create teams. At the sharp end of the competition are the players. Jacob Lyon, 21, who plays simply as "Jake" is one of 130 professional players drawn from 18 nationalities who plays in the league. Lyon has signed a one-year contract guaranteeing him \$50,000, with the potential for that to rise through prize money payments from a pool



BURBANK: The New York Excelsior (L) and Shanghai Dragons play during Stage 3 of Overwatch League Inaugural Season videogame play at Blizzard Arena. — AFP

worth \$3.5 million. His daily regime resembles that of a conventional athlete, with fitness exercises, training and video analysis. Being healthy is part of being a successful gamer, Lyon said.

"With the league structure, when you're playing week on week on week, you have to be able to be consistent and effective over a long period of time," he said. Nanzer, meanwhile, is convinced that eSports are here to stay, brushing off skeptics who question the ability of watching video games being able to appeal to a broad base. "People ask me all the time, 'Oh isn't that crazy that people watch video games?'" he said. "I'm like, 'Isn't it crazy that people watch golf and tennis?' The reason why you watch those things is because you probably also play and you want to see who is the best in the world. It's the same thing here with eSports." — AFP

Drivers brace for Egyptian ride-hailing laws

CAIRO: New legislation regulating ride-hailing services in Egypt may have been welcomed by Uber and competitor Careem, but some behind the wheel fear they could be driven out of business. After various twists and turns, including a ban on ride-sharing as recently as March, Egyptian lawmakers passed a bill in early May, pending approval by President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. The laws will require drivers to pay 3,000 Egyptian pounds (\$170, 140 euros) for a special license, a huge outlay in a country where the average monthly salary is around \$200 and many people take multiple jobs to make ends meet.

"It is too much for an Egyptian," says Khaled, who has been bolstering earnings from teaching Arabic by working for Uber these past few months. "As soon as the law is implemented, I will leave Uber," he adds, since 20 percent of each client's payment goes to the firm, making it hard to turn a profit. Another driver, Mohamed, 27, bought a car to work for the firm, so may invest in the licence, but only if Uber guarantees earnings and provides support. "If I have to pay fees without having the security of a normal job, I might as well be a taxi driver," he says.

But the legislation has been given the thumbs up by the ride-hailing firms, with Uber Egypt managing director Abdellatif Waked describing it as a "historic step", after years of legal uncertainty. He says it paves the way for "increased investment, the creation of many jobs" and further Uber expansion in Egypt. For Ramy Kato, Egypt managing director for



CAIRO: An Uber employee (R) assists a driver at the company's headquarters in the Egyptian capital. — AFP

UAE firm Careem, the new bill "sends out a strong signal that Egypt continues to be open for business and investment". A couple of months ago, the firms feared that would no longer be the case. In March, a lawsuit brought by conventional cab drivers saw a court ban ride-sharing. Uber and Careem appealed, securing a suspension of the ruling in April, pending a verdict by a higher court.

Both ride-sharing companies have invested heavily in Egypt. The country is "one of Careem's largest markets" where the company has invested \$30 million and has more than 100,000 drivers, according to Kato.

With a local customer base of four million people, Uber plans to invest around \$100 million in Egypt over the next five years. The firm says it created 150,000 new job opportunities in the country during 2017 alone, including at one of its largest worldwide customer service

centers. The ride-hailing market is enhancing "investment, development and transport", said Mohamed Badawi, a businessman and Member of Parliament's transport committee.

Demand for the service in this country of around 100 million people is high, amid frustration with traditional taxi drivers, who sometimes refuse to turn on the air conditioning or the meter.

But some fear passage of the bill will not end the political and legal uncertainty, especially since taxi drivers will continue to fight the loss of their turf. Ramez Wagih, an accountant in the morning and Uber driver in the afternoon, spent weeks tied up in bureaucratic red tape, before officials gave him a temporary license. And the 36-year-old is buckling up for more mishaps ahead. "The problem has taken too much time to settle and it will still take more," Wagih says. — AFP

From ships to satellites: Scotland aims for the sky

GLASGOW: A shipbuilding hub since the days of the British empire, the Scottish city of Glasgow is now reaching for the stars with a growing space satellite industry. Glasgow builds more satellites than any city outside of the United States, according to space industry experts, specializing in small "CubeSats" that can be used for anything from weather forecasting to global positioning. "Scotland has always been famous for making ships—and today we're making spaceships," Peter Anderson, head of business development at satellite maker Clyde Space said.

The company's offices are just a few meters from the imposing Finnieston Crane, a relic of the River Clyde's shipbuilding past once used to lift tanks and steam trains onto ships. Clyde Space launched Scotland's first ever satellite in 2014 and within two years it was producing six satellites every month. That set off a period of rapid growth in the space industry, which insiders hope will get a further boost from rumored plans to build two new spaceports in Scotland.

Britain's plans for a home-grown space industry have been stepped up amid concerns it will be banned after Brexit from bidding for contracts on the European Union's £9 billion (10 billion euros, \$12 billion) Galileo global positioning system. The UK wants complete access to Galileo as it played a major role in the development of the system, which is expected to be fully operational in 2026, but the EU has



GLASGOW: Manufacturing operations manager Daniel Bryce works on a satellite at the offices of US satellite firm Spire Global. — AFP

decided to move a satellite monitoring base from Britain to Spain to "preserve security". Prime Minister Theresa May has created a taskforce of engineering and aerospace experts, led by the UK Space Agency, "to develop options for a British Global Navigation Satellite System that would guide missiles and power satnavs", the government said.

'Costs more than gold'

In Scotland, the space sector has grown by over 70 percent since 2010 to a turnover of £2.7 billion last year, according to aerospace trade body ADS Scotland. The industry employs some 7,500 people, the group said. Clyde Space shares an office complex with US satellite firm Spire Global which has built 80 satellites in Glasgow since 2014. Spire's lead engineer Joel Spark said the company had benefited from a high-skilled workforce already in place from the days of the DotCom boom when the area was known as "Silicon Glen".

"Silicon Glen was where a lot of handset manufacturing took place, small electronic devices with radio technology, and that is very similar to what we are doing so we were able to tap into that skillset," Spark said. The burgeoning space industry has inspired smaller startups such as AlbaOrbital, which is preparing for the launch of its first satellite, Unicorn1.

The satellite, put together in AlbaOrbital's office on the south of the River Clyde, will be strapped to a larger payload and ejected from a spring-loaded launcher like a jack in the box. "It costs more than gold per kilogramme to launch a satellite, so the idea of making a smaller cube made a lot of sense," Tom Walkinshaw, CEO of AlbaOrbital, told AFP. — AFP

The Internet: A dangerous place for wild animals

PARIS: From ivory baubles and leopard coats to rare turtles and live bears, the online market for protected wildlife is booming, according to an International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW) investigation released yesterday. Experts from the NGO spent six weeks last year combing the Internet in four countries—Russia, France, Germany and Britain—for advertisements hawked endangered animals, whether dead or alive, in pieces or whole.

The haul was impressive: 11,772 individual articles or animals in 5,381 ads spread across 106 websites and social media platforms. Total asking-price value? Just shy of \$4 million (3.2 million euros). More than four-fifths of the items were live animals, including a large share of marine and fresh-water turtles (45 percent), birds (24 percent) and mammals (5 percent), the report said.

And while it is possible to sell and buy certain endangered species with permits under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), 80-90 percent of the transactions proposed were probably illegal, said Celine Sissler-Bienvenu, IFAW's director for France and francophone Africa. "The internet has transformed the global econ-

omy, and illegal wildlife trade has transformed with it," said Rikkert Reijnen, director for wildlife crime at the US-based NGO. "All those who profit from wildlife crime have moved into the online space." Besides turtles, other sought-after reptiles on the black market include snakes, lizards, and alligators. Owls, birds of prey, toucans, cranes and other protected bird species were also on the virtual bloc.

The market for mammals is more varied, ranging from body parts—rhino horns, cheetah and leopard furs, and a pair of coffee tables made from elephant legs—to a menagerie of protected species, trapped in the wild or raised in captivity under doubtful conditions. "Of the many threats to our planet's wildlife, the illegal trade of live animals and their body parts is one of the most inhumane," said Reijnen. Most of the live animals were on sale in Russia, including big cats, monkeys, lemurs and at least one bear. IFAW praised the "precious work" and commitment shown by major online peer-to-peer platforms such as e-Bay, which has trained its personnel to join in the fight against illegal wildlife trafficking. But national regulations are lagging behind, especially for commerce on the internet, the reports said. As a general rule, sellers—often connected to criminal organizations—know they are breaking the law, but buyers may be less aware. "They just want some exotic animals," Sissler-Bienvenu said. IFAW has forwarded their findings to national and international authorities. Similar reports from the NGO in the past have resulted in legal proceedings against both sellers and buyers. — AFP

Facebook face-off: EU gets little news from Zuckerberg

BRUSSELS: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg sailed through a grilling by EU lawmakers about the social network's data policies as lengthy questions left the 34-year-old American little time to answer. Betraying little emotion, Zuckerberg apologised to leaders of the European Parliament in Brussels for a massive data leak, in his latest attempt to draw a line under the damaging scandal. However, he avoided answering numerous specific questions, notably around opt-outs from targeted advertising, the sharing of data between Facebook and its messaging service WhatsApp, as well as Facebook's collection of data on non-users.

He spoke for over half an hour in total, mostly repeating assurances and descriptions of Facebook plans that he detailed to US lawmakers during 10 hours of hearings in Washington last month. Though some questions were sharp, there was no chance for the Europeans to follow up if they felt the answers fell short. Investment analysts heard little new and Facebook's share price showed no reaction to the event, holding at the level to which it has recovered after taking a hit on the scandal. "I asked you six 'yes or no' questions: I got not a single answer," said Philippe Lamberts of the Greens, one of 12 party leaders and lead legislators whose questions to Zuckerberg took up nearly half of a hearing – broadcast live after complaints about an original plan for a closed-door meeting. Zuckerberg had agreed to meet the lawmakers to answer questions about how political consultancy Cambridge Analytica improperly got hold of the personal data of 87 million Facebook users, including up to 2.7 million in the EU.

'Sorry' and souvenirs

He used an initial 10-minute address to apologise. "That was a mistake and I am sorry for it," he said. Not enough was done to pre-

vent the breach, he added, promising the company was now better prepared and was working on further improvements. The dozen MEPs then asked their questions, ranging from the German conservative leader asking Zuckerberg why his giant firm should not be broken up as a monopoly to complaints from Brexit campaigner Nigel Farage, and an ally of French nationalist Marine Le Pen, that Facebook was now biased against right-wing parties. That left barely 10 more minutes of the allotted time for replies—though Zuckerberg spoke for a further quarter hour before the Italian speaker of the legislature, President Antonio Tajani, brought a somewhat disorderly halt to proceedings.

Over shouted complaints and repeated questions, the Facebook CEO and his adviser promised follow-up written answers: at least one lawmaker, Swedish liberal Cecilia Wikstrom, also found time to pose for a souvenir photo with the youthful tech supremo, who uncharacteristically wore a dark suit and tie for the occasion. British Conservative Syed Kamall complained the hearing was a "get-out-of-jail-free card" for Zuckerberg and said Facebook's reluctance to detail some of its workings left regulators trying to "cure a disease without knowing what the illness is".

The MEPs also faced criticism. Dominique Deckmyn of Belgian paper De Standaard tweeted: "First, they used up all their time speaking to make themselves look good, then complained loudly that Zuckerberg had no time left to answer." In his opening remarks, Zuckerberg said it had "become clear over the last couple of years that we haven't done enough to prevent the tools we've built from being used for harm as well." "Whether it's fake news, foreign interference in elections or developers misusing people's information, we didn't take a broad enough view of our responsibilities." — Reuters

Health

Superstition stopping Ebola victims from seeking proper medical care

'People believe that the Ebola epidemic comes from sorcery'

MBANDAKA, DR Congo: Health workers fighting Ebola in the Democratic Republic of Congo have run into an invisible but powerful hurdle—a belief system that deems the disease to be a curse or the result of evil spirits. Some people are refusing medical care and turn instead to preachers and prayers to chase away the threat, they say.

The pastor of an evangelical church last Wednesday died several days after he "prayed" for an Ebola victim who went to him for help, a doctor said. "Some sick people believe that the Ebola epidemic comes from sorcery—they refuse to be treated and prefer to pray," said Julie Lobali, a nurse on the front line against the DRC's ninth Ebola outbreak.

She is working in a hospital in Mbandaka, a port city on the Congo River in northwest DRC where the first urban case was reported last Thursday. Since the outbreak was declared in the remote area of Bikoro on May 8, 51 cases of Ebola have been reported with 27 deaths. One superstition that has become prevalent in the city, she says, is believing that Ebola began in Bikoro as "a curse on those who ate stolen meat" — a wild animal hunted in the countryside.

Blandine Mboyo, who lives in Mbandaka's district of Bongondjo, told AFP "a hunter put a curse on the village because his big game was stolen." "This curse is so powerful because it hits those who ate this meat, having heard about the theft or having seen the stolen animal," added Nicole Batoa, a local vendor.

Another resident, Guy Ingila, observed that officials have said on the radio "this disease is incurable... It's because it's about witchcraft." For doctors and health officials these beliefs raise serious concerns, complicating efforts to contain

and roll back the deadly Ebola virus. In Geneva on Tuesday, African health officials said they were preparing to send anthropologists to the DRC to help with an Ebola vaccination campaign. A prototype vaccine will first be given to frontline health workers and then to people who have been in contact with Ebola cases. "If we do not handle communication well, the vaccination programme may suffer," John Nkengasong, head of Africa Centres for Disease Control (Africa CDC), told reporters in Geneva. "So we are also assessing how in the next two weeks or so to deploy anthropologists to support the vaccine efforts."

'Bad spirits'

In DR Congo, as elsewhere in Africa, disease and death are often not looked on as natural phenomena. "So many deaths is a sign of a curse and can only have been provoked by a bad spirit," said Zacharie Bababaswe, a Congolese specialist in cultural history, explaining people's perceptions of Ebola. Before the expansion of evangelical churches in the country, Bababaswe says many Congolese would go see the witch doctor or village healer for treatment.

Today there is still widespread superstition, but, since the 1980s, it has taken a different form, with some people turning for help to a church or a pastor who claims to have healing powers. Two people infected with Ebola from Bikoro went to the churches rather than a medical centre for help, local witnesses said.

Another patient, who had been hospitalised in Mbandaka, left the medical centre to seek out a local healer, they said. To brake the spread of Ebola, "we have to convince villagers that the disease is not a curse," said Bayon N'Sa Mputu, an elected official from Bikoro, pointing to the key role that churches can play. —AFP



These beliefs raise serious concerns



MBANDAKA: An International Red Cross Committee (ICRC) staff member walks in front of a quarantine zone at the hospital of Wangata. — AFP

Scientists discover how breast cancer hibernates: Study

PARIS: Scientists have identified the mechanism that allows breast cancer cells to lie dormant in other parts of the body only to reemerge years later with lethal force, according to a study published Tuesday. In experiments with human cells and live mice, researchers showed that disabling the mechanism—with drugs or gene manipulation—crippled the cancer cells and inhibited their capacity to spread.

The discovery, reported in the journal Nature Communications,

provides a promising target for the development of breast cancer therapies, the study said. Some 90 percent of breast cancer deaths occur with metastasis, when the disease moves to other organs or parts of the body. Scientists have struggled to understand how cancer cells manage to remain hidden—sometimes for decades—and what, exactly, triggers their reawakening.

