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Amir urges unity and concerted response amid regional unrest

Arab leaders condemn US decision on Golan • Qatari Amir leaves summit early



TUNIS: (From left) Djibouti's President Ismail Omar Guelleh, Qatar's Amir Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, Mauritania's President Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz, HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz, Tunisia's President Beji Caïd Essebsi, Jordan's King Abdullah II, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, Iraq's President Barham Saleh, Egypt's President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi, Yemen's President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi and Lebanese President Michel Aoun pose for a group photograph with other Arab leaders during the 30th Arab League summit in the Tunisian capital yesterday. — Amiri Dhwani

TUNIS: The Arab world remains determined to overcome all challenges thrust upon the region, HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah said yesterday, calling for unity and a concerted response across the board in the face of such adversity. Allaying concerns over lagging growth across the region, he told a summit of Arab leaders and senior officials in the Tunisian capital that maintaining the status quo is no longer an option. He

highlighted a decade-long plan to fulfill the ambitions of the Arab people, pinpointing initiatives Kuwait has made in recent years to push this plan closer to fruition.

On the scourge of terrorism, HH the Amir said it remains a lingering threat, citing "horrific" attacks on a pair of mosques in New Zealand recently as affirmation. In this context, the Amir reiterated sharp condemnation of the attacks as a criminal act, while supporting all inter-

national efforts to eliminate terrorism. On the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the Amir said it continues to be the Arab world's "chief concern", while the matter has been largely overlooked by the international community. Addressing the "bloody conflicts" in Syria and Yemen, he said a political solution in both countries is the only way forward, which is crucial to ultimately restore peace and stability to the war-torn nations.

Meanwhile, he pointed out that it was necessary to maintain amicable relations with Iran that fully abide by the principles of international law, including non-interference in the internal affairs of other states. As a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, Kuwait will continue to have the Arab region's best interests at heart, HH the Amir promised.

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News in brief

Uncle abducts, tortures nephew

KUWAIT: The interior ministry yesterday arrested a Kuwaiti for kidnapping, torturing and burning his nephew. The suspect admitted to abducting his nephew and taking him to his chalet in Khairan, where he tortured him with a knife. The victim also suffered first-degree burns from head to toe after being burned by his uncle. — Hanan Al-Saadoun

Man stabbed to death in fight

KUWAIT: A man was stabbed to death by a friend, who also sustained various injuries, while a third escaped unharmed. The three - all Indians - were involved in a fight in their sponsor's home in Ishbiliya. Police are investigating to take the necessary legal action. A police source said the three had an argument that led to a fight, with two of them using sharp objects. The owner of the house called police, who arrived along with paramedics. The deceased was stabbed in the heart. — Al-Rai

Visitors should buy health insurance

KUWAIT: A law was issued amending law number 1/1999 pertaining collecting health insurance from non-Kuwaitis and fees for the health services they receive. Informed sources said the new amendment will mandate expats visiting Kuwait to purchase health insurance either through specialized companies or by purchasing revenue stamps to be affixed on the visa from Kuwaiti embassies abroad or border exits. The amendment, which has not set a specific fee so far, exempts some visitors like those arriving for a day or two on official visits, official delegations and diplomats. — A Saleh

Work permit transfers eased

KUWAIT: Informed sources at the manpower authority said expats recruited in Kuwait in agricultural, industrial, shepherding and fishing activities or to work in co-ops will be allowed to transfer their work permits after one year instead of three years, provided the original sponsor approves the transfer. The transfer should also be made to another sponsor engaged in the same activity. — A Saleh

Roads to partially close for repairs



By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The interior ministry's PR and security media department announced that in collaboration with the ministry of public works to maintain various roads, partial road closures (one lane at a time) will begin in two phases from tomorrow (April 2, 2019). The department explained that the partial closures will be

from 6 pm till 6 am on weekdays and from midnight till noon on weekends. The department explained that the roads involved in the maintenance plan include King Fahd Expressway (from the First Ring Road till Bayan Palace), First Ring Road, Fourth Ring Road, Sixth Ring Road and Doha Spur Motorway. The department urged all motorists to cooperate and respect traffic regulations during the closure.

'Edtech' boom transforms how Indian kids learn

MUMBAI: From a multibillion-dollar education startup to wired-up mannequins, technology is helping to revolutionize the way Indian schoolchildren are learning - provided their parents can afford it. A host of online platforms are taking advantage of a surge in smartphone ownership to engage millions of youngsters with interactive games and animated video lessons. India's education system suffers from a lack of investment, and the apps aid students who want extra tuition away from overcrowd-

ed classrooms and crumbling schools. Major foreign investors are ploughing funds into India's growing "edtech" industry as they seek to capitalize on the world's largest school-age population who face fierce competition for university places. "I have been using Byju's since last year and my performance has really improved. I understand mathematical concepts much better now," says 16-year-old Akshat Mugad referring to a Facebook-backed, Indian education app. Byju's has become one of the world's largest online learning sites since it was founded in Bangalore in 2011 and is currently embarking on an ambitious overseas expansion. It is just one of dozens of startups betting that kids are eager to learn differently from rote memorization techniques that are used across much of Asia.

Continued on Page 24

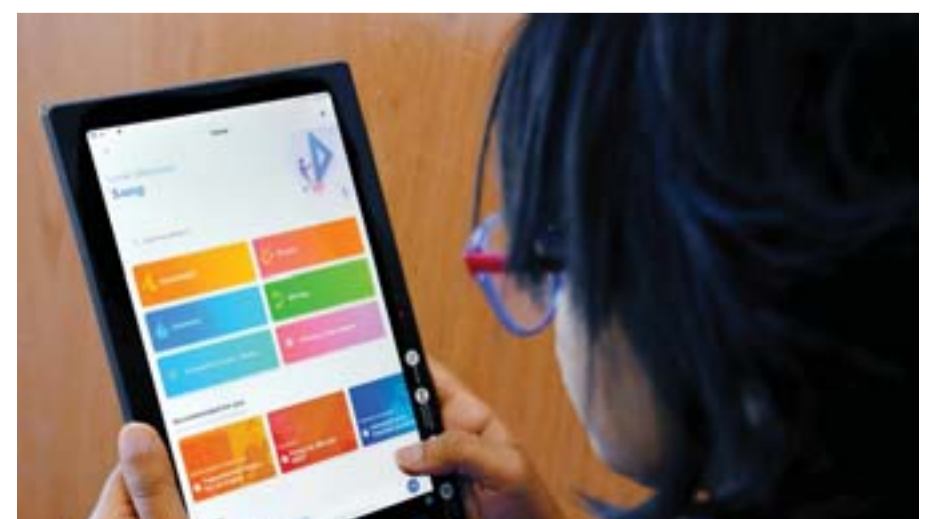
7.3% of Kuwait's workforce illiterate

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Recent statistics by the GCC statistical center (GCC Stat) showed 7.3 percent of the workforce in Kuwait is illiterate, which is the highest amongst GCC states, followed by Bahrain with 4.1 percent. Kuwait also has 23.3 percent of the workforce with only primary school education, which is the highest in the GCC, 12.7 percent with secondary school certificates and 4.7 percent with two-year post-secondary education.

In addition, 31.4 percent of the total manpower working in Kuwait, including citizens and expats, hold no higher than middle school certificates, which makes Kuwait second among GCC states after Oman in the number of middle school certificate holders and second after Saudi Arabia in terms of the percentage of holders of bachelor's degrees (15.9 percent of the total manpower).

The stats also showed 41.2 percent of unemployed Kuwaitis hold university degrees, while the majority (75 percent) of the workforce, namely expats, hold lower degrees. Furthermore, statistics showed that 2.7 percent of Kuwaitis hold PhD or master's degrees, 40.8 percent hold university degrees, 20.9 percent hold two-year post-secondary education certificates, 20 percent hold secondary school certificates and 13.4 percent hold middle school certificates.



BANGALORE: In this photo taken on Jan 10, 2019, an Indian student looks at the education technology startup Byju's app at the company's office. — AFP

Cementing regional stability: A history of the Arab summits



DHAHRAN: The Arab Leaders on the sidelines of Dhahran summit, April 2018, which was named "Jerusalem summit". — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: The Arab world looks forward to the outcomes of the 30th ordinary Arab summit due in Tunis, hoping that it would lead to cementing Arab security, stability and development. A total of 42 Arab summits, including 29 ordinary and 13 extraordinary ones have been held since a maiden gathering was convened in March 1945. This is a chronology of all Arab summits involving the first emergency Inshas conference in 1946 and the last Zahran meeting in April 2018:

- The extraordinary Inshas summit was held in May 1946 upon request from King Farouk of Egypt, with the attendance of the seven co-founders of the Arab League: Egypt, East Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Iraq, Lebanon and Syria. They called for halting the emigration of Jews to Palestine.
- The emergency Beirut Summit was convened by Lebanese President Camille Chamoun in November 1956 following a tripartite aggression on Egypt and Gaza Strip, in the presence of nine Arab leaders.
- Cairo Summit took place in January 1964 as requested by Egyptian President Gamal Abdelnaser, with all the 13 Arab League members attending.
- Alexandria Summit took place in September 1964 and was attended by 14 Arab leaders, mainly calling to support Arab solidarity.
- Casablanca Summit was convened in September 1965, with the attendance of 12 Arab countries and Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The participants stressed regional and international backing to the Palestinian cause.



Late Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah and Late Egyptian president Jamal Abdunaser during the Arab summit 1970.

- Khartoum Summit took place in August 1967 following Arab defeat in the 1967 war with Israel. All Arab countries, excluding Syria, were represented.
- Rabat Summit was held in December 1969, in the presence of 14 Arab countries,



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah during the 21st Arab Summit.

which called for a cessation of hostilities between Palestinians and Jordanian forces in Jordan.

- The extraordinary Cairo Summit was convened in September 1970 following armed clashes between Palestinian organizations and Jordanian forces in Jordan. It was boycotted by Syria, Iraq, Algeria and Morocco.
- Algiers Summit took place in November 1973 following October 1973 War. It was attended by 16 Arab countries, but boycotted by Libya and Iraq. Mauritania joined the Arab League during this gathering.
- Rabat Summit was held in October 1974, with all Arab countries.
- Riyadh Summit was convened by Saudi Arabia and Kuwait in October 1974 to look into the conflict in Lebanon.
- The extraordinary Cairo Summit was

resolution relocating the Arab League headquarters and suspending Egypt's membership.

- Tunis Summit came in November 1979 upon request from Tunisian President Habib Ben Ali Bourguiba. The conferees echoed condemnation of the Camp David accord.
- Amman Summit came in November 1980 and was participated in by 15 countries, but boycotted by Syria, Algeria, Lebanon and PLO.
- Fez Summit was held in November 1981, with all Arab countries, excluding Egypt, participating.
- Fez emergency summit, held in September 1982, grouped leaders of 18 Arab states, except for Libya and Egypt. Summiteers discussed the "Arab peace plan."
- Casablanca extraordinary summit was held on August 1, 1985, in response to a request by (late) Moroccan King Hassan II. It addressed the Palestinian cause, deteriorating conditions in Lebanon and international terrorism.
- Amman emergency summit was convened in November 1987 with participation of 20 Arab states and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). The summit declared solidarity with Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and Iraq in the face of Iranian threats and provocations.
- Algeria extraordinary summit, June 1988, held in response to a request by Algerian President Chadli Benjedid to support a Palestinian uprising.
- Casablanca emergency summit, May 1989, during which Egypt's membership in the Arab League was reinstated. Lebanon that was witnessing a power struggle between two governments did not take part in the summit.
- Baghdad emergency summit, May 1990, which was held with absence of Lebanon and Syria addressed threats against Arab national security and condemned intensification of Jews' immigration to Israel.
- Cairo emergency summit, August 1990, was held in aftermath of the Iraqi aggression on the State of Kuwait. Tunisia was absent. Kuwait was represented by the

hosted by the Egyptian capital in October 1976, with 14 countries participating.

• Baghdad Summit was hosted by the Iraqi capital in November 1978 following the signing of a peace accord between Egypt and Israel. The conferees adopted a



The Late Amir Sheikh Abdullah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah during the 2nd Arab Summit in 1964.

Crown Prince (the late Father Amir) Sheikh Saad Al-Abdullah Al-Saleem Al-Sabah.

- Cairo emergency summit, October 2000, was held upon a request by Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak. Iraq did not partake in the top-level meeting that coincided with the Israeli right-wing movement rise to power.
- Cairo extraordinary summit, October 2000, was held in aftermath of violence in the occupied territories after Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon entered compound of shrines in Jerusalem.
- Amman summit, March 2001, adopted an initiative by the Saudi Crown Prince Abdullah bin Abdulaziz with respect of normalizing Arab-Israeli relations on condition that Israel would withdraw to the June 4, 1967, line.
- Sharm El-Sheikha summit, March 2003, was chaired by Bahraini King Hamad bin Issa Al-Khalifa. Summiteers jointly rejected US offensive on Baghdad.
- Tunis summit was held in May 2004. Summiteers agreed on amending the Arab League charter for the first time since 1945.
- Algeria summit, held in March 2005, kicked off by observing a minute of silence and Koranic reading in homage to souls of the deceased: UAE President Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al-Nahyan, Palestinian President Yasser Arafat and Lebanese Prime Minister Rafic Al-Hariri.
- Khartoum summit, March 2006, approved establishment of the Arab Peace and Security Council.
- Riyadh summit, March 2007, was attended by 17 Arab leaders.
- Damascus summit, March 2008, called for tackling inter-Arab rifts.
- Kuwait economic, development and social Summit, January 2009. It was the first Arab summit to be held with attendance of 22 Arab states. Conferees agreed on doubling efforts to attain inter-Arab social and economic integration and adopting policies to cope with the various fallout of the global financial crisis.
- Doha summit, March 2009, rejected a ruling by the International Criminal Court issuing an arrest warrant against Sudanese

President Omar Al-Bashir.

- Sirte summit, October 2010, called for an Arab plan to salvage Jerusalem and Al-Aqsa Mosque.
- Sharm El-Sheikh economic and development summit, January 2011, condemned terrorism and called for promoting religious tolerance and dialogue.
- Baghdad summit, March 2012, adopted a full-scale vision for reforms in the Arab world.
- Riyadh economic and development summit, January 2013, welcomed an initiative by Saudi King Abdullah bin Abdulaziz to increase capitals of Arab financial organizations by no less than 50 percent.
- Doha summit, March 2013, approved establishment of the Arab Court for Human Rights and the Fund for Supporting Jerusalem.
- Kuwait summit, March 2014. It was the first Arab summit to be hosted by Kuwait since officially joining the Arab League on July 20, 1961.
- Sharm El-Sheikh Summit, March 2015, approved forming a joint Arab military force.
- Nouakchott summit, June 2016, approved merging the Arab economic, social summit with the regular summit.
- Amman summit, March 2017, called on states of the globe to abstain from moving their embassies to Jerusalem or recognizing the holy city as capital of Israel.
- Dhahran summit, April 2018, it was named "Jerusalem summit." Summiteers declared Washington's decision to recognizing Jerusalem as Israel's capital as illegitimate.
- Beirut economic and development summit, January 2019, affirmed the Arabs and Muslims' responsibility toward Jerusalem and called for greater efforts to ensure return of refugees to their homelands.
- Sharm El-Sheikh summit, February 2019, it was the first summit that included leaders of the European Union. Summiteers affirmed the necessity of regional cooperation to face common challenges, boosting Arab-European partnership, tackling irregular immigration and protecting refugees. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem yesterday at Sief Palace Parliament. His Highness also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. HH then received Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. — KUNA photos

Local

UN Secretary General hails Amir as 'bridge builder, peacemaker'

'We are very proud to have Kuwait as a partner'



TUNIS: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres. — KUNA photos

TUNIS: UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres yesterday expressed enormous appreciation for the role of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as a "bridge builder and peacemaker". This came in a press statement following his meeting with His Highness the Amir on the sidelines of the 30th Arab summit held in Tunis.

"Kuwait has been in the front line of all efforts to bring harmony and peace to the region and all efforts to bring humanitarian aid to those who need," he said.

"We are very proud to have Kuwait as a partner, and we are very proud of the friendship that His Highness grants to us," he added. Guterres also voiced deep admiration to His Highness the Amir, Kuwaiti government and people.

HH the Amir met UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres at the Conference Palace in Tunis yesterday. During the meeting, they reviewed distinguished relations between Kuwait and the UN and ways of developing them as well as existing cooperation. The UN



HH the Amir receives King Abdullah II of Jordan.

chief appreciated HH the Amir's role and Kuwait's positions and distinguished efforts towards all regional and international humanitarian issues, including the hosting of international humanitarian conferences.

HH the Amir received King Abdullah II of Jordan at the Conference Palace yesterday. During the meeting, they discussed good brotherly relations between both countries and their brotherly people, ways of promoting and developing them on all levels, issues of

mutual interest and the latest regional and international developments. HH the Amir had also met Omani Deputy Prime Minister for Relations and International Cooperation and Omani Sultan Qaboos bin Said's Special Representative Sayyid Asaad bin Tariq Al Said at the Conference Palace. HH the Amir's accompanying delegation was present at the meetings. Later HH the Amir attended a luncheon banquet held by Tunisian President in honor of Arab leaders participating in the Arab Summit in Tunis. — KUNA

Kuwait marks Earth Hour



KUWAIT: The globe marks the "Earth Hour" on the last Saturday of March when government departments, civil society groups and private companies turn off lights for an hour, 20:30-21:30. Kuwait

Environment Public Authority, Kuwait Society for Environment Protection and other institutions marked the Earth Hour and documented the event in the official website of the Earth Hour. These events are

a reminder of the need to preserve natural resources, refraining from excessive electricity consumption and reducing gas emissions that would aggravate climate change and global warming. — KUNA

Inaugurating consulate in New York crowns US-Kuwaiti ties

NEW YORK: Opening Kuwait Consulate General in New York crowns the relations with the United States and reflects Kuwait's interest in meeting needs of its citizens abroad, said Consul General Hamad Al-Hazeem. Al-Hazeem made the statement to KUNA on Friday on the sidelines of the opening ceremony of the consulate in New York. The ceremony was attended by some consuls from brotherly and friendly countries as well as some US officials and Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. Al-Hazeem noted that there are some 3700 Kuwaiti students in the northern coast of the US as well as some people receiving medical treatment, businessmen and tourists.

He stressed that the Consulate General is ready for answering questions of citizens, facilitating their tasks and guiding them how to deal with the American institutions. The consulate's emergency no is 917-242-6688, he said, adding that it is located in Lotte New York Palace Hotel in Madison Avenue. The Consulate General will focus on economic, commercial and investment fields, he said.

Its role will aim to find jobs and investment



NEW YORK: Consul General Hamad Al-Hazeem during the opening ceremony of the consulate. — KUNA

that contribute to strengthening economic and commercial relations between Kuwait and the United States, he pointed out. Establishing the consulate in New York will contribute also to achieving the common vision of Kuwait and the US that aim to protect citizens in their countries and across the globe, he explained.

The consul also welcomed the resumption of direct flights of Kuwait Airways to New York after coordination between the two countries' governments. This move will have a

positive effect on all fields as the two states seek to promote cooperation in transportation security, civil aviation and others, he stated. Al-Hazeem said that promoting trade and investment between the two sides has contributed to their prosperity and growth. Trade volume between the two countries rose to more than USD 8 billion in 2017, he affirmed. The Kuwaiti-US Strategic Dialogue led to the signing of 23 agreements and memorandums in several fields, including consular, economic and commercial cooperation as well as others.

Arab journalists upbeat about Tunis summit

TUNIS: Cheerful about an Arab gathering in Tunis, Arab media representatives said essential issues are to be atop the agenda of the summit. Speaking to KUNA separately yesterday, they opined that the significance of issues and topics were very apparent during preparatory ministerial meetings held on Thursday and Friday.

They listed such major subjects as Syria's Golan Heights, Jerusalem, Yemen, Libya, Syria, development and human rights in the Arab world. Kamal bin Yunis, a Tunisian journalist, said the Arab foreign ministerial meeting held yesterday focused on the dossiers of Yemen, Libya and Syria. He voiced confidence that the leaders would attach much attention to such subjects in order to ensure security and stability in these war-torn Arab countries.

