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Amir issues warning: Don't turn democracy into a curse

Khorafi grilling fizzles out • Sports law amended • Harbash, Tabtabaei to retain seats

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah yesterday inaugurated the new National Assembly term by issuing one of the strongest warnings to lawmakers to not turn the grace of democracy into a curse, adding that he will not allow the country's stability to be threatened. "Motivated by the responsibility and trust I hold, I say frankly and seriously: I will not allow turning the grace of democracy we are living under into a curse that threatens the stability of our country," the Amir said in a strong-worded inaugural speech.

HH the Amir said that "we must safeguard our democratic system and prevent any breach of its rules so it does not become a tool of destruction and damage". He reiterated his firm belief and faith in the democratic system but regretted that after more than 50 years of its establishment, there remain a lot of immature and negative practices that undermine the country's interests and security.

The Amir said grillings are part of Kuwait's democratic system but criticized the unnecessary rush to file grillings - especially against the prime minister - for things that are under the supervision of other ministers. The Amir appealed to all to improve political behaviors in the country to assist the country in facing the fragile regional situation surrounding Kuwait. Sheikh Sabah said that there should be no room for those misusing the constitution and the law for their own selfish interests. "The rights of members of parliament to pursue the truth should be respected, but at the same time, it is paramount for MPs to use their powers in a responsible

manner and in line with the constitution," he said.

Rules and legislation are meant to be respected by all, affirmed the Amir, who stressed he will protect the constitution and the legal system in Kuwait from abuse by any individuals or groups. The Amir took the opportunity to thank the leadership of the National Assembly for its efforts to bolster cooperation with the Cabinet for the sake of Kuwait and its people. Sheikh Sabah praised the Cabinet for taking measures to protect public funds, stressing that the Kuwaiti leadership was wholeheartedly behind the efforts to combat corruption and its sources.

While there are still some various challenges to tackle on the national level, the government should also take into consideration the alarming regional and international situations, indicated HH the Amir. "Freedom of speech and expression are two valuable assets of Kuwaiti society and the people of this country are proud of living in a land governed by law," he added.

HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah in his speech praised directives by the Amir, which called for enhancing the spirit of solidarity amongst Kuwaitis. "I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for his guidance, and we affirm that we will remain committed to cooperating with the National Assembly members for the best interest of the country," the premier said. "Our commitment to the provisions of the constitution and the law is not an option. It is a national commitment and a basic requirement for the government to adhere to the desired achievement," he said.

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KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as he attends the opening ceremony of the new legislative term of the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

News in brief

Maid beaten to death

KUWAIT: Detectives concluded that an Ethiopian domestic helper who died at her sponsor's house was beaten to death by her female sponsor. The case was handed to detectives who carried out investigations and found the victim was repeatedly beaten, as the bruises on her body and blood spots in the house indicated. The woman confessed to beating the victim because she was allegedly not doing her job, then closed the room's door out of fear someone may notice the beaten woman. When she reopened the door, she found the maid dead, so she told her husband, who reported the death. Investigations are continuing. — Al-Rai

New transfer conditions

KUWAIT: The manpower authority's official spokesperson and PR manager Aseel Al-Mazyad said the authority issued directive number 133/2018 concerning transferring expat workers between various sectors. Mazyad explained that private sector expat workers desiring to transfer to work for the government sector have to be approved by the Civil Service Commission, while an employer has to justify his need for those transferring from the government to the private sector, provided the license has vacant positions that match these workers' qualifications. — Meshaal Al-Enezi

Ikhlas school wins \$270K prize

DUBAI: Kuwait's Al-Ikhlas school yesterday won a \$270,000 prize for the best reading initiatives for students, while a nine-year-old Moroccan girl won \$136,000 in an Arabic-language reading competition organized by the Dubai government. Maryam Amjoun beat 16 other finalists from across the Arab world to land the top prize in the third annual Arab Reading Challenge. Organizers said "10.5 million students from the Arab region and worldwide" took part. — AFP

Indian couple dies taking selfie

LOS ANGELES: An Indian couple who fell to their deaths in California's Yosemite National Park were apparently taking a selfie, according to a family member and media reports. Vishnu Viswanath, 29 and Meenakshi Moorthy, 30, died last week after falling from Taft Point - a popular overlook at the park that does not have a railing - and their bodies were recovered by park rangers on Thursday. The couple fell almost 245 m in an area surrounded by steep terrain and rescuers had to use a helicopter to recover the bodies. — AFP

India eyes speedy solution to issues of engineers and nurses: Swaraj

By Sajeev K Peter

KUWAIT: India's Minister of External Affairs Sushma Swaraj said yesterday that India is seeking an early solution to the issues of degree accreditation of Indian engineers and stranded nurses in Kuwait. Swaraj, who arrived in Kuwait yesterday on her maiden visit to the country after successfully concluding her visit to Qatar, will hold talks with HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Prime Minister

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem today. She will also hold discussions with Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah today on a wide range of bilateral issues.

"During my talks today with HH the Amir, HH the Prime Minister and the Foreign Minister, I will raise both these issues and seek solutions at the earliest," Swaraj said while interacting with the Indian community at the Indian Embassy.

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KUWAIT: India's External Affairs Minister Sushma Swaraj interacts with the Indian community at the Indian Embassy yesterday as Indian Ambassador K Jeeva Sagar looks on. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Turkey rejects demands to shut Qatar base

DOHA: Turkey has dismissed as "unrealistic" demands to close a military base in Qatar as sought by a Saudi-led bloc caught up in a row with the emirate, according to reports yesterday. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu said the presence of Turkish troops in the gas-rich Gulf country was not connected to the ongoing crisis between the Gulf countries. "We believe this demand is both unrealistic and irrele-

vant," the Turkish minister said, quoted by Qatar's pro-government Al-Watan and Qatar Tribune newspapers. Turkey and Qatar had signed a defense agreement in 2014, "long before the Gulf crisis", he added. Cavusoglu also said the diplomatic impasse should be resolved without delay.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt called for the closure of the Tariq bin Ziyad camp in Doha as well as an end to all military cooperation between Doha and Ankara as part of a string of conditions to end their diplomatic and political isolation of Qatar. Qatar dismissed those demands as "neither reasonable nor actionable".

Continued on Page 24

Trump vows to scrap birthright citizenship, sends troops to border

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said he will scrap a constitutional guarantee to citizenship for anyone born on US soil in a headline-grabbing move bolstering his anti-immigration platform a week before midterm elections. The surprise announcement in an interview with Axios, released in part yesterday, followed the dispatch of more than 5,000 regular troops to the Mexican border, itself a highly unusual move prompted by Trump's warnings of a migrant "invasion".

The birthright citizenship proposal was likely to prove even more controversial, given questions over whether a president can meddle with the constitution at all. The right to US citizenship for all born in the country is enshrined in the 14th amendment. To change the constitution requires a two-thirds majority in Congress - something almost unthinkable in today's deeply partisan, near evenly split legislature.

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Amir calls for safeguarding freedoms, warns of ill practices seeping into democratic process

National Assembly Speaker calls for following Amir's directives



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah delivers a speech during the inauguration of the third regular session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly yesterday. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and the Amiri Diwan



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is greeted by Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday called for protecting and safeguarding Kuwait's democracy and freedoms. In his speech to the third regular session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly, His Highness the Amir praised the high level of security and prosperity of the Kuwaiti people, affirming that it was the duty of all Kuwaitis to prevent anyone or group from trying to meddle with their affairs. His Highness the Amir reiterated the belief in the democratic methodology and practices, stressing that it was important to support and solidify such notions within the hearts of the people of this land.

Over 50 years of independence, Kuwaiti democracy took brave and strong strides towards maturity and excellence; however, there are those who mean harm towards the country's ambitions and progress, warned His Highness the Amir. His Highness the Amir indicated that there were negative aspects and ill practices seeping into the democratic process in Kuwait, adding that it was vital to fight those people using sectarian strife, false promises of development, shady practices to promote their own interests and destructive ideas. His Highness Sheikh Sabah said that there should be no room for those exploiting the constitution and the law and there should be no compromise for individuals causing a halt in progression plans. On the level of parliament, His Highness the Amir questioned the fevered race towards interpellations at the National Assembly, wondering if motions against the prime minister and ministers were necessary within the constitutional mainframe.

The rights of members of parliament to pursue the truth should be well respected and admired, but at the same time, it is paramount for MPs to use their powers in a responsible manner and within the context of constitution. Rules and legislations are meant to be respected by all, affirmed His Highness the Amir who stressed that he would be protecting the constitution and the legal system in Kuwait from abuse by any individuals or groups. His Highness the Amir said that he was a contemporary of the early constitutional movement in Kuwait and had witnessed the efforts to bring the constitution to the light from day one. In the past, the constitution writing committee members feared that the principles of the binding national document might be abused, said His Highness the Amir who indicated that such fears were somewhat justified and validated in the current times with elements trying to abuse the rules for their own gains.

His Highness the Amir called on all Kuwaiti people to rise to the occasion and fulfill their national duty to the homeland via rectifying the current parliamentary status quo. His Highness the Amir took the chance to thank the

leadership of the National Assembly for its efforts to bolster cooperation with the cabinet for the sake of Kuwait and its people.

In regards to the government, His Highness the Amir praised the cabinet for taking measures to protect public wealth, stressing that the Kuwaiti leadership was wholeheartedly behind the efforts to combat corruption and its sources. While there are still some various challenges to tackle on the national level, the government should also take into consideration the alarming regional and international situations, indicated His Highness the Amir.

His Highness the Amir prescribed national unity and cooperation among the people of Kuwait as an antidote to fend off difficulties from abroad. The country must seek efforts for reforms on all levels and it must unite people for a common cause to address challenges from abroad as one unit, said His Highness the Amir, adding that the future of the country lies not only in natural resources, but also through the young generation.

The freedom of speech and expression are two valuable assets of Kuwaiti society and the people of this country are proud of living in a land governed by law and institutions, indicated His Highness the Amir who added that there were no political prisoners in Kuwait as a result of the strong justice system. His Highness the Amir warned of the irresponsible use of social media and technology in modern times, saying that such platforms should not be used to propagate hatred, sectarianism, and chaos both regional and internationally. All countries in the region could be considered valid targets for those who thrive on destruction and mayhem, said His Highness Sheikh Sabah, adding that peace, security and stability were goals that should be common among all countries and nations.

His Highness the Amir wished that all problems facing the region and the GCC countries in specific would be overcome so as to continue the mutual stride for development and progression. His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah called on all those attending the new parliament session to work together, hoping that the message he delivered today would resonate amongst the people of Kuwait. Leaving behind pessimism, negative thoughts, and sectarianism is essential for the development of Kuwait and its people. His Highness the Amir stressed, calling on the cabinet and parliament to continue their efforts for the sake of the country and its people.

Amir's directives

Following His Highness the Amir's directives concerning the necessity of national unity and the importance of facing regional challenges would contribute to the stability and development of the State of Kuwait, Speaker of the

National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem said.

Addressing the opening of the third regular session of the 15th legislative term, inaugurated by His Highness the Amir and attended by His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and a score of MPs and senior officials, Speaker Ghanem lauded His Highness Sheikh Sabah's stance on issues pertaining to regional developments. "His Highness the Amir's efforts tried to rectifying the unbalanced situation and finding solutions to problems," said Ghanem who indicated that the Kuwaiti leader's stance stemmed from his traditional policy to defuse tension and to encourage dialogue.

The Kuwaiti people are proud and in debt to His Highness the Amir's non-stop efforts to fend off all that might harm the country and its citizens. Despite all the odds, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah continued to exemplify strong leadership and wise decision-making, taking the country to the shores of development, welfare and security, said Speaker Ghanem. He added that Kuwait's reaction to developments in the region and the world should be calculated and precise to avoid pitfalls, affirming that thanks to His Highness the Amir's wisdom, the country managed to overcome every obstacle and challenge.

The speaker of parliament affirmed that the National Assembly should unconditionally support His Highness the Amir's efforts both regionally and internationally, stressing that national unity was the only path to fend off challenges both at home and abroad. Cooperation is key to eradicate all threats posed by sectarian strife and corruption. It is the duty of the Kuwaiti people to remain vigilant in this regard, affirmed Ghanem. He added that the legislative and executive authorities have an obligation to follow the directives of the Kuwaiti leadership in an effort to encourage unity amongst the people.

Speaker Ghanem said that reforms could not be achieved without cooperation and a sincere desire to shed off differences, stressing that only through the correct implementation of the tenets of the constitution that security and progress could be attained. The top legislator said that political discourse based on focusing on problems without valid solutions was leading nowhere and added that formulating plans to address issues of contention was the way forward.

National unity is not an empty slogan to rally the masses, it is a necessary step to propel Kuwait into the folds of developed nations, said Ghanem. The parliamentary scene in Kuwait should not be focused on who wins the next elections, it should be based on benefiting the future generations, said Ghanem who also called on the executive power to exercise its authority to reinvent itself and apply



Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem delivers his speech.

reforms aimed at the welfare of citizens of the country. The current formation of the National Assembly had passed the two year mark; however, the same development and challenges still face the country, said the Speaker who reiterated that the executive and legislative authorities have a mandate to set aside their differences and focus on the bigger picture of sustainable development and prosperity for Kuwait and its people.

Reforms, in all of its shapes and forms, is a much-demanded policy that all countries of the globe seriously seek, said Ghanem. He added that fighting corruption, whether in government or parliament, would ensure the success of all policies for reform. The current status quo of the government institutions and bodies is not up to the level that the people of this country deserve; therefore, it is necessary to point out the mistakes and formulate adequate and swift solutions to push the wheels of development forward. The leadership of the National Assembly solemnly swears to abide by all laws and regulations to achieve prosperity for the people of Kuwait, affirmed Ghanem who called on the government to lend a helping hand to parliament to achieve this goal. Speaker Ghanem concluded his speech with expressing gratitude towards His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti leadership for their unwavering efforts to help the progression and development of the State of Kuwait and its people. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah gestures as he arrives at the National Assembly yesterday.



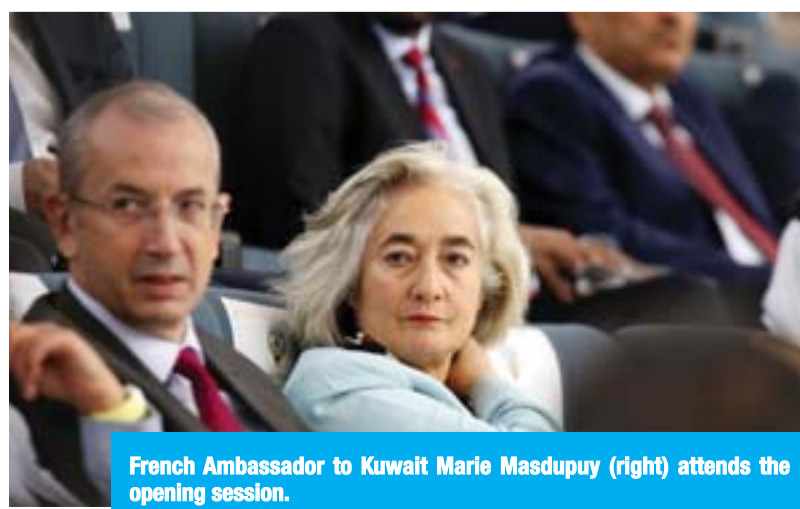
Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem presents a memento to His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem presents a memento to His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



Ambassadors attend the opening session.



French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy (right) attends the opening session.



Turkish Ambassador to Kuwait Ayse Hilal Sayan Koytak (center) attends the opening session.

Local

Prime Minister lauds leadership's directives to enhance Kuwaiti unity

Govt continues seeking cooperation with Assembly: Sheikh Jaber



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah delivers a speech during the inauguration of the third regular session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly yesterday.



Lawmakers attend the opening session of the new legislative year. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat and the Amiri Diwan

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah praised directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah which called for enhancing the spirit of intimacy and solidarity amongst Kuwaitis. "I would like to express my thanks and appreciation to His Highness the Amir for his guidance and great keenness, and we affirm that we will remain committed to cooperating with the National Assembly members for the best interest of the homeland." His Highness the Premier said in a speech during the third regular session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly.

The great trust that the world has agreed upon over the wisdom of His Highness the Amir, the humanitarian leader, was not a coincidence. It is the culmination of decades of hard work, sincerity, fruitful efforts and a vision based on sincere faith and firm principles aimed at protecting human beings wherever they may be, he added. He stressed the need to follow His Highness' footsteps, making his march a guide and guidance for the maintenance of the country's security, stability and interests under changing regional and international conditions that require everyone to be united like solid structures. He recalled that the wisdom of His Highness the Amir and his continuous efforts have spared Kuwait numerous challenges and crises as a result of the regional and international crises. "Our commitment to the provisions of the Constitution and the law is not an option. It is a national commitment and a basic requirement for the Government to adhere to the desired achievement."

"Our hands will remain extended for cooperation with the National Assembly members under supervision of its constitutional control, which we are keen to strengthen its presence and ensure respect within the framework of constitutional and legal right to prevent any derogations and to prevent any violation, and as the other face of national responsibility that we all bear," he said. In keeping with the foreign policy adopted by His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to its consistent approach to its relations with the States, he said, adding that the government was committed to supporting the GCC and is keen to play its active role as a member of the Security Council in supporting Arab and Islamic issues and peace in the world.

"As we begin the current session together, we are proud and appreciative of what has been achieved with our cooperation in the field of legislation and participa-

tion in bearing the burden of responsibility in matters of domestic and foreign policy, and we look forward to the coming days of great hope for further achievements", he noted. There is no doubt that the aspirations and capabilities are much greater than the achievements, but fairness requires appreciation of the sincere efforts and hard work of workers working in various institutions, he said. He said that achievements that have been made in the previous period is well known to all despite doubts about such accomplishments.

Protecting national funds

The government's approach in its work has been to preserve the public money and to take all necessary measures to protect it, sharpen the fight against corruption, eliminate it in all its forms and dry its sources, and the need to embody integrity, transparency and honesty in all governmental procedures and to support the legislative structure to promote integrity, he pointed out. He spoke highly of the fruitful cooperation with the parliament in the issuance of a number of accomplishments including law No. 2 of 2016 concerning the establishment of the General Authority for Combating Corruption and the provisions on financial disclosure, and law No. 49 of 2016 on public tenders, which establishes the rules of transparency, equality and equal opportunities. He also spoke about law No. 23 of 2015 on establishing the Financial Supervisory Authority and finally, law No. 13 of 2018 on the prohibition of conflict of interest, which confirms that public money is sacred and that it cannot be infringed or in the public interest. "We will complete together the system of transparency and integrity by granting the right of access to all citizens to government information," he said.

His Highness the Premier said while commenting on the previous grilling of the Oil Minister and despite termination of political responsibility, "I have asked that all facts concerning the grilling must be unveiled, thus, the Cabinet had issued a decision for the formation of a neutral committee and punish those responsible. On the other hand, he said that the government, represented by the Interior Ministry, has referred the report of the ministerial investigation committee on the ministry's

hospitality expenditure file to the public prosecution in light of suspicion of public fund fraud. He also noted that the government has referred to the public prosecution some 272 fraud-related cases, in addition to detection of 36 cases and 154 notifications by the corruption authority.

Kuwait's Public Anti-Corruption Authority (nazaha) had formulated a first-of-its-kind national strategy to combat corruption in cooperation with various state entities in effort to solidify the notions of transparency and governance, said the Prime Minister. The strategy aims at protecting the public wealth from those eager to harm national interest, affirmed Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak who thanked all those who were involved in the birth of the national strategy against corruption.

Development projects

In regards to the implementation of infrastructural and development projects, His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak indicated that the wheels of the Kuwait Vision 2035 were in motion with great strides taken towards a bright future for the country. Within the housing sector, the waiting period for government sponsored dwellings dropped from 15 years to less than three only, said His Highness the Prime Minister who revealed that around 55,218 housing units were distrib-

uted recently, a 60 percent increase from numbers in 2012. Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak added that 86 percent of citizens had already benefited from the distribution.

On infrastructural achievements, the premier said that in recent years, 574 construction projects for public buildings such as schools, health centers, mosques, and so on were completed, around 61 percent of 935 planned buildings. Road projects were also on the rise with 4,675 kilometers completed, around 24 percent of the 20,000 kilometers of planned roads, said Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, adding that 52 percent of the 300 planned bridges were completed with 156 structures almost finalized. Health sector-wise, a number of 15 hospitals were completed, bringing the total number of hospitals in Kuwait to 31, revealed His Highness the Prime Minister who added that 112 specialized clinics and 21 health centers were founded bolstering health-care in Kuwait.

Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak also touched during his speech on the government efforts to develop the energy sector, saying that the production capacity of electricity was leveled up to reach 40 percent, preventing power cuts during the summer season. The production capacity of water stations was also improved by 28 percent to cover the needs of the people of Kuwait, he affirmed, adding that the reserves of drinkable water has reached around 45 percent from levels in 2012. Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak concluded his speech with vows to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people that the government would continue the road of reforms on all state levels, setting the course for Kuwait's development and welfare on various domains to achieve the dreams of Kuwait's people. — KUNA

“ Govt exerts all efforts to sharpen fight against corruption ”

Government's achievements

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah outlined a number of achievement the government has achieved in the past few years:

- Waiting period for housing dropped from 15 years to less than three.
- 55,218 housing units were distributed recently, a 60 percent increase compared to 2012.
- 86 percent of citizens have already benefited from

- housing distribution.
- 574 construction projects for public buildings were completed, around 61 percent of 935 planned buildings.
- 4,675 kilometers of road projects completed, around 24 percent of the 20,000 kilometers of planned roads.
- Fifteen hospitals were completed, bringing the total number of hospitals in Kuwait to 31.
- Electricity production capacity improved by 40 percent; water production improved by 28 percent.



Military and police officers attend the opening session.



Cabinet ministers arrive to attend the opening session.



Social Affairs Minister Hind Al-Sabeeh (left) and Housing Minister Jenan Boushehri arrive to attend the opening session.



A general view of the audience at the opening of the third regular session of the 15th legislative term of the National Assembly. — KUNA photo

Local

Kuwait Airways' first flight to Milan lands at Malpensa airport

Flights to enhance economic, cultural exchanges between northern Italy, Kuwait

MILAN: As part of its plans to expand its destinations grid, Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) recently launched its first flight to Milan, Italy to start a three flights a week program. A special ceremony was held at Milan-Malpensa Airport (MXP) to receive the maiden flight. The ceremony was attended by Kuwait ambassador to Italy Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled Al-Sabah, Consul General in Milan Abdunasser Bukhodhour, and from the Italian side Undersecretary to the Presidency of the Lombardy Region Alan Christian Rizzi and MXP Director Andrea Tucci. The event also gathered KAC Board Member Bassam Al-Asousi, Acting CEO Abdullah Al-Sharhan, Director of Public Relations Fayez Al-Enezi, Director of Marketing Shorouq Al-Awadhi and Director of KAC Commercial Office in Italy Maurizio Santecori.

Ambassador Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled welcomed the opening of the new destination as very helpful for the increasing and diversified relations with Italy. "The deep-rooted relationship between both countries gained momentum from the historic visit to Italy in 2010 by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah," he said. "The new route is also in keeping with Kuwait's quest for becoming a global economic and commercial hub," he said, expecting the national carrier to continue its trailblazing growth and serve more passengers around the globe.

Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled congratulated KAC leaders, including the Board Chairman Youssef Al-Jassem and Acting CEO Abdullah Al-Sharhan on the new achievement,

saying, "It is the fruit of relentless efforts and ambitious plans of the airline." Milan is Italy's industrial and financial heart and the second-most populous city after Rome: it is one of the most active economic centers in Europe, he said, noting that KAC's new route will open new horizons to businesspeople and tourists from both countries. Sheikh Ali Al-Khaled added that the new route would greatly enhance the trade exchanges and give Kuwait a competitive edge as a gateway and transit point to the Middle East, India subcontinent and the Far East.

Meanwhile, KAC Acting CEO said the national carrier made a great progress in restoring its market share through a two-pronged strategy - to upgrade its fleet and expand its destinations. "The recent studies showed that the new route is highly significant for KAC in terms of freight and passengers," Abdullah Al-Sharhan pointed out. "As of today, KAC will have flights to and from Italy on a daily basis," he said, reaffirming KAC commitment to meeting the needs of its growing clientele.

In the meantime, director of Milan-Malpensa Airport said the successful launch of KAC's new destination would contribute to the global presence of the airport. The airport services nearly 100 airlines that have a network of more than 200 destinations worldwide, Andrea Tucci said.

Welcoming KAC operating its new route, he said, "It is a very positive and smart initiative for KAC to have a share of the huge flow of passengers between Milan and the Middle East." The number of Middle East passengers



MILAN: Officials attend a ceremony to celebrate Kuwait Airways' launch of its first flight to Milan, Italy.

using this airport grew by seven percent last year to 1.5 million," he added. Tucci voiced hope that the KAC's flights will help enhance the economic, commercial and cultural exchanges between northern Italy and Kuwait.