"Our results suggest that breast cancer cells can survive, undetected, in patients for long periods by using a cellular process known as autophagy," said co-author Kent Hunter, a researcher at the National Cancer Institute (NCI) in Bethesda, Maryland. Autophagy occurs when any cell—healthy or cancerous—reshuffles internal components to survive in a stressful and nutrient-poor environment. This allows the cell to partially shut down, entering a state similar to hibernation. The findings help explain why current treatments so often fail to root out breast cancer cells that remain after surgery and chemotherapy. "Many of the traditional anti-cancer drugs are designed to target dividing cells," said Hunter. —AFP

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What's On

Al Hamra celebrates true spirit of Ramadan with children's home

Al Hamra Real Estate Co., a leader in real estate development and management, is proud to announce the launch of its grand Gargean campaign 'SPREAD THE JOY', in collaboration with the Children's Home, an orphanage managed by the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor. The campaign combines several activities to create positive and lasting memories for the kids, showcasing their creative talent and encouraging them to dream big.

This is a unique Gargean program that aims to promote happiness and a culture of generosity and compassion, celebrating the best of Kuwaiti heritage. It also seeks to empower the orphan kids by encouraging their artistic expression and conveying messages of love and support.

As part of the Ramadan campaign, orphan girls and boys aged between 4-15 years successfully participated in a drawing competition, with the best drawings embellishing this year's Gargean sweets boxes. To appreciate and encourage their artistic creativity, the wider community is encouraged to visit Al Hamra Business Tower & Luxury Center to be part of the memorable experience where the kids' drawings and Gargean boxes will be on display from 24 May, 2018 onwards. A limited number of the boxes will also be available for sale at a reasonable price. All proceeds will be used to provide gifts, necessities and artistic support to the orphans.

The Gargean boxes will also be reserved and sold online, on Al Hamra Social Media Channels (@alhamra-tower) from 23-31 May. The first thirty benevolent buyers will be entitled to join in the benefit Ghabka recep-



tion that will take place on 31 May at Al Hamra Business Tower, on the 55th floor in the presence of dignitaries, senior government officials, popular influencers, media as well as the little orphan boys and girls and the orphanage management. On the occasion, kids will enjoy a fun-filled program with games, shows, gifts and a family-like atmosphere in the true spirit of Ramadan.

Abdullah Al Mansour, Al Hamra Real Estate Co Marketing and Public Relations Manager said: "We are pleased to run such a fulfilling initiative that will capture the hearts of everyone in Kuwait. It is a time that should be shared with family and friends. Through our efforts, we hope to reflect solidarity and fellowship with the children so they will always feel part of a bigger family."

As an active member of the community, Al Hamra believes in establishing platforms that will inspire fresh thinking, big ideas, imaginative handiwork to nurture future generations with positivity and confidence." The campaign is part of Al Hamra Real Estate Co.'s established CSR Strategy to invest in the long-term sustainability of local communities.

Al Muthana Nursery holds 4th graduation ceremony

Al Muthana nursery has successfully held its 4th Graduation Ceremony titled "Moving up Ceremony and Recognition Day" for its preschool level on May 12, 2018. Certificates of completion were awarded to young graduates as they were escorted by their parents. Also, the certificates of appreciation were awarded to the distinguished students with their achievements. The attendees were enlightened by the guest speaker who is Principal of Hope School Dr. Linda Fouke. She provided insights related to the vitamin "N" which meant for NO where the students immediately stood still in hearing the word.



vein, Ms Angie Lantaca, nursery administrator thanked all the parents who entrusted Al Muthana nursery to be a part of their children's growing up years, and assured them that the nursery will continuously work on improving and enhancing the brand of Al Muthana education. The event concluded with the cutting of cake.

Parents were happy and excited to see their children confidently performed on the stage. Director of Al Muthana nursery, in his speech, assured the parents of the safety and security of their children while in the nursery. "We will take care of your children", he was quoted as saying. He went on to thank the teaching staff and administration for their year round hard work making the nursery consistently a friendly and conducive environment for the children. He assured the parents that besides playing and learning, serious attention is given to the children the basic foundation of good manners. In the same



ICSK pre-primary sparkles in rainbow colors

Colors play a very important role in our lives. Colors Day was celebrated in The Indian Community School Kuwait, Amman on Thursday 10th May, 2018. Children of Pre-Primary came dressed up in rainbow colors red, blue, yellow, pink, green, orange, purple, black and white.

Red is associated with energy and determination whereas orange is associated with joy and happiness. Yellow is the color of sunshine. Green symbolizes growth and harmony. Blue signifies trust and wisdom. Purple symbolizes power and ambition. Pink represents friendship and affection. White is associated with purity whereas Black is associated with power.

The day was of great fun for the children since it helped them to identify and differentiate various colors and to talk and think how colors enhance and influence their lives. The classrooms were beautifully decorated with different colors by



the teachers. Principal Mr Rajesh Nair C praised the efforts of the children and appreciated the little children enjoying as well as learning through activities. Vice Principal Dr Mary Isaac visited all the classrooms.



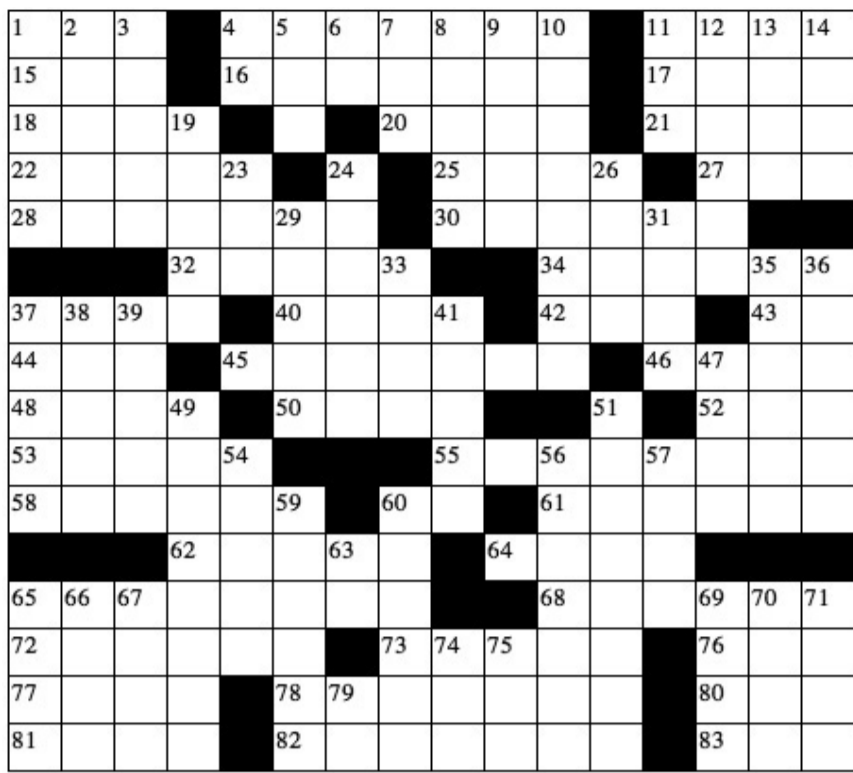
'Your Safety' exhibition by Arab Open University



The "Your Safety" exhibition was organized under the patronage of Arab Open University Rector Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf. The exhibition saw a large presence of university students along with the Assistant Rector for Academic Affairs Dr Mohammad Sayyed, Assistant Rector for Administrative and Financial Affairs Dr Abdallah Al-Ajmi. The event aimed at spreading health awareness and safety with several government entities participating.

Stars

CROSSWORD 1917



ACROSS

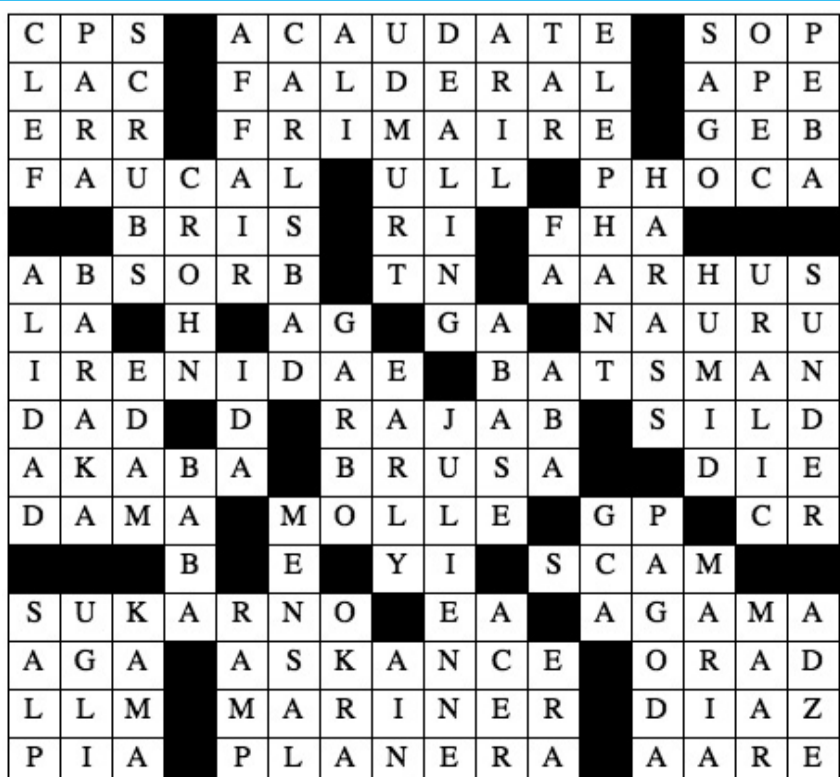
- 1. A state of southwestern India.
4. Any of various rotating shafts that serve as axes for larger rotating parts.
11. Harsh or corrosive in tone.
15. A score in baseball made by a runner touching all four bases safely.
16. Tropical genus of small trees or shrubs.
17. A small cake leavened with yeast.
18. Utter a high-pitched cry, characteristic of pigs.
20. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
21. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829).
22. A genus of Plataneae.
25. A nearly horizontal passage from the surface into a mine.
27. An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
28. Small buffalo of Mindoro in the Philippines.
30. Female peafowl.
32. More than enough in size or scope or capacity.
34. A short sleeveless outer tunic emblazoned with a coat of arms.
37. Petty quarrel.
40. A pilgrimage to Mecca.
42. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.
43. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
44. Of inferior or mixed breed.
45. The retarding force of air friction on a moving object.
46. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
48. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
50. Male red deer.
52. A joke that seems extremely funny.
53. Connected with or belonging to or used in a navy.
55. A dicot family of the order Urticales including.
58. A member of a nomadic Berber people of the Sahara.
61. Alloy of copper and tin and zinc.
62. A daughter of your brother or sister.
64. The inner and longer of the two bones of the human forearm.
65. Dry brandy distilled in the Armagnac district of France.
68. A city of southeastern Mexico.
72. Affectedly trendy.
73. Physicist honored for advances in solid state electronics (born in Japan in 1925).
76. United States liquid unit equal to 4 quarts or 3.785 liters.
77. A loud utterance.
78. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
80. A mature blood cell that contains hemoglobin to carry oxygen to the bodily tissues.
81. Remove with or as if with a ladle.
82. Extreme mental retardation.
83. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).

- (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
6. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
7. Acute delirium caused by alcohol poisoning.
8. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
9. Avoid or try to avoid, as of duties, questions and issues.
10. The mints.
11. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
12. A small tent used as a dressing room beside the sea or a swimming pool.
13. Wild goat of mountain areas of Eurasia and North Africa having large recurved horns.
14. (British) An open river valley (in a hilly area).
19. Deciduous South African tree having large odd-pinnate leaves and profuse fragrant orange-yellow flowers.
23. A human limb.
24. (heraldry) With wings extended in a flying position.
26. Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
29. Type genus of the Aphididae.
31. A Spanish river.
33. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
35. Load anew with ammunition, "She reloaded the gun carefully".
36. The person (or bank) who is expected to pay a check or draft when it is presented for payment.
38. Shrubby tree widely distributed along tropical shores.
39. An anti-TNF compound (trade name Arava) that is given orally.
41. Tree of the West Indies and northern South America bearing succulent edible orange-sized fruit.
47. 100 lwei equal 1 kwanza.
49. Marine crustaceans with feathery food-catching appendages.
51. A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
54. English film actress (1913-1967).
56. An island of central Hawaii (between Maui and Oahu).
57. A transmission line for high-frequency signals.
59. Any tree of the genus Genipa bearing yellow flowers and edible fruit with a thick rind.
60. Pull back or move away or backward.
63. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
66. Fertility goddess in ancient Greek mythology.
67. Moderate in type or degree or effect or force.
69. A city in northern India.
70. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
71. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
74. Estrangement from god.
75. A legal document codifying the result of deliberations of a committee or society or legislative body.
79. The square of a body of any size of type.

DOWN

- 1. A former English silver coin worth four pennies.
2. A board with the alphabet on it.
3. A communist state in Indochina on the South China Sea.
4. One million periods per second.
5. Someone who engages in arbitrage

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

A more dynamic approach suits you well as you enter a new cycle. Being aware of your own changes makes all the difference, it helps you get where you want to be. Well laid plans sometimes go awry, this is one of those times: preparations have already been made, so all is well. A new kind of food gets your attention and you could pursue classes to learn more: learning about new cultures holds your interest also. Roaring full speed ahead no longer appeals and your slower, more contemplative approach works far better. Reaping the benefits of "doing without" is here, and it was definitely all worth it: good job! Someone recognizes you from a few years ago, even if you don't recognize them. You repay a favor. Going out of your way to win isn't unusual, but you do it in different ways now that you've grown.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You want to know what makes something in particular work; this could be something similar to an idea you have. Making extra money helps fatten your savings account. You could feel as though you're haunted by the mysteries of life, the unanswered questions that seem to be just beyond solutions. Putting one foot in front of the next during times of being foggy on your facts keeps things on track. A new acquaintance or coworker sheds light on an old situation; a new pair of eyes pays big dividends! Above all else, the safety and sanctity of your home comes first: home and family are the hallmark of this phase you're in. Spending time and energy on a doubtful situation actually pays off when this turns out to be a wise investment. Feeling good about yourself is well deserved and earned.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