He considered security in all Arab nations a core public demand, stressing that stability is the key to development and advancement in various domains. Hanan Al-Qasemi, a Tunisian TV presenter, hoped that the Arab leaders would adopt a resolution pertinent to human rights in Arab countries in order to fend off looming interference in this regard.

She argued that a nation could not



Palestinian Journalist Mohammad Shawlaq

develop unless human rights are protected, and human freedoms and dignity are safeguarded, voicing confidence that the gathering would come up with relevant positive outcomes. Mohammad Shawlaq, a Palestinian journalist, hoped that the Arab leaders would show consensus over main issues that matter so much to all Arab people. Economic and development issues, chiefly cutting joblessness and raising incomes, are deemed major subjects on the agenda of Tunis Summit, Shawlaq pointed out. — KUNA

Chinese officials laud Kuwait's strategic development vision

BEIJING: China is seeking to promote "effective" cooperation with Kuwait in various economic and development fields, a Chinese official said yesterday. This came in a statement by Deputy Director General of the Department of West Asian and North African Affairs Wang Di in interviews given by a number of Chinese officials with an Arab media delegation visiting China. He praised Kuwait's strategic development vision, adding that this vision aims at boosting Kuwait's role in financial and commercial fields in the region. He added that China is eager to establish comprehensive relations with Arab countries to achieve mutual benefit in various economic, political and cultural fields.

He pointed out that China has projects in various Arab countries, mainly infrastructure, stressing its keenness in the next phase to cooperate in the fields of smart cities, vital medicines and digital technology. The Chinese official said that the second session of the China-Arab States Forum on Reform and Development, to be held in Shanghai in mid-June, will be a major step towards joint cooperation, as well as the second session of the 'Belt and Road Forum for International Cooperation', to be held at the end of April.

For his part, Ambassador for China-Arab States Cooperation Forum (CASCF) Affairs of the Foreign Ministry Li Chengwen said outcomes of CASCF

in 2004 reflected the volume of trade exchange, which reached USD 244 billion. Moreover, he underlined the growing relationship in the sphere of education, pointing out that there are 20,000 Arab students enrolled in various scientific disciplines in China, which would contribute to even deeper political and economic links in the future.

He added that about 15 cooperation mechanisms have been instituted within the framework of the Forum with the aim of strengthening bilateral relations and enhancing cooperation and coordination in various fields. He praised deep-rooted Kuwaiti-Chinese relations and effective partnership between the two countries, noting that Kuwait is one of the first Arab countries to have signed a cooperation agreement with China under the Belt and Road Initiative in 2014.

For his part, China's Special Envoy on the Middle East Issue Gong Xiaosheng said that the Belt and Road Initiative will not only affect the economic and commercial side, but will also enhance regional peace and stability. He stressed that China aspires to play a larger role in promoting peace and stability in the Arab region through dialogue and peaceful initiatives. The visit of the Arab media delegation, which includes a number of news agencies and press institutions, comes within the framework of a training program aimed at enhancing relations in various fields. — KUNA

Local

Photo of the Day



A man walks amidst the shadows of an old post office. — Photo by Ahmad Khamis /Kuna

Zain Kuwait organized its 17th annual employee Umrah trip

Company keen on enhancing bonding and closeness between employees

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, recently organized the 17th Umrah trip for employees and their families to visit the Sacred House in Mecca, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This annually held trip aims at enriching bonding and closeness between Zain employees out of the office atmosphere.

Zain organizes this spiritual trip on an annual basis to reflect its keenness in supporting and enhancing the spiritual aspects of its human resources. The trip saw a large number of Zain employees and their families visiting the Sacred House in Mecca, and it came in line with the company's continuous efforts to enrich communication with its own staff in one family atmosphere.

The travelers were accompanied by Sheikh Bader Al Hajraf, who was present throughout the whole trip to share his experiences through lectures and seminars about the rituals of Umrah, Islamic history, and more. Al Hajraf's participation added value to the trip, enriching the informative aspect of it



KUWAIT: Zain employees honor Sheikh Nezar Al Shaib as he welcomes them to his home.

within the traveling employees. Zain was keen to diversify the program of the trip, as it was not only restricted to the religious aspect. Many activities were organized that included a visit to the home of Sheikh Nezar Al Shaibi, senior bearer of the Kaaba Key, where the travelers had the privilege of looking at many historical artifacts up-close and ask about the annual process of cleaning the Kaaba and other related subjects.

Zain considers its employees the main pillar of its overall success, and thus caters to the many different aspects of their lives. This annual initiative comes as part of Zain's commitment towards its human resources, especially after the positive feedback it received previously from previous Umrah trips. Zain will always put the development of the cultural and spiritual aspects of its employees at the forefront of its priorities.



KFH opens its second digital self-banking station 'KFH-Go'

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) inaugurated in Al Jabriya Co-op its second digital self-banking station KFH-Go with an advanced and wide range of technical devices and self-service instruments. Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani said that the new 24/7 automated branch is an advanced step that represents clearly the achievements of KFH in diversifying retail banking services and is a new self-banking channel to deliver better and more effective customer experience via an innovative automated branch. Mandani's speech was made at the opening of the state-of-the-art e-branch, in the presence of the executive management and Al-Jabriya Cooperative Society.

"This reiterates KFH drive to lead the market in the field of FinTech and enhance its leadership in the Islamic financial services", he added, pointing out that the smart e-branch "KFH-Go" offers the customers round the clock services covering over 80% of the services and transactions provided by traditional branches, hence making it the preferred choice for many customer sections particularly the youth.

Mandani added that KFH-Go is not staffed and contains state-of-the-art XTMs and ATMs as well as cash deposit

machine (Bulk Deposit) capable of accepting 300 notes in a single transaction i.e. 6000 KD. It offers the capability of communicating directly with the telephone service personnel in audio and video calls via XTM machines.

Customers can access several services, including cash withdrawals without a card through the mobile phone using the "QR code", IDs or phone number, as well as conducting "Murabaha" financing transactions, requesting credit cards and prepaid cards, updating data and phone numbers, activating bank cards, opening deposits and accounts and a host of banking and financing services, therefore dispensing with the need to visit the branch or deal directly with the staff. This means more fluidity in accessing services quickly, safely and accurately.

He pointed out that the bank plans to expand similar e-branches to reach 10 KFH Go banking stations by 2019. Mandani said: "KFH has made great strides in its digital transformation strategy which affirmed its leadership in adopting digital services, pioneering the offering of a diverse package of innovative e-services in several sectors and in the Group, in addition to increasing its investment in technology."

He added that KFH succeeded in providing a plethora of high-tech banking services, most of which are unique in Kuwait. KFH launched the Queuing System: Skiplino service, the first of its kind in the Kuwaiti banking sector for online appointments booking in the branches via smart phones. KFH launched its Chatbot service in cooperation with Microsoft, to improve interaction with customers who can use this service through different KFH channels such as KFH.com and the mobile app KFHonline. KFH upgraded a centralized SWIFT network system for global payments



Waleed Mandani with Baitak and Jabriya Co-op officials.

at the group level. Along with developing the other ATMs, it also upgraded its XTMs adding seven new services, some of which are the first to be offered locally, including QR cardless withdrawals with the possibility of updating the information, activating the new and renewed debit cards and changing the PIN.

The Bank introduced a fast cross-border transfer serv-

ice (KFH Xpress) and operated an instant remittance service using RippleNet. KFH also launched the first banking robot in Kuwait. It launched KFH Pay service, where customers can receive money from any KFH account or local accounts with just a few taps on their mobile. With just their payer's email or mobile number, they can securely receive transfers 24/7.

Local

Colorectal cancer number one cause of death for middle-aged men, number two for women

'If you are 40 years old and above, please undergo screening of the colon'

By Ben Garcia

KUWAIT: Colorectal cancer is the number one cause of death for middle-aged men and number two for middle-aged women in Kuwait, according to Dr Abdullah Al-Haddad, consultant general laparoscopic surgeon at Dar Al-Shifa Hospital. The finding was based on ministry of health records released recently. He advised men and women in Kuwait to undergo colonoscopies or any examinations available for patients aged over 40. "If you are 40 years old and above, please undergo screening of the colon so as to help prevent the spread of colon cancer. Colon cancer is preventable, and in order to make this happen, we need to educate the public - early detection is the key," he said.

Colorectal cancer, also known as bowel cancer, colon cancer or rectal cancer, is any cancer that affects the colon and the rectum. In the US, it is estimated that about

1 in 21 men and 1 in 23 women will develop colorectal cancer during their lifetime. Most colorectal cancers begin as small, non-cancerous growths known as polyps, which are attached to the inner wall of the colon. Over time, these polyps can slowly develop into cancer over a period of 10-20 years.

Haddad explained that in order to prevent and treat colon cancer, one must know their colon condition, adding procedures being done at Dar Al-Shifa can help patients. He pointed out that colon cancer is more prevalent nowadays because of the lifestyle, poor eating habits of most people and the regular intake of processed, fatty and junk food.

'It's good to be checked'

The symptoms of colorectal cancer, according to Dr Haddad, include changes in bowel habits, diarrhea or constipation, a feeling that the bowel does not empty

properly after a bowel movement, stools that look black which is actually because of blood, bright red blood coming from the rectum, pain and bloating in the abdomen, a feeling of fullness in the abdomen even after not eating for a while, fatigue or tiredness, unexplained weight loss, a lump in the abdomen or the back passage felt by your doctor, and unexplained iron deficiency in men, or in women after menopause.

"It's good to be checked so that if it's not related to colon cancer, probably we can detect some other condition, which in a way is a blessing in disguise. We can manage any more medical conditions. So if you are 40 up, consult any laparoscopic doctor so as to help prevent the spread of colon cancer. It is very important to see a doctor if symptoms persist for four weeks or more. The age risk of being affected by color cancer has been lowered from 50 years to 40 now," Haddad added.

Dar Al-Shifa Hospital, together with the

support of public hospitals in Kuwait, marked a campaign called 'Beat Colorectal Cancer' during the entire month of March. "The campaign concluded yesterday and we were very successful on all fronts. But it doesn't mean it's the end of the campaign to educate people - as a matter of fact, we are just beginning," Haddad said.

Dr Haddad said early detection can eliminate cancer one hundred percent. "If it is already a stage one or two cancer, it can also be removed through modern technology now. If it's stage three or four, the patient has to undergo chemotherapy, with about a 60 percent rate of survival if detected. Don't wait for stage four as it will be very difficult for doctors to treat it. The main idea is to prevent any cancer from developing, and perhaps avoiding foods that can trigger colon cancer," he said. Treatment available includes surgery, chemotherapy, radiation therapy, targeted drug therapy and immunotherapy.



Dr Abdullah Al-Haddad



ADEN: Campaign in Aden, funded by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity Society, for treatment of thousands of displaced from Hodeida. — KUNA photos



ADEN: Waleed Al-Qudaimi, representing Hodeida governorate, inaugurated a campaign in Aden, funded by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity Society, for treatment of thousands of displaced from Hodeida.

Kuwait charity funds medical campaign for displaced in Aden

ADEN: Waleed Al-Qudaimi, representing Hodeida governorate, inaugurated a campaign in Aden, funded by Kuwait's Al-Najat Charity Society, for treatment of thousands of displaced from Hodeida on Saturday. Al-Qudaimi, in remarks following the inauguration, commended the "huge" humanitarian efforts made by the State of Kuwait and charitable NGOs to helping the displaced Yemeni people. "The State of Kuwait has a pioneering role in helping the Yemeni people," he said. Yanabee' Al-Khair institute, which executed the campaign, said in a statement around 5,000 people from camps in Aden, Abyan and Lahj would be treated.

Meanwhile Yemen's Saada Governor Hadi Al-Waily

said the "Operation Decisive Storm" had assisted the Yemeni people's efforts to regain their own country and liberate Houthi-controlled lands. "The Operation Decisive Storm has destroyed the Houthi project in Yemen," the governor said to KUNA, marking the fourth anniversary of the military operation launched by the Saudi-led coalition on March 26, 2015.

Backed by the coalition, the Yemeni national army has controlled 60 percent of Saada Governorate, which is a key stronghold of Houthi militias, he added. "The national army is now stationed in eight out of 15 districts in Saada, three of which have been completely liberated," he boasted. He noted that Yemeni troops are also making remarkable progress in other districts, adding that army and security forces are struggling to secure and demine frontier areas. Al-Waily went on to say that the people of Saada have borne the brunt of crimes committed by Houthi militias nationwide, since their houses and farms were totally destroyed. However, the Yemeni official appreciated humanitarian aid extended by the Saudi-led coalition's member states through relief organizations, chiefly King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Centre and Kuwait Red Crescent Society. — KUNA



ADEN: Yemen's Saada Governor Hadi Al-Waily inaugurates a housing project funded by Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society.

Speech from US Ambassador at the Amricani Cultural center

KUWAIT: The Public Affairs Section at the US Embassy in Kuwait held an outdoor performance featuring Kyle Dillingham and Horseshoe Road at the Amricani Cultural Center. The band is known for its eclectic style deeply rooted in Bluegrass and Western Swing. To date the band has represented America internationally across 37 countries, energizing audiences worldwide. Below is a transcript of the speech US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman gave to open proceedings.

"Good evening all, it's an honor to be here in this beautiful theater, which carries the name of the legendary actor and cultural pioneer Abdulhussein Abdulredha. Thank you to Mr Ali Al-Youha and the

National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, who have generously sponsored the visit of the musical group you are about to enjoy tonight.

We at the US Embassy appreciate your support and look forward to working with you to bring even more artists and cultural visitors to Kuwait. Such cooperation will be made easier by a new educational and cultural exchanges agreement that Mr Al-Youha and our officials signed during Secretary of State Pompeo's visit here one week ago.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are in for a treat this evening. The group you are about to see and hear, Kyle Dillingham and Horseshoe Road, is a country music ensemble that has performed around the world on tours, wowing audiences from Liberia to Thailand to Russia to South Korea. This is the group's first stop on a multi-nation tour and their first visit to Kuwait. They came all the way from the state of Oklahoma to perform for you. I'm not the only Ambassador here tonight; Kyle has been appointed as ambassador for the State of Oklahoma. American music is as diverse as our people. And while Horseshoe Road is described as country or bluegrass, you will hear many other American musical influences and styles here tonight. While they are in Kuwait, the group will give a workshop on American country music to middle and high school boys and to



students at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

Kyle is an incredibly gifted violinist and singer who was featured at the Grand Ole Opry theater in Nashville. He has performed with legends of country music such as Roy Clark and Hank Thompson. It is my honor to introduce our musicians: Kyle Dillingham on the violin, Peter Markes on the guitar, and Brent Saulsbury on the upright bass."

Communications regulator sees benefits in cloud computing

KUWAIT: The use of cloud computing technology will prove instrumental in boosting productivity among government bodies, while raising the level of economic competition, Kuwait's Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority said yesterday. The introduction of cloud computing to Kuwait is the by-product of a deal signed with Amazon Web Services, which is the American tech firm's cloud computing platform, the communications regulator said in a statement. Such initiatives fit into Kuwait's 2035 vision of sustained development, the statement highlighted, pointing out that employing such cutting-edge systems would prop up the local information technology sector. — KUNA

Do not hire residency visa violators in public schools: MoI

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Interior's residency affairs investigation department contacted Ministry of Education demanding it not hire any residency visa violators in public schools, said informed sources. The sources explained that MoI's letter explained that a number of expats had been arrested for working in public schools while holding visas sponsored by other companies or citizens, noting that most of them work in public schools as representatives or "office girls" without having any records at those schools. The sources explained the number of these office girls is growing in schools of various educational stages and that their salaries are paid by teachers themselves.

Visa trafficking

Manpower Authority Director Ahmed Al-Mousa said the authority will not allow utilizing small and medium projects as backdoors for visa trafficking, and stressed that the attempts by some owners to violate regulations and laws will not go unaccounted for or make the authority reduce such projects. "We will have closer inspections through specialized committees instead," he remarked. Mousa explained that scores of suspected files had been suspended and given legal warnings to undo violations and legalize their statuses. He also noted that the cases had been reported to interior ministry investigators to take legal actions against the violators.



KUWAIT: The Jahra municipality inspection teams recently removed illegal storage sites and warehouses in the Sulabiya agricultural area. The demolition teams were headed and supervised by Kuwait Municipality director, Ahmed Al-Manfouhi.



International

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'Conversion is not your mission', pontiff tells Catholics in Morocco

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A tale of two Delhis: Deadly air exposes rich-poor divide



NEW YORK: Democratic presidential candidate Kristen Gillibrand waits to address the rally for the official kick-off to her campaign for president in New York City. — AFP

2020 spouses eye new title: First Gentleman

US women senators vie to unseat Trump

WASHINGTON: From Martha Washington to Melania Trump, the role of US first lady is as old as the republic itself. But if one of half a dozen Democrat hopefuls get their way in 2020, the nation could soon have a first gentleman—potentially even the husband of America's first gay president—move into the White House.

The presidential spouse has always been a woman, and while her duties have never been officially codified, she is expected to function as the mansion's hostess, overseeing its social and ceremonial events. But the longstanding tradition and expectations of that ornamental and highly visible role, may soon be upended. Four years ago it was Bill Clinton who was widely expected to become first gentleman once Hillary Clinton did away with Republican Donald Trump, but history intervened.

Now, women senators Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren, Kirsten Gillibrand and Amy Klobuchar, along with congresswoman Tulsi Gabbard, are competing to unseat Trump and become the nation's first female commander-in-chief. Their husbands have largely shunned the spotlight, all too aware of the unwritten campaign rule: "Don't overshadow your spouse." Some have taken the stage with their candidate better halves more than others, and social media has been the venue for a few to shine.

One candidate spouse in particular, Chasten Buttigieg, has been gaining positive attention, and is

already leading the 2020 spouse primary. He is the 29-year-old husband of South Bend, Indiana's millennial Mayor Pete Buttigieg, and their same-sex marriage would make White House history. Buttigieg remains a long shot for the nomination, but Chasten's joyous and seemingly unscripted Twitter feed, which combines awe for his accomplished husband with well-placed humor, has a growing following.

Chasten, a middle school teacher who met Buttigieg through an online dating app, radiates charm as he uses self-deprecating humor and candor when ruminating on life as a candidate's spouse. His unapologetic affection for his husband shines through in his postings, as on the January day Buttigieg announced his presidential exploratory committee. "I am so proud of my husband... Let's go show the world why I fell in love with you." When Chasten tweeted "I'm being replaced" under a touching photograph of Buttigieg cuddling with their dog, another potential first gentleman waded in.

"Ok, I thought I had pretty good 2020 Spouse Twitter game. Good job @Chas10Buttigieg!" posted

Douglas Emhoff, an entertainment lawyer who married Harris in 2014. Emhoff, confident and comfortable in front of cameras, routinely appears at Harris's side at campaign events, but he is keeping his public profile in check. Klobuchar's husband, John Bessler is, too. Bessler, a law professor, placed his wife's binder on the lectern at her campaign kickoff, kissed her, then stepped aside.

first husband might shake up expectations.

"Particularly in the mass media age since the mid-20th century, we've expected our first ladies to be practically superwomen," she said. But "fewer expectations" would likely be placed on a man in the position. "A first gentleman might give Americans a chance to 'make-over' our unreasonable expectations for the spouse of a president and allow future first spouses, whatever their gender, to be more themselves, and not have to live up to the role of perfect spouse."

The behavior of some candidates as they seek to humanize themselves and their potential first gentlemen is already stirring discussion. Warren received mixed reactions when she live-streamed from her home and cracked open a beer on camera, then offered one to her husband of 35 years. Harvard law professor Bruce Mann. "I'll pass on a beer for now," Mann says. "This is my sweetie, he's the best and I'm crazy about him," Warren adds.