VIVA sponsors NUKS UK 54th annual conference

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced its sponsorship of the annual 54th conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students (NUKS) - United Kingdom branch. The event took place at the Hilton Hotel on Park Lane in London, from 26 until 28 October 2018, Assistant Undersecretary of Information Mohammed Bin Naji, Ambassador of Kuwait in London Khaled Abdulaziz Al-Duwaisan and NUKS - UK Branch's President Fahed Abdallah Al-Otaibi.

The conference featured various cultural, religious, sport and entertainment activities, including play show, poetry night, soccer tournament, games, and VIVA contest presented by Omar Al-Othman, where prizes and gifts were presented to participants.

On this occasion, Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "VIVA is sponsoring the annual conference of the National Union of Kuwaiti Students, the UK branch, which brings together Kuwaiti students throughout the UK in an academic, cultural, social and entertaining atmosphere." He added: "We at VIVA always strive to foster and nurture activities, events and initiatives that enrich the experience of Kuwaiti students inside and outside Kuwait and our corporate social responsibility at VIVA is part of our strategy and drives us to support them."

The National Union of Kuwaiti Students is considered to be the lone representative for the Kuwaiti students studying in the United Kingdom, as it is well known to be the oldest branch of the Union, established in London 1950. The students union aims to serve its members by demanding of protecting their rights, ensuring the successful encouragement of students in getting their scientific procurement.

VIVA is keen to continue its ongoing socially responsible role in the community in education, health, sport, environment and entrepreneurship, by spreading the spirit of goodness amongst Kuwaiti society. We believe at VIVA in taking a holistic approach to our CSR activities, one that engages our employees, and creates goodwill in our communities with a focus on helping to grow and develop the State of Kuwait.



KRCS kicks off aid campaign to Yemen

RIYADH: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) began dispatching 300 food rations in a relief campaign for those affected by Hurricane Laban in the governorate of Qashin in Yemen. KRCS said, in a press statement, that their convoy that arrived in Al-Qala'nah and Al-Muqad areas, which both suffered from the hurricane due to shortage of water for two weeks, but the two cities now opened their doors for KRCS units and 200 food baskets were distributed to residents.

Meanwhile, KRCS head of the delegation Abdulrahman Al-Oun said that the campaign comes as part of a larger campaign targeting Al-Muhra province, with 1,000 food baskets and 2,500 transport trucks carrying drinking water for one month. Oun pointed out their campaign was part of a response to calls of providing humanitarian and emergency urgent aids for the people of Al-Muhra province as a result of the hurricane Laban, pointing out that this campaign is among several projects funded by the society. — KUNA

Zain hosts LOYAC students to gain experience in private sector

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced it is hosting 32 students of the LOYAC part-time program who will be working at the company's various divisions during October - December 2018, giving them an opportunity to gain experience in the private sector work environment. Zain's support to the program comes as part of the company's Strategic Partnership with LOYAC, a non-profit organization that aims at developing the youth's talents and skills.

Zain's support to this program comes as part of the company's Strategic Partnership with LOYAC, which continues this year for over 14 consecutive years. The partnership comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility Strategy, which centers around the development of the Education and Youth sectors, especially in regards to nurturing and developing business skills within the youth.

The 32 students, enrolled in the LOYAC part-time program, will take part in completing tasks, learning new skills, and go through professional training in the real business world at various departments and divisions within Zain during the period from October - December 2018, where they will gain valuable experiences of working in the private sector environment. Zain also offers the students financial rewards in recognition of their efforts and as an encouragement to their dedication. This year, Zain's support to



LOYAC extends to a great number of educational initiatives and programs that cater to developing the youth's skills and talents, including the KON Social Entrepreneurship Program brought to Kuwait in collaboration with Babson College in Boston, considered the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education. The company also offers its exclusive support to LOYAC's Internship Program at the United Nation's International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as well as the LOYAC AC Milan Soccer School, and more.

Zain is proud to be one of the Strategic Partners of LOYAC since its inception, especially that it is considered one of the most prominent national programs that cater to the youth and offers them a healthy and empowering envi-

ronment to develop their skills and talents in an educational, fun, and social atmosphere.

Zain believes in the development of the communities in which it operates, and it is a very important part of the company's overall success. The company considers education as a core element in the community development process, and it will continue to support it to contribute to the further progress of the country's youth.

Since its inception in 2002, LOYAC has grown to be the first choice of the youth in Kuwait when it comes to innovative and high quality educational programs. LOYAC runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and to help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.

Three e-businesses qualify for Tmkeen award's final round

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company - and the Youth Empowerment Organization (Tmkeen) announced the names of the three e-media and technology businesses that have advanced to the final judging round of the Fourth KIPCO Tmkeen Award for Young Entrepreneurs. The three businesses that qualified are Nutribox - an interactive healthy living platform, Technocare - a smart watch and application that help monitor people with Alzheimer's, and Zidnei - an application that provides tuition for secondary school students.

The entrepreneurs gave a 5-7 minute presentation about their companies in the preliminary judging round. The judges were KIPCO Group professionals representing Burgan Bank, Gulf Insurance Group, OSN, United Real Estate, KAMCO Investment Company, Quraia Petrochemical Industries, United Networks, AUK and Marina FM.

Eman Al-Awadhi, KIPCO's Group Communications Director, said: "The number of businesses competing for the award is growing every year, and with it rises the diversity of innovative business plans, the level of professionalism displayed by the business owners and great potential that we see in the pitches. This has made it challenging for our judges to decide which of the contestants qualify for the final round. The number of positive ideas we saw today indicate that more and more of Kuwait's young people are turning towards entrepreneurship. I would like to thank all the entrepreneurs who took part in this round, and I extend my appreciation to all the KIPCO professionals who



KUWAIT: KIPCO Group Judges and Tmkeen volunteers.

formed the judging panels and took this opportunity to extend their experiences and insights to the young people who took part in the event."

Ali Al-Ibrahim, CEO of the Youth Empowerment Organization, said: "We are pleased with the turnout for this year's award. The presentations were very promising, and we hope that this has been a learning experience for entrepreneurs on how to successfully pitch their businesses to potential investors. We hope that these young business owners will continue to seek the guidance of the KIPCO professionals they have interacted with on the judging panels today, and

benefit from their expertise as they expand their businesses. We wish the top three finalists all the best in the final judging round." The final judging round will take place on November 5, during the first day of the Youth Empowerment Symposium. The finalists will be required to give a more detailed presentation about their businesses before a live audience. This year's winner will be rewarded with \$100,000 worth of services from the KIPCO Group as well as \$15,000 in cash. In addition, the second and third place winners will be rewarded with \$10,000 and \$5,000 respectively. The winner will be announced on November 6.



Business owners make their presentations to the judges.



Local

Government in full gear to push forward Failaka Island development project

Municipality tasked to remove obstacles facing island's development project

KUWAIT: Kuwait government assigned Kuwait Municipality Monday to hastily remove all obstacles facing implementation of Failaka Island development project. The government, chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, instructed Kuwait Municipality and competent authorities to purchase private properties in order to pave way for the development project. The government also approved a request by the National Council for Culture, Art and Letters (NCCAL) to continue with excavation works in Failaka for a year. Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement after the cabinet meeting.

Meanwhile, the cabinet assigned Civil Service Commission and the Public Anti-Corruption Authority to study set-up of units attached with Ministers' offices with the objective of fighting corruption. This was in line with His Highness the Prime Minister's instructions, as well as his determination to crack down on corruption and pursue the corrupt, said Saleh.

Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the cabinet about recent visit by Peter Maurer, President of the

International Committee of Red Cross, and his meetings with senior officials. Maurer, said Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, commended the leading humanitarian role of Kuwait in helping people in need around the globe under leadership of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Saleh also briefed the cabinet about outcome of a recent visit by US Secretary of Treasury Steven Mnuchin and his talks with senior officials over development of trade and investment relations and cooperation. The government approved a KD 900,000 (around \$3 million) donation by Al-Essa Medical and Scientific Equipment Company to provide an information system for medical information for Al-Amiri Hospital's extension building for two years.

On the other hand, the cabinet congratulated Ethiopian President Sahle-Work Zewde on her election and inauguration, wishing her best in luck in leading the African country. It expressed deep sorrow for victims of floods in Jordan, the Indonesian plane crash which killed all people on board and the attack on a Synagogue in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US, and affirmed rejection to all acts of terrorism and violence. — KUNA



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows a proposed plan for the development of Failaka Island. — KUNA

Technicians hurt in transformer explosion

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: An engineer and a technician, both Egyptians, suffered severe burns when a power cable exploded inside a power transformer room in Salwa. Police, firemen and paramedics responded and the injured men were rushed to Mubarak Hospital for treatment. The two victims are working for a company that has a contract with the Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW), and they were performing maintenance work on the transformers. A source said following the repairs, the engineer and technician entered the transformer to start it, when a spark on the switchboard caused the fire. Minister of Electricity and Water Bakheet Al-Rasheed ordered an immediate investigation to find out what happened. Meanwhile, MEW Undersecretary Mohammad Bushehri



KUWAIT: Damaged equipment inside a power transformer room where a fire was reported in Salwa.



This picture released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows a vehicle impounded after its driver was caught driving recklessly at a street in Kuwait.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

All Alghanim Electronics customers who have left their electronic appliances for the purpose of repair service on or before 31/08/2018 are kindly requested to collect them within two weeks from this notice date.

Last date to collect your products is 15/11/2018.

If these products are not collected before the above date, Alghanim Electronics reserves the right to dispose of these products.

assured the technicians' health conditions were stable.

Knifepoint

A citizen pulled a knife at his mother and threatened to kill her if she did not give him money. When he got the money, he escaped. The mother went to the police station and told them he had been doing this for years. But she finally became fed up with him, and when she confronted him, he pulled a knife and took KD 700, she said, adding that she does not know what he will do with it. Police are looking for the suspect.

Injuries in fire

Four persons were injured during a fire in an Arabian-style building in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. Kuwait Fire Service Directorate received a call about the blaze, so Ardiya and Jleeb fire stations responded. Four injured people were rescued as the building was evacuated, three of whom suffered from burns and the fourth from smoke inhalation.

KD 18,000 embezzlement

An Egyptian accountant embezzled KD 18,000 from a company, whom detectives arrested while he was under the influence of drugs. The accountant was absent from his

work for a few days and could not be reached, then officials discovered KD 18,000 was missing, so a complaint was filed. Detectives were able to locate and arrest him, and plan to question him after he sobers up.

Traffic campaign

The interior ministry's relations and security information department said the technical inspection team of the traffic department carried out a campaign that resulted in issuing 38 traffic citations. Meanwhile, the ministry said in a statement yesterday that a vehicle was seen in a video being driven with its back door open, so the driver was called in and several citations were issued against him, including negligence, using the vehicle for purposes other than what it is licensed for and leaving the door open, in addition to endangering others' lives.

Policeman insulted

A female citizen insulted a policeman for issuing her a citation. The woman parked her car in a no-parking area, so the policeman approached her and issued her a ticket for obstructing traffic. The woman became angry and insulted him with indecent words, before driving off. The policeman then lodged a complaint against her.



A fireman battles a blaze in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh.



A truck driver hands his papers to a policeman during a recent traffic campaign.

Amir laments victims of US synagogue massacre

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah expressed his deepest condolences yesterday over a deadly attack on a synagogue in the US state of Pennsylvania, which claimed scores of lives and left dozens of people wounded. His Highness the Amir extended his sympathies in a cable he sent to US President Donald Trump, saying he was distraught over the lives lost in the tragedy. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar messages to the US president.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir sent a cable to Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi. In the cable, His Highness the Amir expressed Kuwait's denouncement and condemnation of a terrorist attack on a security patrol in Tunis

on Monday, which injured a number of security forces and civilians. His Highness the Amir reiterated Kuwait's strong stand against all forms of terrorism, and supportive stand with Tunisia in facing heinous acts with all measures to preserve the country's security and stability, while wishing the injured a swift recovery. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent the Tunisian president similar cables.

Also, Kuwait strongly condemned the terrorist attack against security forces in the Tunisian capital on Monday that injured nine servicemen and civilians. Kuwait rejects all forms of terrorism and violence, a foreign ministry source said in a statement, urging the international community to double efforts to eliminate this menace that threatened people and global stability. — KUNA

MoH contracted company fires 220 bedoon staff

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A local company hired by the Ministry of Health (MoH) for a medical project recently terminated 220 of its bedoon (stateless) staff members, justifying this by what it described as MoH's refusal to extend the company's contract, said informed sources. The sources added that the terminated stateless employees are the only providers for their families and that these families are currently going through hardships after the company gave them three months to look for other jobs.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources said that both the Public Authority for Manpower and the central apparatus for illegal residents' affairs are discussing a

mechanism to employ bedoons in the private and cooperative sectors. The sources added that according to regulations on bedoons' employment, work permits are issued to bedoons for one renewable year effective from the date of the employer's application for the work permit by providing the needed documents including the contract, qualifications, certificate of experience and fee payment.

In other news, informed sources said that the Civil Service Commission (CSC) contacted Ahmadi educational zone requesting the suspension of a chemistry teacher who had entered Kuwait on a secretary's visa before he applied to MoE to work as a teacher. In another educational concern, the third batch of 12 new expat teachers arrived from Tunisia to cover shortages in some schools. Informed sources said the teachers were welcomed at Kuwait airport, where they were given a KD 200 loan each, in addition to KD 60 in rent allowance for male teachers, while female teachers were taken to the ministry's residence pending completing their visa procedures.

Kuwait keen on upholding UN principles

NEW YORK: Kuwait has affirmed its commitment to uphold the noble principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations to achieve and establish security and stability in the world. This came in the speech of the Permanent Delegation of Kuwait to the United Nations, delivered by the diplomatic attache, Sarah Al-Zuman, before the Third Committee of the United Nations General Assembly during discussion of the item on the promotion and protection of human rights on Monday. She stressed the importance of international cooperation in reaching agreed mechanisms that guarantee that humanity enjoys its fundamental rights with respect of the essence of cultural and religious values and backgrounds of each country without

imposing unapproved concepts that are not related to the provisions of international human rights law.

"This year marks the 25th anniversary of the Vienna Declaration and Program of Action and we share the relevant report of the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres that security, human rights, dignity, equality, democracy, peace and sustainable development are interdependent and mutually reinforcing," Zuman said. The rights include basic human rights such as the right to life, the right to shelter, the right to education, health care and the right to work for a dignified life, freedom of belief, freedom of opinion and expression, through publication, writing or other means, freedom of the press, associations and unions.

Zuman explained that Kuwait's constitution guaranteed all these rights to citizens without discrimination, while the state adopted legislative and executive measures to promote and protect the rights of all residents in its territory, including the ratification of 19 agreements on fundamental rights to work. — KUNA

CONDOLENCES

The Owners and Management of
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&
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Express our heartfelt condolence to
Ravi Varrier (CEO)
on the sad and sudden demise of
Vadavannur Varrirath Parukkutty Varsyar (88)

who passed away at her residence
in Palakkad, Kerala
on 29th October, 2018

May her soul Rest in Peace



German nurse admits to killing 100 patients

Bangladesh court doubles jail term for opposition leader

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JAKARTA: Recovered debris from the ill-fated Lion Air flight JT 610 are laid out as Indonesia's President Joko Widodo visits the search and rescue operations centre at a port in northern Jakarta yesterday. —AFP

Divers hunt for doomed plane's recorders

No sign of survivors after plane crashed into sea and sank

JAVA SEA: Indonesia deployed divers yesterday to search for an airliner that crashed with 189 people on board, as "pinger locators" tried to zero in on its cockpit recorders and find out why an almost-new plane went down in the sea minutes after take-off. Indonesia, one of the world's fastest-growing aviation markets, has a patchy safety record. With the now almost certain prospect of all on board having died, the crash is set to rank as its second-worst air disaster. Ground staff lost contact with flight JT610 of budget airline Lion Air 13 minutes after the Boeing 737 MAX 8 aircraft took off early on Monday from the airport in Jakarta, the capital, on its way to the tin-mining town of Pangkal Pinang.

Dozens of relatives of those on board gathered at a police hospital where body bags were brought for forensic doctors to try to identify victims, including by taking saliva swabs from family members for DNA tests. "I keep praying for a miracle although logically, the plane has sunk in the ocean," said Toni Priyono Adhi, whose daughter was on the flight. "But as a parent, I want a miracle." A Reuters witness on the crash site saw about 60 divers scattered in inflatable boats over the slightly choppy waters entering the sea, which is about 35 meters deep. Sonar vessels and an underwater drone have also been hunting for the wreckage of the fuselage, where many victims were feared trapped, officials said.

The head of a national transport safety panel, Soerjanto Tjahjono, said that underwater "pinger locators", including equipment from Singapore, were being deployed to help find the aircraft's black boxes. The priority is finding the cockpit voice recorder and flight data recorder to help determine the cause of the disaster, safety experts said. "The visibility is not good as it's very overcast," a special forces officer said. Underwater footage released by the

national search and rescue agency showed relatively poor visibility. In all, 35 vessels are helping to search.

The focus was initially an area within 5 nautical miles of where the plane lost contact, but that was expanded to 10 nautical miles yesterday and will be expanded to 15 today, a search and rescue agency officer said. But only debris, personal items, including 52 identification cards and passports, and body parts have been found off the shore of



Body parts found from crashed jet

Karawang district, east of Jakarta. Police said human remains were collected in 37 body bags after sweeps of the site, roughly 15 km off the coast. Most of those on board were Indonesian but the airline has said an Italian passenger and Indian pilot were on the plane.

Earlier technical problem?

The pilot of flight JT610 had asked to return to base shortly after it took off, at about 6.20 am on Monday. Investigators are trying to determine why the pilot issued the request, which was granted. The deputy of the national transportation safety committee told a news conference

the plane had technical problems on its previous flight, from the city of Denpasar on Bali island on Sunday, including an issue over "unreliable airspeed". "We are also asking for information from the last pilot who flew from Denpasar to Jakarta, but we have not met the technician," Haryo Satniko said, referring to the technician who handled the aircraft after it landed on Sunday. The committee also had a recording of the conversation between the pilot of JT610 before it crashed and the control tower at Jakarta, he said.

Transport Minister Budi Karya Sumadi told reporters at Jakarta's dock that the investigation would result in sanctions being handed out, but he did not elaborate. Lion had operated 11 Boeing 737 MAX 8s and a transport ministry official said inspections would be made on all of those models operating in Indonesia though they would not be grounded. On Monday, the US National Transportation Safety Board and Boeing Co said they were providing assistance for the investigation. The accident is the first to be reported involving the widely sold Boeing 737 MAX, an updated, more fuel-efficient version of the manufacturer's workhorse single-aisle jet.

Two witnesses described the plane as swaying or rocking as it came down, adding that the nose hit the water first and there was a tall column of smoke afterwards. The aircraft did not make a noise when it came down, they said. "From a long way off, it was already leaning," said Gauk, a fisherman who uses one name. Privately owned Lion Air, founded in 1999, said the aircraft, which had been in operation since August, was airworthy, with its pilot and co-pilot together having amassed 11,000 hours of flying time. Indonesia's worst air disaster was in 1997, when a Garuda Indonesia A300 crashed in the city of Medan, killing 234 people. —Reuters

Nigerian crackdown on Shiite sect sparks fears of escalation

ABUJA: Nigerian police fired shots and tear gas at thousands of supporters of an imprisoned Shiite cleric in Abuja yesterday, just a day after three people were killed in similar clashes that sparked warnings to the government that a heavy-handed crackdown could radicalize the group. At least six Islamic Movement of Nigeria (IMN) supporters have now been killed since Saturday during protests calling for the release of Ibrahim Zakzaky, who has been in custody since December 2015. Several thousand IMN members were marching peacefully in central Abuja but then armed police fired into the crowd to disperse the procession, said AFP reporters at the scene.

At least six injured IMN members were taken away in cars while the area was patrolled by dozens of police, they added. "A lot of our people had been injured, so far we don't have any record of death," IMN spokesman Ibrahim Musa said. Nigeria's military said three IMN supporters were killed during another protest on the outskirts of Abuja on Monday. The army said troops and police "repelled the attack" and that IMN "fired weapons" and threw stones and Molotov cocktails.

AFP photographs of the aftermath showed several bodies of civilians on the ground near police but it was unclear whether they were dead or injured. On Saturday, three other IMN members were killed during protests in Abuja. The army claimed the protesters attacked a military convoy and tried to steal weapons and ammunition—an account the IMN "categorically" denies. IMN spokesman Musa claimed 27 people have been killed since Saturday and that the death toll could be higher since "scores" of people were injured and troops took away others. "We are working towards their release to us for burial," Musa said.

Long-running opposition

Human rights group Amnesty International said on Monday that reports that troops fired live bullets at protesters were "very disturbing" and would be unlawful if they were unarmed. The IMN has staged a series of demonstrations demanding the release of leader Zakzaky, who has been detained since bloody clashes broke out in the northern city of Zaria in 2015. Then, the military was accused of killing more than 300 IMN supporters and burying them in mass graves. Zakzaky has been at loggerheads with Nigeria's secular authorities for years because of his calls for an Iranian-style Islamic revolution. Northern Nigeria is majority Sunni Muslim.

The cleric, who is in his mid-sixties and lost the sight in one eye during the 2015 clashes, has been seen in public only twice since he was detained. Nigeria's government has previously ignored a court order to release Zakzaky and his wife. In April, at least 115 IMN supporters were arrested during protests in Abuja during which police used tear gas and water cannon. IMN processions for the annual Ashura festival have frequently been flashpoints. In November 2016, at least 10 people were killed when police opened fire near the northern city of Kano. —AFP

Wild weather sweeps Europe; 9 die in Italy

ROME: The death toll from fierce storms battering Italy has risen to nine, civil protection authorities said yesterday, as wild weather swept parts of Europe, leaving motorists and tourists stranded. Road were blocked and thousands of people were left without power in southern and central Europe, as rains and violent winds sparked flooding, tore trees from their roots and whipped debris into the air. Thick snow has also cloaked French and Italian mountain regions, trapping scores of drivers in their cars and tourists in hotels.

In Italy, where Venice was inundated by near-record flooding and ferocious storms drove high winds reaching up to 180 kilometers an hour in some areas, civil protection authorities announced a further four deaths, after confirming five people perished on Monday. Authorities yesterday reported a woman died when her home was engulfed by a mudslide in the northern region of Trentino, a man was killed in the northeastern region of Veneto by a falling tree, and a firefighter died during relief operations in South Tyrol.

Elsewhere, a man was killed while kitesurfing on Monday near the town of Cattolica on the Adriatic coast, with the local press saying strong winds had blown him into rocks. A man is also missing at sea off Calabria in the southwest after his boat was discovered empty washed up on rocks along the coast. Italian media reported that around 170 people, tourists and hotel staff, were stranded by heavy snowfall at the Stelvio Pass on the Swiss border. Meanwhile in Friuli

Venezia Giulia, local authorities said some 23,000 people were without power.

Hundreds stranded

In France, more than 1,000 drivers were trapped in their cars for the night in the mountains of the Massif Central region as the roads were engulfed in snowstorms. Another 400 had to spend the night in train carriages at the main station in the eastern city of Lyon after heavy snow blocked the tracks. About 195,000 homes were without power across France—mostly in the east and centre. Another 21,000 homes were also cut off on the Mediterranean island of Corsica, which was placed on red alert Monday for powerful winds, shutting its airports and ports.

Croatia's Adriatic coast has also been battered by gale-force winds and heavy rains that have flooded streets, cut off power and ensnared road and maritime traffic. A Slovenian surfer has been missing since Monday in the sea off of Umag city, on the northern Istria peninsula, according to port authorities. In Spain, over 100 soldiers were helping electrical repair crews to reach isolated areas of the northern region of Asturias, blanketed by heavy snowfall at the weekend. About 4,700 people were still without power in the region yesterday, according to local emergency services.

Venice swamped

Italy's canal-ringed city of Venice was swamped by flooding as heavy rainfall pushed the water levels to near record levels on Monday. Rain-soaked tourists were barred from St Mark's Square on Monday as local authorities said the "acqua alta" (high water) peaked at 156 centimeters. The waters have only topped 150 centimeters five times before in recorded history. In Genoa, authorities closed the airport until 1300 GMT as they



ROME: Photo show cars damaged during bad weather in the Prati district of Rome. —AFP

work to clear runways of detritus carried by the heavy rains, wind and tides. Schools in the city are also closed for the day, with Rome and several other regions also halting classes.

Meteorologists expect the harsh weather to gradually ease in Italy. Storms have also swept into Switzerland, buffeting the Ticino region near the Italian border overnight, according to public broadcaster RTS. Roads were blocked by fallen trees and flooding, while strong winds ripped roof sections off buildings, including in Giubiasco where police said part of a firm's roof had smashed into a moving train and a house, without causing injury. In southern Austria, authorities have deployed hundreds of mobile anti-flooding dams as rivers burst their banks, while in the city of Salzburg a roof section from the mediaeval ramparts flew off in high winds. —AFP

International

A tale of two islands: Brexit blues hit Caribbean cousins

Anguillians consider Saint Martin as 'downtown Anguilla'

THE VALLEY, Anguilla: The tiny Caribbean island of Anguilla lives in harmony with neighboring Saint Martin but the borders could soon be going up in this sun-soaked paradise due to Brexit. Eight kilometres of turquoise sea separate the British overseas territory of Anguilla from Saint Martin, a larger island split between two European Union states: France in the northern half and the Dutch-run south. Chief Minister Victor Banks said Anguillians consider Saint Martin as "downtown Anguilla". "People go there to go to shopping, to make business, or get, for example, medical services," he told AFP.