New approaches with independent solutions create new outcomes which prove to be profitable and progressive. Busy times for you regarding new involvements in social or political circles; there's an indication of concern for your community or region. You receive praise for your actions. A new position at your company or a new job entirely is probable; big changes in your work environment or the source of your livelihood. Your one-of-a-kind style causes you to stand out in the crowd and you could be chosen to attend a certain important event. Second-guessing yourself could be your go-to response after making a decision but you're able to avoid this with effort. Being indecisive is a Gemini trait, but it's also something you can overcome if you truly wish! You're well loved by so many: love yourself.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You're more productive when your business is mixed with pleasure, otherwise it's a struggle. Making ambitions come true is your focus at this time and your energy levels are high and supportive of this pursuit. Your manners are impressive and entice others to work with you quite well. The rewards of your hard work are to be savored and at the same time be humbling; you receive these with grace. During this cycle you're easily bored and this could cause problems if you're not mindful; others could misunderstand and take this personally. You see romance in everything, art, literature, history, science fiction to name a few and this enriches the experience for you. Looking at things from new perspectives helps with making well-rounded, and well-founded, decisions regarding your future.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You follow frivolous temptations today, and it's well deserved! Hard work has led you to a time of rest and relaxation that boosts your physical and spiritual vibrations. Literature and poetry are soothing and enlightening when discussed within a group of like-minded people. Going to a place of beauty with friends or family is part of what makes this cycle special. Tending to your own needs makes you more able to help others; you can't starve yourself enough to feed anyone. Being part of the solution is preferable than being part of the problem. You don't have a "herd mentality;" if you find yourself spending time alone, you're perfectly content. Figuring out a puzzle or mystery appeals to your sense of closure; your mind is exceptionally sharp and detailed oriented during this phase.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Work is where your efforts lie; starting something with a firm foundation is more important than ever. Reaching new heights isn't unusual at this time; expect this to continue and prepare to deal with success reasonably. Being on time and organized helps your efforts and you grow more comfortable with this routine the further along you go. The squeaky wheel gets the oil, in other words, nothing goes unnoticed or unattended as you become more aware of what's needed. Getting further and further away from bad habits, and mistakes you no longer make, takes you to the places you want to be; great job! Self-discipline becomes easier when you spend time with people who are going in the same direction. Being who you are feels good, and you don't worry about what anyone else thinks.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Respect means a great deal to you now, all types but especially self-respect! You take equal note of the positives and the negatives; so far you're ahead of the game, and this cycle supports things staying that way. Taking one day at a time works well and you're not overwhelmed with the whole big picture or plan. The heavens indicate a period of peace, but also busy progress and you're ready for both! Nature calls to you in an ethereal voice, dancing toward you upon the winds of movement and abundance. An old friend touches base with good news. Someone in a social setting gets your attention by causing a disturbance; you could actually be embarrassed for this person! Letting bygones be bygones is harder than it should be; remember, we have the ability to let go of negative vibrations if we choose to.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A strong urge to put everything into your work is noticeably present. A laser focus keeps you on track to the point of seeming obsessed. Remember your daily duties and don't neglect loved ones or yourself; a steady pace could be tough to maintain! Positive vibes attend your activities and guide your decisions. You could be perceived as being on a power trip, but actually it's the drive to finish what's been started and finish it correctly! Curiosity is highlighted now and you're not afraid or intimidated by looking into something pleasurable, but perhaps controversial! Remember, one thing could be scandalous to some, but not to others; ultimately, do what's best for you. When someone tries to challenge you, you point out the cause of the issue and it's solved. Being a peacemaker is on tap for you later.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Being in control is a forceful urge for you now, and this lasts for some time to come. You've studied and meditated on a particular interest and you've figured out how to get ahead of the game; money is indicated here, as well as other gains. A new outlook and attitude brings new abundance and growth; all of this from an effort you didn't want to make at the time! You're a persistent, responsible person, you never give up after you commit to something. Being in the right place at the right time brings unimagined good fortune; this is a result of a strong connection to the law of attraction. Your intellect and outward appearance are at their best and you're able to use them for good! Taking shortcuts doesn't work in your book and the results you get by starting from scratch surpasses the results of others.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Research resulting in valuable information makes your whole work environment healthier and more productive; getting ahead with knowledge or being in the know on any level is a hallmark of this cycle. Your spirits rise when something you've secretly hoped for and worked toward comes about. When things are the darkest, the light comes and shines on all that you need. A kind person paves the way for you to take an opportunity to heal and regroup. Taking the high road appeals to you when someone says something hurtful. Digging in on a project gets you ahead of deadline for the first time; the stars are aligned for positive progress and outlook for some time to come. Transforming yourself physically and mentally provides new beginnings.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Hectic energy is prominent in this cycle for a while longer but you manage to make this work for you with positive outcomes. Running into someone at lunch or dinner brings information you find interesting. A new way to do something makes you wonder. Someone brings assurances that something you've invested time and money in is doing well. Changes in society concern you and you may decide to do something about this in your own way. Eating organically makes a difference in the way you feel; you could have your own vegetable garden for this purpose. New neighbors bring energy that feels like a great addition to the neighborhood; you could join together for the good of the area. A new store gives you good ideas about what to do around your home to save money and improve comfort.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You have a heart of gold and you're moved to help someone who can't help themselves; your karma reflects your goodness! Activities in the areas of work, social and domestic interests seem to fall one after the next; you sneak away for some time to yourself for recharging! Your attitude shifts in favor of someone that surprises you because you can no longer ignore the truth! Close knit neighbors tend to the safety and well-being of the neighborhood; the reputation of this area is very well known! Dark thoughts take you away from the beaten path; this could indicate taboo subjects or sexual fantasies, nothing distasteful or mean. When you finally see the cause of a problem you're able to bring it to an end. Being able to do something just as you want to makes it all the more enjoyable and fulfilling.

Wordsearch Puzzle

New York City 1

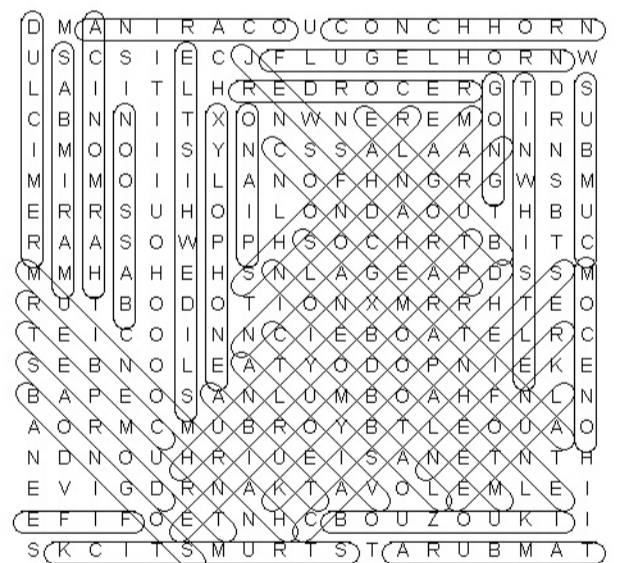
Find and circle all of the words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- BASEBALL, BASKETBALL, BOROUGHS, BROADWAY, BROOKLYN, CHINATOWN, CONEY ISLAND, CULTURAL, EMPIRE STATE BUILDING, ENTERTAINMENT, FASHION, FERRIES, FIFTH AVENUE, FINANCE, FOOTBALL, GRAND CENTRAL TERMINAL, GREENWICH VILLAGE, GROUND ZERO, HARBOR, HOCKEY, HUDSON RIVER, IMMIGRANTS, LAGUARDIA AIRPORT, MANHATTAN, MEDIA, MUSICALS, NASDAQ, NEW YORK TIMES, NYSE, HIGHRISES, POPULOUS, QUEENS, SKYSCRAPERS, SOCCER, SPORTS, STATEN ISLAND, ST PATRICKS CATHEDRAL, SUBWAY, THE BIG APPLE, THE BRONX, TIMES SQUARE, UNITED NATIONS, WALL STREET

Yesterday's Solution

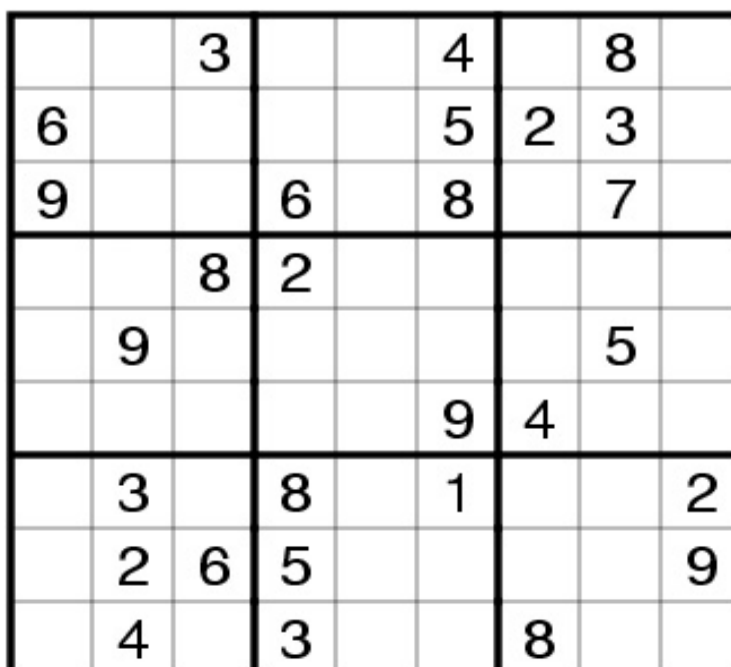
Musical Instruments 2



- BASSOON, BONGOS, BOUZOUKI, BUGLE, CASTANETS, CONCERTINA, CONCH HORN, CUMBUS, CYMBAL, DULCIMER, FIFE, FLUGELHORN, GONG, HARMONICA, HARMONIUM, HUNTING HORN, JEW'S HARP, KEYBOARD, LUTE, MANDOLIN, MARIMBAS, MELODEON, MOCENO, NEFER, OCARINA, PIANO, REBEC, RECORDER, SAROD, SAKOPHONE, SHOFAR, SLIDE WHISTLE, STRUMSTICK, TAMBOURINE, TAMBURA, TIN WHISTLE, TRUMPET, TUBA, VIOLA, XYLOPHONE

Hidden sentence: MUSIC WITH DINNER IS AN INSULT BOTH TO THE COOK AND THE VIOLINIST

Daily SuDoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MAY 24, 2018



Yemenis buy dates at a market in the capital Sanaa during the Muslim holy month of Ramadan.—AFP

Rare silk Quran helps preserve Afghanistan's cultural heritage

One of the only Qurans ever made from silk fabric has been completed in Afghanistan—a feat its creators hope will help preserve the country's centuries-old tradition of calligraphy. Each of the Islamic holy book's 610 pages was produced by hand in a painstaking process that took a team of 38 calligraphers and artists specializing in miniatures nearly two years to finish. Bound in goat leather and weighing 8.6 kilograms (19 pounds), the Quran was produced by Afghan artisans, many of them trained at British foundation Turquoise Mountain in Kabul.

They used the Naskh script, a calligraphic style developed in early Islam to replace Kufic because it was easier to read and write. The decoration around the script, known as illumination, was more time-consuming, each page taking more than a week to complete. A team of artists used paint made from natural materials, including ground lapis, gold and bronze, to recreate the delicate patterns popular during the Timurid dynasty in the 15th and 16th centuries in the western city of Herat.

"All the colors we have used are from nature," Mohammad Tamim Sahibzada, a master miniature artist who was responsible for creating the vibrant colors used in the Quran, told AFP. Sahibzada said working on silk fabric for the first time was challenging. The locally sourced material—all 305 meters (1,000 feet) of it—was treated in a solution made from the dried seeds of ispaghula, or psyllium, to stop the ink from spreading.

'Very rare'

Turquoise Mountain began work in 2006 in Kabul with the aim of preserving ancient Afghan craftsmanship, including ceramics, carpentry and calligraphy. It hopes the silk Quran will generate demand for more handmade Islamic religious texts that could create employment for its artisans and help finance the institute. "We will show it to other Islamic countries to see if it is possible to create job opportunities for graduates to work on another Quran," said Abdul Waheed Khalili, the organization's Afghan director.

For now it will be kept in a specially made hand-carved walnut wooden box to protect its delicate pages from the elements at Turquoise Mountain's offices, which are in the restored Murad Khani, a historic commercial and residential area in Kabul's oldest district. There Turquoise Mountain has trained thousands of artisans with the support of Britain's Prince Charles, the British Council, and USAID. "The copying of the Quran onto silk is very rare,"



country director Nathan Stroupe told AFP. He said the project has been "an amazing way to train our students at an incredibly high level in a very traditional type of work". "If a Saudi prince or a book collector in London... was interested in it, we would be thinking in the \$100,000 to \$200,000 (price) range," he added. — AFP

Afghan master miniature artist Mohammad Tamim Sahibzada shows a handmade Quran made with silk fabric at the Turquoise Mountain Foundation in Mourad Khani, in the old city section of Kabul.



Afghan master miniature artist Mohammad Tamim Sahibzada shows a handmade Quran.

"Our intention was to ensure that calligraphy does not die out in this country—writing is part of our culture," Khwaja Qamaruddin Chishti, a 66-year-old master calligrapher, told AFP in a cramped office inside Turquoise Mountain's labyrinthine mud-brick and wood-paneled complex.

With the Quran considered a sacred text, calligraphy is highly venerated in Islam and Islamic art. "When it comes to art we cannot put a price on it. God has entrusted us with this work (the Quran)... and this means more to us than the financial aspect," Chishti continued. Using a bamboo or red ink pen, Chishti and his fellow calligraphers spent up to two days carefully copying Quranic verses onto a single page—sometimes longer if they made a mistake and had to start again.



Afghan master miniature artist Sabur Omari shows a handmade Quran made with silk fabric



Lifestyle | Music & Movies

Singer R Kelly sued for sexual battery, false imprisonment

A woman who said she met R&B singer R Kelly at a party in 2017 has filed a lawsuit against him, accusing him of sexual battery, false imprisonment and transmitting a sexual disease, the latest in a string of accusations against the Grammy-award-winning pop star. In the civil lawsuit filed in New York state court on Monday, the woman, Faith Rodgers, said she first met Kelly at a party following his performance in San Antonio, Texas, in March 2017, when she was 19. Kelly, 51, has denied multiple accusations of sexual misconduct over the past year.

His manager John Holder on Tuesday said in an email that Kelly had no comment "at this time" on Rodgers' lawsuit. RCA record company publicist Theola Borden did not respond to a request for comment. Rodgers, who is now 20, says in the lawsuit that the singer famous for "I Believe I Can Fly" made arrangements for her to visit him in New

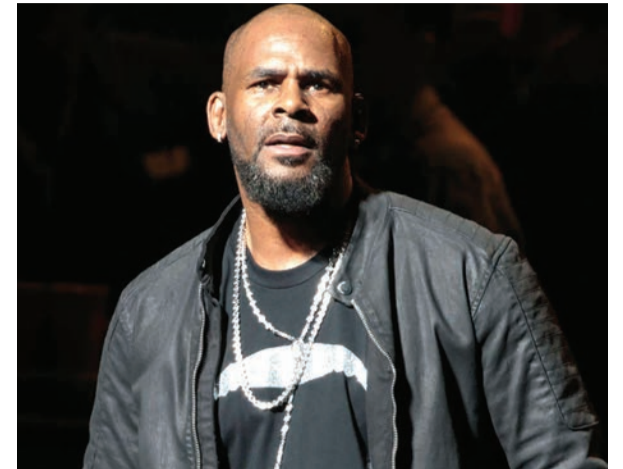
York in May 2017 and "initiated unwanted sexual contact" with her there.

"During the course of their, approximately one-year relationship, defendant, R. Kelly, routinely engaged in intimidation, mental, verbal and sexual abuse, during and after sexual contact," the lawsuit said, adding that Kelly's conduct "was designed to humiliate, embarrass, intimidate and shame Plaintiff." Rodgers said in a TV interview with "CBS This Morning" on Tuesday that Kelly "has this type of, like, intimidation right off the bat. ... So I was just waiting for it to be over."

"I found myself like that multiple times," Rodgers added. In the lawsuit, she also accused Kelly of locking her up for extended periods of time as punishment and knowingly transmitting herpes to her. Her lawsuit follows several US media reports in the past year alleging sexual miscon-

duct by Kelly, one of the most successful R&B singers of the past 20 years. Music streaming service Spotify removed Kelly's music from promotional playlists this month. That followed a #MuteKelly campaign, supported by the Time's Up campaign against sexual harassment in the workplace, that called on companies associated with his music business to cut ties with the singer.