While the next first spouse could be male or female, Americans expect that there be someone to fill that role. The nation has not had a bachelor president in the last century, which may have led candidate Senator Cory Booker, who is single, to reveal he is dating actress Rosario Dawson. "I think she would make an incredible, incredible first lady," Booker said recently when asked if Dawson would move into the White House should he win.—AFP



Nation's first female commander in chief

champion a social cause. But first ladies expert Katherine Jellison, chair of the history department at Ohio University, said that while Americans for 200 years have expected the president's wife to dress, behave and speak a certain way, the prospect of a

NATO fetes 70 years; Trump not partying

WASHINGTON: Seventy years after it was formed to counter the Soviet Union, Russia has returned to the top of the agenda for NATO. But the alliance faces another, more unlikely problem - criticism from the US president. The 29-nation North Atlantic Treaty Organization is celebrating its 70th anniversary with talks among foreign ministers Wednesday and Thursday in Washington, where, in a Cold War redux, the resurgent power of Russia will be the chief item.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said the ministers will work "to make sure that NATO is around for the next 70 years" and take aim at Russia over its 2014 takeover of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine. Pompeo told a congressional hearing he was hopeful "we will be able to announce another series of actions that we will jointly take together to push back against what Russia is doing there in Crimea."

But if countering Russia is a familiar role for NATO, its new internal dynamics are not, with President Donald Trump repeatedly suggesting that the allies are freeloaders. The businessman-turned-president, who berated allies at a NATO summit last year at the group's Brussels headquarters, is pressing member states to meet the alliance's goal set in 2014 of spending

two percent of GDP on defense. Trump has even derisively asked whether it is worth defending small NATO states such as Montenegro. Pompeo said he will discuss spending and again pointed to Germany, which plans for defense spending well below two percent and declining by 2023. "When I talk to my counterparts, they will begin by saying, 'America needs to do X and Y because Russia poses a threat,'" Pompeo told a forum of the conservative National Review magazine. "Then you ask them 'Well, that's awesome. Tell me what you're prepared to do.' And they say, 'It's tough. Our voters just really don't like to spend money on defense,'" Pompeo said to laughter.

Lower-key anniversary

NATO leaders will hold an annual summit in December in London, but the 70th anniversary celebrations are notably low-key. It marks a stark contrast with the 50th anniversary in 1999, which rattled Russia and sealed off Washington streets in a way that locals still talk about. Heads of state visited Bill Clinton's White House, new members the Czech Republic, Hungary and Poland were inducted, and leaders plotted the next moves in NATO's bombing campaign in Serbia.

This year foreign ministers will be speaking at The Anthem, a hip new music venue booked for the occasion. NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg will meet Trump tomorrow and deliver an address to Congress the following day. Derek Chollet, who managed US defense policy on NATO under former president Barack Obama, said he expected NATO members to present a "good news story" on the value of the alliance without the drama of a high-stakes



WASHINGTON: Signs lie in the grass during a protest ahead of the 70th anniversary of the summit meeting of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) in Lafayette Square in Washington, DC. — AFP

summit. "But the concern is Trump. There is a sort of tangerine cloud hanging over all of this," said Chollet, executive vice president at the German Marshall Fund of the United States. "They are concerned that the founding member of the alliance has become the most unpredictable, and perhaps most unreliable."

While the populist right has stepped up attacks on NATO, the alliance has long been a bane for the left, which plans to be out in force to protest the anniversary. Peace groups plan marches around Washington and a counter-conference on alternatives to NATO.

"NATO should have been retired rather than reprogrammed for domination in the 21st century," said Joseph Gerson, disarmament coordinator of the American Friends Service Committee, the Quakers' peace advocacy organization.—AFP

Ultra-extremists fuel fear in Syria's Al-Hol

AL-HOL: Clashes with guards, violent factional quarrels and a new strain of ultra-extremism—the Islamic State group's territorial "caliphate" may be defeated, but a camp in eastern Syria is emerging as a fresh jihadist powder keg. Dislodged in a final offensive by a Kurdish-led ground force and coalition air strikes, thousands of wives and children of IS fighters have flooded in from a string of Syrian villages south of the camp in recent months.

Among the hordes of Syrians and Iraqis, some 9,000 foreigners are held in a fenced section of the encampment, under the watch of Kurdish forces. When they want to go to the camp's market or receive aid rations, these high-risk prisoners are escorted by armed guards. But tensions are rife among the foreigners themselves. "We don't have the same mentality—they (the extremists) want to impose their vision of Islam," said Vanessa, who came to Syria from her native Guyana as a convert in 2013 with her husband and children.

"They say that we are infidels," the gangly 36-year-old said, singling out the camp's Tunisians as especially "extreme". The semi-autonomous Kurdish administration that rules much of northeastern

Syria is urging countries of origin to take back their citizens. The women and children need to be "re-educated and reintegrated by their home countries," said Kurdish official Abdel Karm Omar. Otherwise, he warned, they will become "the terrorists of the future".

Under IS's so-called caliphate-declared in 2014 over large swaths of Syria and neighboring Iraq—minors were systematically indoctrinated and even exposed to public executions. In a gesture of continued loyalty to IS, some children at the camp—a few grinning, others staring coldly—pointed their index finger to the sky in front of AFP reporters. One woman threatened to hit a cameraman, but others—eager to return home and declaring they regret joining IS—were keen to talk.

Some of the Tunisians and Russians interned at Al-Hol have adopted "very extreme beliefs", confided a Belgian woman who came to Syria in 2013. "These people scare me", she said. Even just "talking to the guards, or requesting to go to the market, can make us infidels" in their eyes, she added. Once someone is labelled a non-believer, these women decree it lawful to strip the person of their belongings, the Belgian said.—AFP

International

'Conversion is not your mission', pope tells Catholics in Morocco

Pontiff promotes inter-religious dialogue

RABAT: Pope Francis told Morocco's tiny Catholic community yesterday their role in the predominantly Muslim country was not to convert their neighbors but live in brotherhood with all other faiths. Francis has used his two-day trip to stress inter-faith dialogue. He has also backed Moroccan King Mohammed VI's efforts to spread a form of Islam that promotes inter-religious dialogue and rejects violence in God's name. The country's 23,000 Roman Catholics - most of them expatriate Europeans, mainly French, and sub-Saharan African migrants - make up less than one percent of the population of about 35 million.

"Christians are a small minority in this country. Yet, to my mind, this is not a problem, even though I realize that at times it can be difficult for some of you," he said at a meeting with Catholic community leaders in Rabat's cathedral. Conservative Catholics have frequently criticized the pope's position against organized or aggressive recruiting of potential converts. "The Church grows not through proselytism but by attraction," Francis said to applause.

"This means, dear friends, that our mission as baptized persons, priests and consecrated men and women, is not really determined by the number or size of spaces that we occupy, but rather by our capacity to generate change and to awaken wonder and compas-

sion," he said. Moroccan authorities do not recognize Moroccan converts to Christianity, many of whom worship secretly in homes. Conversion from Islam to Christianity is banned - as it is in many Muslim countries - and proselytizing is punishable by up to three years in prison.

"The problem is not when we are few in number, but when we are insignificant," Francis said, adding that Catholics were called to be an integral part of inter-religious dialogue in a world "torn apart by the policies of extremism and division". On Saturday, Francis and King Mohammed VI visited an institute the monarch founded to train imams and male and female preachers of Islam. Morocco has promoted itself as an oasis of religious tolerance in a region torn by militancy. It has offered training to Muslim preachers from Africa and Europe on what it describes as moderate Islam.

At the Saturday event, Francis praised the monarch for providing "sound training to combat all forms of extremism, which so often lead to violence and terrorism, and which, in any event, constitute an offence against religion and against God himself". Also on Saturday, Jewish leaders joined Christian representatives in the front row at two events presided over by the pope and the monarch on interfaith dialogue.

Francis' appeal for inter-religious dialogue was

Catholics make up less than 1 percent of Morocco population



TEMARA: Pope Francis blessing Moroccan women upon his arrival for a visit to the Rural Center for Social Services at Temara, south of Rabat, during the pontiff's two-day visit to Morocco. Flags read 'Pope Francis, Servant of Hope'. — AFP

made more poignant yesterday by the presence in Rabat cathedral of Father Jean-Pierre Schumacher, a 95-year-old French monk who survived what is known as the Tibhirine massacre in Algeria. In March 1996,

seven French monks were kidnapped in a monastery in the central Algerian village of Tibhirine during the civil war. They were held for about two months and found dead. Schumacher managed to escape. — Reuters

Slovaks choose change, elect woman president

BRATISLAVA: The election of Zuzana Caputova as Slovakia's first female president was greeted yesterday as a vote for change, with the anti-graft activist expected to provide a check on a government tarnished after last year's murder of a journalist. The 45-year-old environmental lawyer's clear victory Saturday over the ruling party's candidate was a blow to the populist-left Smer-SD - the largest grouping in parliament - and could spell trouble for them in the EU elections and next year's general vote.

She is a relative political newcomer who rose to national prominence in the aftermath of the shootings of investigative journalist Jan Kuciak and his fiancée in February 2018, which sparked mass protests and toppled the then-premier. Caputova won 58.4 percent of the vote according to a final tally of results released yesterday, compared with 41.6 percent for her ruling party rival, EU energy commissioner Maros Sefcovic. "A candidate embodying democratic forces has won, and Sefcovic, who was a symbol of continuity, has lost," analyst Grigorij Meseznikov told AFP.

Headlines from the country's newspapers yesterday suggested the vote was a fresh start for the central European nation of 5.4 million. "Zuzana Caputova gives us hope but the real fight will only come now," said Dennik N, a leading opposition daily. She ran on the slogan of "Stand up to evil" but made a point to keep her rhetoric hostility-free. "Let us look for what connects us. Let us promote cooperation above personal interests," she said as the results rolled in.

The office of president is largely ceremonial,

but the role does involve ratifying international treaties, appointing top judges. The president is commander-in-chief of the armed forces and can veto laws passed by parliament. Analyst Aneta Vilagi predicted Caputova will "engage in a purposeful confrontation with the government... rather than become an opposition president criticizing everything the ruling coalition does." Yet "she will represent a stronger system of checks and balances in relation to the government than Sefcovic would have."

'Justice for all'

Caputova, who will be sworn in on June 15, is no stranger to tough battles. She is known for having successfully blocked a planned landfill in her hometown of Pezinok after a decade-long grassroots campaign. She became a familiar figure in the anti-government protests last year, joining tens of thousands of people who demonstrated after Kuciak's death. The journalist had been preparing to publish a story on alleged ties between Slovak politicians and the Italian mafia. The killings forced then prime minister Robert Fico to resign but he remains the Smer-SD's leader and is a close ally of the current premier.

Five people have been charged, including a millionaire businessman with alleged Smer-SD ties who is suspected of ordering the murders over Kuciak's investigation into his activity. Speaking to AFP on the campaign trail, Caputova said she would "initiate systematic changes that would deprive prosecutors and the police of political influence." In addition to fighting for justice for all, Caputova had promised better care for the elderly and environmental protection.

Fresh approach

Teacher Iveta Rabelyova said "Caputova has challenged the typical image of a top politician: she is a woman, divorced, a political novice." "It is a good feeling that our citizens chose someone who



BRATISLAVA: Newly elected Slovakia's President elect Zuzana Caputova speaks to a journalist in front of the Presidential palace in Bratislava, Slovakia yesterday. — AFP

breaks all these stereotypes," the 34-year-old told AFP. "Women are under-represented at top-level posts, this might begin to change now," added the resident of the southern town of Komarno.

Many Slovaks who voted for Sefcovic had said the important position necessitated a man, yet "Caputova won despite her sex" according to analyst Vilagi. She had been "a strong opponent to Sefcovic more because of her story, her personality, values and strong argumentation skills," Vilagi said. Caputova also won in conservative, Catholic Slovakia despite being openly pro-choice and promoting greater rights for same-sex couples. Sefcovic had tried to use that liberal stance to his advantage by stressing traditional family values on the campaign trail, appealing to voters "who insist that Slovakia remain a Christian country." — AFP

Khashoggi killers received training in US, report says

WASHINGTON: Members of the Saudi team that killed journalist Jamal Khashoggi received training in the United States, the Washington Post has reported, revealing other new elements in the death of the newspaper's former contributor. A critic of the Saudi regime, Khashoggi was killed and dismembered October 2 in the Saudi consulate in Istanbul by a team of 15 agents sent from Riyadh. His body has never been recovered.

After having denied the murder, Saudi Arabia said the operation was carried out by agents who were out of control. A trial of 11 suspects opened earlier this year in Saudi Arabia. According to Washington Post columnist David Ignatius, a Saudi who closely read the transcript of a recording from a bug placed in the consulate by Turkish intelligence said it indicates the plan was to kidnap Khashoggi and bring him back to Saudi Arabia for detention and interrogation. A note in the transcript says an injection was administered to Khashoggi, which the Saudi source said was probably a powerful sedative.

A bag was then placed over his head, and Khashoggi screamed: "I can't breathe, I have asthma. Don't do this." According to the Post, he died soon after. The transcript describes a buzzing noise, perhaps an electric saw used to dismember the journalist. According to Ignatius, who said he interviewed more than a dozen American and Saudi sources who spoke on condition of anonymity, some members of the Saudi Rapid Intervention Group received training in the United States. "The CIA has cautioned other government agencies that some of this special-operations training might have been conducted by Tier 1 Group, an Arkansas-based company, under a State Department license," he said. "The training occurred before the Khashoggi incident, as part of ongoing liaison with the Saudis, and it hasn't been resumed." He said several other US-Saudi security exchange programs also have been suspended. — AFP

Brazil's Bolsonaro arrives in Israel for pre-election visit

JERUSALEM: Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro arrived in Israel yesterday just ahead of the country's polls in which his right-wing ally Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a tough re-election fight. Bolsonaro was welcomed by Netanyahu and an official ceremony at the airport near Tel Aviv. "We are making history together," Netanyahu said, adding that they had "opened a new era in relations between our two countries." Bolsonaro said "my government is firmly resolved to strengthen the partnership between Brazil and Israel." "Cooperation in the areas of security and defence is also of great interest to Brazil," he said.

Bolsonaro will walk a diplomatic tightrope during the three-day visit as he seeks to shore up ties with Netanyahu while avoiding angering key Arab trade partners. Bolsonaro's controversial pledge to move Brazil's embassy to the disputed city of Jerusalem is expected to be high on the agenda, as Netanyahu uses the occasion to boost his standing ahead of April 9 elections. Months after promising the step already taken by US President Donald Trump - leading the Palestinians to freeze ties with the White House - Bolsonaro has yet to announce a timetable.

Speaking to reporters Thursday, Bolsonaro suggested he was in no hurry to make a decision. "Trump took nine months to decide, to give his final word, so that the embassy was transferred," Bolsonaro said. "Perhaps now we will open a commercial office in Jerusalem."



TEL AVIV: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu (left) listens to a speech given by Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro during an official welcome ceremony for Bolsonaro at Tel Aviv Ben Gurion International Airport yesterday. — AFP

While moving the embassy would please Bolsonaro's evangelical Christian support base, it would run the risk of provoking commercial retaliation from Arab states, some of which are major importers of Brazilian meat.

Western Wall visit

Bolsonaro is expected to visit Jerusalem's Western Wall alongside Netanyahu today - a controversial move in itself. Earlier this month, US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo became the first high-ranking American official to visit the Western Wall, located in Israeli-annexed east Jerusalem, with an Israeli premier. It could be taken as tacit approval of Israel's sovereignty over the site, one of the holiest in Judaism

and located in the city's mainly Palestinian eastern sector.

The compound above the wall is known to Jews as the Temple Mount - the holiest in Judaism - and also contains the Al-Aqsa mosque, the third holiest site in Islam after Mecca and Medina. Later, Netanyahu will meet with Bolsonaro and sign agreements before they have dinner. Netanyahu became the first Israeli prime minister to visit Brazil when he travelled there for Bolsonaro's January 1 inauguration. In their discussions then, the two right-wingers talked up their budding "brotherhood" which they said would boost military, economic, technological and agricultural cooperation. — AFP

In Aleppo, restored Armenian Church hosts its first mass

ALEPPO: Armenians in Syria's war-torn Aleppo packed their Forty Martyrs Cathedral Saturday for the first mass in the centuries-old church since its restoration began more than a year ago. Established in the 14th century, it is among the oldest active Armenian churches in Aleppo, a northern Syrian city battered by four years of fighting between rebels and government forces. After rebels first overran the city in mid-2012, its Christian quarter, housing the church, became one of the city's most notorious front lines.

In April 2015, parts of the church's walls, its courtyards, and its entrance were damaged during shelling. However, it has been gradually restored since Damascus reasserted its control over Syria's second city in 2016. State news agency SANA says the main entrance, the facade of the church, its bell tower and its courtyards have been renovated over the past year. By Saturday, the church's interior left no trace of the war.

Large chandeliers glittered under the arched stone ceiling as a procession of priests carried incense burners into the cathedral, flanked on both sides by crowds of worshippers. People pressed up against the walls of the church and filled its wooden benches, their heads turned towards the altar. Aram Keshishian, the Beirut-based patriarch of the Armenian church, delivered a sermon in

Armenian. After mass, he told reporters that Saturday's ceremony sent a strong message. It was a sign "that the Armenian community will continue to reconstruct Syria," he said.

Syrian Armenian religious leader Harutyun Selimian said the ceremony sparked hopes for a better future for Syria's Armenian community. "Our future is bright and in this future we will rebuild a new Syria," he said. Jirair Reisian, an Armenian member of the Syrian parliament, said it was a sign that Syria's Armenian community "is here to stay." Christians made up 10 percent of Aleppo's pre-war population. Out of the 250,000 that lived in the city before the war, thousands have fled the city since the onset of the conflict in 2011.

Many of the Armenians among them fled to Armenia itself, while others headed to Lebanon. Few have returned, according to demographic expert Fabrice Balanche. The old quarter of Aleppo is home to several other churches, including those of the Melkite and Maronite sects. They too were damaged by the four years of fighting in the former rebel stronghold. Tens of thousands of Armenians fled to Syria and neighboring Lebanon in the early 20th century after hundreds of thousands of their kin were massacred by Ottoman forces in 1915. The war in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people since it started in 2011. — AFP

International

Britain's May risks 'total collapse' of government in Brexit impasse

May's Brexit strategy in tatters; deal rejected 3 times

LONDON: British Prime Minister Theresa May risks the "total collapse" of her government if she fails to get her battered Brexit deal through parliament, the Sunday Times newspaper said, amid growing speculation that she might call an early election. Underlining the tough choices facing May to break the Brexit impasse, the newspaper said at least six pro-European Union senior ministers will resign if she opts for a potentially damaging no-deal departure from the EU.

But at the same time, rival ministers who support Brexit were threatening to quit if May decides to stay close to the EU with a customs union or if she sought a long delay to Brexit, the Sunday Times said. May's Brexit strategy is in tatters after the exit deal she hammered out with other EU leaders was rejected for a third time by the House of Commons on Friday, the day that Britain was supposed to leave the bloc.

Nearly three years after Britons voted by 52-48 percent to end the country's EU membership after 46 years, what Brexit will look like or whether it will even happen remains up in the air. May now has less than two weeks to convince the 27 other EU countries that she can break the deadlock. Otherwise she will have to ask the bloc for a long extension or take Britain out of the EU on April 12 with no deal to soften the economic shock.

May has said she will step down if her Brexit deal gets through parliament, offering her critics the chance

of a different prime minister to lead the next round of negotiations with Brussels about Britain's future ties to the bloc. But that last-gasp offer has failed to break the impasse, leading to talk of an election. The Mail on Sunday newspaper said May's advisors were divided over whether she should call an early election if she fails to win support for her Brexit deal from parliament in the coming week.

The newspaper said a possible "run-off" vote could take place on Tuesday in parliament between May's deal and whatever alternative emerges as the most popular from voting by lawmakers today. That meant an election could be called as early as Wednesday, the newspaper said, without citing sources. An early election would need the support of two thirds of members of parliament, and the Observer newspaper said

Conservative lawmakers were reluctant to let May lead them into another election after she lost their majority in 2017.

The Sunday Telegraph said senior members of the Conservative Party did not want May to lead them into a snap election, fearing the party would be "annihilated" at the polls if she faced down parliament over Brexit in the coming months. An opinion poll in the Mail yesterday gave the opposition Labor Party a lead of five percentage points over the Conservatives. That lead fell to three points if voters were offered the chance to vote for a new group of independent law-



CARRICKCARNAN: Protesters against any border between Ireland and Northern Ireland because of Brexit hold placards at the Carrickcarnan border between Newry in Northern Ireland and Dundalk in the Irish Republic. — AFP

makers who have not yet created an official party.