Britain is more than 6,500 km away from the pristine white beaches fringing Anguilla, an island 26 km long by five km wide, with a 15,000-strong population. After a 25-minute ferry ride, visitors from Saint Martin stroll straight through the entry checks at what is left of the port at Blowing Point. Anguilla and its neighbor were ravaged by Hurricane Irma in September last year. "People here in this part of the world have very, very, very close family ties," said Tim Foy, the British civil servant who is the head of state Queen Elizabeth II's representative in the territory.

The 2017 records were partially lost in Hurricane Irma but he said there were around 300,000 movements of people between Anguilla and Saint Martin in 2016. Free movement of goods and people between the three administrations is a historical mainstay, said Sherman Williams, finance manager of the Anguilla Air and Sea Ports Authority, which runs Anguilla's three harbors and its small airstrip. The traditional arrangement was legally reinforced by EU rules but is now in ques-

tion due to Britain's decision to leave the bloc. Internally self-governing Anguilla did not take part in the 2016 vote.

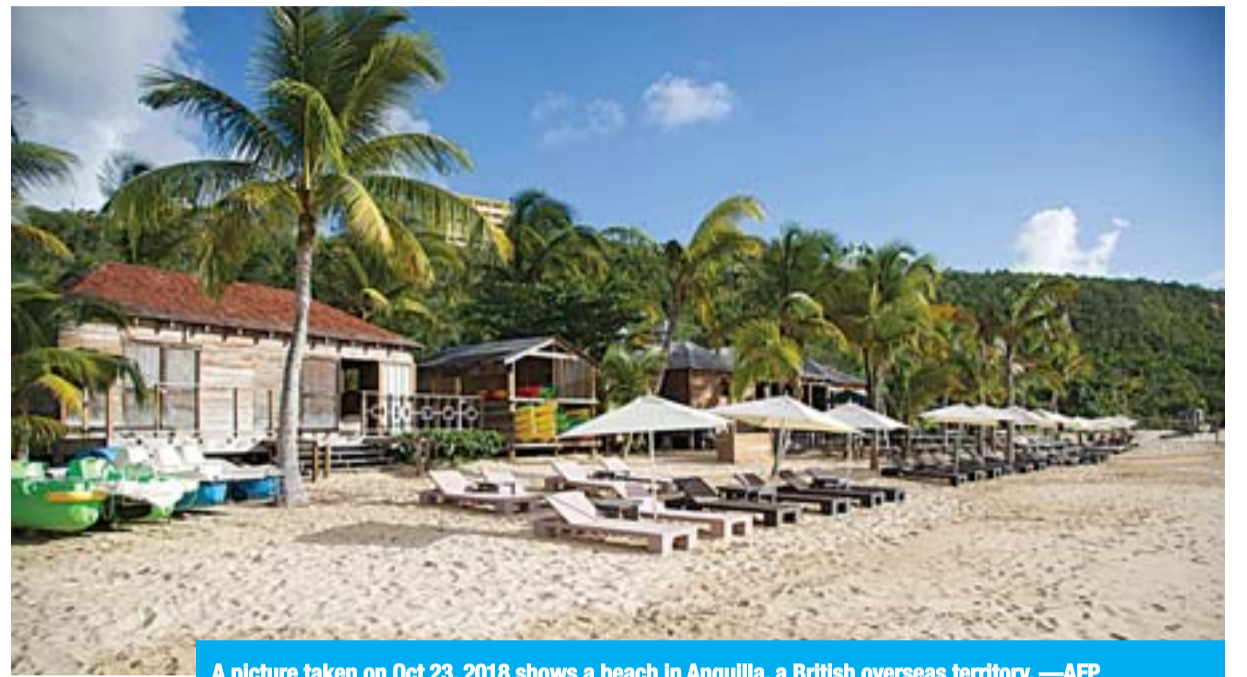
Anguilla's capital and largest town, The Valley, is strung out around three main roads, punctuated with occasional administrative buildings, small grocery stores and some under-occupied modern buildings with herds of goats occasionally roaming by.

'Separation of families'

There are few immediate concerns about the island's economic health. EU development aid accounts for only one to two percent of Anguilla's budget at \$6-7 million and the island's government is planning on negotiating post-Brexit replacement money with London. Around 80 percent of Anguilla's economy is based on services, notably offshore finance and tourism, which rely on smooth cross-border flows. Most longer-haul tourists come via the bigger airport on Saint Martin, famous for its runway right by the beach.

"We don't know exactly what Brexit means for Anguilla," said Shellya Rogers, the Anguilla Tourist Board's corporate affairs manager. While 80 percent of the island's tourists come from the United States, European visitors "may have a few more restrictions on travelling", including possibly visas, she said. There are also concerns in Britain's other Caribbean overseas territories: The British Virgin Islands, the Cayman Islands, Montserrat and the Turks and Caicos Islands.

Banks said they were working together but none faced the same challenges as Anguilla, relying so closely as it does on its neighbor split between EU states. Daniel Gibbs, the president of the territorial council of French Saint-Martin, is Banks' cousin and shares his point of view. He hopes Brexit will not impose dramatic changes on the two islands. "We are determined to put in place a memorandum of understanding to facilitate the exchanges that have always characterized our relationship," said Gibbs.



A picture taken on Oct 23, 2018 shows a beach in Anguilla, a British overseas territory. —AFP

Washington reintroduced sanctions against Iran's currency trade, metals and auto sectors in August after it pulled out from a multinational 2015 deal that lifted sanctions in return for limits on Iran's nuclear program.

A new set of sanctions on Iranian banking and energy sectors are to take effect Nov 5, as US President Donald Trump seeks to cut oil purchases from the Islamic Republic to zero. "Unfortunately a law-breaking country (the United States) seeks to punish a country (Iran) that is abiding by law.... This method will have severe consequences for the world order," Zarif was quoted as saying by the Iranian state news agency IRNA during a visit to Istanbul. —Reuters

Williams summed up how citizens in the three jurisdictions see themselves as one and the same. "Brexit may be

“ We don't know exactly what Brexit means for Anguilla ”

Protests as Druze vote in Israel local elections

JERUSALEM: Israelis voted in local elections yesterday that saw an ally of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vie for Jerusalem mayor and controversial first-time polls in part of the occupied Golan Heights that drew protests. Polling stations opened as scheduled at 7:00 am and were due to close at 10:00 pm. Main results were not expected until today. Elections for mayors and councils, held every five years, are seen as largely local affairs with few national implications, though they have served as a springboard for politicians harboring national ambitions.

One significant new element to yesterday's vote saw minority Druze cast ballots in the Golan Heights for the first time since Israel seized the strategic region from Syria in 1967. The vote was controversial since many Druze who feel connected to Syria fear it will help Israel legitimize its control over the region. Several hundred protesters in the village of Majdal Shams, some carrying Syrian flags, temporarily blocked a polling centre as police sought to maintain calm, an AFP correspondent reported. There had been calls to boycott the election during campaigning and a string of candidates pulled out.

Polling was to occur in four Druze villages in the Golan, though it was called off in two because there were no candidates. The elections followed a court challenge by a group of Druze who pressed for the right to hold the vote. Israel has previously appointed local leaders in the villages. The international community has never recognized Israel's annexation of the Golan. In Yarka, a separate Druze village in northern Israel outside of the Golan, police said two polling stations were closed after a stun grenade was thrown at one of them, lightly wounding 10 people.

Possible run-off

There is similar controversy in east Jerusalem, which Israel also occupied in 1967 and later annexed. Unlike in national elections, Palestinian residents of east Jerusalem who have not taken Israeli citizenship are eligible to vote in local polls. But the vast majority stay away, refusing to recognize Israel's control over the sector of the city they see as the capital of their future state.

Some 300,000 Palestinians live in east Jerusalem. Israel sees the entire city as its capital, a claim buoyed by US President Donald Trump's decision to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December. Among the



MAJDAL SHAMS: Druze men protest against municipal elections in front of a polling centre in the village of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights yesterday. —AFP

few Palestinians in the race is Ramadan Dabash, who heads a list of 12 Arab candidates running for seats on the city council. He has Israeli citizenship-rare among Jerusalem Palestinians-and is a former member of Netanyahu's right-wing Likud party. Candidates running for municipal polls often do not have formal links to national parties, instead campaigning with locally formed alliances.

"There are attempts to make local politics into national politics," said Gideon Rahat of the Israel Democracy Institute think tank and Jerusalem's Hebrew University. "In some places the right-wing is carrying campaigns that are against Arabs or against foreign workers. So this is an attempt to take national issues into local elections, but I'm not sure that they are so successful." The Jerusalem mayoral race features six candidates, increasing the likelihood of a second-round runoff on November 13 if no one receives at least 40 percent of the vote. They are vying to replace Mayor Nir Barkat, who is leaving office after two terms to pursue national office as part of Netanyahu's Likud.

Netanyahu is backing his minister for Jerusalem affairs, Ze'ev Elkin, though he faces a tough race. Others who have garnered significant attention include Moshe Leon, backed by Jewish ultra-Orthodox factions, and secular candidate Ofer Berkovitch. Ultra-Orthodox candidate Yossi Deitch is also in the race. The ultra-Orthodox, who make up some 10 percent of Israel's population, wield particular influence in Jerusalem and the city has previously had an ultra-Orthodox mayor. But any mayor must deal with the various factions represented on Jerusalem's 31-seat council. Around 16,000 police and volunteers were being deployed for the vote, a police spokesman said. —AFP

that has killed 360,000 people and displaced millions. In recent years, those negotiations have been overshadowed by parallel talks overseen by other key regime ally Iran, Russia and Turkey that ended up producing the Idlib deal.

'Return on investment'

Karim Bitar, of the Paris-based Institute of International and Strategic Affairs, said the Idlib deal was "absolutely fundamental". "The Russians feel they have triumphed militarily and hope to get a return on investment after having carried (Syrian President) Bashar al-Assad for three years," he said. "But they won't be able to transform this military victory into a lasting political foundation without Erdogan's support." Julien Theron, of the Paris Institute of Political Studies, said Syria's main power brokers could not avoid talks if they wanted to rebuild the country. "A diplomatic route seems unavoidable," he said. "Nobody can really stabilize or rebuild the country without the cooperation - or at least the tacit agreement - of the others." In recent days, international efforts have focused on setting up a long-awaited committee to discuss a post-war constitution.

The mission is fraught with difficulty, as the opposition has pushed for an entirely new constitution, but the regime has said it will only discuss altering the current one. On Saturday, Turkey, Russia, France and Germany called for the committee to be established by the year's end to pave the way towards "free and fair elections". But analysts are not overly optimistic. Under a UN plan, the regime and opposition would choose 50 committee members each, and the UN would nominate the final 50, composed of representatives of civil society and technical experts. —AFP

Iran: US sanctions will have 'severe consequences'

LONDON: US sanctions against Iran will have "severe consequences" for the world order, Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said yesterday, days before new sanctions on Tehran's oil exports take effect.

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Idlib deal sparks fresh diplomatic push to end war

BEIRUT: A Turkish-Russian deal for Syria's Idlib has revived efforts towards a diplomatic solution to the country's seven-year war, but analysts say a political settlement is still far off. Diplomatic activity has picked up since regime ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey last month reached an agreement to stave off a government assault on the last major rebel bastion of Idlib.

The accord has for now stopped the regime's military advances, after it recaptured swathes of the country with Russian support since 2015 to extend its control to over two-thirds of Syria. Two areas still escape the government's reach: a northwestern chunk including Idlib, and a huge region in the northeast controlled by a US-backed Kurdish-led alliance. "The Idlib deal has opened the way," opposition spokesman Yahya Al-Aridi said. "We have noticed a flurry of diplomacy." The outgoing United Nations envoy to Syria last week visited Damascus, and the political opposition's chief negotiator welcomed the opportunity for dialogue with Moscow.

On Saturday, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin, together with the leaders of France and Germany, called for a political settlement. Numerous rounds of UN-backed indirect peace talks between the opposition and the regime have failed to stem the conflict

International

German nurse admits killing 100 patients as trial opens

Biggest serial killing case in Germany's post-war history

OLDENBURG: Former nurse Niels Hoegel, admitted yesterday to killing 100 patients in his care, on the first day of his trial in the biggest serial killing case in Germany's post-war history. Hoegel, 41, has already spent nearly a decade in prison on a life term for other patient deaths, and is accused of intentionally administering medical overdoses to victims so he could bring them back to life at the last moment. As the proceedings opened in the northern city of Oldenburg, presiding judge Sebastian Buehrmann asked whether the charges against him were accurate. Hoegel replied quietly "yes". "What I have admitted took place," he told the courtroom crowded with dozens of grieving relatives.

As the proceedings began Buehrmann said the main aim of the trial was to establish the full scope of the murder spree that was allowed to go unchecked for years at two German hospitals. "We will do our utmost to learn the truth," he said. "It is like a house with dark rooms - we want to bring light into the darkness." After a minute of silence in the courtroom for the victims, the bearded, heavyset Hoegel listened impassively, his head lowered, as public prosecutor Daniela Schiereck-Bohlmann read out the name of each dead patient and the charges against the defendant.

'Vulnerable mass murderer'

Prosecutors say at least 36 patients were killed at a hospital in Oldenburg where he worked, and about 64 more at a clinic in nearby Delmenhorst, between 2000 and 2005. More than 130 bodies of patients who died on Hoegel's watch have been exhumed, in a case investigators have called "unprecedented in

Germany to our knowledge". One of the more than 100 co-plaintiffs in the trial, Christian Marbach, said it was a scandal that Hoegel had been allowed to kill with impunity for such an extended period of time without hospital authorities or law enforcement intervening.

"They had everything they needed (to stop him) - you don't have to be Sherlock Holmes," Marbach, the grandson of one of the patients said. He later expressed surprise about Hoegel's quick confession, which was broadcast on two large screens to the courtroom audience. "I didn't expect it to happen today," he said. "We now have a chance to make some real progress." Marbach said the defendant seemed remarkably composed as he admitted to the extraordinary list of killings. "He looks like a little, vulnerable mass murderer."

More than 130 bodies exhumed

200 victims?

Caught in 2005 while injecting an unapproved medication into a patient in Delmenhorst, Hoegel was sentenced in 2008 to seven years in prison for attempted murder. A second trial followed in 2014-15 under pressure from alleged victims' families, who accused prosecutors of dragging their feet. He was found guilty of murder and attempted murder of five other victims and given the maximum sentence of 15 years. It was then that Hoegel confessed to his psychiatrist at least 30 more murders committed in Delmenhorst. That prompted investigators to take a closer look at suspicious deaths in Oldenburg. After he took the stand yesterday, Hoegel said that he began taking painkillers shortly after becoming a nurse in 1999 as he felt overwhelmed by the job in the intensive



OLDENBURG: Former nurse Niels Hoegel, accused of killing more than 100 patients in his care, hides behind a folder as he arrives in the courtroom in Oldenburg, northern Germany. —AFP

care unit.

"It was the stress - I found (the work) easier on medication," he said. "I should have quit." Investigators say the final toll could top 200 but fear they might never know for sure because the bodies of many possible victims were cremated. Hoegel appears to have followed a similar procedure each

time, first injecting a medication that triggered cardiac arrest, followed by an often futile attempt at resuscitation. Prosecutors say he was motivated by vanity, to show off his skills at saving human lives, and by simple "boredom". The choice of victim appears to have been entirely random, with their ages ranging from 34 to 96. —AFP

American Jews confront rising anti-Semitism

NEW YORK: Since the end of World War II, American Jews have lived in relative peace and prosperity, convinced that anti-Semitic attacks were a horror left long behind them. But the massacre of 11 people at a Pittsburgh synagogue on Saturday was a brutal reminder that those days are back, resurrected by the advance of extremism and polarization in the Trump era, and fueled by the hatred voiced on social networks.

American Jews — some 5.3 million people, including non-practicing Jews, according to the Pew Research Center — had an "illusory sense of invulnerability," said Jacques Berlinerblau, a professor of Jewish civilization at Georgetown University in Washington. "European Jews never had that sense. 'Now, that sense of invulnerability has been shattered," he said, echoing sentiments expressed widely by Jewish Americans on social media since a gunman stormed the Tree of Life synagogue.

Kenneth Jacobson, deputy head of the Anti-Defamation League, which combats anti-Semitism and discrimination, said it has been a progressive awakening for American Jews about the dangers they face. Over the past two decades, "what we were often hearing from American Jews was, 'Why is ADL still in business? Anti-Semitism in the US is no longer a problem,'" Jacobson said. But with the rise in the number of attacks on Jewish targets in France and across Europe in recent years, "there was more of a conversation in the Jewish community, anti-Semitism was more on people's minds," he added. —AFP

Brexit dims outlook for Spain-Gibraltar border, businesses

GIBRALTAR: It's morning rush hour at the border between Spain and Gibraltar and virtually all the traffic is flowing from the downtrodden Spanish city of La Linea de la Concepcion into the wealthy British territory. After a quick check of their identity papers, hundreds of people walk briskly across the only runway at Gibraltar's airport to their jobs in the tiny British enclave perched on a rocky outcrop on Spain's southern tip.

Gibraltar has close to full employment and it has long been a lifeline for people who live in the adjacent area of Spain known as "El Campo de Gibraltar", which has one of the European Union's highest jobless rates. But when Brexit comes, it could mean tighter controls at what would be a new border between Britain and the European Union which could jeopardize the easy flow of people that has benefited both Gibraltar and "El Campo".

"I worry they will demand some sort of work visa. No one knows what will happen," said Miguel Pereira, 53, who has commuted to a job at a tobacco warehouse in Gibraltar from the adjoining city of La Linea for over three decades. An electrician by training, the married father of two said he would try to find work in the same field in La Linea if working in Gibraltar becomes unviable. But this would be a challenge. The city has a jobless rate of just over 31 percent. It has been dubbed the "drug capital of Spain" because of the gangs that operate there, employing jobless youths to bring loads of hashish in from nearby Morocco on high-speed boats. —AFP

From picket lines to polls: US teachers eye political office

LEON: Like thousands of fellow teachers across West Virginia, Amy Grady went on strike this year demanding better health care and higher pay. Now she hopes to give state legislators a lesson by capturing a state Senate seat. With labor activism catching fire and spreading to multiple US states, a record number of teachers — 1,455 current and former educators, according to the National Education Association — are running for office in the November 6 midterm elections.

Most of them are Democrats aiming to make the leap from schoolhouse to statehouse, to shake up American politics and to make education a priority for the election and beyond. "I didn't foresee myself running for this," Grady told AFP in her classroom at Leon Elementary School, as her students focused on assignments at their desks. The 39-year-old was among 20,000 angry West Virginia teachers who launched a nine-day wildcat strike in February that became the most potent display of US

educator activism in decades.

It set off similar walkouts and protests in Arizona, Colorado, Kentucky, North Carolina and Oklahoma, temporarily shuttering thousands of schools and sending shockwaves through legislatures and President Donald Trump's administration. "The more I talked to teachers and service personnel and different people, they were saying, 'We need somebody who can represent us, somebody who understands what we're going through, somebody who has been in the school system,'" said Grady, who has taught in Leon for nine years and is running for office as an independent. "I decided to go for it."

So did Brianne Solomon, an art and dance teacher at Hannan High School in Ashton now running as a Democrat for the House of Delegates. Solomon resented the way the state was steadily chipping away at public school funding, even as teachers took on added responsibilities to help students with family problems, including the opioid crisis devastating West Virginia communities. "I'm kind of fed up," Solomon said last week during her campaign fundraiser at a Charlotte bar. "I'm not a career politician, but I'm going to put my name on the ballot."

Race on as Merkel opens path for succession

BERLIN: Angela Merkel's bombshell announcement of her plans to step down as German chancellor in 2021 has unleashed a succession race that will be watched closely within Germany and beyond. Merkel on Monday said she would not stand for re-election in December as leader of her centre-right CDU party. Neither would she seek a new mandate as Germany's leader.

Quake rattles New Zealand as Harry and Meghan visit

WELLINGTON: A 6.1 magnitude earthquake rattled parts of central New Zealand yesterday, where British royals Meghan and Harry are on tour, but officials said it caused no major damage. The quake was felt in Wellington during a session of parliament, prompting lawmakers to stop deliberations and seek refuge as a precaution.

There was no tsunami threat and the quake was not strongly felt in Auckland, where the touring royals continued with a public walkabout on the city's waterfront. Reporters travelling with the couple said they did not feel any tremors during the quake, which the US Geological Survey (USGS) gave a magnitude of 6.1. New Zealand's official

GeoNet seismic monitoring service said a 6.2 quake struck at a depth of 207 kilometers (128 miles) in the central North Island about 340 kilometers northeast of Wellington.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern said it was widely felt across the centre of the country, despite the depth of the epicenter, and urged Kiwis to "check on those around you". Civil Defense Minister Kris Faafoi said there had been no reports of damage or injuries. "I think some people might be a little nervous and that's understandable but it's just a case of following those safety messages and being prepared," he told reporters. "I think if there was anything major we'd know by now." Faafoi said proceedings in parliament house were temporarily suspended because of heavy shaking in the building.

"We all felt it in the house, I was in there at the time... and just for the immediate safety of those in the house (the speaker) saw fit to suspend proceedings," he said. "I think that was the wise thing to do as we felt it quite heavily." New Zealand lies on the boundary of the Australian and Pacific tectonic plates,



WASHINGTON: Amy Grady, who is running as an independent for a seat in the West Virginia state Senate, teaches in her classroom at Leon Elementary October in West Virginia. —AFP

'Long time coming'

The NEA expects the spirited teachers' movement to translate to wins in statehouses in Trump country, the so-called red states. "We are going to ride this #RedForEdWave straight to the ballot box in November," NEA president Lily Eskelsen Garcia said last month. More than 20 educators are also running for seats in Congress, including 2016's

National Teacher of the Year, Jahana Hayes of Connecticut. Inspired by their West Virginia comrades, thousands of teachers in deeply conservative Oklahoma picketed in April, demanding higher pay and more school funding. Trent Ratterree, a former college athlete and now a political organizer for the Oklahoma Education Association, said the teachers' passion "blew me away." —AFP

(Merkel's departure) means for the party and how the party can be kept united." For Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung columnist Berthold Kohler, the chancellor has played a well-timed move. "Merkel has done well to give up the party chair post. The CDU has been revived," he wrote.

Waning power

Merkel had enjoyed the support of Germans as a guarantor of stability and prosperity, having steered the country through financial crises and keeping Europe's biggest economy humming with unemployment striking post-reunification record lows month after month. But her power has been on the wane since her 2015 decision to keep Germany's borders open at the height of Europe's migrant crisis, ultimately allowing in more than one million asylum seekers. —AFP



WELLINGTON: Britain's Prince Harry (left) greets children as his wife Meghan, Duchess of Sussex (center) attempts to coax a smile from 5-year-old Joe Young while meeting with students from Houghton Valley School at Maranui Cafe in Wellington. —AFP

which form part of the so-called "Ring of Fire", and experiences up to 15,000 tremors a year. A shallow 6.3 quake in the South Island city of Christchurch

killed 185 people in 2011, while a 7.8 shake slightly further north in 2016 was the second strongest ever recorded in the country. —AFP

International

Sri Lanka political rivals tempt defectors, PMs to swing crisis

Followers of sacked Sri Lankan PM stage mass rally

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's rival prime ministers battled to tempt lawmakers from opposing sides yesterday as they sought numbers to swing any parliamentary vote of confidence to end the country's constitutional crisis. Parliament has been suspended since President Maithripala Sirisena sacked Ranil Wickremesinghe as head of government last Friday and nominated former strongarm leader Mahinda Rajapakse for a spectacular return to frontline politics.

While Wickremesinghe has been backed by the United States and other countries in calling for the suspension to be lifted, both sides have been marshalling their support for a vote that will decide the rivals' fate. Rajapakse, 72, gave four legislators from Wickremesinghe's party ministerial portfolios after persuading them to defect on Monday. Wickremesinghe, who has refused to leave the prime minister's residence since he was sacked, has in turn convinced two lawmakers from Sirisena's camp to join his United National Party.

Following the defections, Wickremesinghe has 105 MPs in the 225-seat chamber while Rajapakse and Sirisena together have 98. A majority of the 22 remaining MPs are expected to back Wickremesinghe in any vote but the horse-trading is sure to intensify, observers said. A deputy minister in Wickremesinghe's administration, Ranjan Ramanayake, accused China of paying for

Rajapakse to buy legislators. "I am telling China not to spend their millions to buy MPs in Sri Lanka. They want to buy the country wholesale," he said.