In response to the Spotify decision, Kelly's management said in a statement: "Mr Kelly for 30 years has sung songs about his love and passion for women. He is innocent of the false and hurtful accusations in the ongoing smear campaign against him, waged by enemies seeking a payoff." — Reuters



R Kelly



Lauryn Hill

Hip hop singer Lauryn Hill to perform in UK for album anniversary tour

American singer and rapper Lauryn Hill will take to the British stage later this year as she marks 20 years since the release of her award-winning debut solo album. The former Fugees band member released the hugely-successful "The Miseducation of Lauryn Hill" in 1998, the first hip-hop album to win the coveted album of the year prize at the Grammy awards. The 42-year-old is going on a world tour this summer to mark the anniversary, with the UK performances slated for the end of November and early December.

The album "chronicled an intimate piece of my young existence", Hill said in a statement about the tour. "I loved and believed deeply in my community's ability to both love and heal itself provided it received the right amount of support and encouragement," she said. "Our world today, both complex and changing, is in need of the balance between moral fortitude and cathartic expression. I hope the love and energy that permeated this work can continue to inspire change with love and optimism at the helm." — Reuters



File photo shows US director Barry Levinson poses during the photocall of the movie 'The Humbling' presented out of competition at the 71st Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP

Czech film festival to honor 'Rain Man' director Levinson

"Rain Man" director Barry Levinson will be honored at the Czech Republic's Karlovy Vary film festival in July, organizers said yesterday. Levinson, who won an Oscar as best director for the 1988 movie, will "receive the Crystal Globe for Outstanding Contribution to World Cinema," the festival organizers said in a statement.

Also known as a writer and producer, the 76-year-old American directed "Diner" (1982), "Good Morning, Vietnam" (1987), "Avalon" (1990), "Bugsy" (1991), "Sleepers" (1996), "Wag the Dog" (1997) and "Sphere" (1998). The 53rd edition of the festival in the western Czech spa city of Karlovy Vary, which drew more than 140,000 cinemagoers last year, will run from June 29 to July 7. — AFP

'No one wanted to make this film': India's Pinto stars in sex slave's tale

A new film starring "Slumdog Millionaire"'s Freida Pinto and Demi Moore, about the real-life story of a young Indian girl who gets trapped in the global sex trade, struggled to get funding because it was too controversial. The gritty movie "Love Sonia", which also features award-winning Anupam Kher, will premiere in June as it opens Europe's largest South Asian cinema gathering, the Bagri Foundation London Indian Film Festival. "It's been a long, long journey. A very difficult one because the truth is no one wanted to make this film," debut director Tabrez Noorani told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

"No one wanted to make a film about trafficking in Hindi," Noorani, a producer on Academy Award-winning "Slumdog Millionaire", "Life of Pi" and "Eat, Pray, Love", said he first encountered sex trafficking victims in Los Angeles in 2003. After some girls were found in a container shipped from China, he was inspired to work with charities tackling the issue, including participating in several raids on brothels. "The misconception is that it's only women and girls. It's not. It's young boys, it's old men, it's older women ... There's all types of trafficking. No one is immune to it. Literally, it's all races, all ages and both genders," he said.

More than 40 million people globally are trapped in forced labour, forced marriages and sexual exploitation, the United Nations estimates, earning criminal networks illegal profits of \$150 billion a year. At least 18 million slaves are in India - trafficked into brothels, forced to work as manual labourers, or even born into servitude, the Walk Free Foundation, an Australian-based rights group, estimated in 2016.

For Mumbai-born actress, Freida Pinto, who has been involved in the film since its inception and is a vocal humanitarian and advocate for women's empowerment, the issue of women and girls' trafficking needs collective action. "Just because this film is in Hindi and it has primarily Indian actors, it's not a problem that just one country suffers from. It's really a global problem," she said. "If we can find our voices and our level of empathy can be raised for people who don't look like us and who don't speak our language, I feel that collective voice is what is ultimately going to result in change." Both Pinto and Noorani said the key to tackling the global trafficking crisis was education, from teaching children in villages not to trust strangers, to working with authorities in cities to help identify trafficked people on the streets. — Reuters



Freida Pinto and Demi Moore

Ariana Grande sends love to fans on Manchester anniversary

Ariana Grande shared a message of hope with fans Tuesday as dignitaries, survivors, first responders and the people of Manchester gathered to mark the anniversary of the concert bombing that killed 22 people. The pop star told survivors and the families of victims that she was "thinking of you all today and every day." "I love you with all of me and am sending you all of the light and warmth I have to offer on this challenging day," she wrote in a tweet that included a bee, the civic symbol of Manchester.

Salman Abedi, a 22-year-old Briton of Libyan descent, blew himself up as fans were leaving Grande's concert at Manchester Arena on May 22, 2017. Twenty-two concertgoers were killed, and police say more than 800 people were left "with physical and deep psychological injuries." Across Manchester, a 19th century industrial powerhouse turned diverse and creative modern city, residents made defiant statements of unity in the face of extremist violence.

Some laid bouquets of flowers in St. Ann's Square. Others left hand-written notes on Japanese maples that have been planted to form a "Trees of Hope" trail through the city. One note cited U.S. Episcopal Bishop Michael Curry's sermon at Saturday's royal wedding: "As a clever bishop said 'there is power in love.'"

Greater Manchester Mayor Andy Burnham said it was a day to "come together." Thousands of people paused outside Manchester Cathedral at 2:30 pm for a minute of silence that was observed across the country, including in Parliament, where lawmakers paused their debates and fell still. Prince William and Prime Minister Theresa May joined survivors and emergency workers who responded to the attack for a remembrance service at the cathedral.

A choir sang "Amazing Grace" and "Somewhere Over the Rainbow," and Christian, Jewish, Hindu, Sikh, Muslim and humanist leaders all addressed the congregation. On the altar stood 22 lighted candles, made from the wax of thousands of candles left at St. Ann's Square in the days after the attack. William read a passage from the Bible's book of Corinthians, ending: "Faith, hope and love abide, these three; but the greatest of these is love." — AP



File photo shows Ariana Grande attends The Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute benefit gala. — AP

Pulitzer-winning author Philip Roth dies at 85

Author Philip Roth, who was both hailed and derided for laying bare the neuroses and obsessions that haunted the modern Jewish-American experience, died on Tuesday at the age of 85, his agent said. Roth died in New York City at 10:30 pm local time of congestive heart failure, his literary agent Andrew Wylie said. Roth wrote more than 30 books, including the 1991 memoir "Patrimony," which examined his complex relationship with his father and won the National Book Critics Circle Award.

In his later years, Roth turned to the existential and sexual crises of middle age, never abandoning his commitment to exploring shame, embarrassment and other guilty secrets of the self, although usually with a heavy dose of humor. After more than 50 years as a writer, Roth decided that 2010's "Nemesis," the story of a polio epidemic in the Newark, New Jersey, neighborhood where he grew up, would be his last novel. He then went back and reread all his works "to see whether I'd wasted my time," he said in a 2014 interview published in the New York Times Book Review.

For his conclusion, he quoted Joe Lewis, the heavyweight boxing champion of the 1930s and '40s: "I did the best I could with what I had." In 2017 he published "Why Write?," a collection of essays and non-fiction works written between 1960 and 2013. Roth's best-known work was the 1969 novel "Portnoy's Complaint," a first-person narrative about Alexander Portnoy, a young middle-class Jewish New Yorker.

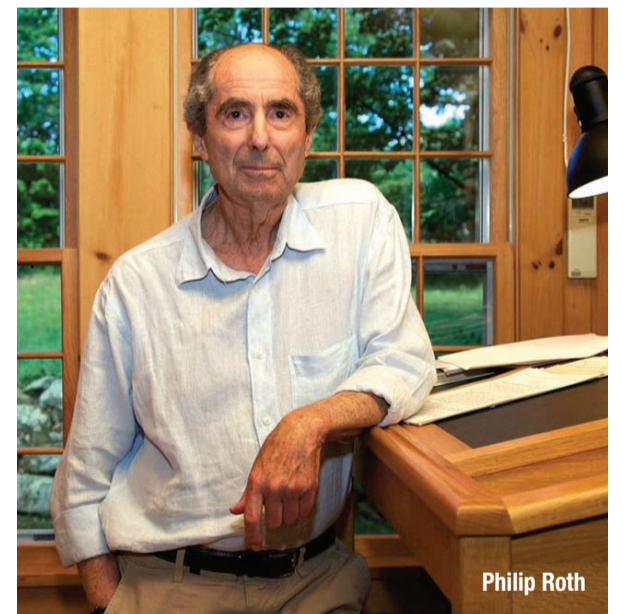
Roth's first published book was the 1959 novella and short-story collection "Goodbye, Columbus," which won the National Book Award. Several of his novels, including "Zuckerman Unbound," "The Ghost Writer" and "The Anatomy Lesson" feature Nathan Zuckerman, a character who came to be seen as Roth's fictional alter ego. Roth liked to play with the distinctions between fact and fiction, often writing about neurotic novelists and even naming some characters "Philip." Yet he was frequently annoyed and amused by readers' desire to project the real Roth onto his characters.

Although his novels often explored the Jewish experience in America, Roth, who said he was an atheist, rejected being labeled a Jewish-American writer. "It's not a question that interests me. I know exactly what it means to be Jewish and it's really not interesting," he told the Guardian newspaper in 2005. "I'm an American." Some critics said Roth's novels exposed him as a self-hating Jew who played on negative stereotypes or generally cast Jews in a bad light. He would recall the hostile reception at a symposium at New York's Yeshiva University in 1962 as the "most bruising public exchange of my life."

Multiple honors

Roth won the Pulitzer Prize for 1997's "American Pastoral," which examined the impact of the 1960s on a New Jersey family. He was the first three-time winner of the PEN/Faulkner Award, honored for "Operation Shylock" in 1994, "The Human Stain" in 2001 and "Everyman" in 2007. Roth also received the National Medal of Arts at the White House in 1998. Philip Milton Roth was born on March 19, 1933, in Newark, New Jersey. The son of an insurance salesman, Roth earned a bachelor's degree at Buckle University and a master's degree in English from the University of Chicago. He dropped out of the doctoral program in 1959 to write film reviews for the New Republic before "Goodbye, Columbus" came out.

Roth taught comparative literature, mostly at the University of Pennsylvania. He retired from teaching in 1992 as a distinguished professor of literature at New York's Hunter College. Roth had a long relationship with British actress Claire Bloom but their five-year marriage ended in divorce in 1995. A year later, she published a bruising memoir, "Leaving a Doll's House," in which she portrayed him as depressed, remote, self-centered and verbally abusive.



Philip Roth

Roth had been especially prolific in the years leading to his 2012 retirement from writing, turning out novels nearly every two years. His more recent books included 2001's "The Dying Animal" and "The Human Stain," published in 2000 and released in 2003 as a movie starring Anthony Hopkins and Nicole Kidman. "The Plot Against America," published in 2004, imagines what would have happened had flying ace Charles Lindbergh, an isolationist who expressed anti-Semitic views, defeated Franklin Roosevelt in the 1940 election and signed a peace accord with Adolf Hitler.

Following the death of several friends, including novelist Saul Bellow in 2005, Roth wrote "Everyman," a short work of fiction about the physical decline and death of a successful advertising executive. Roth was considered a difficult interview subject and told the Guardian he disliked discussing his books. "You should let people fight with the books on their own and rediscover what they are and what they are not."

Roth said the act of writing for him is "filled with fear and loneliness and anxiety." But, he added, "There are some days that compensate completely. In my life I have had, in total, a couple of months of these completely wonderful days as a writer, and that is enough." In a New York Times interview in 2018, Roth reflected on his 50-plus years as a writer, describing it as: "Exhilaration and groaning. Frustration and freedom. Inspiration and uncertainty. Abundance and emptiness. Blazing forth and muddling through." — Reuters



DTCM keen to build good relations with Kuwait media

By Faten Omar

Dubai's Department of Tourism & Commerce Marketing (DTCM) held a Ramadan ghabqa on Tuesday night at Four Seasons Hotel at Burj Alshayaa in Kuwait City. The event was attended by DTCM representatives and a number of media figures. On the sidelines of the event, Aida Al-Busaidy, Director, C2C Campaigns and C2C Marketing Management, told Kuwait Times that Dubai's

Department of Tourism is keen on building good relations with the media in Kuwait.

She noted that Dubai has witnessed a huge transformation, and every year tourists can find something new in malls, hotels, etc, adding that glitzy Dubai is the United Arab Emirates' holiday hotspot where tourists flock for shopping bargains, sunshine and family fun. Busaidy pointed out that Dubai is famous for sightseeing attractions such as the Burj Khalifa (the world's tallest building) and shopping malls that

come with indoor activities. Also, it has many cultural highlights and things to do, as well as all glamorous modern add-ons.

She added that Dubai Tourism is always developing its marketing department to target various categories of tourists from the Middle East, Asia and Europe using printed, digital and audiovisual media. During the evening, guests were introduced to various activities by DTCM that showcased developments in the tourism sector in the UAE. The ghabqa, which was

held in a very friendly and lively atmosphere, was an opportunity for guests, officials and employees to exchange views on current events and issues related to media and tourism. Dubai welcomed over 625,000 cruise tourists to the city during the 2016/2017 season, reflecting an increase of over 15 percent compared to the previous season.



Photos show media representatives and visitors during the event. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Learning to nap in New York, city that never sleeps

New York is the city that never sleeps, but arduous commutes, hellish hours and ultra-competitive jobs mean even the most wired of party animals or dedicated employees have to recharge their batteries. But instead of knocking back a coffee or quaffing an energy drink, a growing number of New Yorkers are opting for a quick nap during office hours. With affluent Americans increasingly health conscious-indulging in fads such as green juice, hot-house yoga and matcha tea-a few pay-for-sleep businesses are now offering customers a little shut-eye on the QT.

“It's really hard to find peace and quiet within New York City”

Nap York is one. Opening three months ago in a three-story building near Penn Station, \$12 buys patrons 30 minutes in a wooden sleep cabin, day or night. “We wanted to accommodate all the exhausted New Yorkers,” explains



Laura Li prepares to take a nap in YeloSpa, in New York where New Yorkers can pay for a cabin to take a nap, and recharge energy without having to return to their homes.

Stacy Veloric, the company's marketing director. “It's really hard to find peace and quiet within New York City.” The business opened with seven cabins, but demand quickly exceeded supply and they added 22 more. Soon there will also be hammocks on the roof, where half an hour's kick-back will cost \$15.

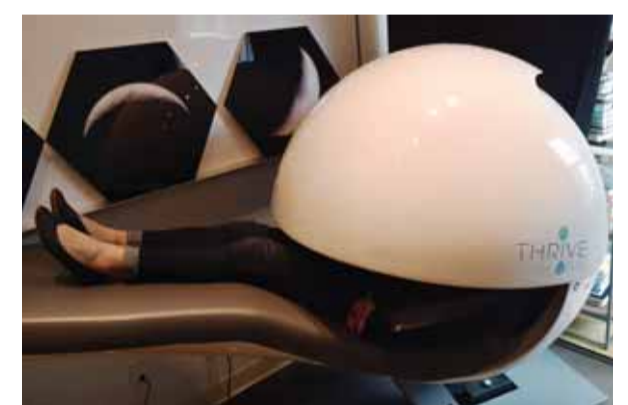
The US sleep deficit is real. According to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, a third of Americans sleep less than they should. Only 24 percent of New Yorkers get eight or more hours of sleep-nearly

half get six or less, according to a state-wide survey for Siena College. Lack of sleep causes moodiness, low productivity and poor concentration. It also costs the US economy up to \$411 billion and the equivalent of 1.23 million working days a year, according to a Rand Corporation study in 2016.