One of the most popular alternatives among lawmakers, including Labor members, is Britain staying in a customs union with the EU, an option also favored by many business leaders. Brexit supporters say a customs union would deny Britain the opportunity to strike trade deals around the world. Earlier on

Saturday, one lawmaker said Conservative members of parliament had written to May telling her to lead Britain out of the EU in the coming months, even if it means a potentially damaging no-deal Brexit. The Sun newspaper said the letter was signed by 170 of the 314 Conservative lawmakers in parliament, including 10 cabinet ministers. — Reuters



Speculation mounts on early election

Conservative lawmakers were reluctant to let May lead them into another election after she lost their majority in 2017.

The Sunday Telegraph said senior members of the Conservative Party did not want May to lead them into a snap election, fearing the party would be "annihilated" at the polls if she faced down parliament over Brexit in the coming months. An opinion poll in the Mail yesterday gave the opposition Labor Party a lead of five percentage points over the Conservatives. That lead fell to three points if voters were offered the chance to vote for a new group of independent law-

News in brief

Seven killed in China explosion

BEIJING: A plant explosion in China's Jiangsu province has killed seven people, authorities said yesterday, the second deadly blast in the province this month as Beijing begins a nationwide industrial safety inspection campaign. Yesterday's blast involved a container of scrap metal that exploded in the outdoor yard of a metal-molding plant in a bonded area in the city of Kunshan, causing the plant to catch fire, the local government said on its official Weibo account. "The cause of the incident is being investigated," it said of the blast that killed seven people and injured five others, one of whom was severely hurt. — Reuters

Vice president survives attack

KABUL: Taliban fighters on Saturday attacked a convoy carrying Afghanistan's vice president Abdul Rashid Dostum, in an assault that left the former warlord unscathed but killed one of his bodyguards, an official said. Enayatullah Babur, Dostum's former chief of staff, said the hour-long attack also left several others in the convoy wounded. The attack occurred in the northern province of Balkh, where Dostum had held a rally earlier in the day. On Twitter, a Taliban spokesman said the insurgent group had carried out the attack and claimed four of Dostum's bodyguards had been killed. Dostum, a powerful ethnic Uzbek leader, is notorious in Afghanistan for extreme barbarities and for repeatedly switching loyalties over 40 years of conflict. — AFP

Anglicans praying for unity in Brexit chaos

CHELMSFORD: With Britain's political world in chaos over Brexit, Christians across the country this weekend took part in special prayer sessions hoping for some divine help in healing bitter Brexit divisions. "It doesn't matter whether you voted leave or remain, we're still one humanity, one nation," Stephen Cottrell, Bishop of Chelmsford, told AFP after imploring his congregation to heal the rift. The Church of England has promoted the initiative as "tea and prayer drop-ins" - combining two of its most well-known sources of comfort.

Despite a sharp decline in church attendance, Cottrell believes faith still has the power to unite the country after Brexit. "It's no good the church standing on the sidelines, waving our hands saying 'why doesn't everybody just love each other', what we've got to do is show what that love looks like in action," he said. Worshipper Angela Sadler, 65, said the church needed to play a larger role in helping resolve the

broader issues surrounding the crisis.

"It's quite difficult for the church because the church needs to be seen as a non-political body, which is correct, but I also think... we need to see more of God's love," she said. As sunlight flooded through the ornate stained glass windows of Chelmsford Cathedral, Cottrell told the group of around 20 worshippers that the values of the church could be expressed through a return to "British values" that were "rooted in the Christian tradition". "Those British values of care for the underdog, care for the stranger, tolerance."

'Prayer is so important'

As the floor was opened to parishioners, one woman called for help in being "patient", something she was struggling with in the inescapable and ever-growing crisis. Another echoed the bishop's call for a return to "traditional values", although the definition of what those values are is one of many debates swirling around Brexit, highlighting the challenges in uniting the country around a common message.

"It's going to be a long process, there's no easy solution to unity," said Sadler's husband Stuart, 66. Three years from a hugely divisive referendum over Britain's EU membership in which the Leave vote won by 52 percent, Anglican leaders have called for communities across the country "to join together in conversation and prayer".



MAIDENHEAD: Britain's Prime Minister Theresa May (left) is handed a posy of flowers by the vicar as she leaves with her husband Philip after attending a church service, near her Maidenhead constituency, west of London yesterday. — AFP

The result in Chelmsford was about the same as the national average, with Leave winning by 52.8 percent. Angela Stuart said she felt "compelled" to come to the service, "to stand amongst others that believe the same". "We are a great nation and we do need the Lord in this nation, and prayer is so important in bringing that forward," she said. A recent survey found that around four in 10 British adults have been left feeling powerless, angry or worried by Brexit, exposing the mental toll being taken on citizens.

Without faith, it's impossible

The early-morning service began with a reading of the parable of the Pharisee and the tax collector from Luke's gospel, chosen as a warning against the divisiveness of moral hubris. "For all those who exalt themselves will be humbled, and those who humble themselves will be exalted," the parable ends. "The reading is about how we define ourselves, we've got to stop defining ourselves by whether we voted leave or remain," said Cottrell, who also sits in the parliament's House of Lords. — AFP

Turks vote in crucial test for Erdogan as recession hits home

ISTANBUL: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan heads into local elections yesterday fighting for what he says is Turkey's survival, with his party risking defeat in the capital amid an economic slowdown. Erdogan and his Justice and Development Party (AKP) have won every vote since the party first came to power in 2002 but this time, analysts say the party could lose Ankara and even Istanbul. It is the first municipal poll since Turks approved constitutional reforms in 2017 to create an executive presidency that gave Erdogan wider powers, and follows general elections last year.

But Erdogan, whose ability to win continuously in the ballot box is unparalleled in Turkish history, is more vulnerable with the country's economy in recession, unemployment up and inflation in double digits. Much of the AKP's success has been down to his perceived economic prowess, but days before the vote, the Turkish lira has been sliding again, provoking memories of the 2018 currency crisis that badly hurt Turkish households. Erdogan, who is aware of his potential weakness and was previously the mayor of Istanbul, has cam-

paigned across Turkey every day though he is not on the ballot.

Since Friday, he has held more than a dozen rallies in different Istanbul districts. Voters are to elect scores of mayors, municipal councils and other local officials. Polls open at 0400 GMT in eastern provinces and 0500 GMT elsewhere in the country. "Citizens are suffering because of the economic problems," Dervis Dikmen, 60, told AFP at an opposition rally in the southern city of Mersin. "Citizens cannot buy anything." "I'm a trader, I'm retired but I've never seen a downturn like this," he said.

Charges of an unfair vote

For his supporters however, Erdogan remains the strong leader Turkey needs and they tout the country's economic development in the decade and a half that he and the AKP have been in power. But rights activists and even Turkey's Western allies say that under his leadership the government has steadily eroded democracy, especially after a failed 2016 coup that led to tens of thousands of people being arrested. The vote will be the first time since 2002 that the AKP is fielding candidates with its alliance partner, the right-wing Nationalist Movement Party (MHP).

The opposition pro-Kurdish Peoples' Democratic Party (HDP) has refused to field candidates in several cities, saying the elections are unfair. Some of its leaders have been jailed on terror charges, accusations they reject. Critics say that with most media either pro-government or controlled by Erdogan supporters, opposition parties campaigned at a disadvantage because Erdogan's rallies dominated TV coverage. — AFP

'Invisible yet visible': Transgenders in Singapore

SINGAPORE: A chest binder, packaging from used hormone injections and a preserved sex organ donated after a sex-change operation - all part of an exhibition designed to showcase Singapore's rich transgender history. The display is an attempt by one of Singapore's best known transgender citizens to raise awareness and preserve the surprisingly vibrant history of LGBT+ culture in the famously conservative country.

Affluent Singapore is modern in many ways, yet social attitudes are often highly conservative, with sex between men banned. Same-sex marriage is illegal. But it has not always been this way. Back in the 1950s, transgender people were an ever-present part of the lively clubs and bars of Bugis Street, Singapore's former red light district. "I don't want our history to be forgotten," said June Chua, who opened the exhibition in December and also runs Singapore's only shelter for transgender people.

"I want the public to understand us. If you understand us, where we came from, who are we ... you will then see us as no different," said Chua, who said she realized she was a girl trapped in a boy's body when she was just 12. The project was inspired by a visit to Stonewall Inn, the bar considered the birthplace of the US gay rights movement that now has national monument status. Singapore is among a handful of Asian nations that recognizes transgender people, and sex reas-



SINGAPORE: People walk on the 'skyway' at the Gardens by the Bay in Singapore. — AFP

ignment surgery has been legal in the city-state since 1973.

Those who have undergone the procedure can change their gender on their identification cards. "Transgender persons have a place in Singapore society, and are entitled to their own private lives," a spokeswoman from the Ministry of Social and Family Development said in an email. They have access to employment, education and health-care as other Singaporeans and should "not be subject to prejudice and discrimination", she added.

Yet campaigners say transgender people face a great deal of social stigma, from difficulty in finding jobs, to bullying in school and rejection by their families. "Very often we are invisible yet visible at the same time," said

Chua, 45, who set up the shelter in 2014 and has housed more than two dozen people who were kicked out by their families or were unable to find work.

Pioneer generation

Sherry, a transgender woman, lost her job in a restaurant when she started wearing make-up and women's clothes about eight years ago, and now earns a living as a sex worker. "Sex work gives me financial independence, but we know deep down in our heart that no one wants to do this for their whole life," said the 28-year-old as she lit a cigarette. Sherry, who asked to be identified by just one name, hopes one day to find work in hotel management - but she is not optimistic. — Reuters

Business

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12 IT played key role in achieving NBK's strategic objectives**13** More than 1 million acres of US cropland ravaged by floods**14** Limak protects environment through Kuwait Airport's Terminal 2 project

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group CEO Khalid Al-Hasan addresses the 57th Ordinary General Assembly Meeting of the Group yesterday.

GIG achieves solid financial results in 2018

Group holds AGM, shareholders approve 36% cash dividend

KUWAIT: Gulf Insurance Group held its 57th Ordinary General Assembly Meeting, during which shareholders approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute a cash dividend of 36 percent (36 fils per share) for the year ended December 31, 2018.

The Group had earlier announced a net profit of KD 11.9 million (\$39.2 million), equivalent to 66.49 fils per share, for the year ended 31 December 2018, with an increase of 18.2 per cent compared to net profit of KD 10.1 million (\$33.1 million) over last year and a growth of 10.2 per cent to KD 335.7 million (\$1.1 billion) in gross written premiums of conventional business compared to KD 304.8 million (\$1.0 billion) last year. Takaful also achieved growth in gross written premiums of 46.9 per cent reaching KD 28.9 million (\$95 million) compared to KD 19.6 million (\$64.7 million) last year.

Following the General Assembly, Gulf Insurance Group held its 'Shafafiyah' Transparency Investors Forum, to present an overview of the Group's performance during 2018 and its expectations and

prospects for 2019.

Speaking on this occasion, Group CEO Khalid Al-Hasan said, "The Group had achieved remarkable financial results in 2018, which reflects the Group's efforts in developing and improving products and the quality of services provided to our valued customers, strengthening our relations with our partners, continuing the Group's expansion and increase our ownership in our subsidiaries. Increase the awareness and the unification of our brand and our identity in various countries that we operate in. These achievements were made possible with the support of the group's major shareholders, KIPCO and Fairfax Financial Holding Canada - and the Board of Directors, to whom I extend the greatest appreciation for their continuous support and cooperation."

He added: "The year 2018 witnessed a boom in the adoption of digitization to align with the technological development which is the characteristic of this era. The Group has started to launch and adopt many strategies that aim to achieve notable development in products and

services. The Group also boasts medical insurance services for Kuwaiti retirees for the third consecutive year."

Commenting on the outlook for 2019, Al-Hasan said: "The Group operates widely and hardly to meet the needs and requirements of our valued customers, exceeding their expectations and maintain our leading position in the key markets in which we operate and achieve sustainable growth rates in the coming years and maximize our shareholders' interests, customers and employees. We aim to strengthen the group's credit rating and invest in digitalization to develop the group's operations. The Group will continue to explore markets and continue our expansion plan, while investing in human resources to enhance and refine the expertise and technical and managerial capabilities of the staff. We also will continue to develop and implement corporate governance and transparency across the Group and respect the business ethics, legislation and compliance regulations in all the Group companies. We will also continue to develop our internal and external



network and use the best technology in marketing and developing our services and products to our valued customers."

He added: "I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all of our clients, shareholders, employees, reinsurers and insur-

ance brokers and the official regulators for the continued trust and cooperation with the Group. We pray that Kuwait continues to be blessed with security, safety and prosperity under the wise rule of its leaders."

Brexit fears for British shop-owners in Germany

BERLIN: As the United Kingdom grapples with its Brexit drama, the uncertainty around its decision to leave the EU persuaded Dale Carr to close down her Berlin shop selling British goods.

The 67-year-old from Sheffield and her husband Robin in 1996 opened "Broken English", a shop selling British goods to homesick expats and Germans with a taste for UK treats in the trendy district of Kreuzberg. But things changed in June 2016 when British voters opted to pull out of the EU and the couple, unsure about the future,

decided to close their business by the end of May this year.

"We decided we would close, because of the uncertainty-not knowing if we could carry on," said Carr, who also shut a second Broken English shop in west Berlin last year.

Carr and her husband, who first came to Berlin in 1978, will retire, leaving her two employees out of work, unless a buyer is found. Visiting customers-stocking up on Stilton, chocolate biscuits and chutney-said they were dismayed by the UK's decision to leave the EU.

"I think it's a joke, a bad joke," said German Manfred Denker, clutching a box of biscuits.

"After Brexit, what is something like a jar of English marmalade going to cost?"

Bad reminders

In the wake of the referendum result, Carr and her husband submitted their paperwork for German citizenship-"it was a no brainer," she said-and the process was

finalized in the middle of 2017.

"I was very grateful to get German citizenship," she admitted. "That was a weight off my shoulders and I didn't realize how stressful it had been until we got our certificates."

After the referendum result, the shop became an unofficial drop-in center for other Brits working in Berlin, worried how Brexit would affect their rights, and eager to apply for German citizenship.

"It (Brexit) has damaged a lot of people, it's affected all of us and it will take a long time for that to disappear," she said. "It has divided people," said Carr, who says she has lost friends who voted "Leave".

Carr says business is currently booming, which she puts down to customers stockpiling goods and Easter approaching.

'A little island'

Up in Hamburg, Robert Berridge, who owns the "British Food and Gourmet", has seen sales of foodstuffs steadily drop away

since 2016. "A lot of customers have stopped buying, some are annoyed (by Brexit) and don't want to be reminded of home," said the 60-year-old from Ascot who moved to Germany in 1981 and started the business in 1985.

Using previous Christmases as a yardstick, Berridge says business has steadily declined from 26,000 euros (\$29,000) turnover for the last quarter of 2014 to 12,000 euros for the same period last year.

"I think it's because of Brexit, I have the feeling some are boycotting British goods-annoyed at the decision," said Berridge, who was granted German citizenship in January.

He says he will probably stop importing British goods, focusing instead on selling second-hand English books, put off by the potential extra paperwork and customs taxes.

Berridge feels his business is "on the marginal edges, where the pain sets in first" and unable to absorb potential extra costs.

'Very, very, very unhappy'

There are no such survival worries for Cologne's "The English Shop", founded in 1995.

However, Brexit has caused a few concerns for some of the 40 employees at the flagship store and a separate shop in Bonn. "We are very, very, very unhappy with Brexit," said Anna-Maria Boehm, in charge of the shop's marketing.

"We have a lot of experience of importing goods from the UK and a hard Brexit will just mean more paperwork-every bar of chocolate or bag of crisps will have to clear customs.

"The main impact so far has been on staff - Brexit has been a huge issue with people applying for dual citizenship or getting married to make sure they can stay."

However, Brits in Germany will always have somewhere to get their tea-especially as the shop has an online store. "There will always be a little island of the UK in Cologne," added Boehm. —AFP

Business

More than 1 million acres of US cropland ravaged by floods

Floods will impact soy, corn, wheat production

CHICAGO/COLUMBUS, Neb: At least 1 million acres (405,000 hectares) of US farmland were flooded after the “bomb cyclone” storm left wide swaths of nine major grain producing states under water this month, satellite data analyzed by Gro Intelligence for Reuters showed.

Farms from the Dakotas to Missouri and beyond have been under water for a week or more, possibly impeding planting and damaging soil. The floods, which came just weeks before planting season starts in the Midwest, will likely reduce corn, wheat and soy production this year. “There’s thousands of acres that won’t be able to be planted,” Ryan Sonderup, 36, of Fullerton, Nebraska, who has been farming for 18 years, said in a recent interview.

“If we had straight sunshine now until May and June, maybe it can be done, but I don’t see how that soil gets back with expected rainfall.” Spring floods could yet impact an even bigger area of cropland. The US government’s National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration has warned of what could be an “unprecedented flood season” as it forecasts heavy spring rains. Rivers may swell further as a deep snow pack in northern growing areas melts.

The bomb cyclone of mid-March was the latest blow to farmers suffering from years of falling income and lower exports because of the US-China trade war.

Fields are strewn with everything from silt and sand to tires and some may not even be farmed this year. The water has also destroyed billions of dollars of old crops that were in storage, as well as damaging roads and railways. Justin Mensik, a fifth-generation farmer of corn and soybeans in Morse Bluff, Nebraska, said rebuilding roads was the first priority. Then farmers would need to bring in fertilizer trucks and then test soil before seeding, Mensik said.

The flood “left a lot of silt and sand and mud in our fields, now we’re not too sure if we’re going to be able to get a good crop this year with all the new mud and junk that’s just laying here,” Mensik told Reuters.

Corn concern

For farmers, “the biggest concern right now is corn planting,” said Aaron Saeugling, an agriculture expert at Iowa State University who does outreach with farmers. “There is just not going to be enough time to move a lot of that debris.”

To be fully covered by crop insurance, Iowa farmers must plant corn by May 31 and soybeans by June 15, as yields decline dramatically when planted any later. Deadlines vary state by state. The insurance helps ensure a minimum price farmers will receive when they book sales for their crops.

The US Department of Agriculture (USDA) forecast on Friday farmers would increase corn plantings by 4.1 percent from last year, but the estimate did not account for the flooding. Nearly 1.1 million acres of cropland and more than 84,000 acres of pastureland in the US Midwest had flood water on it for at least seven days between March 8 and March 21, according to a preliminary analysis of government and satellite data by New-York based Gro Intelligence at the request of Reuters. The extent of the flooding had previously not been made public. The flooded acreage represents less than 1 percent of US land used to grow corn, soybeans, wheat, rice, cotton, sorghum and barley. In 2018, some 240 million total acres of these crops were planted in the United States, USDA data shows.

Iowa, the top US corn and No 2 soy producing state, had the most water, covering 474,271 acres, followed by Missouri with 203,188 acres, according to Gro Intelligence. That was in line with estimates given to Reuters this week by government officials in Iowa and Missouri.

Gro Intelligence used satellite data from the National Aeronautics and Space Administration’s (NASA) Near Real-Time Global Flood Mapping product, to calculate the approximate extent and intensity of flooding. Gro Intelligence then identified how much of this area was either cropland or pastureland, according to data from the USDA’s National



Farms from the Dakotas to Missouri and beyond have been under water for a week or more, possibly impeding planting and damaging soil.

Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS).

Gro Intelligence analysts cautioned the satellite imagery did not show the full extent of flooding in Nebraska, where officials declined to provide acreage estimates to Reuters, or in North Dakota. Nebraska’s governor has said the floods caused agricultural damage of \$1 billion in his state.

Cloud cover or snow on the ground makes it difficult to identify the flood waters in NASA satellite data, said Sara Menker, chief executive of the agricultural artificial intelligence company.

Lost cattle

In Missouri, floodwaters covered roughly 200,000 acres in five northwest counties adjoining the Missouri

River as of Wednesday morning, said Charlie Rahm, spokesman for USDA’s Natural Resources Conservation Service in Columbia. In Wisconsin more than 1,000 dairy and beef animals were lost during winter storms and 480 agricultural structures collapsed or damaged, according to an email from Sandy Chalmers, executive director of the Wisconsin state office of the USDA’s Farm Service Agency.