China denies interference

Rajapakse led a pro-China policy during his 10 years as president up to 2015. But the claim was denied by the Chinese embassy in Colombo. "Recent allegations about China by MP Ranjan Ramanayake are groundless and irresponsible," said an embassy statement to AFP. "It is a matter of internal affairs, and China has consistently supported the principle of non-interference in other countries' internal affairs." Despite calls for a parliamentary vote to end the crisis, Sirisena showed no sign of lifting the suspension which runs until November 16.

Wickremesinghe's finance minister Mangala Samaraweera said the president is trying to buy time to secure votes for Rajapakse. "If he (the president) has the majority there is no need to keep parliament shut. He wants to buy time to do some horse deals," Samaraweera said. Parliament speaker Karu Jayasuriya, who on Monday said there would be a "bloodbath" unless the assembly votes, stepped up his warnings of unrest in an official letter to the president calling for the suspension to be lifted. "If you do not, we will not be able to stop people taking alternate action to protect their democratic

rights," Jayasuriya said in the letter seen by AFP.

"In the name of democracy, I urge you to reconsider your decision to prorogue parliament and allow justice to be served," Jayasuriya said more than 125 legislators had signed a petition seeking the reconvening of the assembly. Tensions have already been heightened by the killing of one activist in the capital on Sunday.

Sirisena appointed a 12-member cabinet late Monday giving the powerful finance portfolio to Rajapakse. Aides said the cabinet will be expanded to 30 members on Tuesday. Rajapakse-whose rule was marked by grave allegations of rights abuses and authoritarianism-said he was given the job because his predecessor's party "engaged in a quest to sell off valuable state assets and enterprises to foreign companies". "I was aware that at this moment of national peril, the people expected our leadership and protection," Rajapakse said after the cabinet was named. "Hence, I accepted the invitation."

Mass rally

Meanwhile, tens of thousands of activists blocked the centre of Colombo yesterday to protest the sacking of Ranil Wickremesinghe as prime minister. Wickremesinghe's United National Party (UNP) staged the protest outside his official residence where he has remained since President Maithripala Sirisena dismissed

him Friday. Sirisena named former authoritarian president Mahinda Rajapakse as head of government, triggering a constitutional crisis.

The party said about 100,000 people took part in the protests while police sources gave a figure of 25,000, though many busloads were still arriving.

"We are against the sacking, the people did not vote for Sirisena to act in this manner," Wickremesinghe told supporters from a makeshift stage. "We will resist what the president has done." Crowds chanted "down with the rogue PM", referring to Rajapakse, and "respect the mandate, recall parliament." Effigies of Sirisena were torn up in a symbolic protest against the president's move which has been described by many local newspapers as a "constitutional coup."

Large crowds, many wearing caps in green, the UNP party color, took part in the hurriedly arranged rally that forced the closure of several roads. More than 2,600 police and 10 units of Special Task Force commandos were deployed for the protest, police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera said. Parliament speaker Karu Jayasuriya has warned that the crisis could lead to a "bloodbath" on the streets unless Sirisena ends a suspension of parliament to let MPs choose between Wickremesinghe and Rajapakse. Wickremesinghe has demanded that parliament meet so that he can prove he has majority backing. — Agencies

Bangladesh court doubles jail term for Khaleda Zia

DHAKA: A Bangladesh court yesterday doubled a jail term for imprisoned opposition leader Khaleda Zia from five to 10 years for what her supporters say are trumped-up corruption charges. The decision came a day after Zia, arch-rival of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, was handed a separate seven-year term for other graft charges. The prosecution told AFP that Zia, 73, will serve the sentences concurrently. Her lawyers said the former prime minister would appeal the latest ruling in Bangladesh's highest court. The Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP), which Zia has led from Dhaka Central Jail since being incarcerated in February, protested against the decision and vowed nationwide demonstrations later.

The February corruption verdict triggered clashes between police and thousands of BNP loyalists. The prosecution had demanded Zia serve more time for embezzling orphanage mon-

ey - an appeal a higher court granted yesterday. "The high court has upheld the lower court verdict and raised the jail sentence from original five years to 10 years," anti-corruption commission prosecutor Khurshid A Khan told AFP. Zia has always denied the charges, and many others she faces, saying she is being pursued in court to prevent her challenging Hasina in a general election slated for December.

Zia boycotted the 2014 general election which Hasina won, sparking violence across the Muslim-majority democracy of 160 million. The latest court ruling deals a crushing blow to the BNP and its embattled leader, who is running out of time to appeal the courts to let her run. "She cannot contest the elections unless the conviction is set aside by a higher court," Bangladesh's attorney general Mahbubey Alam said. Her lawyer, Sanaulah Mia, said Zia questioned whether her appeal would get a fair hearing in the Supreme Court. "She had already expressed fear that she would not receive justice, and then this happens. There is no justice," he said.

Health concerns

This latest court ruling comes as the independence of Bangladesh's judiciary is under question. In a recently published memoir, a for-

mer chief justice alleged he was forced into exile last year after disagreeing with Bangladesh's powerful intelligence services over a case. Another judge, who also lives in exile in Malaysia, made similar remarks in a television interview, alleging he was threatened to hand down a guilty verdict against Zia's son Tarique Rahman. Rahman was jailed for life in absentia this month over a 2004 grenade attack on a Hasina political rally. He lives in exile in London. In recent months, Zia's health has deteriorated inside the abandoned 19th-century jail where she is the only inmate. A physician said she was suffering from diabetes and that arthritis had rendered her left hand useless.

Lawyers for Zia, widow of assassinated military dictator Ziaur Rahman, have accused the government of putting her health at risk by refusing her specialized care in prison. The latest verdict throws up more hurdles for the opposition, which says 4,000 of its supporters have been arrested since September in a pre-election crackdown. Hasina's rule has been marred by allegations of stifling dissent. Critics of her administration, including a prominent photojournalist and lawyers and journalists, have been detained since major anti-government protests in August brought hundreds of thousands to the streets. — AFP

Journalist, police officers killed in India rebel attack

RAIPUR: Maoist rebels ambushed a convoy yesterday in a restive Indian state, killing two police officers and a journalist from the national broadcaster covering the lead up to local elections next month. The cameraman was riding on the back of a motorcycle driven by a police officer in a remote stretch of Chhattisgarh state in central India when their convoy was attacked by armed men. Police said the shooters were Maoist guerrillas who have been waging a long-running insurgency against Indian rule in a

forested belt of the country dubbed the "red corridor". "A sub-inspector, a constable and a cameraman have been killed," Ratan Lal Dangi, a senior state police officer said. Two others were injured in the attack.

National broadcaster Doordarshan confirmed one of its cameramen had been killed in the attack. The deputy head of operations against the Maoists, P. Sunder Raj, said additional forces had been rushed to the scene. "It is a developing situation and more forces are going to the spot. We will get more information about it once the team comes back," he told reporters. Last week, Maoists blew up a military vehicle in Chhattisgarh's Bijapur district, killing four soldiers. The state has been governed by the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) for 15 years. The Maoists have urged voters to boycott next month's polls.

Chhattisgarh Chief Minister Raman Singh, who is seeking a fourth term, has blamed the rebels for impeding development projects in the state. The Maoists are believed to be present in at least 20 states across India but are most active in remote parts of Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand and Maharashtra, where much of the population remains mired in poverty and lacks access to critical services. The guerrillas, who say they are fighting for the rights of tribal groups and landless farmers, often collect funds through extortion. The decades-old insurgency is believed to have cost tens of thousands of lives. Critics say the government's attempts to end the revolt through a no-holds-barred military offensive is doomed to fail. India's Finance Minister Arun Jaitley said yesterday the government was "responding in a befitting manner" to the rebels. — AFP

Typhoon Yutu hits Philippines

MANILA: Typhoon Yutu slammed into the Philippines yesterday with fierce winds that sheared off roofs and snapped trees, after thousands were evacuated ahead of the powerful storm's arrival. Cutting a path just south of last month's Typhoon Mangkhut, which killed dozens, the new storm tore across the Philippines' most populous island, dumping heavy rain along the way. Search crews were just beginning to assess the damage wrought by Yutu, which made landfall yesterday with sustained winds of 150 kilometers per hour and gusts up to 210. Authorities said they were probing reports of two missing people, one from a capsized boat and the other swept away in a river.

"We see some branches on the roads and so on, but it is the flooding that is destroying houses here," International Federation of the Red Cross spokeswoman Caroline Haga told AFP from

Nueva Vizcaya province. "People are needing to be rescued." Nearly 10,000 people fled their homes ahead of Yutu's arrival because they live in low-lying areas susceptible to flooding. The high winds flattened flimsy homes, tore the roofs off others and downed power poles as well as trees. Landslides spawned by the storm blocked a major road in the mountainous north, isolating some residents, a civil defense official said.

Philippine disaster officials said the storm was less powerful than Mangkhut, which struck six weeks ago and left more than 100 dead. Most of the fatalities were due to a landslide in the mining area of Itoigon. Authorities near last month's deadly landslide evacuated at least 1,000 people from the Itoigon area as Yutu approached. An average of 20 typhoons and storms lash the Philippines each year, killing hundreds of people and leaving millions in near-perpetual poverty. The Philippines' deadliest storm on record is Super Typhoon Haiyan, which left more than 7,350 people dead or missing across the central Philippines in November 2013. — AFP



MANILA: A scavenger collects recyclable materials along the breakwater amid strong waves as weather patterns from Typhoon Yutu affect Manila Bay yesterday. — AFP

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Murky water and rotten food: Can Bamako flush its 'open-air toilet'?

Standing over a pit full of stinky, black water in downtown Bamako, Omeka Konate digs out used plastic, paper and cans and throws them over his shoulder. For 35,000 CFA francs (about \$60) a week, he clears garbage that is clogging the streets and gutters of the Malian capital, which he says routinely spill over and flood nearby shacks. "This dirty water flooding our city - it's poison," he explained, shaking mud off his oversized gumboots. "It brings us mosquitoes and mice, and health problems like malaria," he said.

Mali is one of the poorest countries in the world and the authorities struggle to provide adequate public services in the capital. In Bamako - one of the world's fastest growing cities, according to City Mayors, a think tank - population growth makes the issue of garbage disposal and wastewater treatment still more acute, creating what some call an "open-air toilet". "As the population grows, people consume and waste more ... so our city is exploding," said Ahmadou Maiga, deputy assistant to the mayor of Commune 4, one of Bamako's six districts. "Some areas look and smell like an open-air toilet," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation from his office.

Taking shelter

Koudeja Keita has a plan for whenever heavy rains, compounded by untreated wastewater, flood her ground-level shack: take shelter in the local school with her family of 10. "But we're only allowed to bring the bare minimum so rice, sugar, beans - we have to leave it all behind," she said, crouching on a thick rock in her courtyard. Her husband built a brick wall, 50 cm high, to try and stop the water spilling into their home but it is not always enough. "It (flooding) is getting worse and more frequent, sometimes we have water up to our knees." She said her family had not received any help from the authorities, and hopes to save enough money to move to a safer area.

According to Protos, a Belgian charity that promotes access to safe water, more than 85 percent of Bamako households handle their own sanitation - meaning they have to dispose of any wastewater and excrement themselves. "That fuels the spread of diseases like diarrhea and malaria, keeping adults out of jobs and children out of school," said Johan Slimbroeck, program manager at Protos. The charity is helping build Bamako's first ever treatment plant for faecal sludge, which is expected to open next year. "The human waste will be turned into fertilizer and sold on the market," he said by email. Maiga said Bamako lacks a proper sewage system and that most wastewater is evacuated into the Niger river, which runs through the city. His administration is working with organizations like Protos to build sewers across the capital. "They are not that deep and do not cover the entire city, but it's better than human waste being out in the open," he said.

'Mount Kilimanjaro of trash'

Key to solving Bamako's wastewater crisis is removing garbage that clogs its streets and waterways - and that starts with conquering the city's "Mount Kilimanjaro of trash," said Maiga. Just a few hundred metres from the glitzy offices of embassies and aid agencies, flies swarm over mountains of plastic bags, rotten food and other waste, which locals have named after Africa's highest peak. Sanaba Traore has been collecting plastic bottles and other discarded packaging for five years, which she sells to local factories for 1,000 CFA francs (\$1.70) a day.

"There's about 100 of us every day, anyone can pick stuff here," she said, fixing a used pizza box to her head as a makeshift sun hat. She lives 20 km away, but makes the journey every day in a shared taxi. "I make twice as much as when I was selling vegetables," she said, the stench of rot heavy in the air. Although "Mount Kilimanjaro" has existed for years - it is now the size of a two-storey building - Maiga said the city administration began tackling the problem last year and has turned what was a giant mountain of rotting rubbish into a "small hill".

Each day, a dozen garbage collectors load trash onto trucks and dump it outside of town, Maiga added. "But we cannot do it all alone, we need partners, like NGOs, and for people to waste less, especially plastic," he said. In 2010, Africa was estimated to have 4.4 million metric tonnes of mismanaged plastic waste - a figure that could rise to 10.5 million tonnes in 2025 if nothing is done, scientists said in a study published this month. While the clean-up spells bad news for job-hungry waste pickers, Traore is hopeful about her future. "There will always be garbage somewhere for me to pick," she said, placing her stash of plastic bottles in a yellow fish net. "It's a good business." — Reuters



A man takes a break from clearing garbage that is clogging the streets and gutters of Bamako on Oct 11, 2018. — Reuters



BJP underlines Hindu ambitions as polls near

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Hindu nationalist party has been turning up the heat on some controversial and potentially highly divisive religious issues in recent days, with crucial state elections only weeks away and a general election due by next May. Top officials from his Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) have sided with some Hindus defying a court order that scrapped a ban on women of menstruating age from visiting a famous temple in southern India.

At the same time, they and leaders of the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS), the Hindu-first group from which the BJP was born, are for the first time demanding an urgent executive order that would bypass the Supreme Court, to build a Hindu temple at the site of a mosque in the north of the country. The destruction of the mosque by a frenzied Hindu mob in 1992 sparked deadly riots across the country.

"There should not even be any debate over it. There's not even any need to involve the courts here," BJP's Giriraj Singh, a federal minister, said on Monday after the top court delayed a hearing on whether the disputed site should be handed to Hindus or Muslims until at least January. "If Hindus lose patience, I am afraid no one can say what will happen."

Officially, the BJP says it represents all Indians, irrespective of religion. But while Modi has adopted economic development as his driving philosophy since being elected prime minister in 2014, the BJP has not shied away from openly endorsing causes of its mainly Hindu support base. BJP spokesman Gopal Krishna Agarwal said a decree on building the temple was indeed one of the options before the government as "justice delayed is justice denied" and "emotions are running high". A government spokesman did not immediately reply to an email seeking comment.

A BJP minister in one state that goes to the polls soon, Rajasthan, called on Friday on all Hindus to vote along reli-

gious lines, for the BJP, in what may be a breach of election rules. Religion is a deeply political issue in the world's biggest democracy, which has seen a number of deadly communal riots between the majority Hindu and minority Muslim communities, including days of violence when Modi was chief minister of the western state of Gujarat.

The BJP denies it has a bias against Muslims, but says it is opposed to giving unfair advantage to any community, a practice it describes as "appeasement" and alleges the opposition Congress party of long following to win votes. Five states elect their assemblies this year, starting next month, ahead of the general election in which the BJP is projected to lose seats in parliament but still emerge as the single biggest party.

Warning over court verdict

Hitting out at the government of the state of Kerala, which has arrested more than 3,000 people who demonstrated against the Supreme Court's lifting of a centuries-old bar on women or girls aged 10 to 50 from entering the hill temple of Sabarimala, BJP President Amit Shah said on Saturday that the party would stand with the protesters "like a rock". "I can cite many court judgements that were never implemented," Shah said at a rally in Kerala on Saturday. "Why are you hell bent on implementing this particular court order? I am here to warn the Kerala government, don't suppress the devotees in the name of the court verdict."

The comments drew criticism from political analysts and opposition parties including Kerala's ruling Communist party, which accused Shah of attacking the top court and constitution for political gains. "He will divide, polarize, and fan anger, hatred, violence - anything to win elections," Ramachandra Guha, a historian, said in a tweet. "He is the most dangerous and divisive politician in the history of independent India."

Ram temple

Many BJP leaders, including the BJP chief minister of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, India's most populous with 220 million people, are urging the top court to allow the construction of a temple for Hindu God Ram in the state where the Babri Mosque was demolished by a mob. Hindus believe that the town of Ayodhya in Uttar Pradesh was the birthplace of Lord Ram, a physical incarnation of the Hindu god Vishnu. Many Hindus believe that the exact spot of his birth was where the Babri Mosque had stood and that there should be a temple there.

The BJP's manifesto for the 2014 election said it was committed to "explore all possibilities within the framework of the constitution" to make that happen. "I will appeal to the Supreme Court, if they can give a verdict on Sabarimala, they should also decide on the issue of Lord Ram's birthplace," Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, a saffron robe-wearing Hindu priest, said in New Delhi on Saturday to cheers from the audience.

There are fears that communal tensions between Hindus and Muslims, the biggest minority group in India with more than 170 million people, could flare again if the status quo is disturbed. At the moment the site is under court control. "We want a decision soon. We want a law to build the temple," said Mohan Bhagwat, the powerful chief of the RSS in a speech this month. Dhan Singh Rawat, a BJP minister in Rajasthan, on Friday appealed to all Hindus to vote for the party like all "Muslims unitedly vote for the Congress", the main opposition party. Election Commission guidelines say seeking votes in the name of religion, caste, race, community or language is "corrupt practice". "Many people are trying to pollute the minds of the voters by talking about polarizing issues," said Abdul Faheem Qureshi, a Muslim lawyer and community leader in the southern city of Hyderabad. "We're advising our people to ignore these political stunts. We're religious but we have friends from all religions." — Reuters

Raped then jailed: Mauritanian women fight to end victim blaming

Khady knew the man who waited outside her house one evening, followed her down a dark street and put his hand over her mouth. She had refused his offer of marriage several months before. The assault that followed is a blur. The 26-year-old fell pregnant, and five months later she was jailed for breaking Mauritania's law banning sex outside of marriage. "They said I was guilty. I don't know why," she said at a center for victims of rape in the capital, Nouakchott. "I thought if I told the police what happened, they would put him in prison," Khady, whose name has been changed for her protection, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Sex outside wedlock is by far the most common cause of incarceration for women in Mauritania, accounting for more than 40 percent of female prisoners, according to a survey by the Mauritanian Association for the Health of the Mother and Child. About 50 women were locked up for "zina" or sex outside marriage in the main women's prison in Nouakchott between July 2016 and June 2018, the rights group said.

Yet most are victims of rape, according to activists who hope the nation's new parliament will breathe life into an abandoned bill that could improve justice for Mauritanian women. Mauritania, a vast desert country in northwest Africa, is an Islamic Republic with a penal code partly based on sharia law. Adultery, sex between single people and rape are all crimes, yet the law does not define the latter or the notion of consent.

This means rape convictions for men are rare while prosecuting female victims of sexual violence for zina is common, according to campaigners who say rape victims must generally prove the use of force in order to be found innocent. "Once a woman becomes an adult, in most cases, they say she consented," said Aminetou Mint Ely of the Association of Women Heads of Family, which runs support centers for rape victims. "The laws are open, and they facilitate the interpretation of rape as zina," added Ely, the

president of the rights group. A law on gender-based violence that would be tougher on rape and provide more support to victims was almost adopted two years ago, but it lost support in parliament as misinformation spread. Now women's rights groups are campaigning all over again, as new deputies elected in September are set to review the bill.

Jail time

Khady was taken to hospital in February where she gave birth before being returned to jail with a premature baby girl. She was released on special grounds a month later after persistent efforts by lawyers working for Ely's organization. "Night and day were the same," she said shakily, recalling how she kept to herself in prison and avoided the other inmates. Zina is officially punishable by flogging or stoning, but Mauritania does not carry out corporal punishments in practice.

Yet without a good lawyer, women convicted of zina can idle in jail indefinitely, said Zeinabou Taleb Moussa, head of the Mauritanian Association for the Health of the Mother and Child. The risk of incarceration is so high for adult rape victims that Moussa sometimes discourages them from going to the police. "If we know that a woman is going to be imprisoned, we tell her. Unfortunately, the law does not protect you," she said. "If you report it, he (the rapist) will be imprisoned, but you'll be imprisoned too." Men are also charged with sex outside of marriage - not rape - in many of these cases, but they often serve shorter jail terms than women, according to several local rights groups.

Slow progress

A 2005 child protection law made it less likely for girls to be prosecuted for zina, and there has been some progress in the treatment of rape victims in recent years, Moussa said. "Before, every woman who went before a judge and said she was raped was accused," she said. "Now there are investigations, there are testimonies, there is attention given to the woman." Yet the law remains stacked against adult victims, and even minors are still occasionally imprisoned, activists say.

On a recent visit to Ely's office, a 16-year-old in a pink headscarf tried to soothe her baby. Having been raped by her boss, she was convicted of zina but placed under probation - a victory for the association's lawyers because she escaped jail. Sitting nearby, head bowed, a 15-year-old girl was less fortunate. Having flirted with the man who then raped her, she was judged to have consented, and



Khady (name changed), who was raped and then jailed for breaking Mauritania's law against sex outside of marriage, poses for a photo in Nouakchott on Oct 17, 2018. — Reuters

jailed for a month. Saleck Jeireb, an official in the ministry of social affairs, children and family, said the government had a plan to tackle gender-based violence, which includes training health workers and providing psychosocial support for victims. "The response is not at the scale that we want, but we've started," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

New law

Ely and Moussa helped to draft a law on gender-based violence in 2012 which clearly defined rape and increased support services for victims, among other measures. The executive branch and senate approved the bill in 2016, but debate broke out when it was sent to parliament. The bill was pulled after rumors spread that it was against Islam, backed by Westerners, and condoned homosexuality. "There was a debate, unfortunately founded on errors," said Jeireb of the ministry of social affairs. With the installment of a new parliament, the draft law will be resubmitted, he said.

Moussa sounded cautiously optimistic there would be allies in the new government, but she did not expect them to move fast. "They promised they would study it, but we don't know when," said Ely. For countless young rape victims in Mauritania, the legal system remains a source of bewilderment. Some could barely articulate their confusion at having been raped then punished. "I only told the truth," Khady said. — Reuters

Business

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LONDON: File photo shows the sun setting over the city of London. — AFP

Mood sours as euro zone growth slows

Bloc's quarterly growth slows to 0.2 percent, worst in 4 years

BRUSSELS: The euro zone economy grew less than expected in the third quarter as the public mood turned darker, with signs of distress in Italy highlighting concerns that the bloc's third-ranked state is becoming one of its weakest links. Yesterday's data, suggesting the slowdown has further to run, will make uncomfortable reading for the European Central Bank as it moves towards ending in December the program of asset purchases it introduced in 2015 to boost inflation and economic growth.

Economists said the quarterly growth dip to 0.2 percent from 0.4 percent in the second quarter was unlikely to change those plans, though it might push back the date of the ECB's first post-stimulus hike in interest rates. "We expect the ECB to stick to its plans to end asset purchases this year, but the recent run of weak data suggests that the bank will stress that policy tightening will depend on the incoming figures," Jessica Hinds, economist at Capital Economics, said.

Yesterday's preliminary flash GDP reading from European statistics office Eurostat, which sent the euro to an intraday low against the dollar, was worse than expected. Economists polled by Reuters had expected a 0.4 percent rise in the 19 countries sharing the euro. The 0.2 percent reported was the lowest growth pace in more than four years.

Eurostat does not provide national data in its flash estimates, but figures from Italy's statistics agency ISTAT showed growth there stagnated in the third quarter, as the government pursues a war of words with Brussels over a 2019 budget draft that breaks EU rules. "With budget discussions already tense between Rome and Brussels, this stagnation will only add to concerns," Bert Colijn, economist at ING, said.

Quarterly growth in France, the bloc's second biggest economy, also missed forecasts at 0.4 percent though growth accelerated, data from the INSEE statistics agency showed yesterday. An estimate for Germany, the

bloc's largest economy, is not yet available but economists foresee growth is likely to have slowed there too, although the country's jobless total fell in October and employment hit a record high in September.

Confidence on the slide

Meanwhile, inflation in Germany's most populous regions accelerated in October to well above 2 percent, reaching the highest level in many years. That compares with an ECB target of close to but below 2 percent, though Tuesday's German data was not harmonized to compare with other euro zone countries and did not strip out volatile elements such as oil prices, which have risen sharply in recent months. That suggests price pressures will not be a major factor in shifting ECB decisions at this stage.

Of more concern to policymakers in Frankfurt will be indications that the bloc's economic slowdown could worsen in the final quarter. The European Commission

said yesterday that euro zone economic sentiment dropped in October for the tenth consecutive month. The indicator of managers' and consumers' morale - which rose steadily in 2017 - fell to 109.8 points from 110.9 in September, its biggest dip since March though still above its long-term average.