‘I'm worth it’

Laura Li, a 28-year-old copy editor for a travel company, is someone who prefers a 35-minute kip to a coffee. Each week she pops along to YeloSpa, a luxurious, spa-style Fifth Avenue fixture opposite Trump Tower. Li steps into a hexagonal cockpit that looks straight out of a science fiction movie and lies on a bed suspended in a position of zero gravity, knees bent and feet elevated to lower the heart rate and induce sleep. Thirty-five minutes later, she'll be woken by “a simulated sunrise,” explains Maya Daskalova, YeloSpa manager.

The price? A dollar a minute, with a minimum of 20 and a maximum of 40. “I come here specially on days where I have a lot of work-just to get more energy for the rest of the afternoon,” says Li. “I don't drink coffee so if I feel tired there's nothing I can really do, other than sleeping.” She may not have told colleagues that she naps during lunch, but has confessed to friends, who are baffled by the concept of paying to sleep. “They might think this is a waste of time or a waste of money,” she admitted. “As long as I can afford it, then it's worth it. I just feel better afterward, that's enough.” Daskalova has seen her clientele



An “energy pod” is seen at the company Thrive Global, in New York.

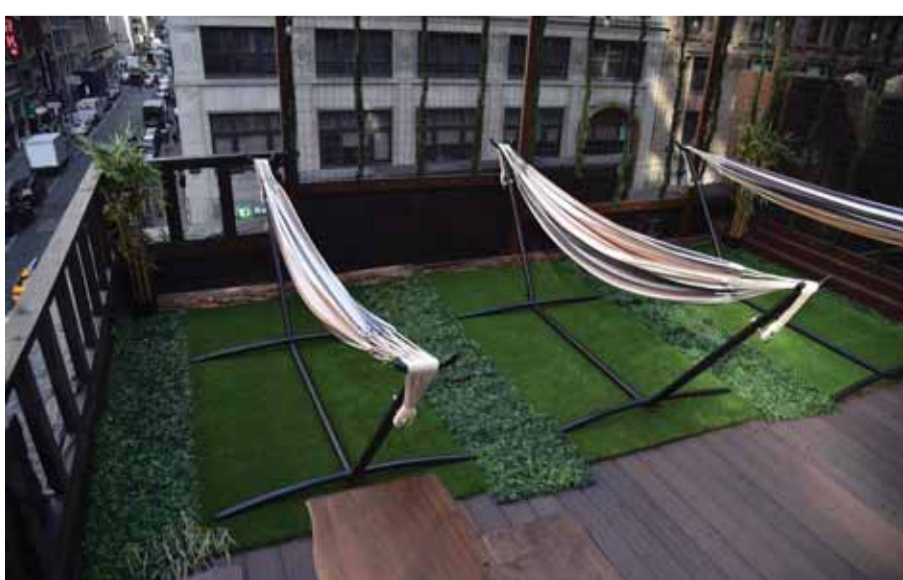
grow gradually and believes that cultural attitudes in America are changing. “Resetting you for the rest of the day is much better than crashing in your desk in the middle of work,” she says.

Generational shift

Who escapes to take a nap? Those who work long hours or live miles away and want time out before a night out. Pregnant women who are exhausted. Parents of babies suffering sleepless nights and party-goers who need a breather. In 2004, Christopher Lindholst created MetroNaps, a company that designs super-modern “energy pods” for quick naps. He installed several in the Empire State Building until security requirements kicked them out, then focused sales on companies, universities, hospitals and airports. Google and NASA are among those who have bought his pods.

“People's attitudes changed dramatically in the last 15 years, there's much more awareness of the importance of sleep and the benefit,” Lindholst says. But in a city with the longest working day in the States, travel time included, he thinks it will take a full generation to erase old stigmas about laziness. “We use the argument all the time that we are talking about a very short period of time, 10 to 20 minutes, essentially the same (as) a coffee break or in New York a smoke break,” he explained.

One MetroNaps capsule lives in the SoHo offices of Thrive Global, a wellness startup founded by Arianna Huffington, author of bestselling 2016 tome “The Sleep Revolution” and a founder of The Huffington Post. Her book calls for an end to “the delusion that we need to burn out to succeed.” “We're in the middle of a cultural shift, one in which more and more of us are taking steps to reclaim sleep,” she writes. — AFP



A view of hammocks are seen at Nap York, in New York.



A worker prepares a cabin for a new client who can take a nap at Nap York.



Meriem surfs off the coast of Rabat.



Meriem walks along the coastline after a surf session in Rabat.



Meriem, a 29-year-old Moroccan engineer and surfer, surfs off the coast of Rabat. — AFP photos



Meriem surfs off the coast of Rabat.

Morocco's women surfers ride out waves and harassment

Moroccan women surfers have become a common sight as they skim the waves off the coast of the capital, Rabat, but they still can face prejudice and harassment back on land. "It's easier in the winter because the beaches are empty," said surfer Meriem, 29, who, like most of the women surfers, wears a wetsuit. "In the summer we suffer a lot of harassment, that's why we pay attention to what we wear." The engineer, who took up the sport four years ago, said she's lucky to have grown up in a "tolerant" family.

For many Moroccan women from conservative backgrounds, such activities are off limits. "Some families are ashamed that their daughters practice water sports," said Jalal Medkouri, who runs the Rabat Surf Club on the capital's popular Udayas beach. The gentle waves nearby are ideal for beginners, but nestled at the foot of the 12th century Kasbah and easily visible from the capital's bustling touristic heart, the beach is far from discreet. Yet some club members say attitudes are changing.

First international women's competition

Rim Bechar, 28, said that when she began surfing four years ago, "it was a bit more difficult". "At first, my father accompanied me whenever I wanted to surf," she said. But now, "people are used to seeing young women in the water, it's no longer a problem." Today, she surfs alone, stays all day and goes home without problems, she said. Surfers first took to the waves off Morocco's Atlantic Coast in the 1960s, at the popular seaside resort of Mehdia, about 50 kilometers (30 miles) north of the capital. Residents say soldiers at a nearby French-American military base were the first to practice the sport there.

A handful of enthusiasts, French and Moroccan, quickly nurtured the scene, travelling further south to the lesser-known beaches of Safi and Taghazout, which later gained popularity with surfers from around the world. The sport gradually gained Moroccan enthusiasts, including women. In September 2016, the country held its first international women's surfing contest.

“ People are used to seeing young women in the water, it's no longer a problem ”

'Provocative' dress

But mentalities differ from beach to beach. Despite efforts to improve the status of women in the North African country, attitudes have been slow to change. A United Nations study in 2017 found that nearly 72 percent of men and 78 percent of women think "women who dress provocatively deserve to be harassed". The harassment women surfers can face in Morocco ranges from looks and comments to unwanted attempts at flirtation and attention from men. In Mehdia, however, surf instructor Mounir said it's "no problem" for girls to surf.

Last summer "we even saw girls in bikinis on the beach and the authorities didn't say anything", he said. Back at Udayas beach, popular with young men playing football, attitudes are more conservative. "Girls are often harassed by the boys," Bechar said. "At first it wasn't easy, so I decided to join a club." The Rabat Surf Club now has more than 40 surfers, half of whom are girls, Medkouri said. "Parents encourage their children when they feel they are in good hands," he said.

Club surfing is particularly popular among girls because the group setting cuts harassment and eases the concerns of some families. Ikram, who also surfs there, said she hopes "all girls who were prevented by their father or brother from doing what they want will follow this path". "Surfing makes you dynamic," she said. — AFP



Meriem (left) walks along the coastline after a surf session.



Rim exits the water after a surf session.



Chinese vase, left in attic, worth at least half a million: Sotheby's

A Chinese vase discovered in a battered shoebox stuffed in an attic in France is set to be the star of a Sotheby's auction next month. Experts have identified the find as an exquisite porcelain vessel made for the 18th century Qing dynasty Emperor Qianlong and the guide price for its auction on June 12 starts at a modest 500,000 euros (\$590,000). It was found by chance among dozens of other pieces of Chinoiserie. "We didn't like the vase too much, and my grandparents didn't like it either," said the owner of the piece, who got in touch with Sotheby's auction house three months ago.

"Porcelains with such elaborate and challenging designs are exceedingly rare on Qing imperial porcelain" and is decorated with "an idyllic landscape with deer and cranes," Sotheby's said in its auction website. It is also said to be in perfect condition. "This vase is the only known example in the world bearing such detail," Olivier Valmier, Asian arts expert at Sotheby's, told reporters. "This is a major work of art." The only other similar vase that has come to light, though without the cranes, is in the Guimet museum of Asiatic arts in Paris. — AFP



A rare Imperial Qianlong porcelain vase (18th century) is displayed at Sotheby's auction company in Paris. — AFP photos



JALALABAD: Afghan children hold dishes as they wait to receive food donated by a private charity during the Islamic holy month of Ramadan, in Jalalabad. Muslims throughout the world are marking the month of Ramadan, the holiest month in the Islamic calendar during which devotees fast from dawn till dusk. — AFP

Filipino domestic workers return to...

Continued from Page 1

records that employers might have been denied, because Kuwaiti authorities will not allow anyone with a record to recruit workers, said the foreign ministry official. The official affirmed that the Kuwaiti side requested that the doors for labor recruitment should

be reopened for Kuwaiti agencies, especially the government-backed Al-Durra company.

He assured that those interested in employing domestic workers will be able to do so by paying reasonable fees. Workers in many Gulf states are employed under the kafala (sponsorship) system, which gives employers the right to keep their passports and full control over their stay in the country. Rights groups say this system leaves millions of workers in the Gulf region open to exploitation. There are more than 260,000 Filipino workers in Kuwait, 170,000 of whom are domestic helpers. Of the household workers in Kuwait, less than 2% experienced abuse, said Bello.

Saddam's superyacht winds up as sailors...

Continued from Page 1

where sea pilots can rest," said Basra port spokesman Anmar Al-Safi. Built by a Danish shipyard while Iraq was at war with Iran, the yacht was passed on to Saudi Arabia - then a Saddam ally - to protect it from air strikes on Basra, officials giving Reuters an exclusive tour said.

The kingdom, which fell out with Saddam after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990, then handed the vessel over to Jordan. Its subsequent movements were unclear until Iraq tracked it down in the French resort of Nice, where a court seized it and sent it home. While the "Basrah Breeze" survived the turmoil of Saddam's decline and

demise, its sister ship "Al-Mansur" - which he also never boarded - suffered a different fate, sinking in the Shatt Al-Arab waterway that passes through Basra after it was hit by US planes and then stripped bare in the chaotic aftermath of his overthrow. Saddam had ordered it in 2003 to leave Umm Qasr, Iraq's biggest port outside Basra, where it had been moored, to Basra in a vain attempt to avoid air strikes.

"I told the captain of the yacht, who was a brigadier, to get rid of the military uniforms of the crew, weapons and munitions and pose as civilian ship in case it is caught by the American warships," said Ali Hussein, a port pilot who guided the yacht at the time.

As regards "Basrah Breeze", Basra museum has not given up hope of persuading the port to allow it to dock the vessel next to its exhibition halls in one of Saddam's former palaces overlooking the Shatt Al-Arab. "Future generations could see how a dictator lived," said Jawad Abdul Kadhim, the museum's deputy director. — Reuters

Roll up your sleeves, Holy month...

Continued from Page 1

If you choose to be lazy, you will pay the price sooner rather than later. Malik Bin Nadhlah (RA) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "There are three categories of hands: the highest of which is Allah's hand, followed by the hand that gives (frequently without fear of poverty) and the lowest being the hand of the beggar. Therefore make sure you give from your surplus and don't be stingy on yourself." (Collected by Imam Abu Dawud 1,649 and its chain of narrators is strong.)

We construe from the hadeeth (prophetic narration) above that you can't give if you don't earn. So this is a clear admonition to abandon laziness and adopt proactivity so that you can earn, so that you can share with others, for which you will reap abundant rewards from Allah (SWT). The devil ties knots on the lazy people. Abu Huraira (RA) narrated that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) said, "The devil ties three knots at the forelock of one of you when he sleeps. By each knot, he encourages you to have a deep sleep during the night, which seems to be very long.

So when one wakes up and remembers Allah (SWT), mentions Him and celebrates His praises, one knot gets untied. When he goes to perform Wudu (ablutions), another knot unties, and when he prays Salat Al-Fajr (the dawn prayer), the third knot is untied. Therefore, the person would wake up active, enjoying a good mood and being characterized as good-hearted. However, if he doesn't do as instructed, he would wake up dejected, melancholic, malicious, apathetic and appearing sly." (Al-Bukhari 3/1,142 and Muslim 776)

Finally, we should understand that Allah (SWT) is our creator; He knows very well what is good for us and what is bad for us. Being active in obliging to the commandments of Allah as well as working hard to fulfill our mundane duties and needs that do not contradict with the Allah's admonitions will benefit us in this world and in the Hereafter. So, let's be active during this auspicious month of Ramadan and explore every avenue that will bring us Allah's pleasure.

Courtesy of the TIES Center: the TIES Center aims at 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.

Al Mawashi looking beyond Australia...

Continued from Page 1

"However, as a result of this review, we will be making serious and meaningful change to the industry." Exporters will now be required to increase cargo space for sheep by up to 39 percent, varying according to seasonal temperature. Independent observers will also have to travel on all ships carrying cattle or sheep. Companies in breach of the new rules could face fines of Aus\$4.2 million (US\$3.1 million) and directors jailed for up to 10 years.

Animal welfare activists accused the government of "double standards" on animal protection, calling for a ban on live exports. "If you leave a dog in a hot car (in Australia) you are prosecuted and you potentially go to jail," said Lyn White from Animals Australia, the advocacy group that released the shocking video. "If you put tens-of-thousands of live sheep on a vessel that turns into an oven it's called a business," she added to Sky News.

White said the government was putting industry ahead of science in continuing with the live trade, a sector she branded an "ethical abomination".

But a key agricultural lobby group welcomed the review's recommendations as a "crucial first step" toward reforming the industry. "We support the future of the trade but there absolutely must be meaningful



Australian sheep are seen in this file photo.

change," National Farmers' Federation president Fiona Simson said. "Change that increases oversight and transparency, facilitates continuous improvement and most importantly, upholds animal welfare to the standard expected by all reasonable Australians." Australia's live animal export trade, worth more than Aus\$800 million annually, has been under scrutiny in recent years after footage shot at offshore abattoirs showed cattle being mistreated. — Agencies

Iraq's Ammar Al-Hakim extols...

Continued from Page 1

"I met HH the Amir, HH the Crown Prince, HH the Prime Minister, and the Defense Minister. We discussed issues related to the bilateral relation between Kuwait and Iraq and the situation in Iraq," he added. He praised Kuwait's role in rebuilding Iraq. "Kuwait has built many charitable projects in Iraq and is still building. There are many economic projects between the two countries," he noted.

Iraq has passed through two phases since the past 14 years. "The first was the phase of establishing democracy which lasted for 14 years. The new phase now started after the elections. This is the phase of rebuilding Iraq," Al-Hakim said. According to him, Iraq has achieved a lot after defeating Islamic State group. "We achieved national unity, and the elections were successful and had wide diversity. There were 7,000 candidates in 127 parties, which included all categories of the Iraqi community. This showed the aims and demands of the Iraqi people. Many new and young candidates won," he explained.