In the Dakotas and Minnesota, melting snows in coming months will put spring wheat planting at risk. Gro Intelligence found nearly 160,000 acres have already been flooded in Minnesota.

“That’s yet to come and we will deal with that at least until the middle of April,” said Dave Nicolai, an agriculture expert at the University of Minnesota. — Reuters

China to suspend extra tariffs on US vehicles, auto parts

BEIJING: China’s State Council said yesterday that the country would continue to suspend additional tariffs on US vehicles and auto parts after April 1, in a goodwill gesture following a US decision to delay tariff hikes on Chinese imports.

In December, China said it would suspend additional 25 percent tariffs on US-made vehicles and auto parts for three months, following a truce in a trade war between the world’s two largest economies.

The State Council, or cabinet, said yesterday’s move was aimed at “continuing to create a good atmosphere for the ongoing trade negotiations between both sides.”

“It is a positive reaction to the US decision to delay tariff hikes and a concrete action adopted (by the Chinese side) to promote bilateral trade negotiations,” the State Council said.

“We hope the US can work together with China, accelerate negotiations and make concrete efforts towards the goal of terminating trade tensions.” The government also said it would announce separately when the suspension would end. US President Donald Trump said on Friday that trade talks with China were going very well, but cautioned that he would not accept anything less than a “great deal” after top US and Chinese trade officials wrapped up two days of negotiations in Beijing.



LIANYUNGANG: A staff member walks past new cars waiting to be exported at a port in Lianyungang in China’s eastern Jiangsu province yesterday. China’s manufacturing sector ended its four-month downward trend in March, official data showed yesterday, but exports continued their long slide in the wake of the Washington-Beijing trade war. — AFP

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer were in the Chinese capital for the first face-to-face meetings between the two sides since Trump delayed a scheduled March 2 increase in tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods. The talks are set to resume next week in Washington with a Chinese delegation led by Vice Premier Liu He. — Reuters

“would suggest the soft patch we entered the year with is temporary” and would confirm economic projections for 2019, said Russell Price, chief economist at Ameriprise Financial in Troy, Michigan.

February’s US retail sales data, due today, and the March jobs report, scheduled for Friday, may be the most closely watched indicators as economists want reassurance on the spending power and confidence of US consumers, which represent about 70 percent of the US economy.

US non-farm payroll growth almost stalled in February, with only 20,000 jobs created. Economists polled by Reuters last expected an average of 170,000 new jobs for March.

January retail sales rose a modest 0.2

percent after a December decline, but were not seen as strong enough to alter slowing US economic momentum. Economists, on average, expect a February increase of 0.3 percent. “If we were to witness a faltering of the US consumer, that would be very difficult for markets, which are relying on the US consumer to propel the cycle through at least another year,” said Frances Donald, head of macroeconomic strategy at Manulife in Toronto.

But Donald expects a rebound in both retail sales and jobs, since the last reports were weakened by the December-January government shutdown. She will also watch durable goods data, due tomorrow, for a view on corporate capital spending. — Reuters



SEOUL: Currency dealers monitor exchange rates in a trading room at the KEB Hana Bank in Seoul. — AFP

US investors seek comfort in flood of data

NEW YORK: Wall Street will be watching next week’s economic data with a laser focus after a dismal February jobs report and recessionary warning signals from US Treasury yields.

After the longest US government shutdown on record, bad weather and a late 2018 equities sell-off muddied market participants’ view on the US economy in recent months, they are hoping for a clearer view from upcoming data.

Investors have been anxious for reassurance since US Treasury 10-year note yields last Friday fell below three-month Treasury bill yields for the first time since 2007.

The S&P fell almost 2 percent that day as yield curve inversions are widely viewed as recessionary indicators and this one occurred two days after the US Federal Reserve pulled back on expected rate hikes amid signs of slowing economic growth. “Investors are going to be hyper-sensitive to data,” said Jack Ablin, chief investment officer at Cresset Capital Management in Chicago. “The yield curve inversion is the manifestation of investors’ fears that the US is getting caught up in a global slowdown.”

Many investors say they do not expect a US recession any time soon. But they are seeking confirmation for this optimism in next week’s data, which includes retail sales, manufacturing activity, durable goods orders and non-farm payrolls.

Reports that meet or beat expectations

ECB’s hawkish knot makes dovish sounds on rates long-term

BERLIN: Dutch central bank Governor Klaas Knot expects the eurozone economy to recover speed in the second half after a sluggish start to the year, but in an interview with Handelsblatt the noted hawk was distinctly dovish on long-term interest rates.

Knot, one of the most prominent hawks on the European Central Bank’s rate-setting committee told the German paper that though he was strongly in favor of normalizing policy after years of anti-crisis measures, it was clear that even afterwards interest rates would be lower than before the crisis.

“It is clear that there has been a cooling off,” he said of the slack start to the

year. “But there is no recession or crisis,” he said, adding that robust demand and rising wages suggested growth would soon pick up again.

He also repeated his skepticism about multi-tiered deposit rates to help well-capitalized banks with excess liquidity, saying he would need to see clear evidence that negative interest rates were hurting lending to the real economy. Details for a new tranche of long-term ECB bank financing would be announced in June or July, he said, adding that conditions for the financing would likely be stricter than previously.

“I see the news program, TLTRO III, as a bridge ... to ease the transition to market financing,” he said. “The new program’s conditions will be less advantageous than before... We should avoid us needing to discuss a TLTRO IV or V in a few years’ time.”

He also issued a warning that markets had not yet fully priced in the potential impact of a disorderly Brexit on Britain’s currency. “If it happened, there could potentially be a revaluation and the pound would come under pressure,” he told the newspaper in the interview, published yesterday. — Reuters

How Europe is faring on renewable energy targets

PARIS: The European Union’s use of renewable energy—such as hydropower, wind and solar—reached 17.5 percent in 2017, keeping it on track for a target of 20 percent by 2020. Each member state has its own renewable energy goal, based on its situation and potential, ranging from 10 to 49 percent.

While 11 countries in the bloc have already surpassed their targets, others are lagging behind, according to EU statistics authority Eurostat. With the target for 2030 at 32 percent, Eurostat says: “While the EU as a whole is on course to meet its 2020 targets, some member states will need to make additional efforts to meet their obligations.”

Sweden: Champion of Europe

Europe’s renewable energy leaders are Nordic countries: Sweden, Finland and Denmark.

Since 2012 more than half of the total energy consumed in Sweden has come from renewable sources, according to the International Energy Agency. This is due in large part to hydroelectric power, which provides more than 40 percent of the country’s electricity output. Swedes heat themselves mainly with biofuels.

Denmark—a small, flat country long dependent on energy imports—now gets 43 percent of its electricity from wind power after investment starting in the late 1970s when it began phasing out coal plants.

The Netherlands: Lagging behind

Luxembourg and the Netherlands are the EU countries with the lowest consumption of renewables, reaching 6.4 percent and 6.6 percent respectively. Despite its investment in offshore wind farms, the Netherlands is the furthest from reaching its targets. Yet, with a part of the country lying below sea level, it is particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change.

In 2015 the Netherlands was one of the first countries to rule on a climate case, with a court ordering the state to reduce national greenhouse gas emissions by at least 25 percent by 2020.

France: Nuclear preference

Inspired by the Dutch decision, four environmental NGOs in March sued the French government for failing to uphold its commitments on fighting climate change. In 2017 France reached 16.3 percent of energy consumption from renewables, compared to its 23 percent target for 2020.

Wood and hydropower are the main sources of green energy in France, ahead of biofuels. France has long preferred investment in nuclear power, from which it gets more than 70 percent of its electricity. The government has committed to closing 14 nuclear reactors by 2035 and shutting down four still-active coal power plants by 2022, on condition that it can guarantee secure electricity supplies.

Germany’s renewable energy, which comes mainly from wind and solar power, reached just 15.5 percent in 2017, while its 2020 objective is set at 18 percent. Coal remains the cornerstone of its energy policy, in part due to the government’s decision in 2011 to shut down all nuclear plants by 2022. Coal accounts for 37 percent of Germany’s electricity production and more than 30 percent of its heating. — AFP

Business

Limak protects environment through Kuwait Airport's Terminal 2 project

Limak aims to accomplish a LEED Gold certificate for T2



KUWAIT: Limak Insaat Kuwait S.P.C. demonstrated its effective corporate social responsibility strategy in environmental sustainability and waste management after reporting that 88 percent of Kuwait International Airport Terminal 2 (T2) construction waste material is diverted from landfills.

As the project contractor, Limak is also committed to accomplishing all LEED Gold certification (Green Building Certification System of USGBC) requirements for construction. Since the start of construction in August 2016, the project has diverted 88 percent of all construction waste from landfills. The T2 project has diverted from landfills around 21,111 tons of materials from a total of approximately 23,897 tons, including 100 percent of all wood, concrete, metal, plastic, cardboard and reused tiles.

LEED Coordinator at Limak, Eng. Orcun Ozhelvacı, said: "As the contractor of the biggest landmark project in Kuwait we aim to obtain LEED Gold certification and to educate the community on the challenges of construction, the benefits of sustainability and how to achieve LEED certification. We want people to see what makes this project unique and to understand the concept behind green buildings."

Limak implements its own Construction Waste Management Plan on-site recognized by the Environmental Public Authority (EPA) as the best implementation of construction waste management in Kuwait. The plan's activities include the set-up of nine 100 sqm collection areas across the site to segregate the waste, and a dedicated waste management team of loaders, foremen, supervisors and engineers.

Limak currently has four ongoing LEED projects worldwide as part of the company's vision to add value to

environmental protection. The company's other LEED projects include the Istanbul New Airport in Istanbul, Turkey, the High Speed Train Station in Ankara, Turkey, and the Residence and Mall (Mixed-use building) in Skopje, Macedonia.

Limak announced its environmental achievements during the Project UCON event, held under the theme 'Terminal 2 Design and Construction' at Al-Shaheed Park from February 6 to 13.

Held under the patronage of Environment Public Authority (EPA) Director General and Chairman of the Board Sheikh Abdullah Ahmad Al-Homoud Al-Sabah, Project UCON is a local, environmental initiative of the Ministry of Public Works that aims to promote waste management and recycling in buildings currently under construction.

At the opening ceremony, Limak's Project Director for the New Kuwait International Airport Terminal 2 project, Richard Meredith, said: "At Limak, the environment has always been an important aspect. For every project we undertake - both in Kuwait and across the world - we prepare an Environmental and Social Impact Assessment considering different standards like IFC, World Bank, EBRD, Equator Principles, etc. to predict and assess the potential environmental and social impacts of a proposed project. This enables us to keep up-to-date with international standards and practices as part of our commitment to achieve our vision of a sustainable and greener future. We are proud to be recognized for the impact we have been adding to this field by sharing our studies and techniques with the public and other corporate entities in Kuwait. Through Project UCON and our other activities in Kuwait,



88% OF KUWAIT INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT T2 CONSTRUCTION WASTE MATERIAL IS DIVERTED FROM LANDFILLS

Limak Insaat Kuwait S.P.C.

we hope to raise awareness on sustainable construction and green building certification and encourage other construction companies in the country and across the region to follow suite."

As a strategic partner to UCON, Limak donated over 8 tons of construction waste materials used in the pavilions

and event signage, and designed and constructed all arrangements in the T2 Exhibition Hall. The seating and tables in the hall were produced from and filled with waste materials gathered from the T2 construction site with informational plaques to share information and increase awareness on sustainable construction.

Geely Emgrand 7 is the perfect choice for your fleet

KUWAIT: Kuwait Automobile Import Company (KAICO) Al-Shaya & Al-Sagar has been keen since 1936 to provide the top brands in Automobiles, Tires, and Lubricants.

Among the vehicles on which it depends and has a brilliant future with its brilliant future, "Geely Emgrand 7", the ideal solution for corporate fleets, which outperforms competitors in the same category by the following:

1. A Bigger motor than competitors (1800 CC)
2. Modern CVT transmission (5 speeds), which helps reduce fuel consumption
3. Bigger size

4. Spacious Cabin
5. TFT Large screen (touch screen)
6. Push-Start Button

The car is full of the features it offers to its drivers, such as LED backlight, USP & AUX audio system, CD player, back and front head-rests, electric glass and leather-trimmed brushes. The car is stylish and attractive.

Geely has benefited from its investments and acquisition of major international companies such as the esteemed Swedish Volvo, the Malaysian Proton, London Taxi, the British Lotus Company, and Geely is the largest shareholder of the German Daimler Group. In addition to its development and research, Geely has been able to offer modern cars in a short period of time and competes with the world's largest brands.

Ashish Tandon, General Manager of KAICO stated: "Geely group has a clear vision to continue its transformation into global leadership. As partners of Geely, we have found an excellent partnership to expand our services in Kuwait. Their advanced technology research & development will play an important role in their

global presence and it will enhance our strong position in the automotive market."

Safety Systems

These acquisitions and investments made Geely benefit from the global experiences in the manufacturing, where it appeared that the "Geely Emgrand 7" got 4 stars of 5 in the European program for assessment of new cars EURO NCAP in terms of safety and safety, superior to many other cars that are more expensive than it, so it achieved brilliant sales over a short period among the daily used vehicles.

Mohammed Osman, Brand Manager of Geely in Kuwait says "Geely Emgrand 7 changed the equation for small cars Geely comes strongly to impose its character among its rival small cars."

The "Geely Emgrand 7" includes a number of international systems from the German Continental, the Swedish Autoliv, the French Valeo and the American TRW that combine to enhance the safety in the car, including the anti-lock braking system, braking force distribution system, electronic stability control, steering control, sensors, rear camera and much more.

Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

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

The lucky winners are:

1. Ali Abdulrahman Dashti
2. Fatema Jawad Alamir
3. Ghassan Mohammad Zein
4. Mohammad Abdullah Ali

ABK announces first winners of salary transfer campaign

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) yesterday announced the first two winners for the monthly draw in its "Transfer your Salary and Find Reasons to Smile" campaign, which is open to both Kuwaiti and expatriate customers who hold Elite, Prestige or Al-Raed Salary Transfer Accounts.

The first monthly draw was held on the 14th March under the supervision of the Ministry of Commerce and Interior (MOCI) and the first two winners are Abdulmajeed Mashaa Allah Ali Pour and Ayeed Helal Ali Awad, both from the

5. Adnan Bader Sllshawamrah

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

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

Farwaniya branch. The two lucky customers each receive the equivalent of their monthly salaries.

The next draw for the "Transfer your Salary and Find Reasons to Smile" campaign takes place on 18th April. The campaign runs up until 31st December, with nine more draws to go. Customers must have their salaries transferred to the bank at least one month prior to the draw date to enter.

In addition to the draw, the "Transfer your Salary and Find Reasons to Smile" campaign offers ABK salary account customers a range of exceptional rewards. Kuwaiti salary account holders receive cash gifts of up to KD 1,000 provided that they transfer a salary equivalent to or higher than KD 500. Moreover, Kuwaiti customers are eligible for an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000 and expatriates up to KD 5,000.

These loans are subject to ABK's terms and conditions, as well as the Central Bank of Kuwait's regulations and policies.



AUB announces winners of its 'shop and win' campaign draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced the names of the winners of the third and last draw of "Shop and Win up to 100 percent Cash Back" of the Value of your Purchases' campaign, which took place on 26 March 2019 at the Bank's main branch in the presence of the Ministry of Trade and Industry's representative.

The lucky winners: Abulrahman Hussain

Suroor, Zaid Mosaed AlMailam, Ehsan Abdullah Nehayyer, Husam Ali Hasan and Mohammad Menahi Al-Osaimi, all redeemed up to 100 percent cash-back of the value of their purchases using their AUB Credit Cards with a maximum cash-back of KD1,000.

The campaign was designed to reward the Bank's customers with up to 100 percent cash-back on their purchases made using their AUB Credit Cards, with a maximum cash-back of KD 1,000 for each winner. To be eligible, the AUB Credit Cardholder had to spend KD 100 or above during the three months campaign period which ran from January 2019 until 26 March 2019. The campaign offered 15 prizes throughout three draws, each with five prizes.

Entry into the draw was calculated based on the total value of purchases made during the period of the campaign. Customers received one

chance in the draw for every KD 10 they spent locally in Kuwait, and received three chances in the draw for every KD 10 they spent abroad.

In addition to the exciting cash-back campaign benefits, customers who spent using AUB credit cards automatically benefited from the Pearls reward program as well as AUB's instant discount program. These offers provided customers a real added value that rewards the AUB Credit Card and ATM card holders through unique discounts at major well-known companies and retail outlets in Kuwait."

In a press statement, the Bank said "We are very pleased with the success of this campaign which reflects our success in introducing innovative offers that add to our customers' banking experience. This campaign reflects AUB's ongoing commitment towards our customers, and our underlying efforts to reward them."



What's On

Aquapark summer activities kick off

By Ben Garcia



Mohammed Koursheed.
— Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Aquapark, the first water park of its kind in the Gulf and among the biggest in the region, is now open for the summer after a complete renovation during winter. Located on Arab Gulf Street adjacent to Kuwait Towers, the huge aquatic city, which houses water and fun games, towering water slides and swimming pool areas for adults and kids, will open new restaurants, from Hardee's to Sbarro, Krispy Kreme, Baskin Robbins, new juice bars and other eateries.

Mohammed Koursheed, General Manager of Aquapark, said 2019 for its valued customers will be very exciting with new rides and clean

and ready-to-use facilities. "We have done a great deal of renovation to ensure maximum satisfaction for our customers. The toilets are new, entire areas have been completely remodeled, piping and sewage facilities were changed, and doors, accessories, ceramics, lights and central ventilations were all changed for the comfort of our clients. We added showers inside and outside bathrooms and added vanity areas for men and women. This is a complete renovation to make these facilities better and attractive to all," he said.

Aquapark is spread over an area of 60,000 square meters. "Among the entertainment options offered by the park include a kiddy pool area, a

swimming pool for toddlers with an octopus slide and floating toadstools. In the middle area, we still have the pool where you can just float around in a tube, a lazy river and wave pool. The adventure area has 14 rides targeting all age groups," Koursheed said. "We also have Flow House inside the park, but the facility has a separate gate to enter," he added.

Aquapark is open daily from 10 am to 10 pm. The entry ticket costs KD 4.750 inclusive of all the rides and facilities inside (except Flow House and surfing areas). "We have a promotion this April where tickets are for KD 3.500 only. So if you want to save KD 1.250, purchase a ticket now!" he said.



The Ambassador of Bangladesh S M Abulkalam hosted a reception on the occasion of the 48th anniversary of Independence and National day at JW Marriott Hotel. Higher official, diplomats, cross section of Bangladesh community and media person attended the event. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



BSK students complete International Award Expeditions

In February, students from the British School of Kuwait completed the Adventurous Journey section of their Duke of Edinburgh's International Award. The award requires students to develop their independence, teamwork and perseverance by completing a hike in which they navigate using maps and compasses, cook their own meals and camp in the wild - certainly not an easy task! However, after completing practice expeditions in Kuwait, the students were feeling confident and excited to demonstrate everything they had learned.

10 students travelled to Wadi Rum, Jordan for their Bronze Adventurous Journey. Soft sand, relentless sun and limited patches of shade made challenging conditions for the hike, but this was more than made up for by the beautiful scenery, and all the students maintained a fantastic attitude throughout, with both their assessor and campsite manager describing them as the best group of students they had ever worked with. All students completed the trek successfully and were fantastic representatives for their school, families and themselves.

11 students completed their Silver Adventurous Journey through the beautiful Cypriot area of Akamas. The stu-

dents found themselves in a whirlwind of different climates, from hail to glorious sunshine, as they continued to persevere through the three intense days. Blisters, aching muscles, wet clothes and soggy socks didn't have a chance to stop the resilient groups from reaching their goal. The students were a credit to their school, proving that teamwork, friendship and a smile has the power to take you beyond anything you felt possible. The IA staff are very proud of their achievements; and can't wait to see what these students can achieve next.