In October the largest fall was recorded in retail services as managers held "much grimmer views on the present and expected business situation," the Commission said, and the indicator of selling price expectations dropped. Confidence in industry and services also went down, while consumer sentiment improved slightly. Morale fell in Germany, France and Italy while it grew in Spain. In Italy the downward trend began in July, the month after a eurosceptic government took office in Rome. Outside the euro zone, Britain recorded a slight increase of economic sentiment, driven up by more optimism in retail trade and services which more than offset a fall in industry confidence. — Reuters

From streaming TV to Gmail, it's all about the cloud

SAN FRANCISCO: Whether you're watching your favorite show on Netflix or backing up all-important cat photos to Google Drive, the "cloud" has become an essential part of our digital lives. No, not those large white bodies of water vapor floating through the sky—the tech definition simply refers to having servers in remote datacenters handling programs or data that people or businesses can access anywhere from devices of their choosing.

"You name it, it's happening in the cloud," analyst Rob Enderle of Enderle Group said. "It's really where everything is being done now." Century-old technology stalwart IBM is making a \$34 billion bet on cloud computing in the form of a mega-deal to buy Red Hat, a pioneering proponent of the open source movement that arose to counter giants like Microsoft whose models were based on keeping their source code secret. Here is a look at the trend and its allure to technology titans such as Amazon, Google, Microsoft and IBM.

The cloud is everywhere

Developers craft software in the internet cloud. Self-driving cars and smart cities will rely on computing in the cloud. Web-based email and company

payroll systems are in the cloud. Sales teams on the road manage accounts and tap into resources in the cloud. While businesses in the past used on-site mainframes built by IBM or its rivals, it has become cost effective for firms to rent applications or data storage hosted and maintained in the cloud by providers such as Amazon or Microsoft.

Such arrangements allow businesses to easily access more or less computing power as needed, without having to invest in data centers or system maintenance. Companies interested in tighter control of some of the data or processes opt for "hybrid clouds," simply meaning that they let online data centers handle some of the computing work while keeping more sensitive aspects on their own machines.

Cloud future clear

The kind of computing power available in the cloud is seen as essential for processing data in real time for innovations such as cars safely driving themselves or cities allocating public services in real time as needs or situations change. Mobile lifestyles ramp up reliance on cloud computing as people watch YouTube, post on Facebook, tweet, send photos to friends, and work on the go. Smartphones, tablets, and laptops can open windows into immense computing power in data centers.

The more people "cut the cord" and let go of traditional cable TV, the more they turn to the cloud. Streaming television services accessible at Netflix, Amazon Prime, and YouTube are hosted and powered by online data centers, as are web-



SAN FRANCISCO: In this file photo taken on October 4, 2017, Sundar Pichai, chief executive officer of Google Inc, speaks about Google's improvements in Artificial Intelligence and machine learning during a product launch event at the SFJAZZ Center. — AFP

based email and social media such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, and Twitter.

Online music rains from the cloud. But the cloud also comes with concerns about who is controlling and protecting data stored by third-parties online. Cloud computing platforms are tempting targets for hackers who see gold or power in the massive amounts of information behind data center walls. Some believe that will lead to a future with businesses preferring more balanced, or hybrid, setups with sensitive data kept in-house. — AFP

UAE sets up to lure foreign investors

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates announced yesterday the establishment of a special unit at the economy ministry to help lure foreign investors amid an economic slowdown. The establishment of the foreign direct investment unit was ordered by President Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan in a decree.

The order stipulates that foreign investment firms which secure licenses under the decree will be treated like national companies, significantly cutting back red tape. Last year the UAE attracted more than \$10 billion in foreign direct investment, continuing a trend in recent years of having the largest FDI inflows among all Arab states.

The presidential decree aims to go further still, with the new unit to propose policies to improve the investment environment and attract more FDI. The measure by the Middle East's second largest economy after Saudi Arabia comes amid a slowdown in the oil, tourism and real estate sectors. In May the UAE announced new incentives to lure foreign investors, granting 100 percent ownership of companies and a 10-year visa for professionals and investors.

The following month Abu Dhabi, one of the UAE's seven emirates, announced a 50 billion dirham (\$13.6 billion, 11.6 billion euro) stimulus package over the next three years. Although the UAE has the most diversified economy in the Gulf, it remains highly dependent on oil revenues. Growth fell to just 0.5 percent last year, down from 3.0 percent in 2016 according to the International Monetary Fund, driven by a 2.5 percent contraction in the oil sector. Abu Dhabi's economy contracted by 1.6 percent last year and was projected to grow by just 0.5 percent in 2018. The IMF has forecast growth of 2.9 percent for the UAE this year, followed by 3.7 percent for 2019. — AFP

Business

Cypriot farmers fear no-deal Brexit may affect livelihoods

'It spells disaster for the communities that are on the British bases'

AVDIMOU: Olive farmer Andreas Fotiou steered carefully along a dusty lane in southwest Cyprus, en route from his village to nearby groves-locations that could have clashing trade regimes, post-Brexit. He fears he could lose out on vital EU subsidies, and even be forced to pay crippling tariffs, if London and Brussels fail to finalize a withdrawal agreement or trade deal.

Fotiou is one of thousands of Cypriot farmers who work on British military bases, part of Britain's sovereign territory, and which sprawl over about three percent of the Mediterranean island. "If the UK leaves the EU on bad terms... (it) spells disaster for the communities that are on the British bases," said the 54-year-old. "We cannot afford to pay extra taxes," he added, amid uncertainty about tariffs that generally apply when produce is imported from so-called "third party countries" into EU territory.

The European Commission's online trade and customs database flags duties of 15.2 percent for olive imports from nations outside the EU with no agreed trade deals. Historically, relations between local farmers and the British military have been "excellent", Fotiou said, standing in the shade of an olive tree. "When there are problems we sit at the table and solve it on the spot." But "no one has informed us what will happen after Brexit, what the status will be," he added. His picturesque village of Avdimou borders Akrotiri—one of two military bases Britain kept on the island after Cyprus gained independence in 1960. The other, Dhekelia, is in the east.

Olive, grapes and potatoes are key crops on extended non-militarized stretches of these British sovereign territories, while farmers also keep livestock. Fellow villager Constantina Pierou, who grazes 600 sheep on Akrotiri, said she is stressed about the future. "A lot of farmers are afraid. Our farm is on the base and maybe we don't have a job after Brexit - it is a dangerous situation for us," the 41-year-old said.

Cyprus protocol 'developed'

The farmers' sense of insecurity is compounded by

losing their original lands after Turkey's 1974 invasion of Cyprus, which came in response to a Greece-sponsored military coup. Displaced from what is now the Turkish-occupied northern third of the island, Fotiou and Pierou said their families were among some 1,000 people re-homed in Avdimou, many of whom came to farm on Akrotiri base.

Negotiations between London and Brussels over an EU withdrawal agreement have been running parallel to talks between Britain and Cyprus, which joined the EU in 2004, on an annex to the main exit deal. Prime Minister Theresa May told parliament last week that the Cypriot protocol has now been "developed". But the European Commission has long maintained that "nothing is agreed until everything is agreed", indicating that the Cyprus protocol would be inapplicable if ongoing negotiations over the wider UK-EU withdrawal deal fail. Cyprus's foreign ministry told AFP "the rights and interests of Cypriots residing in the bases should and will be safeguarded", even if there is no withdrawal agreement. Cyprus has "plans for addressing all scenarios", the ministry said in a statement to AFP. It cited the former British colony's 1960 Treaty of Establishment, which stipulates that there be no customs barriers between the bases and the Republic of Cyprus.

Legal ambiguities

But others point to uncertainties surrounding Cypriot, EU and world trade law. One legal expert who has followed the Cypriot negotiations closely said "the scenario of farmers paying tariffs cannot be ruled out". The laws of the EU's Customs Union apply on the bases, but a key UK parliamentary committee has warned that arrangement will lapse after Brexit.

"Goods will no longer be able to flow freely" between the bases and the Republic of Cyprus, the European Scrutiny Committee said in July. "Instead, EU law will require Cyprus to apply customs and regulatory controls on crossing between the two for the first time," it added. There have also been reports that the passage of British military supplies through Cyprus and



AVDIMOU: A worker watches as olives are pressed at a factory near the village of Avdimou just outside the sovereign British base area. — AFP

onto the sovereign bases could be compromised by a no-deal Brexit.

The London daily The Times said in August that British officials had concluded they would need to extend a small existing port on Akrotiri significantly, to avoid complications at Cypriot ports. But one analyst told AFP that under a no-deal scenario, the EU would be likely to agree exemptions. The bases fall under "security cooperation, which both the UK and the EU agree should remain largely unaffected irrespective of

future arrangements", said Kit Nicholl, a security analyst for IHS Markit in London.

Britain's Ministry of Defence said "constructive discussions" had taken place with Cyprus "to safeguard the effective military functioning of the bases, and minimize disruption and uncertainty for citizens, businesses, and residents". "We look forward to working with the Republic of Cyprus and our European partners to build an enduring and mutually beneficial future relationship," a spokesman said. —AFP

Sony nearly doubles first-half net profits, upgrades forecast

TOKYO: Sony's net profit nearly doubled to hit a record high in the six months to September, it announced yesterday, as it upgraded its annual forecasts, with games such as "Spider-Man" and "God of War" leading the way. The electronics and entertainment giant said April-September net profit reached 399.4 billion yen (\$3.5 billion), up 88.7 percent from a year ago and marking its best performance for the period.

Operating profit and sales were both up, with video games driving the good news, including blockbuster software titles. Sony's quality sensors for smartphone cameras saw explosive demand, becoming a major pillar of the firm's revenue. The movies and music segments also contributed to growing profits, though Sony's mobile phone business continued to struggle. The robust six-month performance, with operating profit up 20.1 percent at 434.5 billion yen and sales rising 5.5 percent to 4.1 trillion yen, prompted Sony to upgrade outlook for the second half.

It now projects an annual net profit of 705 billion yen, which would mark a new all-time high, along with

annual operating profit of 870 billion yen and sales of 8.7 trillion yen. Sony had previously forecast a moderate slowdown for the rest of the year. "Various areas including music as well as the game and network services field" are doing better than earlier thought, the firm said.

Observers said a string of third-party games this quarter would likely provide support, with newly released Red Dead Redemption II getting star reviews, while Call of Duty: Black Ops set a new PlayStation record for first day digital sales, according to Bloomberg News. The massively popular free game Fortnite also lifted income owing to in-game item revenue, which is shared with Sony. Among movies, television licensing revenues from "Jumanji: Welcome to the Jungle" and "Peter Rabbit" added to its sales.

Foreign exchange rates and strong sales of Sony's paid membership game service also contributed to the optimistic annual expectations, the company said. However, for the mobile phone segment, Sony braced for further struggles particularly with smartphone sales falling in Europe and Japan. Sony expected to see a loss from the segment despite attempts to cut costs. The firm has struggled to win market share against giants Samsung and Apple, and faces pressure from Chinese manufacturers as well.

Analysts said the company results showed it was entering a growth phase after a remarkable recovery that followed several painful years of huge losses. "Its game sector has continued spearheading its recovery. Strong titles offset slowing sales of PlayStation 4 consoles," Hideki Yasuda, an analyst at Ace Research



TOKYO: This file photo taken on September 21, 2018 shows visitors playing the Sony video game "Call of Duty" at the Tokyo Game Show. — AFP

Institute in Tokyo, told AFP ahead of the company's announcement.

"Other than mobile businesses, I have not seen any major risks surrounding Sony," he said. Yasuo Imanaka, an analyst at Rakuten Securities in Tokyo, said: "Sony has already completed a full-fledged comeback and is now heading toward a new growth phase." "The only concern is its mobile phone business. Sony is required to revamp the sector drastically," he told AFP before the announcement. — AFP

Apple Watch supplier under fire over China student labor

BEIJING: Apple is investigating a factory in southwest China after a labor rights group said the tech giant's supplier forced student workers to work "like robots" to assemble its popular Apple Watch. The report raises fresh questions about the practices of suppliers Apple uses to build its gadgets in the country following the deaths of a number of workers in 2010 apparently linked to tough working conditions.

Many of the students were compelled to work in order to get their vocational degrees and had to do night shifts, according to an investigation by Hong Kong-based NGO Students and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM). SACOM interviewed 28 students at the plant in Chongqing municipality over the summer, and all of them said they had not voluntarily applied to work there, according to the report published last week.

They worked under the guise of "internships", SACOM said, a practice rights groups say is widespread in China as manufacturers pair up with vocational schools to supply workers and fill labor shortages when they ramp up production for new models or the Christmas rush. "Our graduation certificate will be withheld by the school if we refuse to come," said one student majoring in e-commerce, according to SACOM. The US titan has sold tens of millions of Apple Watches — which can cost up to \$1,499 — since it was launched three years ago and chief executive Tim Cook said it was the most popular watch in the world.

Earlier labor abuse allegations focused on workers building iPhones and other gadgets for Taiwan-based Hon Hai Precision Industry Co., better known as Foxconn. As the world's largest contract electronics maker Foxconn assembles products in huge plants in China where it employs more than one million workers. In 2010,



SHANGHAI: Customers listen as a staff member introduces the iPhone XR at an Apple store. — AFP

at least 13 Foxconn employees in China died in apparent suicides, which activists blamed on tough working conditions, prompting calls for better treatment of staff. Although Foxconn denied the accusations, it raised wages by nearly 70 percent at its China plants in 2010.

Urgent probe

Foxconn also admitted to intern violations in 2013, with overtime and night shift problems similar to those leveled at the Apple Watch supplier this year. Manufacturing internships are permitted under Chinese labor law in some cases, but SACOM found the work has "literally nothing to do with learning" and violated some of the country's labor law provisions permitting intern work in factories.

"We are like robots on the production lines," one 18-year-old student told SACOM. "We repeat the same procedure for hundreds and thousands of times every day, like a robot." Others said they were put on the night shift working from 8 pm to 8 am with minimal

breaks, according to SACOM. The Chongqing factory is operated by Quanta Computer, a Taiwanese electronics manufacturer, and also produces for other brands. Quanta did not immediately respond to an AFP request for comment. But Apple spokeswoman Wei Gu said: "We are urgently investigating the report that student interns added in September are working overtime and night shifts."

Wei noted Quanta Chongqing was a new Apple supplier and had been audited three times between March and June without finding student interns. Student workers told SACOM student labor was widespread at the factory. Assembly lines that pieced together Apple Watches that had failed a quality check were almost entirely made up of student workers, one intern told SACOM. "The factory would not be able to operate without student workers," a student told SACOM. The NGO demanded Apple investigate and bring the labor practices in line with the firm's own policies and those of the local and central Chinese government. — AFP

European firms urge Brussels to drop digital tax proposal

BRUSSELS: Spotify, Booking.com and other European hi-tech firms yesterday urged EU member countries to drop a proposed digital tax, warning it would harm economic growth and innovation in Europe. France for a year has rallied European Union partners to draw up the tax which Paris says is necessary to ensure that global tech platforms such as Facebook and Google pay their fair share. Britain's government said Monday it will introduce a new digital services tax aimed at tech giants from 2020, after it exits the EU.

"We write to you as leading European businesses to express our serious concern about the proposed Digital Services Tax (DST)," the CEOs and other top executives of 16 European firms said in a letter EU finance ministers. These businesses "urge you not to adopt a measure which would cause material harm to economic growth and to innovation, investment and employment across Europe," they added.

Paris argues that the measure would be a popular accomplishment for the EU ahead of European elections next year, in which anti-Brussels populists could do well. However, Ireland leads a small group of countries that argue the tax would also punish European companies and stifle innovation. Dublin, along with Luxembourg and the Netherlands, are the European homes for several US tech giants that would face the tax. The European businesses said the impact of the proposed tax has not been studied well enough. "Most start-ups and new companies rely on their revenues to grow and scale," the business leaders said.

'Pay fair share'

"The proposed DST would deprive these very businesses of an essential source of capital to reinvest in their growth, weakening their ability to compete globally," the letter said. "Taxing revenues, as opposed to profits, will also impose a significant compliance cost, requiring new processes and infrastructure to be established. "European technology companies, and particularly companies which are not yet profitable, would be the hardest hit," it said. The proposed tax also raises a number of legal, technical and political concerns, including that of double taxation, it said. Under pressure from France, EU finance ministers are due to discuss the proposed tax at their next meeting in Brussels on November 6. The European Commission, the EU's executive arm, on Tuesday defended the proposal.

Commission spokesman Johannes Bahrke recalled what Economics Commissioner Pierre Moscovici had previously told US firms that the proposed tax is "nationality and company neutral." Bahrke added: "Our goal is to ensure a level playing field for all businesses, whether they are EU based, non-EU based, small or big." He also recalled the Commission's goal and "preferred option" is to find a solution through the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, which groups the world's top economies. Commission spokeswoman Mina Andreeva added: "Digital companies should pay their fair share of tax." — AFP

Business

Gulf Bank puts customer service at forefront through new website

New website to enhance user-browsing friendliness through new features

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the launch of their new public website - www.e-gulfbank.com - designed to enhance user-browsing friendliness through new features and improvements; aligned with their new strategy of Customer Service and Innovation.

Developed following global best practices, the new website includes a personalized landing page that asks visitors about what they are looking for, then providing them links to their desired page. Along with this, there is themed imagery, such as the aerial footage of Kuwait City to make the page more visually pleasing. Additionally, the new site is dynamic as it creatively changes depending on the time day.

Speaking on the new website, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications, Gulf Bank, said: "At Gulf Bank, we understand that our customers are digitally savvy, therefore require easy-to-use and convenient online services. Our new website allows our visitors to navigate without difficulty, resulting in the ability to take

advantage of our services even more. Finally, our improved website and all its features will work perfectly with full responsiveness no matter what device is being used."

In addition to the new features, improvements have been made on existing sections, such as card comparison tool and dedicated investors relations section. Customers can now share content to WhatsApp and LinkedIn, in addition to Facebook and Twitter. Moreover, navigating any page is only one to three clicks away, with easy access to the most visited destinations, such as careers and OLB log-in.

For further details about Gulf Bank, please visit the Bank's website: www.e-gulfbank.com or its social media accounts.

Gulf Bank is one of the leading conventional banks in Kuwait with total assets of KD 5,683 million for year ended 31 December 2017. The Bank provides a broad offering of consumer banking, wholesale banking, treasury, and financial services through its



Ahmad Al-Amir

large network of 58 branches and more than 200 ATMs in Kuwait. The Bank was founded in 1960 and is listed on the Kuwait Stock Exchange (Boursa Kuwait) since 1984.

Al-Nahedh: KFH strategy focuses on quality of assets

KUWAIT: Group Chief Executive Officer at Kuwait Finance House (KFH), Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh said: "In terms of our strategy, we are focusing on the quality of assets and improving our competencies within the bank, and we have seen a remarkable improvement during the period. The focus moving forward will be with investment in technology and digital transformation of the bank. During the third Quarter, KFH uniquely provided several Artificial Intelligence services. We signed a partnership agreement with Ernst & Young (EY) to launch an ambitious Robotic Process Automation (RPA) program as the first Bank in Kuwait to integrate Artificial Intelligence into operation."

He added during Q3 2018 - KFH earnings webcast: "One of the most important aspects is to focus on human resources and customers by ensuring that our employees are highly committed to the organization, which is reflected in their performance in providing the best services to our customers. KFH enjoys a leadership position in the Sukuk market and the Islamic financial services in general. The vast experience of KFH Group in the Sukuk issuance has positioned it as a trustworthy and highly recognized organization by major corporates and governments globally."

He continued: "With regards to our strategy in supporting the national economy and achieving the comprehensive development, the most recent deal was a contract of credit facility with Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) where KFH participated in financing the company's \$2.3 billion Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) import. KFH was selected to lead the deal of the Islamic banks for their share in the \$500 million. KFH is currently studying different other projects to finance. Also KFH pays great attention to the small and medium enterprises SMEs. The Bank enjoys great share in financing SMEs as they play a significant role in supporting the youth segment and improving the performance of the entrepreneurs. This contributes in diversifying income resources, creating new jobs while building national expertise in business."

Shadi Zahran

Meanwhile, Group Chief Financial Officer at KFH, Shadi Zahran said: "The group Net Profit After Tax (NPAT) attributable to Shareholders for the period ended 30th Sep 2018 stood at KD 169.1 million and higher than same period of 2017 by 22.7 percent, that's mainly from an increase in net finance income by KD 81.9 million, and partially offset by a decrease in investment income by KD 35.2 million and increase in both Operating Expenses and Provisions by KD 8.8 million and KD 6.1 million respectively. As we used to do before we will explain each part separately in the coming slides."

He added KFH-Kuwait, C/I ratio is maintained at 31.1 percent which is below both the local Islamic Banks average of 38.8 percent and local conventional Banks average of 34.4 percent both calculated as per the published financials for H1-18. The average profit earning assets is up by 6.3 percent, although the total assets / total balance sheet declined by 0.3 percent illustrating an increase in yielding assets contribution trend. This is also an evidence of efficient balance sheet that focuses on sustainability of earnings and also reflected in the improved Net Financing Income.

He explained that the operating profit from banking activities is maintained above 92 percent of total operating income of the Group and is being maintained as part of overall Group Strategy.

Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

Group Chief Strategy Officer at KFH- Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem said "KFH maintains its top position as the most trusted and safest Islamic Bank in the region. We are the first and largest Sharia compliant bank in Kuwait and second largest Islamic Bank in the world by assets."

He added that most recently KFH won the prestigious award from Global Finance Magazine as the Safest Islamic financial Institution in the GCC -2018, which affirms customers' confidence in the Bank and KFH's leading role in the international development of Islamic banking and financial services industry at a global level.

For the key business highlights, Al-Mukhaizeem said "we've launched a variety of products and services especially targeting the Youth segment in Kuwait. Across the FinTech world, our Bank is continuing its efforts in providing a digital experience for our new generation customers, providing them with digital banking platform that is intuitive and simple to use. KFH continues its strong support and sponsorship for its CSR activities."

On another front, he pointed out that Fitch Ratings recently affirmed Kuwait's sovereign rating at AA with a stable Outlook as well as affirmed KFH rating at A+ with a stable outlook.

Ooredoo Kuwait participates in DevFest 2018 forum

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait participated in the DevFest 2018 Forum by WTM (Women Techmakers) and GDG (Google Developers Group), which took place on 26 and 27 October at the American University of Kuwait campus. The event was organized in collaboration with the IEEE AUK chapter in Kuwait; a non-profit group that is dedicated to support the empowerment of everyone particularly women in education, public & private sectors, entrepreneurship and industry.

Representing Ooredoo at the forum was Capability Management Director, Dina Subuh, who gave an inspirational speech to the attendees at the opening of the event about how it is to be a woman in the world of technology.

The forum ran two parallel programming workshops targeting both beginners and advanced - level programmers. The first workshop was in collaboration with Django Girls, a global non-profit volunteer organization dedicated to advancing the education of the public in the subject of computer science by providing and assisting in the provision of programming workshops and materials. The second workshop was Advanced Web Programming which focused on giving the trainees a feel for real-world software development through acquiring user requirements, UX design, the development life cycle, advanced JavaScript, in addition to frontend and backend development. In addition to the workshops, the DevFest forum hosted an Artificial Intelligence talk by Mijbil Al-Qattan from Cubical Services.

Commenting on this, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub underscored the company's commitment to supporting youth, noting that this stems from the company's

Cadillac Alghanim celebrates with youth and lovers of luxury of luxury

KUWAIT: Lovers of luxury were on a date with an exceptional driving experience on the morning of October 27th. While enjoying the fresh breeze of the lovely autumn atmosphere, Cadillac Alghanim, the exclusive dealer for Cadillac in Kuwait, has invited a group of young people and fans of luxury to enjoy the driving experience of the 2019 Cadillac Crossover XT5, and to learn about its driving pleasure throughout the day. The company has dedicated a number of its Crossover XT5 vehicles to be driven by the participants to enjoy an exciting driving experience on the roads of Kuwait touring around in various areas. All has been provided as a leisure tour and a unique driving experience by Cadillac Alghanim for its special customers to enjoy the ultimate Cadillac XT5. The exciting trip was planned in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, to which Cadillac Alghanim would like to express its thanks and appreciation for their support. Their help contributed to the success of the experience, which left the best impression among the youth and other participants in the trip. It's also worth mentioning that Cadillac's motorcade was accompanied by a number of journalists and photographers along with media members.

Le Notre restaurant on the Gulf Road was the starting destination and also the meeting point for all participants and guests. The celebration witnessed a wide range of individuals and families, especially young people who came from everywhere, to enjoy the atmosphere of the celebration and witness the new striking Cadillac models. With the ceremonial launch of the procession at 12 noon, the Cadillac Crossover XT5 took off, as there was a refreshing autumn atmosphere that made the drive more enjoyable, especially when luxury and comfort combine. The driving program included a number of stations including the Jumeirah Hotel & Resort, Sahara Club and Hilton Hotel. They were the destinations to rest at the same time; the atmosphere was full of fun, excitement and competitive spirit, since participants had to work on collecting and solving puzzle games at each stop. More about this special day, the General Manager of Cadillac Alghanim, Mohammed Eltakhawi, said: "It was a special day that was attended by a large number of special participants and guests to experience the exceptional driving experience of the 2019 Cadillac Crossover XT5 and discover its advantages, features, and advanced technological specifications that reinforce Cadillac's leadership."