He also spoke about the National Wisdom Party, which is one of the main winners in the recent elections. "It is a new political party that was established

nine months ago. It consists of members from all sects and sectors. Most of our members are young people, and we gained the trust of people - winning 20 seats in the parliament," he pointed out. "Now we look forward to forming a new government. We are having many discussions and negotiations on this issue. I believe that the new Iraqi government will meet the expectations of the people. Our programs focus on reforming the economy, providing social services and jobs," Al-Hakim added.

Al-Hakim is not happy about the US interference in the region. "The US strategy in the region does not provide stability. Iraq will always be negatively affected by this interference, and we want our country to be far from any attack. We also want to preserve our good relations with our neighbors," he concluded.

Earlier yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received the Iraqi official and expressed his congratulations to the Iraqi government on the success of the recent legislative elections. His Highness also expressed hope that elections will contribute to the formation of a unified national government that would achieve the aspirations of the Iraqi people.

The meeting was attended by the head of protocol at His Highness the Crown Prince Diwan Sheikh Mubarak Sabah Al-Salem Al-Hmoud Al-Sabah. Hakim and his delegation also met with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah at Seif Palace. The meeting was attended by Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohamad Abdullah Abu Al-Hassan.

Sports

'Fearless' Pakistan ready to put England under pressure

Bess to make England Test debut against Pakistan

LONDON: Pakistan coach Mickey Arthur believes his "fearless" side have everything to gain when they face an "under the pump" England in the first Test at Lord's today. England will be looking for some much-needed home comfort after recent winless Test tours of Australia and New Zealand extended their poor away record in cricket's longest format to 13 matches without a victory.

Pakistan, by contrast, enter this two-match campaign on the back of a morale-boosting five-wicket win over Test debutants Ireland at Malahide last week. "We haven't come here not to win," Arthur told reporters at Lord's on Tuesday.

"It's a changing room full of very, very skilled cricketers, very young cricketers, fearless cricketers. If we get the breaks and things go our way, they will certainly put England under pressure." England, in their first Test since Ed Smith became their new head selector, continue to have doubts over a batting order where captain Joe Root has been promoted to number three, wicket-keeper Jonny Bairstow to five and Jos Buttler recalled at seven.

And with Jack Leach injured, England could give a Test debut to his fellow Somerset spinner Dominic Bess. "In their home conditions, England are a different team to England abroad," said Arthur. "We've had a look obviously at Buttler, he adds an attacking side to England."

Two years ago, England were held to a 2-2 home draw by Pakistan in a four-Test series. Since then veteran batsmen Misbah-ul-Haq and Younis Khan have both retired, with Pakistan hoping the likes of Azhar Ali and

Asad Shafiq can fill the void.

But it is Imam-ul-Haq, the nephew of Pakistan selection chief and former Test batsman Inzamam-ul-Haq, who has made three fifties from as many games this tour-including a match-clinching innings against Ireland.

"He's a totally different character to Inzi," said Arthur of Imam, a 22-year-old left-handed opener, who is somewhat quicker between the wickets than his celebrated uncle.

"He played beautifully for us, under pressure, against Ireland in his Test debut."

'CHANGE WITH THE TIMES'

Arthur believes Pakistan are fitter now than when he took over two years ago and more aggressive with it. "We are an incredibly fit unit. The guys have trained unbelievably hard, not that we weren't coming in 2016 but that was the start of almost the fitness

regime," he said.

"The brand of cricket we are playing is certainly more attacking. We felt we needed to change with the times and get another bowler in," the former South Africa and Australia coach explained of a side captained by wicket-keeper Sarfraz Ahmed.

Much could depend on Pakistan left-arm quick Mohammad Amir, who has enjoyed Test success and a Champions Trophy triumph in England, as well as a 2017 County Championship title with Essex, since his career was almost ended by his involvement in a spot-fixing scandal at Lord's during the 2010 tour.

If the 20-year-old Bess plays he won't be the youngest slow bowler in the match, with 19-year-old



LONDON: England's captain Joe Root (L) and Pakistan's captain Sarfraz Ahmed pose with the trophy during a practice session at Lord's Cricket Ground in London yesterday, on the eve of the first Test match between England and Pakistan. — AFP

Pakistan leg-spinner Shadab Khan replacing the injured Yasir Shah. England appear set to decide between seam-bowling all-rounder Chris Woakes and injury-prone fast bowler Mark Wood for the last place in their XI, with one of pacemen Rabat Ali or Hasan Ali dropped from Pakistan's 12-man squad. "There will be an Ali playing!" joked Arthur.

Meanwhile Buttler was well aware of the threat posed by Pakistan, whose last Test at Lord's saw them beat England by 75 runs. "They've lost some experi-

ence, but as we saw in the Champions Trophy, Pakistan are a very strong side," he said. England will field a trio of Test veterans in opener Alastair Cook and the new-ball duo of Stuart Broad and James Anderson.

"With all that comes a lot of responsibility and accountability," said Arthur. "A couple are under the pump. Our guys don't fear that at the moment. They are looking to grab the opportunity with both hands. I just hope they do because if they do it solidifies exactly what we want to do with Pakistan cricket." — AFP

Russia 2018 WCup: Turkish Airlines' must-know guide for travelling fans

ISTANBUL: Football fan? If so, you've reason to rejoice this summer, as June 14 marks the kick off of the 2018 FIFA World Cup in Russia.

Four Arab national teams will be flying out to compete at this year's tournament - KSA, Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco. And, following close behind them will be legions of loyal ticket-holding fans eager to see how their own team fares at the pinnacle of international football. With 42 flights daily from Kuwait to Istanbul and with short onward connections to seven match venues in Russia, Turkish Airlines has the 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia covered. To help fans prepare for their trip, the airline has put together this must-know guide to each of the relevant host cities it serves.

Moscow
Luzhniki Stadium
Capacity: 80,000
Relevant matches hosted:
Russia v Saudi Arabia, June 14
Portugal v Morocco, June 20
Round of 16, July 1
Semi-final, July 11
Final, July 15
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Domodedovo International Airport

Spartak Stadium
Capacity: 45,360
Relevant matches hosted:
Belgium v Tunisia, June 23
Round of 16, July 3
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Sheremetyevo International Airport

Moscow at a glance
Moscow may be best known for its historically and politically significant attractions, but beyond these high-profile landmarks lays a broader, buzzing metropolis that rarely seems to slow.
The Kremlin, Red Square and Saint Basil's Cathedral tell a fascinating story of Russia's colourful past, while the Moscow riverboat tour provides a memorable, alternative view of the city. Head to Danilovsky Market to sample deli-style international cuisines, and Tverskaya Street for row after row of retail stores. Moscow's weather is pleasant during the summer months, making a visit to the activity-filled Gorky Park worthwhile.

Must-eat restaurants
Bardak, Marosevka Street, House 6/8
Uryuk, various locations across the city
Livanets, Glinishhevskiy Lane, 3
Don't leave without seeing...

Bunker 42. This vast tunnel system was built in secret under the streets of Moscow after the Soviet Union's first series of nuclear tests to shelter Stalin and other senior figures in case of nuclear fallout.

Saint Petersburg
Saint Petersburg Stadium
Capacity: 64,287
Relevant matches hosted:
Morocco v Iran, June 15
Russia v Egypt, June 19
Round of 16, July 3
Semi-final, July 10
Third place play-off, July 14
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Pulkovo Airport

Saint Petersburg at a glance
Russia's cultural heart, Saint Petersburg stands apart for the scale of its opulent landmarks and historical attractions. The city's elegant canal, lined by ornate plazas and elegant palaces often draws comparison with Venice, while its many parks and gardens bloom during the summer months to offer a brief retreat from urban life.
Like many cities in Russia, Saint Petersburg's rich past has been preserved for the modern day. As the first structure that was built in the city, Peter & Paul Fortress on Zayachy Island is considered the birthplace of Saint Petersburg. Meanwhile, the world-famous Hermitage Museum comprises the largest collection of paintings in the world and this magnificent Russian Museum houses a vast collection of impressive Russian art.

Must-eat restaurants
Navruz, Leninskiy Prospekt, 125
Armudu, S'ezhinskaya, 4
Shurpa, Engelsapr-kt, 27
Don't leave without seeing...

The White Nights festival. Held this year between May 26 and July 23, the festival brings classic ballet, opera and musical performances to the city. If that's not your thing, a series of carnivals are also held in the streets during the festival, where actors in period dress and period carriages play out historical events.

Rostov-on-Don
Rostov Arena
Capacity: 45,145
Relevant matches hosted:
Uruguay v Saudi Arabia, June 20
Round of 16, July 2
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Rostov-on-Don Airport

Rostov-on-Don at a glance
Known informally as "the gateway to the Caucasus", Rostov-on-Don marks the geographic border between Asia and Europe, and is the preferred stop off point for travellers heading on to the Black Sea.
The city's many green spaces and imposing squares make it an ideal destination to explore on foot, which leads most to the Don River - arguably the city's most prominent landmark. Here, visitors will find an



energetic mix of food stalls, live music, and pleasant fountains. Beyond the many riverside sights, Rostov-on-Don's rich history is a recurring feature. Bolshaya Sadovaya Street, one of the city's oldest and most attractive locations, stands as Rostov-on-Don's cultural hub.

Must-eat restaurants
Yalla, Teatralnaya Square, 3
Baghdad, House 42 Budenovskiy pr-kt 25
Chyornaya Koshka, Sholokhova Avenue, 12
Don't leave without seeing...

Pushkinskaya Ulitsa. Escape the city streets and explore this serene promenade, which is at its most pleasant during the summer months. Restaurants, sculptures, and buskers pepper the route, providing a welcome distraction during a casual stroll.

Sochi
Fisht Stadium
Capacity: 47,659
Relevant matches hosted:
Round of 16, June 30
Quarter final, July 7
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Sochi International Airport

Sochi at a glance
Already familiar to most as the host city of the 2014 Winter Olympics, Sochi is a polished seaside gem on Russia's southern coast. The city is the largest on the 'Russian Riviera', so named for the area's sophisticated, energetic resorts.

Beyond the yachts and nightlife, you'll see that Sochi has a calmer character in the many peaceful parks dotted along the coastline - notably, Sochi National Park. And, like most major Russian cities, you won't need to explore much to discover the area's historical and political past. The Museum of Sochi History shines a light on the city's maritime and military past.

Must-eat restaurants
Damask, Yegorova Street, 2
Restaurant Ulker, Yaltinskaia Street, 4
La Punto, Mezhdunarodnaya Street, 2/1, Olympiyski Park
Don't leave without seeing...
The Lenin Mosaic. This highly Instagramable, giant read head shot of the former Soviet Leader is hard to miss in

Sochi's Riviera Park.

Samara
Samara Arena
Capacity: 44,807
Relevant matches hosted:
Round of 16, July 2
Quarter final, July 7
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Kurumoch International Airport

Samara at a glance
Understated Samara may not be a typical tourist magnet, but the port city's lively atmosphere and riverside location should create an enjoyable experience for travelling football fans.
The Samara Embankment is a highlight during the sunnier months. It offers the chance to stroll and admire the view out over the Volga River, as sunbathers bronze and friends catch up at one of the various low-key cafes. Creative types will appreciate the city's abundant art museum, while Stalin's Bunker provides a lesson in Samara's Soviet history.

Must-eat restaurants
Chuchvara, Dachnaya Street, 2
Vostochnii Kvartal Chaikhana, Sadovaya Street, 61
Cafe Puri, Kuibysheva Street, 79
Don't leave without seeing...

Square Aleksandra Pushkina. This peaceful retreat is an ideal spot to wander and relax, crowned by the memorable view down on to the Volga River below.

Kazan
Kazan Arena
Capacity: 45,379
Relevant matches hosted:
Round of 16, June 30
Quarter final, July 6
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Kazan International Airport

Kazan at a glance
As the intersection between European and Asian cultures, Kazan kindles its guests' interest with its unique, multi-faceted personality. Islamic and Christian cultures merge together here, evidenced most notably by the brightly-coloured domes and striking crescents that adorn

the Temple of All Religions in Kazan's northwest.

Situated on the banks of the River Volga, the city bursts with cultural landmarks, like the Central Market that harks back to the Tatar bazars that were once commonplace.

Must-eat restaurants
Rubai, Profsojuznaya Street, 23/12
Sultanat, Nursultan Nazarbayev Street, 35/98
Khumo, Chernyshevskogo, 29
Don't leave without seeing...

The Chak-chak Museum. This interactive museum with a difference provides an edible exploration of Tatar's national food and drink, notably the sweet chak-chak dough balls that are served during special occasions.

Yekaterinburg
Ekaterinburg Arena
Capacity: 35,696
Arab matches hosted:
Egypt v Uruguay, June 15
Fly with Turkish Airlines into: Koltsovo Airport

Yekaterinburg at a glance
Few other Russian cities can boast a story like Yekaterinburg. The city is considered the birthplace of Russian industry, witnessed the fall of Russian monarchy, and flourished during the early 20th Century as the country's cultural and scientific nucleus. Its location also marks Yekaterinburg as a strategic base for travellers making their way to the magnificent Ural Mountains.

A thriving restaurant scene reflects the city's wider prosperity, boosted by the World Cup, which brought an upgrade to its metro line and touristic infrastructure.

Must-eat restaurants
Sufra, Voyevodina Street, 8
Nigora, Kuibysheva Street, House 55
Hmeli Suneli, Lenina Street, 69/10
Don't leave without seeing...

The view from Vysotskiy Viewing Platform. Head up 52 floors inside the tallest Russian skyscraper outside of Moscow for a birds-eye view of Yekaterinburg's sprawling urban landscape.

...And the rest?

A total of 11 cities will host matches during this year's tournament. Volgograd will be the location for Tunisia v England on June 18, before Saudi Arabia play Egypt on June 25.

Kaliningrad hosts Spain v Morocco on June 25, while Saransk welcomes fans for Panama v Tunisia on June 28. Meanwhile, Nizhny Novgorod provides the backdrop for round of 16 matches on July 1, and the quarter-final on July 6.

From our pilots to our cabin crew to our ground crew, we know what it takes to deliver a trophy-winning experience. Choose Turkish Airlines for your 2018 FIFA World Cup Russia travel and fly with the aviation champions.

Sports

Harper's homer, Taylor's game winning walk-off double lifts Nats past Padres

Chris Sale strike nine runs as Boston beat Tampa Bay

WASHINGTON: Michael A. Taylor hit a walk-off double with one out in the ninth inning, giving the Washington Nationals a 2-1 victory over the San Diego Padres on Tuesday night at Nationals Park. Rookie Juan Soto started the ninth inning with a walk against Mark Strahm (0-2). Soto moved to second when Wilmer Difo grounded to third baseman Cory Spangenberg, who momentarily dropped the ball, which forced him to throw to first for the out. Taylor followed by capping an eight-pitch at-bat with a double off the wall in center that easily scored Soto from second. Sean Doolittle (2-2) earned the victory after striking out the side in the top of the ninth. Washington's Bryce Harper hit his 15th homer of the season in the fifth, an inning after San Diego's Franchy Cordero hit his seventh home run.