Meanwhile, nine students from Year 12 completed their Gold expedition to Nepal. This trip was longer and more challenging than Bronze and Silver, with students taking part in a four-day hike followed by a three-day community project. The trek was long and arduous but took in some stunning scenery and gave the students the chance to see a totally different way of life. After the trek, students headed to the Shree Ram Janaki Basic School on the outskirts of Kathmandu.

Their project was to help build a boundary wall around the school, to help keep the school and students safe, as well as drawing and painting permanent classroom displays. The students were incredible, spending most of the next three days pick axing, shoveling and moving huge piles of earth as well as painstakingly filling once blank walls with hand painted artwork. They made a huge impression on the local community, truly becoming integrated into their surroundings. These trips were hugely successful thanks to the dedication, commitment and hard work of a very enterprising group of young people.

Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn Al-Thuraya City celebrate Earth Hour

Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Al-Thuraya City have turned off the lights and electricity on the main venues such as: buildings signage, restaurants, parking lights, swimming pool lights and grand staircase for an hour from 8:30 pm to 9:30 pm to commemorate the Earth Hour. The goal of the World Wildlife Fund for Nature (WWF) global initiative is for individuals, communities, families and business to turn off unnecessary lights for one hour each March as a symbolic gesture of solidarity with the environmental protection movement.

"This event is important to remind us of our responsibility towards the environment. This initiative helps to enhance little small things such as turning off lights in order to preserve the world's resources for future generations. And we are very glad to be sharing this moment with our guests and staff," said Antoine Flouty, Area General Manager - Kuwait/ General Manager - Crowne Plaza & Holiday Inn Kuwait Al-Thuraya City.

Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Al-Thuraya City have always been a favorite destination for business people, key characters and VIPs. Located in a strategic location 5 min-



utes from Kuwait International Airport, it offers access to many leisure and business activities. Al-Thuraya City has a wide range of restaurants, local and international cuisines, which offers the guests unforgettable experience where visitors enjoy its distinctive views. The visitors can also enjoy the services of Edge Health Club and the unique Aquatic Spa in the Middle East.

LAPA launches World Theatre Day

Sponsored by NCCAL, Al-Jarida, Al-Anbaa and Al-Seyassah dailies, LOYAC's Academy for Performance Arts (LAPA) launched its first World Theatre Day Festival on March 27, 2019, at 6:30 pm at the Qibliya school. The festival hosted elite artists, theatre icons, media figures and theatrical groups. The following is the performances schedule: The Arabic Theatre company performed its 'Saleh returns' play at Kuwait National Museum theatre on March 28. Al-Salam theatre company performed its 'Jumanji' play at the same theatre at 7:30 on March 20. The final performance by Jabloom Art



Production Company under the title of 'The Hairy Ape' took place on March 30. Commenting on the festival preparations, LOYAC's board chairperson, Fare'a Al-Saqqaf expressed her joy for cooperating with NCCAL describing it as a 'strategic ally of LOYAC.'



Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel celebrates Earth Hour

Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel had 'gone dark' again this year, marking the annual celebration of Earth Hour in support of the global initiative created by the World Wildlife Fund (WWF). Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel turned off its lights for one hour on March 30, 2019 to show its solidarity and support of the Earth

Hour by using non-electrical lighting. Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel turned off selective lights, including the decorative, facade, restaurant and other public areas.

Guests were informed of this global environmental awareness event, hence allowing them to take part in Earth Hour observances at their own preference. Saif Eddin Mohammed, the General Manager of the hotel said, "Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel's commitment goes beyond one hour. It is actually a continuous effective contribution of reducing energy consumption through innovation, team work and environmental programs that target new energy-saving alternatives in coordination with the guests and customers to serve the local society, community and company's goal."



Health & Science

French anti-pollution activists unimpressed by EU green record

Fine particle pollution alone is cause of 48,000 premature deaths in France each year

MARSEILLE: Outside the French Mediterranean port of Marseille, at Fos-sur-Mer, one of the largest industrial and port zones in Europe has been spewing a noxious cocktail of fumes for years. And few residents think EU pledges to clean up the continent will make a difference anytime soon. Environmental concerns are expected to be a major issue in the European Parliament elections in May, when analysts say green parties could score better than they do in national contests.

Yet anti-pollution activists say that despite EU claims of having the toughest standards in the world, its actions are far too feeble against places like Fos-sur-Mer, home to dozens of oil refineries, chemical factories and steel companies. "I'm fed up with the European Union-what are they waiting for to raise awareness about this?" said Daniel Moutet, who has spearheaded the campaign to force Fos-sur-Mer to clean up its act.

Rates of cancer and chronic diseases are higher in this area than the average in France-last year Moutet was diagnosed with diabetes, which he believes could be linked to the dire air quality. In March 2018 the regional health agency (ARS) acknowledged that the health of residents of the area had been hit by the pollution levels. A year earlier an independent study concluded that women questioned in the area had cancer levels three times higher than the national average.

12 years of warnings

According to Moutet, mercury, benzene, sulfur and nitrogen oxides are all part of that toxic cocktail along this stretch of the French Mediterranean coastline. Last May, the European Commission took France and five other countries to the European Court of Justice for failing to apply long-sought steps to improve air quality.

In France's case the move came after 12 years of warnings over fine particles as well as nitrogen dioxide levels which in some cities were more than double EU limits.

Some residents have learned to live with the fumes

belching from the Fos-sur-Mer chimneys. "The white ones are just steam," said Martine Monnier, 65, enjoying the spring sun on a beach just a stone's throw from the site. "But there are also red ones and yellow ones, those are more dangerous. We know how to recognize them."

'Cocktail effect'

According to France's public health agency, fine particle pollution alone is the cause of 48,000 premature deaths in the country each year. To ensure the EU's pollution limits are met, countries are supposed to impose-and enforce-strict emission limits for industrial sites like Fos-sur-Mer.

Some progress has been made: A study released in March showed a marked decline in atmospheric concentrations of mercury since the 1970s in response to tougher rules. And the Esso refinery, for example, which produces seven million tons of petroleum products a year, says it has cut its sulfur emissions in half over the past 10 years, while reducing nitrogen oxide emissions by two-thirds.

"There are lots of spot checks" by state inspectors, the site's director, Stefaan Van Severen, told AFP. "We've gotten our environmental footprint under control."

Such claims fail to persuade the EU's critics in Fos-sur-Mer and nearby Marseille, where there is also shipping traffic and a heavy reliance on cars because of limited public transportation options.

A recent report by Greenpeace and the Respire ("Breathe") advocacy groups found that a quarter of Marseille's schools and daycare centres are in areas where NO2 levels exceed EU thresholds.

EU has 'very little power'

Rene Raimondi, who was the Socialist mayor of Fos-sur-Mer for 14 years before stepping down last year says he is "a little disappointed" that the EU has "very little power" when it comes to the environment. "France has been convicted several times by Europe over fine particles, but afterwards nothing ever happens," he said.

Toxic air tears apart families in Mongolia

BORNUUR, Mongolia: In the world's coldest capital, many burn coal and plastic just to survive temperatures as low as minus 40 degrees-but warmth comes at a price: deadly pollution makes Ulaanbaatar's air too toxic for children to breathe, leaving parents little choice but to evacuate them to the countryside.

This exodus is a stark warning of the future for urban areas in much of Asia, where scenes of citizens in anti-pollution masks against a backdrop of brown skies are becoming routine, rather than apocalyptic.

Ulaanbaatar is one of the most polluted cities on the planet, alongside New Delhi, Dhaka, Kabul, and Beijing. It



BRUSSELS: People take part in a 'Rise for Climate 5th Belgian and European march', in Brussels, to raise awareness for climate change, yesterday. — AFP

A case in point is the steel giant ArcelorMittal, which was targeted in late 2018 for excessive runoffs of benzene, a known carcinogen, at Fos-sur-Mer.

Critics say the fine of just 15,000 euros (\$16,850) was unlikely to have any meaningful impact on the operations of a company with an annual turnover in the billions.

ArcelorMittal Europe CEO Aditya Mittal says the group is cleaning up its act at Fos-sur-Mer.

"We are obviously making additional investment and we plan to solve all these problems by the end of April this year," he said.

The European Commission's representative in

Marseille, Alain Dumort, said Brussels will fulfil its role as the guardian of Europe's air quality. He pointed to the Commission's warning to Paris in January to enact several EU directives into French law, a first step toward legally binding infringement proceedings. The EU is also financing a seven-million-euro research project aimed at capturing the industrial gases emitted at Fos-sur-Mer and using them in the production of insulation products and plastic films. But the eventual results of the four-year project might not be enough to convince Fos-sur-Mer residents of the EU's effectiveness, less than two months from the European Parliament elections. — AFP



Ulaanbaatar's toxic pollution presents huge risks to children, including stunted development, chronic illness, and in some cases death. — AFP

regularly exceeds World Health Organization recommendations for air quality even as experts warn of disastrous consequences, particularly for children, including stunted development, chronic illness, and in some cases death.

Erdene-Bat Naranchimeg watched helplessly as her daughter Amina battled illness virtually from birth, her immune system handicapped by the smog-choked air in Mongolia's capital.

"We would constantly be in and out of the hospital," Naranchimeg told AFP, adding that Amina contracted pneumonia twice at the age of two, requiring several rounds of antibiotics.

This is not a unique case in a city where winter temperatures plunge towards uninhabitable, particularly in the districts that rural workers moved to in search of a better life. Here row upon row of the traditional tents-known as gers-are warmed by coal, or any other flammable material available. The resulting thick black smoke shoots out in plumes, blanketing surrounding areas in a film of smog that makes visibility so poor it can be hard to see even a few

meters ahead. Hospitals are packed and young children are vulnerable, common colds can quickly escalate into life-threatening illness.

Birth defects

The situation was so bad that doctors told Naranchimeg the only solution was to send her little girl to the clean air of the countryside. Now aged five, Amina is thriving. She lives with her grandparents in Bornuur Sum, a village 135 kilometers away from the capital.

"She hasn't been sick since she started living here," said Naranchimeg, who makes the three-hour round trip to see Amina every week.

"It was very difficult in the first few months," she said. "We used to cry when we talked on the phone."

But like many parents in Ulaanbaatar, she felt the move was the only way to protect her child.

The levels of PM2.5 — tiny and harmful particles-in Ulaanbaatar reached 3,320 in January, 133 times what the World Health Organization (WHO) considers safe. — AFP

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Scope of clinical Practice.

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Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 1, 2019



Models display creations from the 'Heaven Gaia' collection by Xiong Ying during the China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP photos

Rolling Stones

cancel tour over
Mick Jagger's health

British rock icon Mick Jagger said on Saturday he was "devastated" after his Rolling Stones were forced to cancel their United States and Canada tour dates so he could receive "medical treatment". "I really hate letting you down like this," the 75-year-old wrote on his Twitter account, without specifying what treatment he was receiving. "I'm devastated for having to postpone the tour but I will be working very hard to be back on stage as soon as I can."



In this file photo Mick Jagger leads the Rolling Stones as they perform during the Desert Trip music festival at Indio, California. — AFP

The rock legends earlier announced the cancellations, saying that they would reschedule the dates. "Mick has been advised by doctors that he cannot go on tour at this time, as he needs medical treatment," said the band's official statement. "The doctors have advised Mick that he is expected to make a complete recovery so that he can get back on stage as soon as possible."

Jagger has eight children, five grandchildren and a great-granddaughter, but has maintained his energetic stage performances well into his 70s, playing Britain's Glastonbury Festival in 2013. The band, who formed in 1962, were due to play 17 shows in the US and Canada between April and June.—AFP

SHERPA WIDOWS BREAKING DOWN TABOOS AS THEY EYE EVEREST

For generations climbing has been firmly the realm of men among the legendary Sherpas of Nepal, tradition dictating women care for the home while their husbands conquer the Himalayan peaks. But that convention is being challenged by two Sherpa women attempting to summit Everest and force a rethink about the role of widows in their conservative community, after their husbands died on the world's highest mountain.

Furdiki Sherpa and Nima Doma Sherpa hail from the Himalayan people revered for their skill at high altitudes as climbing guides. Neither woman ever dreamed of making an expedition to the roof of the world themselves. But that is exactly what they are preparing to do when the short spring climbing season gets underway in April. "The men climb. We had other things to do. I was running a tea house and taking care of my family. I didn't think about climbing the mountains," Furdiki told AFP.

That changed in 2013 when she lost her husband to the mountain as he fixed ropes along the route that aid climbers to the summit. Like many Sherpa women before her, Furdiki was suddenly alone without a breadwinner to help raise their three children, bearing the stigma of misfortune that can stalk widows in Nepal. A year later, another tragedy brought her into contact with Nima Doma, whose husband was swept to his death with 15 other Nepali guides in a deadly Everest avalanche.

"After our husbands passed away, we spent months just crying at home over their memories. But we had to take care of our family and ourselves. It was not easy to do this as a widow," said Nima Doma. In need of work, the pair sought jobs as trekking guides in the capital Kathmandu,

and often crossed paths as they lit lamps at a local Buddhist stupa for their deceased husbands. "We started sharing our stories, our grief, and what we should do in life," Furdiki said.

After helping guide some amateur treks the women embarked on serious mountaineering training and soon plans to summit Everest took shape. In November, they successfully climbed Island Peak and Chulu Far East Peak, both difficult ascents over 6,000 meters. "They grew up in the mountains," said Ang Tshering Lama, whose Angs Himalayan Adventure company is organizing their 'Two Widow Expedition' to Everest. "As climbers they are very strong and determined."

'Double challenge'

Their Everest dream comes as attitudes toward women and climbing are slowly changing in the overwhelmingly male-dominated industry. Last season 18 women reached the top of Everest—towering over the world at 8,848-metre—a record number, according to Nepal's department of tourism. Women trekking guides are more popular than ever but they are still vastly outnumbered on Everest—and Sherpa women even more so. Close to 4,000 Sherpa men have ascended the peak, according to the reputable Himalayan Database, compared to just 34 women from the legendary ethnic group.

Professional climber Lhakpa Sherpa, 44, is the best known having topped Everest nine times, but she remains very much an anomaly. "Women are rarely encouraged to take up climbing," said Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, the only internationally certified female mountaineering guide in

Nepal. Sherpa society, like many ethnic groups in Nepal, is conservative and patriarchal. Wives and daughters are expected to keep the home fires burning while the men climb mountains.

But many die in the process. The Himalayan Database estimates that as many as one third of all Everest deaths have been Sherpas, leaving women to raise and run households despite the loss of the main breadwinner. "It is difficult and confusing for them. They are usually dependent on their husbands and not educated. And suddenly they are faced with the responsibility of taking care of the family," said Tsering Dolker Sherpa of the Juniper Fund, a non-profit that works with families of deceased mountain workers.

For women left to pick up the pieces, their grief and struggle is compounded by their newfound status as widows, one that carries stigma. In some parts, widows are considered bad luck and ostracized. "Furdiki and Nima Doma are fighting a double challenge stepping into this industry—as women and as widows," said Dawa Yangzum Sherpa, the female professional guide.

The pair said meeting other Sherpa widows who endured discrimination has strengthened their resolve to reach the summit. "We want to climb Everest with a message for widows and single women. We are not less than anyone, we are capable of achieving anything," Nima Doma said. — AFP



In this picture Furdiki Sherpa, left, and Nima Doma Sherpa, the Nepali widows of mountaineers, prepare for their Everest expedition at a shop in Kathmandu. — AFP photos



In this picture Furdiki Sherpa, the Nepali widow of a mountaineer, trains at a climbing gym in Kathmandu.

Hemingway legacy writes unifying chapter for US, Cuba

Ernest Hemingway's legacy helps to bring Americans and Cubans together, an American congressman said as he opened an archive at the legendary writer's onetime home in Havana, despite tensions between the two nations. "Hemingway is once again serving to unite Americans and Cubans," Massachusetts Congressman Jim McGovern said at the ceremony on Saturday at the facility, already a museum chronicling the some 20 years the author spent in Cuba.

The inauguration came against the backdrop of a sharp pivot by the administration of US President Donald Trump following his predecessor Barack Obama's policy of normalization with Havana. "There is no good and rational reason" why the United States and Cuba cannot have normal relations, said McGovern, a Democrat, as flags of the two countries stood behind him. McGovern, who has made numerous trips to the

island, in 2002 established the Finca Vigia Foundation with Jenny and Frank Phillips.

Jenny Phillips, who died last year, was the granddaughter of Hemingway's editor and friend, Maxwell Perkins. Its mission is to work with Cuban colleagues to restore and preserve "Finca Vigia" (Lookout Farm) — the Havana home of the Nobel literature laureate—as well as its contents and his fishing boat. The boat had already been renovated and the home restored "to its 1950s splendor," according to the foundation website.

Now the on-site archival storage facility, whose construction began in 2015, has also opened, with McGovern cutting a ribbon and reviewing the archives, which include Hemingway's passport. The congressman, who favors scrapping the six-decade-old US trade embargo against Cuba, later met with President Miguel Diaz-Canel. Gladys Collazo, director of Cuba's National

Council of Cultural Heritage, said the new facility is the result of collaboration among "people of goodwill" despite the obstacles.

In a separate statement the council said "there are many US interests linked to cultural exchanges with Cuba that are curbed by the setback in bilateral relations." "With very little money, and in the midst of a dauntingly difficult political climate, this project has flourished and continues to grow," the foundation said. Hemingway wrote many of his classics including "For Whom the Bell Tolls" and "The Old Man and the Sea" at Finca Vigia. Most of Hemingway's time in Cuba preceded the 1959 communist revolution. He committed suicide in 1961 after returning to the United States.—AFP



US Democratic congressman for the state of Massachusetts Jim McGovern, chairman of the Rules Committee of the House of Representatives of the US Congress, speaks to the press at the Cuban Higher Institute of International Relations (ISRI) in Havana. — AFP



Ice Skating Rink holds last musical concert

By Nawara Fattahova

Over 3000 people attended the last musical concert held on Friday at the Ice Skating Rink before being demolished soon according to the organizer. The seat were completely sold out with many people crowding outside the rink to attend the concert. The majority of the audiences were youth. The concert started with a performance by young Kuwaiti singer and actor Bader Al-Shieibi. He became popular among the young generation just few years back with his modern mix of Arabic and English songs.

Popular singer Sultan Al-Omani from Oman, who started his career in 2017 and became very popular

through his Iraqi style songs also performed at the concert. This was his third time performance in Kuwait. After the concert he said that Kuwait is the station of success for him. "This concert was very successful, and I'm glad to be here. I would also like to thank the audience for their love to my songs," Al-Omani noted.

The concert was concluded with a performance by Kuwaiti singer Mutref Al-Mutref. Besides his romantic songs, he also presented two of his late father Yusef Al-Mutref's songs in new style. The concert concluded at 1:30 am. The concert was produced by Abdulaziz Al-Zaidi, Managed by Mohammed Shehata, and presented by the popular Kuwaiti TV presenter Halima Buland.



Millennium Hotel holds musical concert

By Nawara Fattahova

The Millennium Hotel hosted a musical concert on Thursday night. It was attended by 1200 people from different ages, due to the variety of singers performing in this concert. The concert started at 10 pm with a performance by Kuwaiti singer Bu Ateej. The concert continued with performances by Kuwait singer Khalid Bu Sakhar and Palestinian young singer Mohammed Assaf. The concert concluded with a performance by popular Lebanese singer Diana Haddad. She started her career in the early 1990s in the UAE and became well-known in all Arab countries. This event was organized by Al Hadaba Music Ramy Omran and sponsored by Sheikh Dueij Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah.