He added, "This is not new for Cadillac Alghanim, who's always been creative in keeping the customers updated regard-



deep-rooted values of caring, connecting and challenging. He added, "Ooredoo has always been keen on working with various entities to empower women and enrich the experiences of our Youth." Commenting on the program of the forum, Alayoub said: "We are honored to work with such esteemed entities as the WTM & GDG. This event is in alignment with our vision for youth enrichment and women empowerment especially in the field of technology and science."

Supporting youth and empowering women is

among Ooredoo's top priorities through its CSR strategy. The company signed a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs in 2017 to support youth projects and initiatives. Ooredoo is continuously working with the different entities in both private and public sectors to enrich youth experience in a variety of fields.



Mijbil Alayoub



ing anything related to Cadillac. At the same time, the company aims to enhance communication with its customers and their cars' fans, adding that the experience has greatly contributed to attracting the attention of many of the attendees. The 2019 Cadillac XT5 has become a modern and inviting model, with many of expressing their intent for buying it."

He also clarified that Cadillac Alghanim emphasizes the importance of knowing how to make the right decision based on knowing the features and specifications accurately when choosing the future vehicle. Also how necessary it is to consider evaluating the vehicle's performance through taking it on an actual driving test to discover all the car's specifications of luxury, technology and safety features. Not to mention, choosing a care and service program package like the one Cadillac provides to its customers, that enhances the customers' satisfaction and gives them confidence in their choice. A key element to point out is the

importance of the luxury care program offered by Cadillac Alghanim to its customers which includes: 4 years of free service (or 100,000 km), 24/7 roadside assistance plus 4 years warranty (or 100,000 km).

The 2019 model features new enhancements on both the exterior and interior offerings, including a rear camera mirror, Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibilities, auto-heated steering wheel and front- and rear-seat USB capabilities.

In addition to high levels of fuel economy, driving dynamics and interior space, the XT5 is a lightweight Crossover with a unique design structure. Cadillac's Crossover embodies the brand's expertise for lightweight and agile driving dynamics. This was achieved using innovative techniques including the use of laser welding, ultra-high-strength steel and advanced analytics that ensure a stronger structure, excellent crash performance, yet less overall bulk.

What's On

Sultan al-Bohra commemorates Chehlum sermon in Kuwait



— Photos by Joseph Shagra

The 53rd al-Dai-al Mutlaq His Holiness Dr Syedna Mufaddal Saifuddin TUS, is in Kuwait to deliver a sermon at Markaz al-Burhani in Ardiya on the occasion of Chehlum (Arbaeen), which is attended by all members of Bohra community residing in Kuwait, including men, women and children, who were at the reception of the Sultan upon his arrival.

The session was inaugurated by reciting verses from the Munificent Quran by the son of Sultan, Hussain Burhanuddin. Then, the Sultan delivered a sermon praising the master of messengers of Allah, our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), and his Companions. He mentioned the martyrdom of Imam Al-Hussain (AS), highlighting the principles of justice, sacrifice, brotherhood, forgiveness, kindness and piety inherent in this tragedy happened in Kərbela.

He also mentioned the teachings of Islam caring for security and peace, as well as how to coexist with all peoples. He also spoke of the friendship between His Holiness Late Dr. Muhammad Burhanuddin (May his soul rest in peace) and His Highness the Late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah and His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

He further counselled the members of Bohra Community within Kuwait to stick to the teachings of Islam, refrain from abominable acts, and adopting the praiseworthy morals, which our Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) compelled on us to stick to them. He urged them to live in Kuwait as their second homeland and be loyal to the State of Kuwait, respecting its regulations and laws, and contribute to the socio-economic growth of Kuwait.

Finally, he expressed his highest considerations to His Highness the Amir of Kuwait, His Highness the Crown Prince, HH the Prime Minister, and to the kind people of Kuwait for their kind hospitality as he arrived to Kuwait, praying to Allah, the Almighty, for His Highness to long-life and enjoy good permanent health.

He also thanked Sheikh Nasser Al-Muhammad Al-Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan, Chief of Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Abdullah Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior, all Amiri Diwan Staff and all MOI affiliates, for all the support they observed for maintaining security during the visit. He ended the session praying to keep Kuwait as the oasis of security and prosperity, and well-guard it against all evils.

His Holiness Sultan arrived in Kuwait on October 26,



2018 and is the guest of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait. During his stay, he held social programs, including mass marriage ceremony, business promotion and social welfare of the community. Bohra community has a long his-

tory in Kuwait as most of the community members hail from Western India, have been at the forefront of the country's economic progress by contributing as industrialists, traders and professionals across numerous fields.

GUST to host 17th IFIP conference



Prof. Antonis Simintiras



Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) is hosting the 17th annual International Federation for Information Processing (IFIP) Conference. The event brings together approximately 75 scholars from around the globe to present research findings conducted on the subject of this year's conference: Challenges and Opportunities in the Digital Era. Among these, 11 are from GUST. The event is to be held over a period of four days on GUST's campus, and will be the first time that this symposium is held in Kuwait.

With the exponential growth of digital forums across the world on a multitude of platforms, it is imperative the academic community explore different ways of adapting to new realities to conduct business. This is especially true today as opportunities afforded to consumers - due to the sheer volume of information accessible to them - presents challenges to companies that need to constantly create innovative strategies to remain relevant. Similarly, consumers are also challenged as they seek optimal ways of sifting through

information which inundates them, and makes the process of selecting the best product or service provider increasingly difficult.

Prior to the conference, a doctoral colloquium was held to give PhD candidates and research students an opportunity to present their work to a panel of experts to get feedback and gain further insight in their area of study. Conference Co-Chair and GUST Vice President of Academic Affairs, Dr Salah Al-Sharhan said, "As the world around us changes, so must we. As academics, we must consistently strive to find ways to relate to and connect with the wider world. This conference will be a prime opportunity to learn from other scholars and academics, learn how their findings can be applied locally, and also cement GUST's place as a veritable regional knowledge hub."

Presenting findings on behalf of GUST will be Nabae Asfar, Dr Saeed Askary, Dr Ahmed ElMorshidy, Dr Ahmed Hassanein, Dr Khalid Kisswani, and Professor Taher Ali, who explored the topics of e-Business, e-Services, and e-Society. Also in attendance, are promi-

nent scholars such as Professor Yogesh Dwivedi from Swansea University in Wales, Professor George Balabanis from City University in London, Dr Winfried Lamersdorf from the University of Hamburg, and Professor Matti Mantymaki, from University of Turku, Finland.

Conference Co-Chair and Dean of College of Business Administration Prof Antonis Simintiras, said, "I am very optimistic that this conference will yield some interesting results, and I am excited to hear the different perspectives scholars from around the world will present to us. I'd also like to thank Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences and That Al Salasil for their support in helping put together such a high profile and prestigious conference."

The IFIP conference has taken place annually for the last 16 years, however, this is the first time that it has taken place in Kuwait. The previous conference was held in The Indian Institute of Technology in Delhi, and explored the topics of Smart Cities, Innovation, and Sustainability.

Burgan Bank offers discount to customers on Richards Coffee Bar

Promising its customers to receive advantageous offers from popular outlets in Kuwait, Burgan Bank announced its latest partnership with Richards Coffee Bar that will entitle its youth customers with an exclusive 15 percent discount. Youth cardholders can indulge in the genuine and unique taste of coffee beverages served at Richards Coffee Bar, famed for its coffee bean seeds collected from around the world. Burgan Bank seeks to keep

abreast of modern preferences, especially for coffee lovers as coffee grabs a large sector of people in Kuwaiti society. As this new offer allows the customers to benefit from the discount on Richards Coffee Bar, the most prominent specialty coffee bar and professional roaster, situated in Kuwait City, Richards Coffee bar provides a fun and comfortable atmosphere surrounded by soothing music, company and world-class service.

KCST participates in public relations forum

Kuwait College of Science and Technology (KCST) participated in the Public Relations and Innovation in Small Businesses Forum organized by the Kuwait Public Relations Association in presence of its Chairman Gamal Al-Nasrallah in cooperation with Al Hamra Economic Consultancy Company, by the Director General of the Company Abdulwahab Al-Hajji in Public Relations in Kuwait and organizations that support youth permanently.

Nasser Al Arfaj, Director of Public Relations of the Ministry of State for Youth Affairs, spoke with Ibrahim Bader

Al Mutawa, Director of Public Relations and Marketing at Kuwait College of Science and Technology, about the best ways of marketing that serve the society in general and youth. The forum included several useful workshops for entrepreneurs and initiatives on self-development, negotiation and persuasion skills, personal expenses management, and public relations plans.

Ibrahim Bader Al-Mutawa was invited as a keynote speaker at the forum to address the role of the university in supporting youth initiatives, and its constant investment in its students, and that the university has been characterized by the introduction of leadership and management materials within the study plan for its belief that future engineers must have the qualities of leadership and management. He also participated in sharing his success story along with the success stories of the participants, and keynote speakers alongside him at the podium, such as Reham Al Ayyar and Yousef Al Naama.



NOTICE

You are cordially invited to a new TIES course about Purification and Prayer (Tahara and Salat) every Wednesday from 11:00 am till noon. Bearing in mind that our bodies are Allah's property, we will learn the importance of physical and spiritual purity, how to purify not only our bodies, but also our hearts from destructive mindsets,

and we will examine the temporal and everlasting benefits of physical purity. We will also learn why Salat (ritual prayer) is the second pillar of Islam, why Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) received the command to pray five times a day during his ascension to the heavens, the prerequisites and procedure of prayer, and why it is the only act of worship inexcusable to miss, whatever the situation. Regular attendees of this three month course will receive certificates of achievement.

NOTICE

You are cordially invited to another session of series organized by TIES about some prophets and messengers of Allah (SWT) on November 1, 2018 at 7:00 pm. In this class, we will compare Yaqoub's son's claim after throwing Yusuf in a well with their excuse for leaving Benjamin in Egypt. We will see why Yaqoub didn't believe them when they accused Benjamin of theft, what he told them, and his reaction to their advice to stop grieving. Finally, we will learn why Yaqoub went blind and never lost hope, tying it to his interpretation of Yusuf's childhood dream, eliciting many positive lessons for our lives.

Technology

Australia spooks emerge from shadows with tweets, China warning

Burgess defends govt decision to bar Chinese telecoms firms

SYDNEY: Australia's highly secretive signals intelligence agency-tasked with eavesdropping and decrypting adversaries' communications-has made a tongue-in-cheek Twitter debut, while issuing a serious warning of security risks from Chinese technology. The Australian Signals Directorate, a sister agency to Britain's GCHQ or America's NSA, took to the social network as part of what it said was a new, more public-facing communications strategy.

"Hi internet, ASD here. Long time listener, first time caller." @ASDGovAu tweeted for the first time. Defense officials confirmed the tweet and account were authentic. The debut tweet was followed by an image containing a visual text puzzle, or cryptogram, of the organization's acronym and excerpts from a speech by director general Mike Burgess. In his talk, Burgess said ASD was coming "out of the shadows" and stridently defended a government decision to bar Chinese telecoms firms Huawei and ZTE from operating Australia's new 5G network.

The long-awaited 3.5 GHz system will allow lightning-fast speeds and could allow everyday objects to become intelligent, interconnected devices that feed pools of data-raising security concerns over who can access it. The decision to ban Huawei and ZTE from running the technology has infuriated Beijing and sparked a PR battle over the trustworthiness of those firms. Both operate with Chinese state backing but are among the biggest technology companies in the world.

Security concerns

Huawei, founded by a People's Liberation Army researcher, and ZTE have been accused by the US Congress of being tools of the Chinese intelligence services. "5G is not just fast data," Burgess explained in his speech. The technology "will underpin the communications

that Australians rely on every day, from our health systems and the potential applications of remote surgery, to self-driving cars and through to the operation of our power and water supply".

After studying whether the network could be secure if there were any "high-risk" vendors participating, Burgess indicated the ASD assessment was a firm 'no'. "My advice was to exclude high-risk vendors from the entirety of evolving 5G networks," he said. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Lu Kang said Australia should facilitate cooperation between Chinese and Australian companies "instead of citing all sorts of excuses to erect artificial hurdles and enforce discriminatory measures."

"We urge the Australian side to abandon its ideological bias and level the playing field for Chinese enterprises' operation in Australia," Lu told a regular press briefing in Beijing. Reforms to Chinese intelligence and President Xi Jinping's drive to expand China's influence overseas have led to increasing friction and competition between intelligence agencies in Beijing and Canberra. The independent Australian Strategic Policy Institute yesterday accused the Chinese military of sending 2,500 scientists and engineers overseas to work on potentially sensitive projects-with the intention of returning to work directly for the People's Liberation Army.

Researcher Alex Joske found at least 300 Chinese military scientists came to Australia as PhD students or visiting scholars. They worked in fields including signal processing, radar, explosions and navigation systems, as well as self-driving cars and code-breaking, he wrote. Most PLA scientists do not disguise their background, but the institute said it identified "24 new cases of scientists hiding their military affiliation while travelling outside China, including 17 who came to Australia". Australia



BEIJING: This file photo shows a man uses his mobile phone outside a Huawei store in Beijing. — AFP

is part of the "Five-eyes" intelligence alliance with United States, who cooperate closely and share sensitive information. —AFP

Hacking brains for memory manipulation and theft

In the future, cyberattackers may be able to exploit memory implants to steal, spy on, alter or control human memories. In addition, while the most radical threats are several decades away, the essential technology already exists in the form of deep brain stimulation devices. Scientists are learning how memories are created in the brain and can be targeted, restored and enhanced using such implantable devices. However, vulnerabilities exist in the connected software and hardware and these need to be addressed if we are to be ready for the threats that lie ahead, according to a new report by researchers from Kaspersky Lab and the University of Oxford Functional Neurosurgery Group.

The researchers combined practical and theoretical analysis to explore the current vulnerabilities in implanted devices used for deep brain stimulation. Known as implantable pulse generators (IPGs) or neurostimulators, these devices send electrical impulses to specific targets in the brain for the treatment of disorders such as Parkinson's disease, essential tremor, major depression, and obsessive-compulsive disorder. The latest generation of these implants comes with management software for both clinicians and patients, installed on commercial-grade tablets and smartphones. The connection between them is based on the

standard Bluetooth protocol. The researchers found a number of existing and potential risk scenarios, each of which could be exploited by attackers. These include:

- Exposed connected infrastructure - the researchers found one serious vulnerability and several worrying misconfigurations in an online management platform popular with surgical teams that could lead an attacker to sensitive data and treatment procedures.
 - Insecure or unencrypted data transfer between the implant, the programming software, and any associated networks could enable malicious tampering of a patient's or even of whole groups of implants (and patients) connected to the same infrastructure. Manipulation could result in changed settings causing pain, paralysis or the theft of private and confidential personal data.
 - Design constraints as patient safety takes precedence over security. For example a medical implant needs to be controlled by physicians in emergency situations, including when a patient is rushed into a hospital far from their home. This precludes use of any password that isn't widely known among clinicians. Further, it means that by default such implants need to be fitted with a software 'backdoor'.
 - Insecure behavior by medical staff - programmers with patient-critical software were found being left with default passwords, used to browse the internet or with additional apps downloaded onto them
- Addressing these vulnerable areas is key, because the researchers estimate that over the coming decades, more advanced neurostimulators and a deeper understanding of how the human brain forms and stores memories, will accelerate the development and use of such



technology and create in new opportunities for cyberattackers.

Within five years, scientists expect to be able to electronically record the brain signals that build memories and then enhance or even rewrite them before putting them back into the brain. A decade from now, the first commercial memory boosting implants could appear on the market - and, within 20 years or so, the technology could be advanced enough to allow for extensive control over memories.

New threats resulting from this could include the mass manipulation of groups through implanted or erased memories of political events or conflicts; while 'repurposed' cyberthreats could target new opportunities for cyberespionage or the theft, deletion or 'locking' of memories (for example, in return for a ransom).

Commenting on the results of the investigation, Dmitry Galov, junior security researcher, Global Research and Analysis Team, Kaspersky Lab said, "Current vulnerabilities matter because the technology that exists today is the

foundation for what will exist in the future. Although no attacks targeting neurostimulators have been observed in the wild, points of weakness exist that will not be hard to exploit. We need to bring together healthcare professionals, the cybersecurity industry and manufacturers to investigate and mitigate all potential vulnerabilities, both the ones we see today and the ones that will emerge in the coming years."

Laurie Pycroft, doctoral researcher in the University of Oxford Functional Neurosurgery Group said: "Memory implants are a real and exciting prospect, offering significant healthcare benefits. The prospect of being able to alter and enhance our memories with electrodes may sound like fiction, but it is based on solid science the foundations of which already exist today. Memory prostheses are only a question of time. Collaborating to understand and address emerging risks and vulnerabilities, and doing so while this technology is still relatively new, will pay off in the future."

China steps up VPN blocks ahead of Internet shows

HONG KONG: Chinese authorities have stepped up efforts to block virtual private networks (VPN), service providers said yesterday in describing a "cat and mouse" game with censors ahead of a major trade expo and internet conference. VPNs allow internet users in China, including foreign companies, to access overseas sites that authorities bar through the so-called Great Firewall, such as Facebook Inc and Alphabet Inc's Google.

Since Xi Jinping became president in 2013, authorities have sought to curb VPN use, with providers suffering periodic lags in connectivity because of government blocks. "This time, the Chinese government seemed to have staff on the ground monitoring our response in real time and deploying additional blocks," said Yokubaitis, the chief executive of Golden Frog, the maker of the VyperVPN service.

Authorities started blocking some of its services on Sunday, he told Reuters, although VyperVPN's service has since been restored in China. "Our counter measures usually work for a couple of days before the attack profile changes and they block us again," Yokubaitis said. The latest attacks were more aggressive than the "steadily increasing blocks" the firm had experienced in the second half of the year, he added.

The Cyberspace Administration of China did not respond immediately to a faxed request from Reuters to seek comment. Another provider, ExpressVPN, also acknowledged connectivity issues on its services in China on Monday that sparked user complaints. "There has long been a cat-and-mouse game with VPNs in China and censors regularly change their blocking techniques," its spokesman told Reuters. Last year, Apple Inc dropped a number of unapproved VPN apps from its app store in China, after Beijing adopted tighter rules. — Reuters

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Dr. Husain Alenezi

-Board Certified Urologist.
-Endourology Society-Approved Fellowship In Endourology And Robotic Surgery At Western University, Ontario, Canada.

Expert in diagnosing and treating:

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Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 31, 2018



People fancy dressed as "Catrina" take part in the "Catrinas Parade" along Reforma Avenue, in Mexico City. Mexicans get ready to celebrate the Day of the Dead highlighting the character of La Catrina which was created by cartoonist Jose Guadalupe Posada, famous for his drawings of typical local, folkloric scenes, socio-political criticism and for his illustrations of "skeletons" or skulls, including La Catrina. (See Pages 20-21 for pictures and story). — AFP

Don't let me down: Japan superfans lose fight for Beatles footage

It's been a hard day's fight, but a group of Japanese Beatles fans have lost their bid to get police to hand over historic footage of the band's 1966 Japan visit. The superfans took their battle for the film-



This photo taken on June 29, 1966 shows members of the British band The Beatles, Paul McCartney (center front), John Lennon (front right) and George Harrison (back left), arriving at Tokyo International Airport at Haneda in Tokyo ahead of their tour.

recorded by police as a security measure—all the way to Japan's supreme court, arguing the images were a "historical document." Police had offered to release the footage, reportedly about 35 minutes long,

but only after blurring the faces of everyone in the film except the Beatles, citing privacy reasons. Two lower courts backed the police against a group of citizens from Nagoya who wanted the entire film released uncensored, saying it would be almost impossible to identify people in the footage more than 50 years later.

But the long and winding legal battle ended last week when the supreme court rejected their argument, the group announced. The Beatles toured Japan only once, playing five concerts, and were trailed across the country by legions of screaming fans. A lawyer for the group seeking the footage said it would have huge historical significance for Beatles enthusiasts. "It is a document that should be made available from a historical standpoint," lawyer Satoshi Shinkai told the Asahi Shimbun newspaper. "The final concert given on July 2 was apparently electrifying," added fan Toru Omura, who has written books about the impact of the group's tour.

"If confirmation can be made of the existence of footage from that day, there would be huge excitement," he told the newspaper. The Beatles remain popular in Japan, and former group member Paul McCartney arrived in Tokyo this week to kick off his new world tour. — AFP



This photo taken on June 29, 1966 shows the British band The Beatles, (bottom to top) Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr and George Harrison, arriving with their manager Brian Epstein (top left-behind George) at Tokyo International Airport at Haneda in Tokyo ahead of their tour.



This photo taken on June 30, 1966 shows British band The Beatles, (from left to right) Paul McCartney, Ringo Starr, George Harrison and John Lennon, performing during their concert at the Budokan in Tokyo. — AFP photos



This photo taken on June 29, 1966 shows members of the British band The Beatles, (from left to right) Paul McCartney, John Lennon, Ringo Starr and George Harrison, holding a press conference in Tokyo at the start of their tour.

Dry Danube reveals hidden treasure in Hungary

A treasure trove of some 2,000 gold and silver coins has been found on the Danube riverbed in Hungary thanks to an exceptionally low water level, archaeologists said. "Around 2,000 coins have been found, as well as arms, pikes, cannon balls and swords," Katalin Kovacs, an archaeologist with the Ferenczy Museum Center, told the MTI agency. The discovery was made this week where the river passes by the town of Erd, to the south of Budapest. Archaeologists are working frantically, assisted by divers and drones, to extract what they can from the site before a rise in river levels expected this weekend.

Like other rivers across Europe, the Danube is in some places at a historically low level after a long period of dry weather. In Budapest it is running at a mere 38cm (15 inches), which has affected shipping traffic. The treasure, which includes ducats and pennies, was found amid the wreck of a trading boat whose origin is not yet known, archaeologists said. Like many rivers across Europe, the Danube is in some places at a historically low level after a long period of dry weather.

"The coins are 90 percent foreign and date from between 1630



Hungarian archaeologists inspect the site where they found coins from the 16th-17th centuries and special weapons on the banks of the Danube river due to its low water level near Erd, located 25 kms from Budapest. — AFP photos

and 1743", archaeologist Balazs Nagy told the Klub radio station, adding that they had been minted in "the Netherlands, in France, Zurich and even the Vatican". The low level of the Danube has already revealed the remains of Budapest's former Franz Josef bridge, which was destroyed during World War II, as well as an American bomb from the same period. — AFP



Hungarian archaeologists inspect the site where they found coins from the 16th-17th centuries and special weapons on the banks of the Danube river due to its low water level.



Brina Galvan poses for a photograph disguised as "Catrina".



Sandra Neri Ruiz poses for a photograph disguised as "Catrina".

This combination of pictures shows (left to right top) Arlette Ortiz, Jessica Esquivias, Alejandria Copado and Jossy Javier and (L to R bottom) Victoria Garcia, Donovan Sanchez, Jimmy Roman and Monica Molina disguised as "Catrina" (Mexican representation of death) before the March of Catrinas in Mexico. — AFP photos



Fernando Espinoza



Anna Miller



Celia Alejandre



Leo Curiel

In Mexico, skull faces to scare away *US-style Halloween*

Mexico's Day of the Dead is almost here, so on weekends the streets teem with Catrinas—people dressed up with elaborate skull faces that recall an old symbol of Mexican political and social satire in a bid to fight an invasion of US-style Halloween celebrations. AFP took photos of some of the thousands of parade-goers who wore wild, colorful costumes and had their faces turned into that of death itself by expert body painters.

Jessica Esquivias, a procession organizer, was dressed all in black, with a big red-and-white flower arrangement atop a fancy hair-do and a thick string of pearls around her neck. Her skeleton face features huge teeth and eyes. Last weekend saw the first of several parades planned for the Day of the Dead, which is November 2. It was the fifth year of these processions, which seek to rekindle Mexican traditions that are under pressure from Halloween festivities. The Catrina craze started when promoters saw that in Mexican markets, most of the party-oriented garb for sale at this time of year was witch, monster and vampire costumes.

They called in body painting experts to help people dress up as Catrinas at a reasonable price. So what is a Catrina? Originally it was the name of an etching by the artist Jose Guadalupe Posada in the early 20th century, as

the Mexican Revolution that would topple dictator Porfirio Diaz in 1911 was gaining steam. The first of these illustrations was of a skeleton, meant to depict a high-society lady wearing only a fancy French-style hat—a satirical barb aimed at the rich. Diaz was known to love extravagance and all things European. The image was also used to make fun of many other human foibles.

Posada's original name for the caricature was the "Catrina Garbancera," using a term for poor Mexicans who were ashamed of their indigenous roots and tried to come across as European. The image had a powerful influence on other arts and artists including the muralist Diego Rivera. In the parade, a reveler named Jossy Javier wore her hair down, a tight-fitting black outfit with a sash like that of a beauty queen, her face decorated with different shades of white and flowers on her head.