RED SOX 4, RAYS 2

Mookie Betts hit his major-league-leading 16th home run, and Chris Sale struck out nine in 7 2/3 innings of two-run ball as Boston beat Tampa Bay in St Petersburg, Fla. Betts' blast was a three-run shot. Rafael Devers launched a solo homer for Boston, which won for the fifth time in six games. Sale (5-1) was charged with one earned run on four hits and two walks. Willy Adames' first hit in his major league debut was a solo shot against Sale, and Daniel Robertson also had an RBI for Tampa Bay. The Rays have lost back-to-back games after a six-game win streak.

BREWERS 1, DIAMONDBACKS 0

Domingo Santana, robbed of a homer earlier, drove in the only run with sacrifice fly, and four Milwaukee pitchers limited visiting Arizona to three hits. Lorenzo Cain had two hits, a walk and two outfield assists for the Brewers. The Diamondbacks got only two runners as far as second base and had four runners thrown out on the bases while losing their sixth straight and 12th of 13. Brewers right-hander Jhoulys Chacin pitched five scoreless innings before Matt Albers (3-1), Josh Hader and Corey Knebel finished up. Knebel recorded his third save.

Sleepless nights for Bangladesh World Cup flagmakers

MERAJNAGAR: Flagmakers in Bangladesh are doing a roaring trade weeks ahead of the World Cup, but no-one is interested in the home nation's colours-the money is all on pennants for Lionel Messi's Argentina and Neymar's Brazil.

Textile printer Kamal Hossain owns one of scores of small, hot, sweaty workshops in the Merajagar district of capital Dhaka, working flat-out to produce flags and pennants for the local market ahead of the tournament in Russia. "For the last two months I have been working non-stop," said Hossain. "There are days when I do not even get two hours of sleep," added the 40-year-old, barely lifting his head from his screen-printing machine. Bangladesh is traditionally cricket territory, but every four years the country of 160 million people-whose national team is ranked 197th out of 202 in the world by FIFA-goes World Cup crazy.

Flags in the colours of Argentina and Brazil take over the streets, and printers in Merajagar are expecting to produce hundreds of thousands before the tournament starts in Moscow on June 14. Homes have been converted into makeshift printing and sewing plants as orders pour in from across the country. "Every day we're printing and making thousands of flags. Today we've already printed 11,000 Argentina pennants," said Hossain.

From red carpet to red dirt, Muguruza the warrior

LONDON: Being the reigning Wimbledon champion and former French Open winner has its perks for Garbine Muguruza, like being invited to walk the red carpet at this year's Oscars in Hollywood.

Fun as that was, however, the powerful Spaniard knows her real place next week will be fighting it out on the red dirt trying to add to her grand slam total. The world number three has had an up-and-down year, but will arrive at Roland Garros as one of the main contenders. Last year proved a chastening experience in Paris when, as defending champion, she lost to local favourite Kristina Mladenovic in front of a raucous, partisan

INDIANS 10, CUBS 1

Jose Ramirez and Yonder Alonso drove in three runs apiece and Trevor Bauer pitched six scoreless innings as Cleveland cruised to a win at Chicago. Jason Kipnis added two RBIs, and Michael Brantley finished 2-for-6 to extend his hitting streak to 11 games. Ian Happ hit a 433-foot home run in the ninth inning to help Chicago avoid its fourth shutout loss.

BRAVES 3, PHILLIES 1

Brandon McCarthy pitched 5 2/3 solid innings, Ozzie Albies homered and scored three runs, and visiting Atlanta defeated Philadelphia. McCarthy (5-2) allowed four hits and one run while striking out five and walking two. Four Braves relievers held the Phillies to no runs on three hits in the last 3 1/3 innings. Arodys Vizcaino pitched the ninth inning for his ninth save. Albies, Ronald Acuna Jr., Freddie Freeman and Tyler Flowers had two hits each for the Braves, who won for the third time in four games.

REDS 7, PIRATES 2

Scooter Gennett slugged a grand slam as part of a season-best six-RBI night to help Cincinnati post a victory against visiting Pittsburgh. Matt Harvey (1-2) pitched six strong innings to win for the first time in three starts since joining the Reds. Harvey allowed one run, three hits and two walks while striking out five. Tucker Barnhart went 3-for-4 and scored twice for Cincinnati. Gennett went 2-for-3 and scored twice, and Eugenio Suarez also had two hits. Colin Moran and Austin Meadows hit solo home runs for the Pirates, who have dropped four consecutive games.

ROYALS 5, CARDINALS 1

Jason Hammel picked up his first victory of the season, and Alex Gordon and Salvador Perez homered as Kansas City won at St Louis. Hammel (1-5) was winless in his first nine starts this season, but he delivered seven strong innings to help the Royals snap a three-game slide. He scattered nine hits, allowing only one run with six strikeouts and no walks.



WASHINGTON: Pedro Severino #29 of the Washington Nationals tags out Jose Pirela #2 of the San Diego Padres trying to go home on a single by Franmil Reyes #32 (not pictured) in the fifth inning at Nationals Park on Tuesday in Washington. — AFP

Gordon and Alcides Escobar each had three hits for the Royals, and Jon Jay added two hits. Yairo Munoz went 4-for-4 to lead the Cardinals, and Marcell Ozuna finished 3-for-4.

TWINS 6, TIGERS 0

Brian Dozier drove in three runs with a pair of doubles, Lance Lynn tossed 6 2/3 scoreless innings, and Minnesota downed Detroit in Minneapolis. Ehire Adrianza also hit a pair of run-scoring doubles and he scored twice, while Byron Buxton also scored two runs and drove in another. Lynn (2-4) allowed five hits and a walk while striking out four. A trio of relievers completed the shutout. The Twins have won three straight following a three-game losing streak. They have given up just three runs during the upswing. Nicholas

Castellanos, James McCann and JaCoby Jones had two hits apiece for the Tigers, who have lost five straight.

RANGERS 6, YANKEES 4

Cole Hamels pitched seven effective innings as Texas recorded a victory over visiting New York. Pitching for the first time in 11 days after being scratched from a start due to neck stiffness, Hamels (3-4) held the Yankees to two runs and four hits. In his longest outing of the season, the left-hander recorded his first home win of the year and 150th career victory overall. Keone Kela tossed a perfect ninth and notched his ninth save in as many opportunities. Jurickson Profar hit a three-run homer in the first inning, and Ronald Guzman hit a solo shot in the fourth. Gleyber Torres, Miguel Andujar and Austin Romine homered for the Yankees. — Reuters



DHAKA: This photograph taken on May 17, 2018, shows a Bangladeshi worker using a silk-screen for printing a Brazil flag in Narayanganj, on the outskirts of Dhaka, ahead of the 2018 football World Cup. — AFP

Fans across Bangladesh hold flag-waving processions to honour their favourite team. Last week, a video of supporters marching with a 200 metre-long Argentina flag in the north-western town of Madarganj went viral on social media. The impoverished country first saw live World Cup matches in 1982. But it was the 1986 tournament, when Diego Maradona single-handedly helped Argentina win the trophy, that cemented football into the Bangladesh psyche-along with a new favourite team.

"The craze for Argentina is still going strong, Maradona is gone but Messi is the new superstar," said Faruq Mia, a flag hawker who came from neighbouring Narayanganj district

to stock up. Mia bought 500 flags last week, made a big profit and so needs 500 more. He will be cheering for Argentina.

Factory owner Selim Howlader expects to sell several hundred thousand flags as "World Cup fever came early in the country, months before kickoff". "In 2014, I sold more than 80,000 flags. Most of them were sold during the World Cup or just days before kickoff. Now I am selling 2,000-2,500 big flags and 10,000 pennants a day and the World Cup is still weeks away," said the happy 33-year-old businessman. Howlader employs 25 workers and said about 2,000 people in all are working in Merajagar's flag factories. — AFP

"I felt like a bit out of place, like, 'what am I doing here?'" It's all about superstars and I was there representing the world of sport. It was a good experience to witness all the Hollywood glam. But I'm in a different world of competition.

Muguruza is quick to knock that notion back. "I was invited (to the Oscars) by Rolex and thought it was a great opportunity, a chance in a lifetime," Muguruza, announced as a global brand ambassador for mineral water company Evian this week, told Reuters.

"I'm more of a warrior. I live in a different world." Venezuela-born Muguruza burst on to the scene in 2015 when she reached the Wimbledon final and lost to Serena Williams. She avenged that defeat a year later in the

French Open final and then beat Venus Williams to win Wimbledon last year. She rose to number one in the world in September.

This season she claimed the Monterrey title in April but her form on clay has been inconsistent, losing to Russian 21-year-old Daria Kasatkina at the Madrid Open before suffering a surprise defeat by Australian Daria Gavrilova in Rome.

Muguruza, however, says she has learned not to dwell on defeats and 'overthink'-traits that hampered her in the months after her stunning 2016 French Open triumph. "I just think now that when the day comes I'll be ready," she said. "You get upset for five minutes and then you're like, 'okay, it's time to do something. What can I do for next time?'"

One thing that has not changed is her ultra-aggressive style and it never will, as long as she is hungry for slams. "I have never seen someone winning such an important title by not being super-aggressive," Muguruza, who is back working full-time with coach Sam Sumyk after ending a spell with fellow Spaniard and former Wimbledon champion Conchita Martinez. — Reuters

Jeonbuk face Suwon in all-Korean AFC Champions League tie

HONG KONG: Two-time champions Jeonbuk Motors will take on fellow South Koreans Suwon Bluewings in the quarter-finals of the Asian Champions League when the continental club championship resumes in August.

Jeonbuk, who won the title in 2006 and 2016, overcame a first-leg deficit to see off Thailand's Buriram United and were drawn to face Suwon at the Asian Football Confederation's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur yesterday.

Former Asian Club Championship winners Suwon have already defeated Korean opposition in the knockout phase after beating Ulsan Hyundai in the previous round. Tianjin Quanjian, China's sole remaining representative in the competition, will take on Japan's Kashima Antlers after Paulo Sousa's team eliminated two-time champions Guangzhou Evergrande in the away goals rule in the Round of 16.

Kashima, meanwhile, are appearing in the last eight for the first time since 2008

and progressed to the quarter-finals after beating current Chinese Super League leaders Shanghai SIPG over two legs.

In the west of the continent, Qatar's Al Duhail will take their perfect record in the competition so far to a meeting with last year's semi-finalists Persepolis. Al Duhail won all six of their group matches before back-to-back wins over former champions Al Ain from the United Arab Emirates in the Round of 16 to set up the meeting with the Iranian league champions.

Another Iranian side, Esteghlal, will also take on Qatari opposition after being drawn to play Doha-based Al Sadd. Clubs from the west and east of the confederation are drawn separately with representatives of each side of the continent meeting in the final.

The first legs of the quarter-finals will be played from August 27 to 29 with the return clashes held from September 17 to 19. — Reuters

Serena's French Open seed denial stirs fresh debate

PARIS: The decision by French Open organisers not to grant Serena Williams a seeding on her long-awaited Grand Slam return has prompted renewed focus on the sport's policy towards female players and parenthood.

"French Open is punishing Serena Williams for having a baby" read a USA Today headline, arguing an expectation for the 23-time major winner should be made for today's draw. At 36, the American is looking to regain her top form following the birth of her daughter last September. After sitting out of competition for over a year, she no longer had a ranking upon her return to the WTA circuit in March.

She has played just four matches this season across appearances at Indian Wells and Miami. But her results, far from convincing, have only been good enough to climb to 449th in the world rankings. With a ranking so low, no player would typically even be able to take part in qualifying for the main draw. That is unless benefiting from a wildcard or using a protected

ranking, which has at least allowed Williams direct entrance into the field.

It is a system that lets a player retain, for a transitional period, a former ranking upon return from a long absence-between six months and two years-due to injury, illness or pregnancy. But it does not guarantee them a seeding, leaving Serena vulnerable to an encounter with leading title contenders as early as the first round.

At Miami, Williams ran into Indian Wells champion Naomi Osaka in her opening match and was easily beaten. "She has won this title so many times (eight) that she needs protection," Miami tournament director James Blake said after the WTA refused to alter its rules despite conceding that they would be "further reviewed" going forward. "It's not as if she left because of injury and lost her passion for the game," Blake said. "She had a kid, which we should all be celebrating, so when she comes back there should be a grace period where she can still be seeded." Maria Sharapova also spoke up in support of her longtime rival last week. — AFP

Sports

Arsenal appoint 'progressive' Emery as Wenger successor

Emery has earned a reputation as one of Europe's most studious coaches

LONDON: Arsenal announced former Paris Saint-Germain coach Unai Emery as their new boss yesterday, handing him the daunting task of revitalising a club that has slipped well behind their Premier League rivals.

The Spaniard, who won the domestic treble with PSG this season, emerged as the shock favourite to replace Arsene Wenger earlier this week after it had appeared former Arsenal captain Mikel Arteta was in line to land the job at the Emirates.

Wenger departed at the end of the season following a 22-year reign, with the club finishing sixth in the Premier League — 37 points behind champions Manchester City and failing to qualify for the Champions League.

Arsenal will be wary of the turmoil at Manchester United after the departure of long-serving manager Alex Ferguson in 2013 but said the choice of Emery was unanimous. "I am thrilled to be joining one of the great clubs in the game," Emery, 46, told Arsenal's website. "Arsenal is known and loved throughout the world for its style of play, its commitment to young players, the fantastic stadium, the way the club is run. I'm very excited to be given the responsibility to start this important new chapter in Arsenal's history."

Chief executive Ivan Gazidis said the decision to appoint the former Valencia and Spartak Moscow boss had been unani-

mous. "Unai has an outstanding track record of success throughout his career, has developed some of the best young talent in Europe and plays an exciting, progressive style of football that fits Arsenal perfectly," he said.

"His hard-working and passionate approach and his sense of values on and off the pitch make him the ideal person to take us forward."

Emery left PSG this month after winning

sive Europa League titles with Sevilla.

Arsenal have won three FA Cups in the past five seasons but have consistently failed to mount a credible title challenge since they were last crowned Premier League winners in 2004. Wenger won three Premier Leagues and a record seven FA Cups during his time in charge, his crowning glory coming in the 2003/04 season when Arsenal won the league without losing a single game.

Defeat to Atletico Madrid in the Europa League semi-finals earlier this month meant Arsenal missed out on Champions League qualification for a second consecutive season. Emery has earned a reputation as one of Europe's most studious coaches, demanding relentless effort on the training ground.

He has flourished within a structure similar to the one now in place at Arsenal, working well with recruitment director Monchi at Sevilla. But according to reports, he will have just £50 million (\$67 million) to spend on new players to revitalise his squad, putting him at a huge disadvantage compared with the cash-rich Manchester clubs.

Emery will have a handful of top stars to call on, including Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang and Mesut Ozil, but the future of many of the squad members is uncertain, with the club in need of defensive reinforcements.

Yesterday's official announcement came



PARIS: File photo shows, Paris Saint-Germain's Spanish head coach Unai Emery (L) shakes hands with Arsenal's French manager Arsene Wenger during the UEFA Champions League Group A football match between Paris-Saint-Germain and Arsenal in Paris. Unai Emery has been appointed as the new manager of Arsenal, the club announced yesterday. — AFP

after Emery looked to have confirmed himself as the Arsenal's new boss late Tuesday. The homepage of Emery's personal website, www.unai-emery.com, displayed a picture of the Spaniard alongside an

Arsenal crest. It carried the message: "Proud to be part of the Arsenal family." The image was later taken down, replaced by an error message, but has now been reinstated. — AFP

I am thrilled to join one of the great clubs

Ligue 1 and four domestic cups in two seasons in the French capital. The Spaniard, who will be unveiled at a press conference at the Emirates later on Wednesday, will work in a head coach capacity at Arsenal.