Maisie Williams unsuccessfully predicts final season of GOT

The 21-year-old actress - who plays assassin Arya Stark - sat down with her mum one evening before she received her scripts for the eighth and final series of the HBO fantasy drama to write down what they expected to happen in the last six episodes, but neither of them made the right calls, she recalled: "I said, 'Let's predict the final series. You call who you think is going to be alive and who you think is going to be dead. So will I.' And we did. And we were both wrong." Her co-star, Joe Dempsie - who plays Gendry - admitted one of the first things he did on receiving his scripts was to check to see if he'd won, died or survived. He admitted: "At the top of every script there is a cast list for every character involved in that episode. A few of us were tempted to check if we were in the last one." And asked his fate, he simply said: "Look, Gendry's the last surviving blood Baratheon. He's got to have a pretty strong claim. But I don't even trust the fact that I have the answers in my brain. It feels like you're walking around with a secret that the whole world wants to know." But Kit Harington, whose alter ego Jon Snow is one of the favorites to end up on the

iron throne, didn't look at his scripts until the full cast gathered for a read through, and he delighted them with his reactions. Emilia Clarke, who plays his on-screen lover, Danerys Targaryen, told the Sunday Times magazine: "Kit hadn't even looked at the scripts before the read-through. 'He didn't want to know, so when we all read it out loud, all of us together probably for the first time since series three, Kit's reactions were insane. He was just gawping.'" The 32-year-old actor may have been gripped to the final scripts but he admitted he would have "sneered" at the idea of watching the show when it first began if he hadn't been cast. Kit said: "Had I not been in it, and someone had said, 'Why don't you watch that?' I'd have said, 'Dragons?' I would have sneered at it." Kit - who is married to former co-star Rose Leslie - is proud of the "skill" he has developed in talking about the show without giving away any spoilers. He said: "It's something I pride myself on. Exciting people about it but not telling them anything is a skill that we've all developed in the 'Thrones' cast."



Models display creations from the "Heaven Gaia" collection by Xiong Ying during the China Fashion Week in Beijing. — AFP photos



Models display creations from the "Maryma" collection by Ma Yanli during the China Fashion Week in Beijing.



Lifestyle | Features



An artist paints on a cotton fabric in his workshop, in the village of Fakaha, northern Ivory Coast. — AFP photos



A group of women spin cotton in the village of Fakaha, northern Ivory Coast.

Picasso in Ivory Coast? A village tells of its brush with the artist

"I'm sure! I tell you, he came. I saw him!" insists Soro Navaghi, keen to extinguish any doubts about Picasso's visit to a small Ivorian village famed for its painted textiles. Whether in tourist brochures or online, it is not unusual to find references to Picasso's reputed visit to Fakaha, a remote village in northern Ivory Coast, some 650 kilometers from Abidjan, the economic capital.

French travel guide Petit Fute describes Fakaha as "internationally renowned" for its hand-spun cotton cloth which is painted by the Senufo people and that once "charmed a certain Picasso as he paid a discreet visit to the region at the turn of the century." A whole mythology has grown up around the question of Africa and Picasso, who never spoke of having been to Fakaha.

For the artist who once provocatively brushed off the subject, saying: "Negro art? Don't know it" was also an ardent admirer and passionate collector of African art, who built up an impressive private collection. Highlighting the resemblance between African sculpture and some of Picasso's work, many art critics see the symbolism and imagery of Africa as one of his sources of inspiration.

One often-cited example is the striking similarity between an African Grebo mask and one of the faces in his 1907 work "Les Femmes d'Alger". "Whenever someone emphasized the influence of African art on the development of his own work, he would shrug his shoulders, annoyed at being reduced to that: although it is certain he was influenced by it from 1906 when he experienced his first (African) sculptures," says Gilles Plazy, one of his biographers. "Picasso used everything that came through his door and integrated it into the constant evolution of his artistic process," he told AFP. "He opened up new paths."

Out of the bush, barefoot

For the several hundred residents of Fakaha, there is no question about where the celebrated Andalusian artist and sculptor found his inspiration, after stumbling upon their village some 15 km from the main road to Korhogo. For decades, these local artists have been hard at work in open huts around a sandy track, where they can be found smearing earth-based pigments onto canvas. Their dexterity is fascinating, their moves precise. Working with knives or sticks, they plunge their tools into the bowls of color, quickly transforming the white cotton into a work of art covered with animal motifs and figures in masks.

And there is an element of Picasso in it, with a definite



An artist in his workshop shows a painting assumed to be made by Spanish artist Pablo Picasso.

similarity between his works and those of the artists of Fakaha. But is this just a random resemblance or creative coincidence? Or did Pablo Picasso actually see or even own one of the Fakaha canvases? "I tell you, he came here. He was inspired by us," repeats Soro Navaghi, aged in his 60s. Picasso apparently broke down while driving to Korhogo, but set off on foot and eventually turned up in the village "bare chested and without shoes", Navaghi says. The artist stayed there for several days and even gave the villagers some advice, they say.

A Picasso self-portrait?

"It was him who taught us to use sponges and toothbrushes to be quicker and more precise," says Silue Naganki, one of the artists who takes his inspiration from long-dead ancestors. "Before him, we never used the frames either. It was him who advised us to paint the

frames." Ducking into his house, Soro Navaghi comes up with the "ultimate proof"—a cotton canvas featuring Picasso himself. The fabric is covered with multiple motifs of a bald, white man, sometimes wearing shorts, sometimes in a grass skirt, who is variously clutching a pencil or paintbrush or even some twigs.

A self-portrait by the master! Surely there can be no doubt, even for an amateur, that this is Picasso, proclaims Navaghi. Attached to the canvas is a self-declared certificate of authenticity signed by a travel agent who attests to having witnessed the visit. "Picasso came barefoot to Fakaha in 1968. He worked shirtless and without clothes," says the document, a copy of the original which is kept in the village archives for safekeeping.

For biographer Plazy, the account would have delighted the eclectic painter, the idea of him visiting Fakaha "like a magician, and infusing the traditional local art with an

international attention to the sport. Popular for centuries on the sub-continent, tent-pegging has become a dying pastime in Pakistan, mainly kept alive in wealthy Punjab province.

There it remains part of cultural celebrations in urban areas, where riders dress up in traditional waistcoats and turbans of vibrant colors while horses are fitted with shining saddles. Muhammad Sohail, one of the participants in Tulamba, took the opportunity to call for more support for the sport. "We are promoting this sport on our own," he said, calling on the Pakistani government to help. In 2018 Pakistan qualified for the first time in a decade to participate in the tent-pegging World Cup held in the UAE. A total of 12 teams participated in the event.—AFP

But, he told the crowd, they established a record for 120 horses reaching the finish line in 166 seconds, and for uprooting 90 tent pegs at once, among others. They are awaiting final confirmation from Guinness officials. Organizers hope the bid will draw much-needed interna-

Pakistanis seek world record in ancient sport of tent-pegging

Traditional drumbeats and melodious shahnai flutes are drowned out by thundering hooves in the small Pakistani city of Tulamba, as riders pound down a dusty track seeking world record glory in the ancient sport of tent-pegging. Riders in bright costumes drive their lances into the targets, wooden pegs embedded in the dry ground, their aim sometimes obscured by the dust kicked up by other competitors.



These photographs show Pakistani horse riders with lances used to pick up pegs during an attempt for a Guinness World Record for tent pegging in Khanewal district in Punjab province. — AFP photos



Pakistani traditional drummers perform during an attempt by Pakistani horse riders for a Guinness World Record for tent pegging.

invigorating breath of fresh air. "That is a fantastic tale which would have pleased him very much," he told AFP. "There were a lot of stories about Pablo Picasso, and since he had a sense of humor, he would sometimes pretend some of them were true."

End of his life

Picasso died in 1973 at the age of 91, and other villagers concede that his visit was probably earlier than 1968 given his age by then. At that time, the world-renowned painter, in his mid-80s, would have walked 15 km through the bush, chancing upon a village with no electricity or running water and staying there several days. And all this passing under the radar... Even though Picasso continued working until his death, it certainly wasn't only at the end of his life that African influences appear in his works.

But could he have been in Fakaha around the turn of the century, as travel guide Petit Fute suggests? If there is no trace of Picasso's visit, it is because he wanted it to be kept secret and not give away the fact that he had been inspired by Fakaha, a young villager says.

Picasso impersonator?

If he did make the journey, Picasso would have had to take a boat to Abidjan, then travel the remaining 1,000 km by road in scorching, dry conditions with little shade from the sun—an adventure more suited to an explorer. Such an epic trip would have taken at least several months, and would likely have featured in one of his biographies.

Even so, the story retains an element of mysterious intrigue. In a bid to seek expert input, AFP contacted the Picasso Museum in Paris, which declined to comment, then spoke with several of his biographers, who also refused to be pinned down. One theory put forward by residents of the city of Korhogo is that it was a false Picasso—a man who clearly resembled the famed Spanish painter and fooled the villagers by pretending to be him. But that also raises a question: why? —AFP



The Louvre pyramid is seen during preparations for the installation of French contemporary artist and photographer Jean Rene, aka JR, in the main courtyard of the Louvre Museum in Paris. — AFP

French artist JR promises latest work will reveal Louvre pyramid's 'secret'

French artist JR on Friday put the final touches to a huge collage in the courtyard of the Louvre, his latest eye-popping project unveiled to mark the 30th birthday of the Louvre's glass pyramid. Some 400 volunteers working in teams of 50 spent four days pasting strips of printed paper on the cobles of the courtyard, creating a giant patchwork around the pyramid commissioned by late Socialist president Francois Mitterrand.

JR, who has been dubbed the "French Banksy" after the British street artist, is famous for blowing up photographs—often of people—into huge collages that have graced the wall between Jerusalem and the West Bank and the Rio favelas, among other sites. The artist promised that his latest work—created using a technique that distorts the image of the subject unless viewed from a specific angle—would reveal "the Secret of the Great Pyramid."

A camera on the roof of the Louvre fed images to two giant screens which appeared to show the pyramid emerging from its foundations, as if from a giant quarry of white rock. "There are more than 2,000 strips to paste on the ground, each ten metres long, so it's a huge puzzle. And when you're on the puzzle you don't see what you're doing," the artist told AFP. "It's great. We're like children watching this pyramid grow before our eyes."

Hated by many Parisians when it was unveiled 30 years ago on Friday, Chinese-American architect I. M. Pei's creation has wormed its way into their hearts and is now revered like one of the Louvre's greatest treasures, such as the "Mona Lisa" and the "Venus de Milo". Three years ago JR, whose real name is Jean Rene, gave the pyramid a very different treatment, covering it in a giant trompe-l'oeil that made it look as if it had disappeared. — AFP

One year on, tough times loom for Ethiopia's Ahmed

ADDIS ABABA: In his first speech as Ethiopian prime minister last April, Abiy Ahmed called for an end to the repressive, exclusionary governance that had plunged the country into turmoil. It was a promise on which he is seen to have delivered dramatically, earning him both international acclaim and domestic popularity so great that his keenest supporters say he deserves a Nobel Peace Prize. "Before Abiy came, our fear was that Ethiopia would descend into civil war," said Hassen Hussein, a top official in the Oromo Democratic Front, one of the many banned groups welcomed back from exile.

Yet the new prime minister's first year in office has also been marked by a surge in ethnic violence that has forced 1.8 million people out of their homes. While Abiy has remade the public face of the ruling omnipotent Ethiopian People's Revolutionary Democratic Front (EPRDF), diplomats and politicians say politics remains very much as usual at the local level. "Many people, especially at the grassroots level, are asking, where is the change?" said Merera Gudina, a top opposition politician. "Both the depth and pace of change... people are really doubting."

As Abiy enters his second year in office, he faces a new challenge: Keeping his promise to make 2020 elections free and fair despite rising political violence. Abiy, who was sworn into power on April 2, 2018, took office following the resignation of his predecessor Hailemariam Desalegn, after more than two years of anti-government protests and growing discord within the EPRDF.

A former science minister, Abiy comes from the Oromo people, Ethiopia's largest ethnic group. He rose up through the military and intelligence services, reaching the rank of lieutenant colonel. The 42-year-old won over Ethiopians with his rapid, dramatic reforms, often delivered with a personal touch. He met publicly with newly-freed political prisoners and held repeated meetings with old foe Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki to negotiate a July 2018 agreement re-establishing relations following a

bloody 1998-2000 border war.

"For the first time in the country's history, he is negotiating with the opposition," said Merera, who was jailed under Hailemariam, then released on the eve of his resignation. But Merera worries whether the four parties that make up the EPRDF - and especially the old guard from the Tigrayan minority that dominated the coalition until Abiy's rise - really support him. "We are not sure the degree to which the EPRDF is committed," he said.

At the local level, politics has changed little. "The ruling party is the ruling party; the cadres are the same, the service delivery is the same," Merera said. Those who have met the prime minister worry over his tendency to show off his accomplishments while revealing little about his plans to tackle the country's challenges.

Abiy made headlines last October by appointing a cabinet in which half the ministers were women. But critics say he has taken power into his own hands and sidelined government ministries. "It's a one-man show... it's not a functional government," one foreign diplomat told AFP, adding that among embassies, "a few eyebrows are now rising." Shortly after Abiy took office, a long-running dispute over land in southern Ethiopia's West Guji and Gedee zones erupted into ethnic fighting that forced nearly a million people from their homes.

Such violence continued through Abiy's first year. Last September at least 58 people, mostly from minority ethnic groups, were killed on the outskirts of the capital Addis Ababa, while aid groups said in December that ethnic violence in western Ethiopia had displaced 250,000 people. Analysts have blamed rising violence on a slackening of the tight control the EPRDF once maintained on regional security forces and administration.

Abiy has touted his moves to improve media freedom - following in the footsteps of Hailemariam, who released several prominent jailed journalists - but instability threatens this progress. Elias Kifle, who heads the online



AMBO, Ethiopia: In this file photo taken on April 11, 2018, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed reacts during a rally. — AFP

news outlet Mereja, believes Oromo police officers sanctioned the February mob beating two of his journalists in the town of Legetafo. "I considered it not only an attack on the media, but on the reform," he said, adding that he does not blame the prime minister for the assault.

In a sign of the country's apparent precariousness,

officials in March postponed a national census, which was seen as a precursor to next year's vote. "Damned if you do, damned if you don't," Hassen said of the elections. "With the level of polarization that exists now, I'm not sure an election would do any good for Ethiopia and Ethiopians." — AFP

Israelis to speak at Bahrain forum

DUBAI: Several Israeli speakers are to appear at a business conference in Bahrain next month, a move condemned by MPs in the tiny Gulf state yesterday. At least three Israeli speakers, including the Israel Innovation Authority's deputy chief Anya Eldan, are scheduled to speak at the Global Entrepreneurship Congress in Manama, according to the forum's website. Members of parliament said Sunday they were against hosting Israeli speakers in Bahrain, which - like most Arab states - does not recognize the Jewish state.

"Parliament stresses its support for the just cause of the brotherly Palestinian people, and it will remain a priority for the Bahraini and Arab people," it said in a statement published on its official Facebook page. "The end of the Israeli occupation and the withdraw-

al from all Arab land is an absolute necessity for the stability and security of the region and for a fair and comprehensive peace."

Officially, Israel only has diplomatic relations with two Arab states, neighboring Egypt and Jordan. The Jewish state has long faced resistance to its efforts to improve ties with Arab nations because of its 50-year occupation of Arab territories. It has, however, recently seen increased behind-the-scenes cooperation with some Arab countries, particularly in tackling their shared enemy, Iran.

Bahrain's foreign minister, Sheikh Khalid Al-Khalifa, last year backed Israel's right to "defend itself" after its military said it struck dozens of Iranian military targets in Syria. He said Iran had "breached the status quo in the region and invaded countries with its forces and missiles." "Any state in the region, including Israel, is entitled to defend itself by destroying sources of danger," he wrote on Twitter. Also in 2018, Bahrain hosted a UNESCO conference attended by an Israeli delegation. — AFP

Biden bids to quell storm over kiss

WASHINGTON: Former vice president Joe Biden insisted yesterday he has never acted inappropriately towards women as a growing row about a kiss on the campaign trail cast a shadow over his expected run for the White House. The 76-year-old Biden is the clear favorite to win the Democratic nomination to take on Donald Trump in the 2020 presidential election even though he has yet to declare his candidacy.

But several of his rivals have now weighed in on the allegations from a former state lawmaker who has recalled being "mortified" when Biden planted a "big, slow kiss" on the back of her head on the sidelines of a rally in Nevada five years ago. The New York Post on Saturday ran a gallery of photographs of Biden's "most touchy-feely moments", embracing and kissing women at public events over the years.

His 39-year-old accuser Lucy Flores said in a new television interview that Biden's behavior meant he should not run for president shortly after Biden released a statement trying to quell the storm. "In my many years on the campaign trail and in public life, I have offered countless handshakes, hugs, expressions of affection, support and comfort. And not once - never - did I believe I acted inappropriately," Biden said in his statement released by his spokesman on Twitter.

"If it is suggested that I did so, I will listen respectfully. But it was never my intention. I may not recall these moments the same way, and I may be surprised at what I hear. But we have arrived at an important time when women feel they can and should relate their experiences, and men should pay attention. And I will."

Flores, who was a state lawmaker at the time, had been running for the post of Nevada lieutenant governor when Biden appeared at a rally to offer support when Barack Obama's number two. In response to Biden's statement, Flores said she was "glad he's willing to listen" but added that his behavior should rule him out from seeking the Democratic nomination against a president who has himself faced multiple accusations of sexual harassment.

"For me it's disqualifying," she told CNN. "Yes, of course I want him to change his behavior. And I want him to acknowledge this was wrong. I want this to be a bigger discussion about how there is no accountability



LAS VEGAS: In this file photo taken on Nov 1, 2014, Nevada Assemblywoman Lucy Flores introduces former US Vice President Joe Biden at a get-out-the-vote rally at a union hall. — AFP

structure within our political space either for instances in which women feel that there was inappropriate behavior or more serious instances."

Biden has previously acknowledged that his "tactile" behavior could land him in trouble, especially in the #MeToo era which has already torpedoed the careers of several US politicians, including the former Democrat senator Al Franken. Senators Amy Klobuchar and Elizabeth Warren, who are also running for president, both said Flores' account should be regarded as credible while another Democratic candidate, former Colorado governor John Hickenlooper, said it was "very disconcerting".

Asked if the allegations were disqualifying, Bernie Sanders - who is running second to Biden in the opinion polls among Democrat supporters - said it was a decision only Biden could make. "I'm not sure that one incident alone disqualifies anybody, but her point is absolutely right. This is an issue not just for Democrats or Republicans, but the entire country has got to take seriously," he told CBS.

Biden has had a reputation in Washington for awkwardly touching the wives, mothers or daughters of senators during swearing-in ceremonies, and he came under criticism for massaging the shoulders of new defense secretary Ash Carter's wife in 2015. White House advisor Kellyanne Conway claimed on Fox News that Biden had a "big problem," adding that there was multiple footage of him behaving in a "creepy" way. Trump himself suffered a major embarrassment during the 2016 campaign when an old recording of him bragging about assaulting women was made public although he has since disputed whether it was actually his voice. — AFP

Amir urges unity and concerted response...

Continued from Page 1

Arab leaders, long divided by regional rivalries, condemned yesterday a US decision to recognize Israel's sovereignty over the Golan Heights and said Middle East stability depended on creating a Palestinian state. Arab leaders have been under popular pressure to reject Washington's action, while they also grapple with regional differences, including a bitter Gulf Arab dispute, splits over Iran's regional influence, the war in Yemen and unrest in Algeria and Sudan.

The abrupt departure from the summit of Qatari Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al-Thani, who is locked in a row with Saudi Arabia and other Arab allies, suggested regional differences were not easily buried. No reason was given for his departure. Saudi Arabia's King Salman bin Abdulaziz told Arab monarchs, presidents and prime ministers at the meeting that his country "absolutely rejects" any measures affecting Syria's sovereignty over the Golan Heights.

President Donald Trump's signed a proclamation last week recognizing the Golan Heights as part of Israel, which annexed the area in 1981 after capturing it from Syria in 1967. The Saudi king's condemnation echoed those of Arab officials before yesterday's summit of the Arab League, which usually ends with a final declaration agreed by the 22 member states. Trump's Golan decision followed a US move less than four months ago to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, a decision that also drew Arab condemnation. Palestinians want East Jerusalem as the capital of a future state.

Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi said Arab leaders also needed to ensure the international community understood the importance of the Palestinian cause to Arab

nations. Regional and international stability should come through "a just and comprehensive settlement that includes the rights of the Palestinian people and leads to the establishment of a Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital," Essebsi said. UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, who addressed the meeting in Tunis, said any resolution to the Syrian conflict must guarantee the territorial integrity of Syria "including the occupied Golan Heights".