Donovan Sanchez, a tall and muscular man sporting tattoos, donned an indigenous-style headdress with feathers in various shades of blue that matched the tones of his striking skull face. Anna Miller, a German who came to Mexico to live with her Mexican boyfriend, chose something a bit more simple, wearing her hair in the style of the artist Frida Kahlo. — AFP



Jimmy Roman



People fancy dressed as "Catrina" take part in the "Catrinas Parade".



Annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade



A dog dressed as a vampire attends the annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade in Long Beach, California. — AFP photos



A woman dressed in a costume at the annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade.



Sweenie the dog waits for the start of the annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade.



Gidget the Pug (center) is dressed along with her owner as a character from "The Wizard of Oz"



Dogs and their owners parade at the annual Haute Dog Howl'oween parade.



Dogs and their owners parade.



A dog dressed as Rose from the movie 'Titanic'.



Mazie the dog struts in her costume.

Lifestyle | Features



Iraqi female wrestlers practice at a gym in Diwaniyah, around 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of the capital Baghdad. — AFP

Women wrestlers take on rivals and tradition in south Iraq

Sports teacher Nehaya Dhafer was living a quiet life looking after her elderly mother in Iraq's tribal south when she was asked to set up the country's first women's wrestling squad. Taking on a sport largely reserved for men in a region with strict traditions was quite a challenge but one that both Dhafer and young female sports fans embraced. "Recruiting wasn't a problem," said Dhafer, a tight blue hijab framing her round face. "On the other hand, it's been difficult to convince society because our traditions aren't really headed in this direction," the 52-year-old told AFP.

Dhafer was working as a school sports teacher and trainer at a sports club but never imagined that one day she would be coaching a group of young female wrestlers in her conservative city of Diwaniyah. But when the Iraqi Wrestling Federation approached her two years ago with the opportunity to lead the team due to her proven track record with women athletes, she leapt at the chance. To start off, she found five volunteers at her local sports club to train the Al-Rafidain—"the two rivers"—whose name pays tribute to Iraq's mighty Tigris and Euphrates.

'Tribes rule'
Today, the team has about 20 members aged from around 15 to 30 who train three times a week in two-hour sessions after school. On a broad blue mat with a red circle at its center, the wrestlers tumble with determination under the watchful eye of Dhafer, wearing a grey tracksuit. The gym's windows are thrown wide open to ease the stifling heat. Dressed in an assortment of shorts, tights and T-shirts, the young women alternate between stretches and sparring drills. But when training ends, the wrestlers file out of the building in long robes, most of them wearing headscarves, seamlessly blending into the city where most women are cloaked in black. "Here, the tribes rule the lives of all. I've received direct and indirect threats but we've managed to win respect," said Dhafer.

To do so, they had to put in more effort than the average coach, according to Dhafer's assistant, Nadia Saeb. "We've built bonds of trust with the wrestlers' families," she told AFP. "We look after the girls, picking them up from their home before practice and returning them afterwards," she said. "We even follow up on their schooling," added the 47-year-old proudly. The approach has paid



off. At first unsure what to make of the sport's new female competitors, today people in Diwaniyah come out to support the team during competitions, according to Dhafer. Al-Rafidain's success has pushed others elsewhere in Iraq to try the same, with women's teams popping up in the ethnically mixed city of Kirkuk, north of the capital, and in Basra in the country's far south.

'Little by little'
As the sport gained popularity across the country, "little by little, people finally accepted us", said Alia Hussein,

the team's star who sports a stylish short haircut. In September, she won a silver medal at the Women Classic International Tournament in Beirut in the under 75 kilo category. Alongside her budding wrestling career, the 26-year-old hopes to finish her high school diploma after having put her studies on hold to help her family.

After graduating, she hopes to study physical education at university. Her mother, who has adorned their modest family home with Alia's trophies alongside paintings showing revered Shiite imams and figures, has always been supportive. "We're sure of what we do, so people can say what they want—we don't care, we haven't done anything wrong, so no one has the right to say anything," she said. Wrestling federation chief Ahmad Shamseddine has been supportive of Iraq's women wrestlers since day one. When Al-Rafidain first got started in 2016, the federation was only able to give it "a very small budget", with about \$40 (35 euros) a month allocated to each member, he said. But in 2019, he added, "they will have more because the team has had good results". — AFP



Iraqi female wrestlers practice at a gym in Diwaniyah, around 160 kilometers (100 miles) south of the capital Baghdad. — AFP

Crouching tigers, hidden cameras: Nepal counts its big cats

Chayan Kumar Chaudhary flicked through photographs captured on a hidden camera in the jungle, hoping his favorite big cat—dubbed "selfie tiger" for its love of the limelight—had made another appearance. Thousands of camera traps have helped conservationists track Nepal's wild tiger population, which has nearly doubled in recent years as the big cats claw their way back from the verge of extinction. After a nine-year push to protect tigers, an exhaustive census across 2,700 kilometers (1,700 miles) of Nepal's lowlands completed earlier this year revealed the population has grown from 121 in 2009 to an estimated 235 adult cats today.

On the frontline of the painstaking survey were trained locals like Chaudhary in western Nepal's Bardia National Park where tiger numbers have grown nearly fivefold. The 25-year-old helped track and record wild tiger movements through the park by scanning images taken by cameras hidden in the jungle's undergrowth. "It was very exciting when we checked the (memory) cards and found photos of tigers," Chaudhary told AFP. "It felt like we are part of something big."

Nepal's southern lowlands, home to five national parks, were mapped into grids, each fitted with a pair of camera traps to record any tiger activity. More than 3,200 of these special camera traps were installed, some by field workers on elephants to navigate the dense jungle. "It was not an easy process and risky as well," said Man Bahadur Khadka, head of Nepal's department of wildlife and national parks.

These cameras were equipped with sensors that triggered a click whenever any movement or a change in temperature was detected. Soon the photos started to trickle in: lone tigers walking past, mothers with their playful cubs and the occasional tiger feasting on a fresh kill. And Chaudhary's favorite: a big cat that seemed to enjoy preening in front of the lens. The census began in November 2017 and by the following March, more than 4,000 images of tigers had been collected. "We then began analysing the photos," Khadka said. "Just like our fingerprints, tigers have unique stripes. No two tigers are alike."

'Our wealth'

Conservationists say that behind Nepal's success was a strategy to turn tiger-fearing villagers—who could earn thousands of dollars for poaching a big cat—into the animals'

protectors. A century ago, Nepal's lush jungles were a playground for the country's rulers and visiting British dignitaries who came to hunt the Royal Bengal tiger.

In 1900, more than 100,000 tigers were estimated to roam the planet. But that fell to a record low of 3,200 globally in 2010. Nepal's tiger numbers hit rock bottom following the decade-long civil war, which ended in 2006, when poachers ran amok across the southern plains.

In 2009, the government changed tack, enlisting community groups to protect the animals. Hundreds of young volunteers were recruited to guard Nepal's national parks, patrolling against poachers, raising awareness and protecting the natural habitat. "Tigers are our wealth, we have to protect them," said Sanju Pariyar, 22, who was just a teen when she joined an anti-poaching group. "People understand that if our tiger and rhino numbers grow, tourists will come and bring opportunities. It is good for us."

Armed with a stick, Pariyar regularly goes out on patrol to search for traps laid by poachers. The locals have also become informants, alerting park officials if they see anything, or anyone, suspicious. Nepal has tough punishments for poachers—up to 15 years in jail and a heavy fine—and it has recently started a genetic database of its tigers to aid investigations. In March, police arrested a poacher who had been on the run for five years after being caught with five tiger pelts and 114 kilos (251 pounds) of bones.

The contraband was believed to have been destined for China, a top market for wildlife smugglers, where rare animal parts are used in traditional medicine. In 2010, Nepal and 12 other countries with tiger populations signed an agreement to double their big cat numbers by 2022. The Himalayan nation is set to be the first to achieve this target. "If a country like Nepal—small, least developed, with lots of challenges—can do it, the others can do it," said Nepal's WWF representative, Ghana Gurung.

But conservationists are aware that rising tiger numbers are also good news for poachers and the lucrative black market they supply with endangered animal parts. Tiger poaching is difficult to track because unlike with rhinos, nothing of the cat is left behind after it is killed. "It is now more important than ever to stay vigilant," said national park warden Ashok Bhandari. — AFP

Nature pushed to the brink by 'runaway consumption'

Unbridled consumption has decimated global wildlife, triggered a mass extinction and exhausted Earth's capacity to accommodate humanity's expanding appetites, the conservation group WWF warned yesterday. From 1970 to 2014, 60 percent of all animals with a backbone—fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals—were wiped out by human activity, according to WWF's "Living Planet" report, based on an ongoing survey of more than 4,000 species spread over 16,700 populations scattered across the globe. "The situation is really bad, and it keeps getting worse," WWF International director general Marco Lambertini told AFP. "The only good news is that we know exactly what is happening."

For freshwater fauna, the decline in population over the 44 years monitored was a staggering 80 percent. Regionally, Latin America was hit hardest, seeing a nearly 90 percent loss of wildlife over the same period. Another dataset confirmed the depth of an unfolding mass extinction event, only the sixth in the last half-billion years.

Depending on which of Earth's lifeforms are included, the current rate of species loss is 100 to 1,000 times higher than only a few hundred years ago, when people began to alter Earth's chemistry and crowd other creatures out of existence. Measured by weight, or biomass, wild animals today only account for four percent of mammals on Earth, with humans (36 percent) and livestock (60 percent) making up the rest.

The great acceleration

Ten thousand years ago that ratio was prob-



This file photo shows elephants at the Voi Wildlife Lodge in Tsavo East.—AFP photos



This file photo shows a Humpback whale jumping in the surface of the Pacific Ocean at the Uramba Bahía Malaga National Park in Colombia.



A bird resting on the head of a white-tailed deer roaming free in San Jose Villanueva.



This file photo shows a rescued bear roaming around a sanctuary in Ninh Binh Province for bears rescued from farms and facilities where they were formerly exploited for bile extractions used for traditional medicine.



An Olive Ridley Turtle (Lepidochelys olivacea) laying her eggs in the sand at Rushikulya Beach, some 140 kilometers (88 miles) southwest of Bhubaneswar.



A saltwater crocodile with a tyre around its neck is seen in Palu river in Palu.

chosen as the "gold spike," or starting point, for a new geological period dubbed the Anthropocene, or "age of man". In looking for answers, conservationists are turning to climate change for inspiration. "We need a new global deal for nature," said Lambertini, noting two key ingredients in the 195-nation Paris climate treaty. "One was the realization that climate change was dangerous for the economy and society, not just polar bears," he said.

Similarly, he argued, threatened ecosystem services long taken for granted—drinkable water, breathable air, heat-absorbing oceans, forests that soak up CO₂, productive soil—are worth tens of trillions of dollars every year. "A healthy, sustainable future for all is only possible on a planet where nature thrives and forests, oceans and rivers are teeming with biodiversity and life," said Lambertini.

The Paris Agreement, negotiated under the UN convention on climate change, also set a clear target: global warming must be held to "well below" 2C, and 1.5C if possible. The parallel UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), by contrast, has lots of targets running out to 2020 which are not only too weak, but with one possible exception—will probably not be met, Lambertini said. "The CBD is failing," he told AFP. But an upcoming meeting of the 195-nation body could be the beginning of a "revolution" that will see the Convention re-engineered in 2020 into "a new deal for Nature." — AFP

'New deal' for nature

The pace of population increase—long taboo in development and conservation circles—also took off around 1950, the date scientists have

Sports

Tom Brady extends run as Patriots down Bills 25-6

Cleveland Browns fire head coach Jackson

NEW YORK: Tom Brady threw for 324 yards as the New England Patriots beat the Buffalo Bills 25-6 on Monday night in Orchard Park, N.Y., for their fifth consecutive win. Having averaged 39.3 points over their previous four games, the Patriots (6-2) didn't reach the end zone until James White's 1-yard touchdown plunge with just under 10 minutes remaining.

Devin McCourty returned an interception 84 yards for New England's other touchdown, and Stephen Gostkowski made four field goals. Brady completed 29 of 45 passes but did not throw a touchdown pass for the first time this season. He improved to 29-3 all-time against the Bills, extending his NFL record for most victories by a quarterback against a single opponent.

New England's Julian Edelman caught nine passes for 104 yards. White had 79 yards on 10 receptions and 15 yards on eight carries. Derek Anderson was 22 of 39 passing for 290 yards and an interception in his second start for the Bills (2-6), who have lost three straight and have scored just two offensive touchdowns over their past five games. Anderson went to the locker room with 1:25 remaining holding his right arm after being sacked by Kyle Van Noy.

McCourty's pick-six came with 5:54 left in the fourth quarter and two plays after Bills tight end Jason Croom had a touchdown overturned when replays showed he bobbled the ball in the end zone.

Stephen Hauschka made a 47-yard field goal for Buffalo late in the first half and a 51-yarder that cut New England's lead to 9-6 midway through the third quarter. The Patriots drove into Bills territory four times in the first half but only came away with three field goals. Gostkowski connected from 25, 40 and 38 yards before missing a 50-yard attempt just before halftime. Gostkowski added another 25-yard field goal late in the third quarter.

Bills rookie linebacker Tremaine Edmunds left the game in the second quarter due to a concussion. All-Pro tight end Rob Gronkowski returned for the Patriots after missing one game with back and ankle injuries. He had three catches for 43 yards. Linebacker Dont'a Hightower (knee) and Sony Michel (knee) were inactive.

Pro Bowl running back LeSean McCoy started for the Bills after clearing the concussion protocol on Sunday. McCoy rushed for 13 yards on 12 carries and caught six passes for 82 yards. The Bills honored their all-time leading rusher, Thurman Thomas, by retiring his No. 34 at halftime.

Meanwhile, Hue Jackson was fired as head coach of the Cleveland Browns on Monday, and offensive coordinator Todd Haley was ousted, too. Jackson compiled a record of 3-36-1 in Cleveland, and the team is 2-5-1 this season following a 33-18 loss at Pittsburgh on Sunday.

At an afternoon meeting Monday, players were informed defensive coordinator Gregg Williams would serve as interim head coach, according to multiple reports. Freddie Kitchens was promoted from running backs coach to offensive coordinator. Williams has 27 years of experience in the NFL, including as a head coach with the Buffalo Bills from 2001-03.

Williams will remain defensive coordinator. He was the only interim coaching candidate to speak with team owner Jimmy Haslam on Monday. New York Giants coach Pat Shurmur told reporters 37-year-old Eli Manning remains the team's starting quarterback "at this point," but he did leave himself a bit of wiggle room to change his mind following the bye week for the 1-7 team.

"We'll see," Shurmur said. "But yeah, I think Eli's our QB. I know what you're all trying to tease a headline out of. At this point, Eli's our QB and we're looking at all ways to improve."

Manning has completed 68.3 percent of his passes this season for 2,377 yards with eight touchdown passes and six interceptions. The Tampa Bay Buccaneers will start Ryan Fitzpatrick at quarterback against the Carolina Panthers in Week 9, coach Dirk Koetter announced.

The news comes one day after Jameis Winston threw four interceptions against the Cincinnati Bengals and was pulled in the third quarter for the 35-year-old Fitzpatrick, who nearly rallied the Bucs to overtime. Koetter lamented the team's turnover ratio (minus-13, tied for last in the NFL) when asked about the decision.

In other Tampa Bay news, the team appears unlikely



BUFFALO: Tom Brady #12 of the New England Patriots is hit by Lorenzo Alexander #57 of the Buffalo Bills as he throws during NFL game action at New Era Field on Monday in Buffalo, New York. — AFP

to trade wide receiver DeSean Jackson before Tuesday's deadline, despite the veteran's reported request to be dealt. Also, defensive tackle Vita Vea avoided a tear of his anterior cruciate ligament, according to multiple reports.

Miami Dolphins quarterback Ryan Tannehill has resumed throwing a football, but his status for Sunday's game against the New York Jets remains unclear due to his injured passing shoulder.

Dolphins coach Adam Gase hopes to know the answer by Wednesday in terms of whether Tannehill will be the starter. Tannehill has missed the past three games since sustaining the injury.

Tannehill has thrown for 972 yards, eight touchdowns and five interceptions. If he remains sidelined versus New York, Brock Osweiler will make his fourth consecutive start. Osweiler has passed for 895 yards, six touchdowns and three interceptions. — Reuters

11th Asian Airgun and 8th Shotgun Shooting Championships

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: President of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Eng Duaij Khalaf Al-Otaibi said the 11th Asian Airgun and the 8th Shotgun Shooting Championships will be held under the patronage of President of Civil Aviation, Honorary President of Civil Aviation, Honorary President of Kuwait and Asian Shooting Federations Sheikh Salman Sabah Al-Salem Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, adding that 35 countries represented by 600 shooters will participate.

Al-Otaibi, who spoke during a press conference at Crowne Plaza hotel, in the presence of Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations thanked Sheikh Salman for his patronage of the tournament that will be held at Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Shooting Complex, which will start Nov 2, and continue until Nov 12, while the opening ceremony will be Nov 3. He said some delegations have already arrived and all will be in town in two days.

Al-Otaibi said the technical meeting will be held, Nov 3, and will be followed by unofficial training, while official competition will begin Nov 4.

He said the tournament is very important because it covers all types of shooting and has special attention in



Kuwait that has special status in the sport of shooting and hosts both Arab and Asian shooting federations, besides having one of the best shooting ranges in the world.

He said Kuwait reached advanced places and made international achievements due to the continued support by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He lauded the latest victories that were made by Kuwait shooters lately most importantly the Asiad gold medal by Mansour Al-Rashidi and Abdelrahman Al-Faihan's winning in South Korea and qualified for Tokyo 2020 Olympics, that in addition to the junior's winning in Kazakhstan

International Championship.

He said Kuwait shooters are training hard for the Asian championships bearing in mind that strong countries such as Korea, China, Japan, Kazakhstan and others are participating. He added that the technical committee already made its selection of players who will participate.

Eng Duaij Al-Otaibi said there will be important meetings to be held during the tournament with Asian dignitaries in attendance, adding that there was not any obstacles faced by the shooting club in organizing the event because of the support of Public Authority for Sports and its Director General Dr Humoud Fulaiteh.

Russia at a crossroads over doping scandal: WADA

LONDON: Critics of the World Anti-Doping Agency's decision to reinstate Russia should focus on whether they will deliver on the final steps that will lead to full rehabilitation, says the organisation's director general Olivier Niggli.

WADA has been assailed from all sides—administrators, national doping agencies, athletes and Niggli's predecessor David Howman—since its decision to lift the ban on Russia's anti-doping agency (RUSADA) in September.

RUSADA was initially suspended by WADA in 2016 after an independent report by Professor Richard McLaren found that more than 1,000 athletes across more than 30 sports were aided by state-sponsored doping.

The Russians now have until December 31 — a deadline imposed by WADA—to grant an independent panel access to a laboratory in Moscow and to the data they hold there. Niggli staunchly defended the move, which paves the way for Russian athletes to return to the international sporting fold, and warned the country was not out of the woods yet.

"As regards RUSADA, the pressure now should be on Russia to deliver on what it has promised," Niggli told AFP. "It is at a crossroads and has the chance to safeguard the future of Russian sport."

"Will Russia deliver? We certainly hope so because that is what is best for clean sport but WADA again stands ready to respond if it doesn't." The Swiss lawyer, who has been in his post since July 2016, says he believes the Russians will honour their promise after two years of stagnation and obfuscation on their part.

"There is no reason to believe they will not do it," he said. "It was a big step forward for before they had refused to provide access to the laboratory because of the ongoing criminal investigation. "I want to believe they will deliver on it now."

Niggli said that speed is crucial. "It is a two-step process," he said. "Firstly, an independent panel chosen by Russia and WADA must go and get the data and then, step two, analyse the data and decide if there are samples still in the lab that need to be re-analysed."

"Then we would request access to those samples specifically," Niggli is indignant at the criticism being levelled at him and WADA over the decision to lift the ban, claiming some of the critics are sore losers.

"It was a very democratic process following an independent compliance commission, chaired by a British barrister, made its recommendations then we had a debate and a vote at the executive committee," he said. —AFP

Verstappen charges to sensational second with the aid of Mobil 1 oils

SINGAPORE: Max Verstappen is renowned for his overtaking ability and in Austin this weekend, he showed off some of his very best moves to secure a stunning second place. This report reviews Aston Martin Red Bull Racing's United States Grand Prix.

With rain rendering Friday practice a washout, it wasn't until Saturday morning's final practice session at the majestic Circuit of The Americas that we began to get a read on form for Sunday's race.

The RB14, powered by Exxon & Mobil Synergy race fuel and Mobil 1 engine oil, looked strong around Austin's high-speed turns, with Daniel Ricciardo qualifying in fifth, which became fourth courtesy of a grid penalty for Sebastian Vettel.

Verstappen had a mechanical problem in qualifying, and ultimately started 18th, but the lowly grid position created the conditions to charge back through the pack - and the Dutchman didn't disappoint. By the end of lap one, he had already made up a staggering nine places to run ninth. That became fourth by lap nine. The team then employed a super

strategy to allow him to undercut Valtteri Bottas to take third.

And by managing his tyres effectively, Verstappen was able to do a one-stop strategy and that in turn allowed him to jump championship leader Lewis Hamilton for second. It was then time to chase race leader Kimi Raikkonen but though he piled the pressure on the Ferrari racer, his tyres began to lose grip and he dropped back and was forced to defend from Hamilton in the closing stages.

Despite Hamilton having fresher tyres, Verstappen held off the Mercedes to clinch second, with Hamilton failing to score enough points to win his fifth world championship with three races to go.

Verstappen's team-mate Ricciardo comfortably ran fourth in the early stages, but a mechanical problem forced him to retire his RB14. Ahead of the weekend, Verstappen and Ricciardo went shopping for bespoke Texas-themed race-suits while Verstappen attended a pre-race weekend Exxon & Mobil media event in downtown Austin.

The Dutchman competed in a quiz



Max Verstappen attends a pre-race Esso Synergy media event in Singapore.

show and handed the lucky winners of the Red Bull Pit Stop Challenge a year's supply of Exxon and Mobil fuel. Meanwhile over in Miami, David Coulthard performed a series of smoking donuts on top of one of Miami's most iconic new towers - the 700-foot high 1000 Museum building.

Mobil 1 engine oil was introduced in 1974. The brand range now includes a

variety of engine oils, oil filters, chassis grease, transmission fluids, and gear lubricants. Mobil is a major American oil company which merged with Exxon in 1999 to form a parent company called ExxonMobil. Today, Mobil continues as a major brand name within the combined company, as well as still being a gas station sometimes paired with its own store or On the Run.

Sports

Luminaries call for Cricket Australia chairman to resign

'It's not a hiccup, it's much more than that'

SYDNEY: Pressure was building on Cricket Australia chairman David Peever to resign yesterday in the wake of the release of a scathing independent review into the culture of the game. Former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd and former ICC Chief Executive Malcolm Speed were among those calling for him to be replaced after Monday's release of the review commissioned in the wake of March's ball-tampering scandal.

The report said the governing body was perceived as "arrogant" and "controlling" and treated its elite players like commodities, allowing "alpha-male" egos to develop a win-at-all-costs approach.

Peever, who was awarded a second five-year term last week, embarked on a series of media interviews defending the leadership of Cricket Australia on Monday, including one in which he described the ball-tampering incident as a "hiccup".

Speed said that interview had convinced him that the former mining executive was not the right man to take Cricket Australia forward and that somebody with a background in the game needed to take over.

"It's not a hiccup, it's much more than that," Speed, who was chief executive of the Australian cricket board from 1997 until 2001 before serving a similar role at the global governing body, told ABC radio.

"My response when I saw that interview and I saw that comment, I thought Australian cricket can do better in choosing its chairman and the game deserves better governance." Former Prime Minister Rudd joined a growing chorus of discontent at Peever's reaction to the review on social media, posting his comments on Twitter.

"So let's get this straight," he wrote. "Cricket Australia, under David Peever, has overseen the destruction of the (international) image of our national game. "But Peever

gets re-appointed as chair last wk, 3 days before release of damning report? #PeeverShouldResign."

With the review also suggesting that the culture CA fostered had contributed to the ball-tampering scandal, there were calls for the suspensions imposed on Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft to be lifted.

Speed suggested that former Australia test captain and Cricket Australia board member Mark Taylor would fit the bill as chairman in place of Peever. "I'd like to see Mark Taylor stand up as chairman of Cricket Australia," he said.

"David is the first to have come out of the corporate world rather than out of the cricket world and I think in this crisis that's what's shown here," Speed added. "It's good to see some diversity on the board - some women, some people who aren't from the cricket family so to speak - but I think that's missing at the moment, that the dyed-in-the-wool cricket people need to stand up and take back their sport."

Peever was also faced with blanket condemnation in the pages of Australia's newspapers on Tuesday, the main charge being that he had extended his reign as chairman after the ball-tampering scandal while heads around him rolled. Former captain and vice-captain Smith and Warner are serving one-year bans, former coach Darren Lehmann and chief executive James Sutherland have since stood down, while high performance chief Pat Howard has announced his departure.