It follows the appointments of Raul Sanllehi as head of football relations and Sven Mislintat as head of recruitment over the past year. Before moving to France in 2016, Emery had a significant track record of success in Spain, winning three succes-

Decision time for Zidane as Bale awaits chance for reconciliation

MADRID: Gareth Bale's relationship with Zinedine Zidane will come to a crossroads when Real Madrid play Liverpool in the Champions League final on Saturday. The pair have not seen eye-to-eye for some time, ever since Zidane jettisoned the Welshman for Real's last 16 first leg game at home to Paris Saint-Germain in February.

With their La Liga challenge all but over, Zidane's reputation hinged on a run in Europe and dropping Bale delivered a resounding message about a lack of trust when it mattered most. But breaking point arrived in April, in the quarter-finals, in the second leg at home to Juventus. Bale had scored three goals in his previous three games, six in five including matches for Wales, and he was rewarded with a start at the Santiago Bernabeu.

Zidane, however, hauled him off at half-time, with Real trailing Juve 2-0. At best, it seemed the Frenchman was apportioning blame to Bale. At worst, it seemed like punishment by public humiliation. "It was not to punish Gareth but something had to change," Zidane said after the match. "I was not happy with the approach." Bale felt harshly treated, he became noticeably down around the squad and his intensity dropped in training. Sources told AFP that Bale and Zidane were barely on speaking terms around this period.

Three days after Real scraped past Juventus, via Cristiano Ronaldo's last-gasp penalty, they faced a lengthy trip to Malaga and several key players, including Bale, were left out. Real insisted they were rested but while the likes of Ronaldo, Toni Kroos, Luka Modric and Marcelo returned for the weekend's game against Athletic Bilbao, Bale again found himself sat on the bench. By the time he had been overlooked for both semi-final legs against Bayern Munich, the 28-year-old



MADRID: (L-R) Real Madrid's Croatian midfielder Luka Modric, Real Madrid's French coach Zinedine Zidane, French assistant coach David Bettoni, Real Madrid's Brazilian defender Marcelo and Portuguese forward Cristiano Ronaldo attend a training session during Real Madrid's Media Open Day ahead of their UEFA Champions league final football match against Liverpool FC, in Madrid on Tuesday. — AFP

had started only one of his last five matches.

'I'VE BEEN IN GOOD FORM'

"It is always going to happen in a side like ours," Zidane said. "There are players in good form and in the team, who are playing well." If that was the lowest point, there has been an upturn in recent weeks, in both Bale's form and his connection with Zidane. A brilliant goal against Barcelona, the highlight of a rather underwhelming performance, provided a spark, followed by two more goals and a man-of-the-match display against Celta Vigo. Bale scored against Villarreal on Saturday to make it five goals in his last four starts.

It means the final against Liverpool this weekend represents an acid test. The expectation in recent weeks had been Bale would again give way to less spectacular, but more defensively diligent, team-mates - Lucas Vazquez, Karim Benzema or Isco - but this latest surge will be difficult to ignore. Even in

an interview with Real Madrid TV on Tuesday, Bale pointedly said when asked about his form: "I feel like I've been in good form for a while." Sources have told AFP that Bale's first choice this summer is to resist offers from England and stay at Real Madrid, where he enjoys the lifestyle, the support of those higher up the club, and where his family are settled. But his persistence has its limits.

If Zidane rejuvenates Bale for Real's biggest game of the season, it would continue the upward momentum and create the possibility for a fresh start next season. If he disregards Bale's form in Kiev and leaves him on the bench, reconciliation becomes distinctly unlikely.

"He is playing very well, he has scored many goals recently," Zidane said on Tuesday. "Not only that but he has been very consistent. He has not played so much but the last three games he has played he has played well." — AFP

Belgium court could throw FIFA player rules into turmoil

BRUSSELS: Some of the most important football action of the summer could take place today not on a pitch but in a Belgium court and could transform the transfer market. More than two decades after the Bosman case created freedom of contract, ended nationality quotas and shifted power to the wealthiest clubs, a Brussels court will hear an appeal on third party ownership (TPO) of players, which is banned by football's world governing body, FIFA. TPO allows investors to hold a financial stake in players and cash in by taking a cut when they move between clubs during their careers in lucrative transfer deals.

Critics say it deprives players of control over their careers and former UEFA president

Michel Platini, now banned from football following a graft probe, called it "a type of slavery". Football authorities worry that involvement of third party owners with clubs creates conflicts of interest and favours clubs who can afford to form continuing relationships with agents or player owners. Supporters claim it helps poorer clubs sign and develop young players and spreads the burden of transfer fees because they only buy part of the player's registration.

The current case was brought by Belgian third-division club Seraing which in January 2015 signed an agreement with investment fund Doyen Sports based on the potential returns from TPO. Seraing refused to accept FIFA's ban, imposed four months later, on TPO and has already been fined 150,000 euros (\$175,900, £131,720). Their legal action is supported by the Spanish and Portuguese leagues, who are also taking a case to the European Commission.

'ETHICAL VALUES'

FIFA, supported by European governing body UEFA and global players union Fifpro,

are fiercely opposed to TPO. "One leg owned by one, a leg by another, transforming work contracts into financial products," said Fifpro president Philippe Piat. Seraing's lawyer Jean-Louis Dupont, who also worked for Jean-Marc Bosman when he won his landmark case in 1995, argued that: "Under the guise of protecting ethical values, FIFA are using their regulatory power to promote their own economic interests and those of their ultimate members, the clubs in monopolising profits in a transfer market that they created and regulate." "Why can't players own their own rights?" he asked. In the traditional model, player registrations are bought and sold by football clubs for an agreed transfer fee.

In reality players, their agents and former clubs often receive a cut of the fee as part of the deal, but full ownership of the player simply passes between the clubs involved. In the interview that cost him his job as England manager, Sam Allardyce told Daily Telegraph reporters posing as Far East businessmen in September 2016 that getting around TPO rules was "not a problem" and that he knew agents who were "doing it all the time". — AFP

Rabiot criticized for rejecting World Cup standby spot

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Adrien Rabiot "has made a huge mistake" in refusing to be a World Cup standby player, France manager Didier Deschamps said yesterday as his squad assembled at their Clairefontaine training centre.

Rabiot was omitted from the main 23-man squad and then emailed Deschamps saying he would not "be able to follow the training programme" laid out for the 11 standbys. "I can understand his immense disappointment," said Deschamps, adding that Rabiot "has dropped himself, insisting on being a selector. I dare to hope that decisions like this will help him grow up".

"At the highest level there is no place for moodiness, one has to be professional in all circumstances." Asked if the 23-year-old Rabiot could one day return to

the France squad, Deschamps answered: "I never take extreme positions. He's put himself in the wrong, full stop."

Before Deschamps spoke, his boss, Noel Le Graet, the president of the French football federation, issued a statement that said Rabiot "has made a bad decision" and "punished and sentenced himself on his own". Le Graet assumed the roles of both sympathetic mentor and stern disciplinarian.

Rabiot, Le Graet said, "is a player of high quality and a likeable boy, who has always behaved well in the national squad," before adding "his disappointment does not allow him to give up and not make himself available for the France team".

The issue even echoed along France's corridors of power yesterday. "I think that when one has the honour of being called to wear the tricolour shirt and defend the colours of your country, one answers 'present', whatever the role," said government spokesman Benjamin Griveaux, after the weekly cabinet meeting at the Elysee Palace. Rabiot, who has six France caps, was placed on standby in case one of the first-choice players was hurt before the final deadline for submitting the squad on June 4. — AFP

'Secret Weapon' Loftus-Cheek says he can handle big stage

BURTON ON TRENT: With only two England appearances in his career and not even 50 games under his belt in club football, Ruben Loftus-Cheek will not be a known quantity for opposition coaches at the World Cup.

England manager Gareth Southgate hopes the attacking midfielder, who impressed on debut in a November friendly against Germany, can be his secret weapon, and the 22-year-old says he is ready for the intensity of the tournament in Russia.

"One hundred percent I feel ready for it. I know how to deal with pressure. As a youth player, I played for England and got used to it and I have just to carry it on to the bigger stage," he told reporters at England's St. George's training camp.

"I won't be intimidated by any player or team, I think that is fundamental in football if you want to do well. I take that mindset into the World Cup." Loftus-Cheek is one of several inexperienced young players that have been included in Gareth Southgate's World Cup squad and the tall midfielder believes none of them will be overawed.

"I think this squad is used to playing under pressure, most of us haven't been to a World Cup before but for me, individually, I am just excited to play at the World Cup and I think if you enjoy it, you play your best football," he said.

Loftus-Cheek is a product of

Chelsea's youth system but got regular Premier League football under his belt with former England manager Roy Hodgson at Crystal Palace this season. The Londoner doesn't know where he will be playing next season but says he has to put that uncertainty out of his mind for the next few weeks.

"I am not thinking about that too much to be honest right now - I am trying to focus on this summer, this tournament is too big. "I'll be back at Chelsea in pre-season anyway and then I will decide when that comes along. I am not too worried it will get sorted when the time comes."

Southgate worked with Loftus-Cheek during his time in charge of England's under-21 team and the player says he enjoys the approach of the former Aston Villa defender.

"He has been there and played for England and so he knows what it is like," said Loftus-Cheek. "He has been in these situations, with his knowledge that he can pass on to us players, it is great for us. "As a manager he is very good with players one-on-one and tries to help you as much as he can." If England, drawn with Tunisia, Belgium and Panama in Group G, are to provide a surprise run in Russia, it will require the younger elements in the squad, such as Loftus-Cheek, to deliver. "In training you look about at the talent and it is frightening. I think we have a good chance," said Loftus-Cheek. — Reuters

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Rockets edge Warriors to level series

Warriors lacked starter Iguodala with bruised left leg



OAKLAND: Stephen Curry #30 of the Golden State Warriors drives to the basket for a shot against the Houston Rockets during Game Four of the Western Conference Finals of the 2018 NBA Playoffs at ORACLE Arena on Tuesday in Oakland, California. — AFP

SAN FRANCISCO: NBA regular-season wins leader Houston, powered by James Harden's 30 points and 27 from Chris Paul, edged defending champion Golden State 95-92 Tuesday to level their semi-final playoff series at two wins each. The Rockets snapped Golden State's record playoff home win streak at 16 games, the Warriors suffering their first loss since the 2016 NBA Finals, and took their first playoff win over the Warriors in eight all-time tries.

"We know how hard it is to come back from 3-1," Paul said. "When it's winning time, you have got to suck it up. We knew we needed one here and we got it." P.J. Tucker had 16 rebounds and Clint Capela grabbed 13 for the Rockets, who host game five of the best-of-seven Western Conference final Thursday in Houston.

Paul hopes the title quest helps the Houston area take relief from a school shooting that saw a teen gunman kill 10 people, much the way the Houston Astros' World Series baseball crown did last year after hurricane flooding.

"Hopefully basketball can be a way for people to ease their minds, if only for a moment," Paul said. The series winner will face either Cleveland or Boston in the NBA Finals starting May 31. Stephen Curry led Golden State with 28 points on 10-of-26 shooting while Kevin Durant added 27 points and 12 rebounds and Draymond Green had 11 points, 14 rebounds and eight assists.

The defeat marks the first time the Warriors, seeking a third crown in four seasons, have lost twice in a playoff series since Durant joined last season. "Now we've got to fight. This is now a real playoff-type experience," Curry said. "We're ready for it. The vibe in the locker room is really positive when it comes to what we need to correct to win game five."

Harden made 11-of-26 shots from the floor and Paul hit 10-of-20 to lift the Rockets, who closed the game on a 25-10 run after falling behind 82-70. "I wish we had done a better job of taking control," Durant said. "We had chances to win... We've just got to get better next game."

The Warriors lacked starter Andre Iguodala with a bruised left leg and saw Klay Thompson strain his left knee in the second quarter while Houston's Paul said his nagging left foot injury was improved. "It's as good as it's going to be right now," Paul said. "Mental toughness is just as important as physical toughness and we showed that."

'JUST RAN OUT OF GAS'

Curry scored 17 points in the third quarter, three consecutive 3-pointers sparking an 18-3 run to open the big lead. "They went on a hell of a run in the third and I told the guys in the huddle 'Let's fight back,'" Paul said. "Hell of an effort. Fun game. Big time game."

Stopping Houston took a toll on the Warriors in a physical contest. "Some of the work we had on defense affected us on the offensive end," Curry said. "When you give yourself a lead like that it would help to sustain it." Golden State, which opened the game on a 12-0 run, managed only 12 points in the fourth quarter.

"We just ran out of gas," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "They outplayed us in the fourth quarter and that was the difference. This game was just trench warfare, everybody grinding it out."

'GUTTING IT OUT'

Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni said he had never seen his club defend so well. "This is the highest level we've ever played defensively," he said. "There was some good defense in there to get us back. And they got a little tired in the fourth quarter because they felt us for three quarters."

In the dying seconds, Thompson missed a jumper, Paul hit a final foul shot and Curry missed a desperate 3-point try at the final buzzer. "It was just gutting it out and willing it," D'Antoni said. "Got to find a way. This thing is not always going to be pretty but it's going to be tough."

Harden scored 15 points in the second quarter as Houston, down 28-19 after one quarter, surged ahead 53-46 at half-time. — AFP

South African 'colossus' AB de Villiers retires

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's star batsman AB de Villiers yesterday announced his surprise retirement from all international cricket after a glittering 14-year career playing for the Proteas.

De Villiers, 34, was famed for mixing traditional and unorthodox shots, as well as his fast scoring and ability to hit the ball to all parts of the ground. He holds the world record for the fastest half-century (16 balls), hundred (31 balls) and 150 (64 balls) in ODIs, and is one of the few batsmen to top the Test and 50-over rankings at the same time. "I have decided to retire from all international cricket with immediate effect," he said in a state-

ment. "After 114 Test matches, 228 ODIs and 78 T20 Internationals, it is time for others to take over. I have had my turn, and to be honest, I am tired."

The middle-order batsman said it had taken him a long time to make the "tough" decision and that he decided to quit while still playing "decent cricket".

"After the fantastic series wins against India and Australia, now feels like the right time to step aside," he said. "It would not be right for me to pick and choose where, when and in what format I play for the Proteas. For me, in the green and gold, it must be everything or nothing."

He added he had no plans to play overseas but would continue in league competitions, saying: "It's not about earning more somewhere else, it's about running out of gas and feeling that it is the right time to move on."

'MISTER 360'

De Villiers retired with a Test average of 50.66 and as the fourth-highest run-scorer for South Africa with

8765 runs, with 22 100s. In limited overs, he finished as the number two ranked batsman in the world and as the second highest run-scorer behind Jacques Kallis with 9577 runs at an average of 53.50.

"AB is one of the all-time greats of South African cricket who has thrilled spectators around the world with his sheer brilliance, coupled to his ability to innovate and take modern day batting... to new levels," said Cricket South Africa (CSA) president Chris Nenzani.

"It goes without saying that he is going to be greatly missed wherever international cricket is played." CSA chief executive Thabang Moroe said De Villiers' decision ahead of the 2019 World Cup in England and Wales was disappointing but respected.

"AB has been a colossus on the world stage for well over a decade," he said. "His ability to improvise has made him known as Mr. 360 degrees in white ball cricket and we will never ever forget those remarkable innings that earned him the fastest 50, 100 and 150 in ODI cricket." — AFP



AB de Villiers