In The Australian newspaper, cricket writer Gideon Haigh pinpointed a line in the review that spoke of people in leadership roles having to take responsibility for matters "over which they do not exercise direct control".

"David Peever is lost," he wrote. "Cricket needs to find another guide." — Reuters



MELBOURNE: Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) president Greg Dyer (L) and CEO Alistair Nicholson (R) leave a press conference in Melbourne yesterday. The Australian Cricketers' Association yesterday renewed calls to reduce the sentences of players involved in the ball-tampering scandal, as pressure mounts on Cricket Australia chairman David Peever after a damning review of the governing body. — AFP

'Intelligent' Rayudu promises to end India's No 4 woes

NEW DELHI: Rohit Sharma struck yet another 'daddy hundred' but it was probably Ambati Rayudu's relatively modest century on Monday which pleased India captain Virat Kohli more as he seeks an end to a pesky problem seven months before next year's World Cup.

An undercooked middle order has been the direct result of having an in-form trio - Rohit, Shikhar Dhawan and Kohli - at the top of India's batting order of late.

The problem has been acute at number four with Ajinkya Rahane, Manish Pandey, Lokesh Rahul and Dinesh Karthik being trialled at the crucial spot and found inadequate.

Rayudu's second 50-plus score in four matches against West Indies has filled Kohli with optimism he may not need to fret over the issue anymore. "Rayudu has taken his opportunity with both hands," Kohli said after the team's victory in the fourth one-dayer against West Indies in Mumbai.

"We need to back him till the World Cup and give him more confidence. He is feeling good about his game and he is a very confident man."

Rayudu exhibited both sides of his batting in his 211-run stand with Rohit on Monday, first playing second fiddle to his partner and then using the long handle to good effect in his brilliantly paced knock of 100.

In the end, he matched Rohit's four sixes and



Ambati Rayudu

also reached the 50 and 100 marks in fewer balls than his partner. "He reads the game really well, so we are happy that someone with intelligence is batting at number four," Kohli said.

Rohit was equally impressed with the ability of Rayudu, who registered his third ODI century on

Monday, to play according to the situation. "I think it's a very important knock," the India vice-captain said of the 33-year-old.

"Hopefully he has solved all the mysteries of number four. I guess till the World Cup, there won't be any talk of number four." — Reuters

'Let them play', union leads calls for end to Smith, Warner bans

SYDNEY: The Australian Cricketers' Association (ACA) called yesterday for the immediate lifting of lengthy bans imposed on Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft after the release of a scathing report into the culture of Australian cricket.

Among the findings, the review released on Monday said that to view the ball-tampering scandal which led to the bans as "the failure of a handful of players" would be a mistake.

Smith and Warner are seven months into one-year bans, while Bancroft will be eligible to return in December after his suspension for attempting to tamper with the ball during a test against South Africa in Cape Town in March.

Greg Dyer, the head of the Australian players' union, said all three players had been punished enough. "Given there is now independent verification that CA's system and culture were contributory factors, the ACA calls for the lifting of the board-imposed penalties on Steve Smith, David Warner and Cameron Bancroft," ACA chief Dyer told a news conference in Melbourne.

"The players have already lost time in the game, lost chances to play for Australia, endured public humiliation and faced massive financial penalties. "My message to Cricket Australia is this: these contrite men have suffered enough. Let them play."

Cricket Australia (CA) Chairman David Peever, in his reaction to the review on Monday, made it clear that the board had handed out the sanctions after "full and thoughtful process" and that they would remain in place.

Former Australia coach Darren Lehmann, who stood down in the wake of the scandal, also joined calls to have the bans set aside and allow the trio to return to state and international cricket.

"I think they should be back but it's up to the board to make that decision, not me," Lehmann told the Sydney Morning Herald. "I think the general feeling around Australia, certainly the people I talk to, is they want them playing again, at worst domestic cricket."

"Now the findings have come down they should be reviewing the sanctions on the three players." While Lehmann's view of the mood of the Australian public might be reflective of the "bubble" the review said surrounded top players, test greats Shane Warne, Adam Gilchrist and Doug Walters have also called for a reduction to the bans.

Test paceman Josh Hazlewood said on Monday the players would like to see former captain Smith, vice-captain Warner and batsman Bancroft back on the field. "We'd love to see the guys back playing as soon as possible. That's not really our decision," he told a news conference. "The bans have been handed down and the boys have copped them, as you'd expect. That's really out of our hands, as players." — Reuters

Mirza, Malik welcome baby boy

NEW DELHI: Indian tennis star Sania Mirza has given birth to a baby boy, her Pakistani cricketer husband Shoaib Malik said yesterday, prompting a flood of congratulatory messages on social media.

"Excited to announce: It's a boy, and my girl is doing great and keeping strong as usual #Alhumdulillah. Thank you for the wishes and Duas, we are humbled. #BabyMirzaMalik," Malik tweeted. Mirza and Malik enjoy a high profile owing to their successful sports careers and their unusual marriage straddling the border of nuclear-armed rivals India and Pakistan.

"It's a boyyyyy!!!!" Mirza's younger sister, Anam Mirza, wrote on Instagram. Malik's manager and agent, Aameem Haq, said the former Pakistan captain was "over the moon" to become a father.

"#BabyMirzaMalik boy is here! Baby and mother are all smiles, the dad is over the moon," Haq tweeted. Mirza, who is a three-time Grand Slam doubles winner, announced her pregnancy in April, prompting speculation her tennis career was over. She had been sidelined since last October with a knee injury.

The 31-year-old, who became the first Indian to win a WTA tournament singles title in 2005, has said the baby's surname would be Mirza-Malik. All-rounder Malik, 36, has been Pakistan's key player in the limited-overs format after he retired from Test cricket in 2015. — AFP



Belgian club postpones match over Thai owner's death

BRUSSELS: Belgian club OH Louvain, owned by the late Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha, have postponed their next match to mourn the death of the Thai billionaire who also owned Leicester City.

The Belgian second division club were set to play Lommel today but have put off the tie until December 4, the Belgian Football Association said yesterday.

The Thai chairman died on Saturday night after his helicopter crashed near Leicester City's King Power Stadium following a 1-1 draw against West Ham. Leicester's next match, against Southampton, has also been postponed.

The death of the Leicester chairman, creator of duty-free empire King Power triggered shock and sadness across the football world. Vichai, 60, died along with four others in Saturday's disaster. Mourners have gathered outside the ground to pay tribute to the much-admired former boss while his family members and other laid wreaths. — AFP

Sports

Lopetegui sacked as Real coach, Solari takes charge

Lopetegui has now lost two jobs in under five months

MADRID: Real Madrid sacked coach Julen Lopetegui three months into his first season in charge after the Spanish giants were beaten by arch rivals Barcelona over the weekend, the European champions said on Monday.

Real have failed to win in La Liga since beating Espanyol on Sept 22, losing to Sevilla, Alaves, Levante and drawing with Atletico Madrid before Sunday's 5-1 thrashing by Barcelona. Former player and reserve team boss Santiago Solari has been put in caretaker charge after negotiations between the club and former Chelsea, Italy and Juventus boss Antonio Conte broke down on Monday, the club added.

"The Real Madrid board met today and decided to renounce coach Julen Lopetegui's contract with the club," the club said in a statement. "The board feels there has been a disproportionate difference between the squad Real Madrid possesses... and the results obtained until now."

Lopetegui has now lost two jobs in under five months as he was also fired by the Spanish Football Federation as coach of the national team the day before the World Cup started in June for announcing his move to Real behind the organisation's back, throwing Spain's tournament preparations into chaos.

The 52-year-old replaced Zinedine Zidane as Real coach after the Frenchman decided to step down from

the role having guided the club to three successive Champions League titles in May.

After the club's all-time top scorer Cristiano Ronaldo also departed for Juventus in July, Lopetegui's stint at Real got off to a difficult start as they were beaten 4-2 by city rivals Atletico Madrid in the UEFA Super Cup.

His side then won four of their opening five La Liga games and a 3-0 win over AS Roma in their Champions League opener. But things started to fall apart when they were thrashed 3-0 by Sevilla last month, a result that started a run of four defeats in five matches in all competitions. During that stint, they also failed to score a goal for eight hours. Last Tuesday's 2-1 win over Viktoria Plzen in the Champions League provided a brief respite but the team were still booed off the pitch after an unconvincing display.

Sunday's 5-1 hammering proved to be the final straw for Real president Florentino Perez. During his 10 La Liga games in charge, Lopetegui won four, drew two and lost four, leaving Real floundering in ninth place in the table.

Spanish Federation rules allow clubs 14 days to name a permanent successor, meaning that Argentine Solari, who played for Real between 2000 and 2005, could potentially be in charge of four first team games. — Reuters



BARCELONA: Real Madrid's Spanish coach Julen Lopetegui gestures from the sideline during the Spanish league football match between FC Barcelona and Real Madrid CF at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona on October 28, 2018. — AFP

City win pitch battle as Mahrez sinks Tottenham

LONDON: Pep Guardiola claimed Manchester City's 1-0 win over Tottenham was extra special because of the problems posed by Wembley's damaged pitch. Playing on the scarred Wembley turf just 24 hours after it was torn up by an NFL fixture, City's peerless quality and a predatory finish from Riyad Mahrez helped them win the pitch battle.

A sixth victory from their last seven league games lifted Guardiola's unbeaten side back above Liverpool on goal difference. And the City manager admitted he was relieved to see his players cope with the treacherous conditions. "It was a great victory in special conditions, against one of the most physical teams in Europe," he said.

"It was not football conditions to play. We reacted well. For our players and the players of Tottenham, hopefully they will sort the problem for the future. "It's a question for the Premier League and Tottenham. We were invited to come here today for the fixture hopefully they can solve that problem."

Guardiola hailed City's Champions League win over Shakhtar Donetsk last week as the finest display of his reign in Manchester. This was a far more prosaic performance as City's defenders took centre stage, equalling the club record of six consecutive league clean-sheets.

Guardiola was frustrated that City wasted several chances to kill off Tottenham and warned them they must improve if they want to retain the title and win the Champions League. "We had many chances. We needed to score and we didn't. We have a lot of things to improve," he said.

"Of course we are very good side, I'm not saying the opposite, but if you are going to play in the later stages of big competitions we need things we don't have at the moment. "We will talk and work and hopefully we can improve."



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli (C) crosses the ball during the English Premier League football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Manchester City at Wembley Stadium in London, on Monday. — AFP

It was a dispiriting evening for fifth placed Tottenham, who now trail City by five points after their first league defeat in five games. Tottenham defender Toby Alderweireld blamed the pitch, saying: "I have to be honest, the pitch wasn't good.

"Both teams like to play out from the back and to play football in these circumstances, it was very difficult." But his manager Mauricio Pochettino was more frustrated by the woeful defending that led to City's goal.

"The circumstances of the pitch were the same for both sides. It was the kind of cheap goal you cannot concede in this type of game. Football will punish you," Pochettino said. "I'm proud of the effort, we created a lot of chances. Last season it was difficult to compete against Manchester City, but today the level was closer."

Pochettino's cause wasn't helped by the presence of the Jacksonville Jaguars and the Philadelphia Eagles at Tottenham's temporary home a day earlier. There were large areas of worn brown turf down the middle and both flanks, while the NFL logo in the centre circle and yard-line markers the length of the pitch were all still visible.

But City were unfazed as they raced into the lead after just six minutes. Tottenham defender Kieran Trippier misjudged a long kick from City goalkeeper Ederson, his errant header allowing Raheem Sterling to steal possession and cut past him into the penalty area.

Sterling showed tremendous composure as he picked out Mahrez's run and the Algerian finished the raid with a clinical close-range finish. It was an emotional moment for former Leicester star Mahrez just 48 hours after the death of Foxes owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha in a helicopter crash outside the club's King Power Stadium on Saturday.

Mahrez pointed his fingers to the sky in what appeared to be a tribute to Vichai. City seemed less troubled by the surface and they scythed through the Tottenham defence with a flowing move that ended with Hugo Lloris pushing Mahrez's drive onto a post.

Sent clean through on goal by Erik Lamela's pass, Harry Kane had a golden chance to equalise but his poor first touch, which couldn't be blamed on the turf, allowed Ederson to block with his legs. — AFP

Martial has world at his feet, says teammate Matic

LONDON: Anthony Martial can become one of the Premier League's top players if he believes in himself, according to Manchester United teammate Nemanja Matic. Jose Mourinho's men received a much-needed shot in the arm on Sunday by over-coming Everton.

Martial's delightful curling effort proved the difference in a 2-1 victory at Old Trafford, where he was crowned man-of-the-match after also winning the penalty that eventually led to Paul Pogba opening the scoring. The 22-year-old appears to have turned a corner at United, having struggled to earn the trust of Jose Mourinho and at times endured a testy relationship with the manager. Martial's run of four successive starts has brought four goals and teammate Matic believes the forward has the world at his feet.

"Anthony is a great player and he needs to understand that," the United defensive midfielder said. "He needs more confidence. He is still young and I think if he continues to score in the next game he will get that. If he reaches his top level, he can be one of the best players in the league for sure."

"Sometimes I don't think he understands how good he is. He is quick, he is good with the ball, he can run." Asked if senior players like himself have told Martial just how good he can be, Matic said: "The manager speaks with him about it. I have told him once. "But he is a great person and a great guy, and I am happy for him that he is scoring. It is great. "The quality is there, confidence is there now and he just needs to be more consistent. I am glad we have him in the team."

Matic is also certain that out-of-sorts striker Romelu Lukaku will get back on track. After eight scoreless appearances for the United, the Belgium international was dropped to the bench as his former club Everton visited Old Trafford. — AFP

Icardi double lifts Inter Milan second place in Serie A

MILAN: Mauro Icardi scored in either half as Inter Milan beat Lazio 3-0 under the rain in Rome on Monday to move ahead of Napoli and into second place behind Juventus in Serie A.

Inter skipper Icardi tapped in the opener after 28 minutes with Marcelo Brozovic adding a second before the break. The Argentine snatched the third after 70 minutes in the Stadio Olimpico, as Inter with 22 points from 10 games overtook Napoli on goal difference.

Carlo Ancelotti's Napoli were held 1-1 by Roma on Sunday. Inter and Napoli are both six points behind Juventus who beat Empoli 2-1 on Saturday thanks to a Cristiano Ronaldo double.

"We're on the right track," said Icardi after his side's sixth straight league win. It was also his sixth league goal this season. "I'm going through a good period of form along with Inter. We're playing well, apart from the game with Barcelona (2-0 Champions League defeat), and want to do even better."

"We're not the anti-Juventus, as we're a few steps away to reach what they've done in recent years, but we are happy with what we are doing." Luciano Spalletti's side controlled the game which had been in doubt all afternoon because of strong winds and rain in Rome.

With just one point separating the two sides the match was also an important step in the race for Champions League places next season. Inter had snatched the final Champions League spot from Lazio on the last day of last season, condemning Simone Inzaghi's side to the Europa League.

Under sudden bursts of torrential rain, the game sprung to life with Icardi's opener after 28 minutes. Perisic crossed for Matias Vecino, who flicked on to



MILAN: Inter Milan's Italian midfielder Matteo Politano (2ndR) vies for the ball during Italian Serie A football match Lazio between Inter Milan at the Olympic stadium in Roma, on Monday. — AFP

Icardi to finish off.

Shortly afterwards the rain began to bucket down with Lazio's Croatian midfielder Milan Badelj going off injured to be replaced by Danilo Cataldi.

But Inter continued their charge with Brozovic getting the second after 41 minutes, firing into the bottom left corner. The visitors seemed more at ease on the water logged pitch continuing to dictate play.

Lazio did not give up with Samir Handanovic pushing an Adam Marusic effort over the bar. But they were only sporadic signs of a fightback with Icardi drilling in the third with ease from a distance.

Lazio remain fourth but have not lost to all their leading rivals—Juventus, Napoli, Roma and now Inter. "I admit we deserved to lose this evening," said coach Inzaghi.

"Against the big teams Lazio lack the conviction we have in other matches. These teams are built to win titles. "Now we want to get back on track against SPAL." — AFP

Live Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE

AC Milan v Genoa CFC	22:30
beIN SPORTS HD 4	

Biles leads US to women's team gold at world gymnastics

DOHA: Simone Biles led the US to the women's team gold at the world gymnastics in Doha yesterday, as the Americans dominated the event to clinch victory for the fourth successive championships. They led the competition throughout and ended up winning by a comprehensive margin of almost 10 points, finishing on 171.629.

In contrast to the night before in the men's event which went down to the very final gymnast, this felt like a victory parade from start to finish by the peerless American team. "I'm really proud, it's been a long year," Biles said afterwards.

"I think it shows how strong we are but we still have little things to work on." She added: "We are going to keep trying to push ourselves harder but hopefully we get to celebrate a little bit and then get back to work." Russia took silver, amassing a score of 162.863, edging out China who took bronze on 162.396.

This triumph means that the last time the Americans failed to take gold in a world team event was back in 2010 in Rotterdam, when they finished in the silver medal position. The margin of victory in Doha was the largest of their six world championship team golds. As well as a team triumph it was yet another notable night for superstar Biles. This latest gold was her 15th medal at a world championships drawing her level with Romania's Gina Gogean, to make her the joint second highest female medal winner in championship history. — AFP

25 Tom Brady extends run as Patriots down Bills 25-6



26 Luminaries call for Cricket Australia chairman to resign



27 Lopetegui sacked as Real coach, Solari takes charge



CHICAGO: Zach LaVine #8 of the Chicago Bulls drives to the basket against Jordan Bell #2 of the Golden State Warriors on Monday at United Center in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP

Thompson breaks three-point record

DeRozan, Spurs down Mavericks in OT

CHICAGO: Klay Thompson set an NBA record with 14 3-pointers as part of an NBA-season-high 52-point performance, and the visiting Golden State Warriors stormed to a 149-124 win over the Chicago Bulls on Monday night. The Warriors scored 92 points in the first half—the most ever by a road team and the second most of all time behind the Phoenix Suns, who had 107 in the first half against the Denver Nuggets on Nov. 19, 1990. Golden State led 92-50 at the break. The 42-point margin was the fourth-largest halftime lead in history and the largest lead by a road team. Thompson finished 14 of 24 from beyond the arc. He exulted and held up three fingers with each hand after his record-breaking 3-ball dropped through the net with 4:53 remaining in the third quarter. The shot moved Thompson past teammate Steph Curry, who sank 13 3-pointers against the New Orleans Pelicans on Nov. 8, 2016. In 26 minutes of action, Thompson made 18 of 29 field-goal attempts and grabbed five rebounds.

BUCKS 124, RAPTORS 109

Host Milwaukee held Toronto without a field goal for the first 4:11 of the second quarter, establishing an early lead before pulling away in a battle of unbeaten teams missing their leading scorers. The Bucks improved to 7-0 despite the absence of Giannis Antetokounmpo, who was recovering from a concussion, and took advantage of the Raptors' decision to rest their star, Kawhi

Leonard. Milwaukee filled Antetokounmpo's void with balanced scoring, placing seven players in double figures, led by Ersan Ilyasova's 19 points. Serge Ibaka had a season-high 30 for the Raptors, who fell to 6-1.

TIMBERWOLVES 124, LAKERS 120

Jimmy Butler made five 3-pointers in the fourth quarter and scored 32 points to lead host Minnesota over Los Angeles in Minneapolis. Karl-Anthony Towns added 25 points, 16 rebounds and four blocks for the Timberwolves, and rookie guard Josh Okogie scored a season-high 17 points. LeBron James had 29 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists for the Lakers after being held scoreless in the first quarter. Brandon Ingram returned from a four-game suspension and scored 17 of his 24 points in the first half for Los Angeles, and Kyle Kuzma scored 16 of his 19 in the first half.

NUGGETS 116, PELICANS 111

Nikola Jokic finished one rebound shy of a triple-double, Gary Harris and Jamal Murray scored 23 points apiece, and host Denver beat New Orleans. Jokic finished with 12 points, 10 assists and nine rebounds. His effort helped Denver remain unbeaten in four home games this season. Paul Millsap also scored 18 points for the Nuggets. Julius Randle had 24 points and eight rebounds and Nikola Mirotic had a double-double with 17 points and 10 rebounds for New Orleans, which hung

tough despite not having Anthony Davis (elbow).

76ERS 113, HAWKS 92

Ben Simmons scored 21 points to lead seven Philadelphia players in double figures in a rout of visiting Atlanta. Simmons, who registered his first 20-plus point effort of the season, also had 12 rebounds and nine assists. It was the 21st time in Simmons' young career that he has scored at least 20 points. Markelle Fultz scored a career-high 16 points while Mike Muscala and JJ Redick added 14 apiece for the Sixers, who won their second straight. Joel Embiid had a relatively quiet game with 10 points, six rebounds and six assists. Kent Bazemore led the Hawks with 18 points while Trae Young, Omari Spellman and Dewayne Dedmon added 11 each.

SPURS 113, MAVERICKS 108 (OT)

DeMar DeRozan, who led all players with 34 points, scored six points in the final 1:43 of overtime as host San Antonio held off Dallas, which is still winless on the road. DeRozan outdueled Mavericks rookie Luka Doncic, who scored a career-high 31 points. Doncic scored eight consecutive points during a late fourth-quarter run that helped Dallas force overtime. LaMarcus Aldridge contributed 20 points for San Antonio, which received 15 points, 11 rebounds, four assists and six steals from Rudy Gay. DeRozan led the Spurs with nine assists. Dallas got 22 points from Dennis Smith Jr.

Harrison Barnes added 18 points, and DeAndre Jordan had eight points and 18 rebounds.

TRAIL BLAZERS 103, PACERS 93

CJ McCollum and Zach Collins each had 17 points to lead seven Portland double-figure scorers as the visitors dropped Indiana in Indianapolis. Collins matched his career high and led a crew of Trail Blazers reserves who outscored their Pacers counterparts 54-15. Victor Oladipo scored 21 points and Darren Collison added 17 for the Pacers. The Blazers shot 48.7 percent from the field and 94.4 percent from the free-throw line and won the rebounding battle 50-35.

KNICKS 115, NETS 96

Tim Hardaway Jr. scored the first eight points of a decisive run spanning the second and third quarters as host New York snapped a five-game losing streak by beating Brooklyn. The Knicks' losing streak included close losses to a pair of Eastern Conference contenders, the Boston Celtics and Milwaukee Bucks, as well as a 28-point loss to the defending NBA champion Golden State Warriors in which New York led in the fourth quarter. Hardaway led all scorers with 25 points while Enes Kanter recorded a double-double with 15 points and 15 rebounds. Spencer Dinwiddie led the Nets with 17 points while Rondae Hollis-Jefferson finished with 16 points. — Reuters

Kasatkina hangs on in Zhuhai despite Wang fightback

ZHUHAI: Top seed Daria Kasatkina survived a scare yesterday to claim victory over crowd favourite Wang Qiang in a thrilling contest at the WTA Elite Trophy in China, taking the match 6-1, 2-6, 7-5.

The 21-year-old Russian looked totally dominant in the early stages in Zhuhai, wrapping up the first set against the Chinese eleventh seed in just 26 minutes. But the vocal supporters at the Hengqin International Tennis Center were given something to cheer about when Wang, 26, broke all four of Kasatkina's service games

to claim the second set.

The deciding set saw some breathtaking points and rallies as each player tried to break the deadlock, but nerves appeared to take hold as both failed to win almost any of their service games. Finally, after almost two hours on court, it was Kasatkina who held on to her serve at the crucial time to take the third and final set 7-5.

Asked what was going through her mind towards the end of the tie, Kasatkina told reporters: "The main goal was not to cramp at all. 'I was fighting against myself, against my body. And in the end I'm happy I was able to do this and went through.'"

Wang praised her opponent, singling out her defensive tactics and telling journalists: "Definitely she is a very strong competitor." Last night's clash was their first round robin match, with both yet to play American Madison Keys, ranked 16th in the world.

Kasatkina, who plays Keys today afternoon, criticised the timetable. "Of course I'm not happy with the schedule—it sucks completely!" she said. "For example, some play-

ers are starting to play on Thursday, and I play two matches in a row after finishing my first match at 10 pm, and I play the next day. This is tough.

"I don't think it was right to make the schedule like this," Wang, however, said that she felt "great" despite her loss to Kasatkina and felt she still had a chance to progress in the tournament. "Whatever the result will turn out to be, I still can feel that I learned a lot and can also keep practising," she said.

Earlier, big-hitting Aryna Sabalenka, 20, was too strong for Australia's Ashleigh Barty, 22, in the opening singles clash, taking the match 6-4, 6-4. The pair produced some spectacular base-line battles, but Sabalenka, from Belarus, turned the screw to see out the match in one hour, 26 minutes.

They are both yet to play eighth seed and world number 18 Caroline Garcia from France in their round robin group. "I think I played well in the first set, and in the second set I probably started to rush a little bit and make a lot of mistakes, and kind of stupid mistakes," Sabalenka said after the match. — AFP



ZHUHAI: Daria Kasatkina of Russia hits a return against Wang Qiang of China in their women's singles first round match of the Zhuhai Elite Trophy tennis tournament in Zhuhai, in south China's Guangdong province yesterday. — AFP