The Tunis summit brought together the rulers of Saudi Arabia and Qatar for the first time at the same gathering since 2017 when Riyadh and its allies imposed a political and economic boycott on Doha. But Qatar's amir left the summit hall shortly after Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit praised the way Saudi Arabia handled its rotating Arab League presidency last year, live television footage showed. Qatar's state news agency did not say why Sheikh Tamim left, but Tunisia's state news agency TAP said the rest of Qatar's delegation stayed.

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt accuse Qatar of supporting terrorism and say it has been cozying up to Iran, a charge Doha denies. The row has defied mediation efforts by Kuwait and the United States, which called Gulf Arab states to unite in opposition to Iranian influence in the region. King Salman, whose country has long vied with Iran for influence, called for confronting what he called the "aggressive policies of the Iranian regime". He said Iran was interfering in Arab affairs, a charge Tehran dismisses.

Arab states remain divided over other issues, including how to deal with pro-democracy protests that have erupted in the region since 2011. The leaders of Sudan and Algeria were not at yesterday's meeting as both nations have been roiled by anti-government protests. Syria's seat at the summit was vacant, Damascus as been suspended from the League since 2011 over its crackdown on protesters at the start of its civil war. The League has said no consensus has yet been reached to allow Syria's reinstatement. — Agencies



TUNIS: (From left) EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, Chairperson of the African Union Commission Moussa Faki and UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres listen as delegates address the opening session of the 30th Arab League summit yesterday. — AFP

'Edtech' boom transforms how...

Continued from Page 1

Edtech platforms are also taking off in other Asian countries, notably China and Taiwan. "We wanted to make education fun," said Manish Dhooper, the founder of New Delhi-based Planet Spark, which uses "gamified" teaching methods.

Garima Dhir enrolled her six-year-old boy into a Planet Spark program to study maths and English because she wanted him to get used to using technology at a young age. "With interactive classes, my son is picking concepts without any stress and enjoying the process without fear of failure," she told AFP. Robomate, Toppr, Simplilearn, Meritnation and Edureka are others in the market. India has an estimated 270 million children aged between five and 17. Its online education sector is projected to be worth \$2 billion to Asia's third-largest economy by 2021, according to research published by accounting group KPMG two years ago.

With revenues heading for \$200 million, Byju's says it has around 32 million users in India using its e-tutorials that feature animations, live classes and educational

games to match India's school curriculum. It has raised more than \$1 billion in funding since the beginning of last year, including from Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg, valuing the firm at around \$5.4 billion. "We want to be the largest education company in the world," founder Byju Raveendran, 39, whose stake in Byju's is now thought to be worth almost \$2 billion, told AFP.

Analysts say technology has the power to transform education in India but note that at the moment it is largely the domain of middle-class families. A year-long subscription to Byju's can cost upwards of \$150 for example, a small fortune for the majority of Indians. At a state-run school in Mumbai teacher Pooja Prashant Sankhe is using technology in a rather different way to change how her pupils engage with lessons.

The 45-year-old hides an Amazon Echo device in a shop window mannequin. When AFP visited children aged 11 approached and asked questions such as, "Alexa, how many states are there in India?" They also did sums and then asked Alexa for the answer to find out if they had done them correctly. The device plays the Indian national anthem at the start of the school day and healing music during meditation sessions. Indian media have carried reports of a teacher doing the same thing in another school in rural Maharashtra state, of which Mumbai is the capital. "The kids get really excited when they ask her questions," said Sankhe, 45. "Pupils are coming to school more regularly now because of Alexa," she added. — AFP

Sports

NY Islanders down Buffalo Sabres, clinch playoff berth

Kings' OT win dims Blackhawks' playoff hopes

NEW YORK: Anthony Beauvillier scored twice Saturday night for the New York Islanders, who capped one of the most remarkable stories of the NHL regular season by clinching a playoff berth with a 5-1 win over the visiting Buffalo Sabres. Jordan Eberle, Michael Dal Colle and Ryan Pulock also scored for the Islanders (46-26-7), who will return to the playoffs for the first time since 2016 thanks to a raucous victory in a building they thought they'd left in the spring of 2015. The Islanders moved from Nassau Coliseum to Brooklyn's Barclays Center following the 2014-15 season but began splitting their home schedule between the two arenas this season as they wait for construction to begin on a proposed hockey-only building at the Nassau/Queens border. The Islanders are 12-6-2 at the Coliseum and will close out their home schedule there Monday. They will be hosting the Toronto Maple Leafs and former teammate John Tavares in the home finale. All first-round home games will be played at the Coliseum. Should New York advance, it will head back to Barclays Center for home games in subsequent rounds.

KINGS 3, BLACKHAWKS 2 (OT)

Drew Doughty scored with 12 seconds remaining in overtime as Los Angeles dealt a major blow to visiting Chicago's fading playoff chances. Playing with a one-man advantage after a late penalty by the Blackhawks' Jonathan Toews, Doughty powered in his game-winner from the top of the right circle and through Chicago goaltender Corey Crawford. It was Doughty's seventh goal of the season. Austin Wagner and Michael Amadio also scored for the Kings. Amadio's goal with just over four minutes remaining in regulation sent the game into overtime.

HURRICANES 5, FLYERS 2

Carolina scored twice on power plays in a victory in Raleigh, N.C., which eliminated Philadelphia from playoff contention. Teuvo Teravainen, Dougie Hamilton, Justin Faulk, Jacob Slavin and Brock McGinn scored for the Hurricanes, who strengthened their hold on the top

Eastern Conference wild-card spot. The Hurricanes scored two goals in a 21-second span in the first period to wipe out a one-goal deficit and later added two empty-net goals.

BLUE JACKETS 5, PREDATORS 2

Cam Atkinson scored twice to tie the franchise record for goals in a season, and Artemi Panarin collected four assists to set a team record for points in a campaign as visiting Columbus beat Nashville to remain in a playoff spot. Sergei Bobrovsky stopped 23 shots for the Blue Jackets (44-30-4, 92 points), who have won four straight and are one point back of the Hurricanes for the first wild-card spot. Columbus is tied with the Montreal Canadiens, but holds the second wild-card spot with the tiebreaker. Nashville's two-game winning streak was snapped on a night the Predators (44-29-6, 94 points) failed to take advantage of an opportunity to claim the top spot in the Central Division.

CANADIENS 3, JETS 1

Joel Armia, Jeff Petry and Jordan Weal all scored as visiting Montreal held on to claim a win over Winnipeg that was crucial to their playoff hopes. Montreal goalie Carey Price stopped 23 shots in a victory that keeps his team in the thick of the playoff race, along with fellow wild-card candidates Carolina and Columbus. Montreal (42-29-8, 92 points) is on a 5-1-1 roll, though the Canadiens have one fewer game remaining than the Hurricanes and Blue Jackets.

SENATORS 4, MAPLE LEAFS 2

Anthony Duclair scored twice, including an empty-netter, as Ottawa defeated visiting Toronto, which missed a chance to clinch a playoff berth. Craig Anderson made 42 saves for the last-place Senators, who improved to 6-7-1 under interim coach Marc Crawford. Magnus Paajarvi and Cody Ceci also scored for Ottawa, which took a 2-0 lead into the third period before the Maple Leafs tied it with goals 27 seconds apart. Brady Tkachuk and Colin White each had two



UNIONDALE: Mathew Barzal #13 of the New York Islanders runs into linesman Steve Barton #59 during the game against the Buffalo Sabres at NYCB Live's Nassau Coliseum in Uniondale, New York. The Islanders defeated the Sabres 5-1 to qualify for the playoffs. — AFP

assists for the Senators.

CAPITALS 6, LIGHTNING 3

Alex Ovechkin scored twice to eclipse the 50-goal mark, and Nicklas Backstrom and T.J. Oshie each had two goals and an assist as visiting Washington beat Tampa Bay. Ovechkin scored from the low slot at 14:35 of the third period, marking the eighth time he has

reached the 50-goal milestone, and his 51st came less than two minutes later on the power play. Only Wayne Gretzky and Mike Bossy, each with nine, have more 50-goal seasons. Goaltender Braden Holtby stopped 25 shots to win his 31st game for the Capitals, who have won 14 of their last 19 and salvaged the final meeting in the three-game season series (1-1-1) over 15 days against Tampa Bay. — Reuters

Park In-bee birdies 18 to seize LPGA Kia Classic lead

LOS ANGELES: South Korean Park In-bee drained a long birdie putt at the 18th hole on Saturday to grab a one-shot lead over Japan's Nasa Hataoka in the LPGA Kia Classic. Park, a seven-time major champion seeking to end a year-long title drought, carded her second straight five-under par 67 at Aviara Golf Club in Carlsbad, California.

Her 14-under par total of 202 put her one in front of Hataoka, who had eight birdies without a bogey in her 64 for 203. Park, seeking a 20th LPGA title in this last event before the first major of the year, the ANA Inspiration, said the key to her round was "a combination of consistency and the putting."

"I holed some good putts, especially on the back nine," she said. "Just the feel on the greens is really good this week and I really want to keep that going tomorrow." Hataoka, 20, is trying to add to the two titles she won last season.

"I started out playing really well,

attacking the pins, and had a lot of par saves as well, good par saves," she said, adding that she wanted to take advantage of good scoring conditions. South Korea's Hur Mi-jung made the most of them, firing a tournament record 62 that included seven of her 10 birdies on the back nine.

"I got goosebumps," she said. "So excited playing the back nine. (I) had great shots and great putts and made seven birdies in a row." Her sparkling effort left her tied with world number one Park Sung-Hyun (71) on 205 — a stroke behind Thailand's Thidapa Suwannapura.

Thidapa, tied for the overnight lead with Park Sung-hyun, carded a 70 while the South Korean posted a 71 — bouncing back from a double-bogey and two bogeys in her first six holes with six birdies before a bogey at the last.

Earlier, Sergio Garcia blundered with a hasty stroke Saturday to lose a hole in falling to Matt Kuchar at the WGC Match Play Championship, then asked his US rival to surrender a hole. The odd situation came in Kuchar's 2-up victory over Spain's Garcia in a quarter-final match at Austin (Texas) Country Club.

Garcia missed a seven-foot par putt at the par-3 seventh hole, his ball an inch from the cup, set for Kuchar to concede and halve the hole. But an irked Garcia followed his shot by quickly brushing the



CARLSBAD: Park In-bee of Korea hits her tee shot on the fourth hole during the third round of the Kia Classic at the Aviara Golf Club in Carlsbad, California. — AFP

ball and it lipped out, all of it before Kuchar could concede the putt and as a result, Garcia lost the hole.

That led to tense moments for the remainder of the match, notably an exchange between the two on the 10th hole which Kuchar later said was the two getting "on the same page." "I said, 'Sergio, I didn't say anything. I'm not sure how this works out,'" Kuchar said. "I didn't want that to be an issue... Sergio said totally his mistake. He knew he

made a mistake." But when Kuchar added, "I didn't want that to be how a hole was won or lost," Garcia replied, "Well, you can concede a hole." "I thought about it and said I don't like that idea, either," Kuchar said.

Garcia, who was disqualified from the Saudi Arabia International in February after damaging several greens in frustration, admitted his blunder after the match, which he took to the 18th hole before being eliminated. — AFP

Lopez wins Tour of Catalonia

BARCELONA: Colombian Miguel Angel Lopez of the Astana team withstood a late attack by Briton Adam Yates to claim victory in the Tour of Catalonia yesterday. Lopez went into the seventh and final stage with a 14sec overnight lead over Mitchelton-Scott rider Yates, who eventually finished second ahead of two more Colombians in Egan Bernal (COL/SKY) 55, 7, Adam Yates (GBR/MIT) 55, 8, Nairo Quintana (COL/MOV) 55, 9, Steven Kruijswijk (NED/JUM) 55, 10, Michael Woods (CAN/EFI) 55

The stage, a hilly 143km ride that started and ended in Barcelona with the biggest climb an ascent up the 485m Creu d'Ordal, was won by Italian Davide Formolo of the Bora-Hansgrohe team. The day's racing was marred, however, by a heavy crash of around 20 riders. Romain Bardet, Simon Geschke and Gari Bravo were all taken to hospital for treatment, while Marc Soler also pulled out.

Results from yesterday's seventh and final stage of the Tour of Catalonia

1. Davide Formolo (ITA/BOR) 3hr 19min 41sec, 2. Enric Mas (ESP/DEC) at 51sec, 3. Maximilian Schachmann (GER/BOR) 53, 4. Dion Smith (NZL/MIT) 55, 5. Alejandro Valverde (ESP/MOV) 55, 6. Egan Bernal (COL/SKY) 55, 7. Adam Yates (GBR/MIT) 55, 8. Nairo Quintana (COL/MOV) 55, 9. Steven Kruijswijk (NED/JUM) 55, 10. Michael Woods (CAN/EFI) 55

Overall standings

1. Miguel Angel Lopez (COL/Astana) 29hr 14min 17sec, 2. Adam Yates (GBR/MIT) at 14sec, 3. Egan Bernal (COL/SKY) 17, 4. Nairo Quintana (COL/MOV) 25, 5. Steven Kruijswijk (NED/JUM) 56, 6. Michael Woods (CAN/EFI) 1:42, 7. Rafal Majka (POL/BOR) 2:27, 8. Guillaume Martin (FRA/WGG) 2:41, 9. Enric Mas (ESP/DEC) 2:49, 10. Alejandro Valverde (ESP/MOV) 3:02. — AFP

Gvozdyk retains WBC light heavyweight title as Ngumbu hurt

WASHINGTON: Unbeaten Oleksandr Gvozdyk retained his World Boxing Council light heavyweight title Saturday with a fifth-round technical knockout of Doudou Ngumbu, who was halted by a right leg injury.

Ukraine's Gvozdyk, making his first defense of a title he won with a devastating knockout of Adonis Stevenson in December, improved to 17-0 with 14 knockouts. Although Gvozdyk had some trouble with Ngumbu's awkward

style, he connected with a hard right in the first round and a left hook in the fourth.

The champion was leading on the cards when the proceedings at the 2300 Arena in South Philadelphia came to an anti-climactic ending as Congolese-born French fighter Ngumbu suddenly pulled back in the fifth round and limped into a corner.

The bout was paused for a few minutes before referee Eric Dali finally called a halt at 58 seconds of the fifth round. A distraught Ngumbu, his first world title challenge in ruins, wept in his corner after falling to 38-9 with 14 knockouts. "It definitely didn't happen what I expected and wasn't what he expected," Gvozdyk said. "I just tried to do my best. I don't know what happened actually."

Gvozdyk's previous fight against Stevenson had near-tragic consequences as the 31-year-old Canadian, who was making his 10th title defense, suffered traumatic brain injury and was in a coma for several weeks. — AFP



Oleksandr Gvozdyk

Tiger loses to Bjerregaard in WGC Match Play quarter-final

WASHINGTON: Tiger Woods won a dramatic morning showdown with Rory McIlroy only to be upset by Denmark's Lucas Bjerregaard in Saturday's quarter-finals of the WGC Match Play Championship.

Woods, a 14-time major champion seeking a fourth WGC Match Play title, defeated McIlroy 2&1 in a morning knockout match only to fall 1-up to the 50th-seeded Dane, dropping the 18th hole when he missed a four-foot par putt.

"We read it inside left center and it went left," Woods said. "It was just one of those weird spots. It's match play. They are going to put the pins in difficult spots and we just have to make the shots."

Bjerregaard, who will face US 23rd seed Matt Kuchar in a semi-final, marveled at his achievement and the crowds Woods drew to Austin (Texas) Country Club. "We had a great match. It's a shame it had to end like this," Bjerregaard said. "I enjoyed playing with him. It was a cool experience. To say I've beaten Tiger, it's right up there."

"It's so different to what I've ever experienced before. I've never heard so many yells, his name all the way around. It was really enjoyable but it must be hard to do that every day." Italy's Francesco Molinari, the highest remaining seed at seventh, will meet US 48th seed Kevin Kisner, last year's runner-up to Bubba Watson, in Sunday's other morning semi-final to set up an 18-hole afternoon championship final.

Bjerregaard, who also ousted Sweden's Henrik Stenson 3&2, opened with a 5-foot birdie then rallied after Woods answered with three consecutive birdies. A bogey was enough for Woods to win the par-3 11th for a 1-up lead. Both birdied 12 and 13, then Bjerregaard missed long birdie putts to halve 14 and 15. Bjerregaard sank a 29-foot eagle putt at the par-5 16th to level the match, then drained a 13-footer for birdie at the par-3 17th, forcing Woods to sink a tense six-footer for birdie to stay level as they reached the 18th.

"His ball flight was low and in these conditions that was advantageous," Woods said. Woods chipped into a bunker but blasted out and, after Bjerregaard missed a birdie putt to win, the 43-year-old American lipped out his last putt.

Woods, the 13th seed, never trailed in taking full advantage of McIlroy's struggles with the putter and a double-bogey disaster at the 16th hole as spectators roared. "It was big for us inside the ropes too," Woods said. "It was fun for us. We battled hard against each other. I was fortunate to come out on top."

McIlroy, who had dropped only three holes in three matches, was 3-down after 10 against Woods but birdied to win 12 and 13 and looked to win 16 after Woods buried his tee shot under a bunker lip.

Instead, McIlroy followed a mammoth tee shot by finding a right rough slope, chipping over the green against a boundary mark, chipping again into a bunker and blasting out to two feet before surrendering the hole. — AFP

Sports

Harden hits 50, posts triple-double as Rockets trip Kings 119-108

Grizzlies edge Suns despite Booker's 48 points

HOUSTON: James Harden recorded a 50-point triple-double, and the Houston Rockets fended off the hot-shooting Sacramento Kings for a 119-108 victory on Saturday at Toyota Center. Harden posted his ninth 50-point game on the season while producing 50 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists. With the Rockets clinging to a 101-100 lead midway through the fourth quarter, Harden sank three free throws, converted back-to-back floaters, and added a 3-pointer to extend the advantage to 111-102. Harden reached 50 points with two free throws with 48.8 seconds remaining. The 50-point triple-double was the fifth of his career. Clint Capela added 24 points and 15 rebounds, while Chris Paul chipped in 22 points and five assists for the Rockets. The Kings were officially eliminated from playoff contention after going 0 for 5 from behind the arc in the fourth quarter. The Kings entered the period 15 of 24 on 3s. Bogdan Bogdanovic paced the Kings with 24 points off the bench, while Buddy Hield added 21 points and De'Aaron Fox paired 18 points with 10 assists.

MAGIC 121, PACERS 116

Khem Birch gave visiting Orlando the lead for good with a dunk in the second minute of the fourth quarter en route to a win over Indiana in an important game for both teams. A seventh win in their past eight games allowed the Magic (38-39) to move within one game of .500 in a tightly bunched group of five teams vying for the final three playoff spots in the Eastern Conference. Aaron Gordon led the Magic with 23 points, 10 rebounds and seven assists, with more than half his points coming on four 3-pointers. Darren Collison led Indiana with 24 points to go with nine assists, and Bojan Bogdanovic had 22 points.

GRIZZLIES 120, SUNS 115

Jonas Valanciunas scored 14 of his career-best 34 points in the fourth quarter and also collected 20 rebounds as Memphis posted a road win over Phoenix. Mike Conley added 33 points for Memphis, which survived 48 points by Phoenix's Devin Booker. The Suns

star was 19-of-29 shooting while looking for his third straight 50-point game after scoring 59 and 50 in his previous two games. Deandre Ayton had 17 points and 13 rebounds for the Suns before leaving with a sprained left ankle with 3:03 left in the third quarter. The rookie center exited shortly after scoring a basket and noticeably expressed his anguish on the way back upcourt.

76ERS 118, TIMBERWOLVES 109

Tobias Harris scored 25 points, and Ben Simmons had 20 points, 11 rebounds and nine assists to lift visiting Philadelphia over Minnesota. Jonah Bolden scored a career-high 19 points, JJ Redick added 16 and Jimmy Butler had 12 points and 13 rebounds. Mike Scott also had 10 points off the bench. All-Star center Joel Embiid sat out for the Sixers for load management, but they managed to win their second in a row. Andrew Wiggins paced the Timberwolves with 24 points, while Karl-Anthony Towns added 21. Gorgui Dieng chipped in 13.

PISTONS 99, TRAIL BLAZERS 90

Suddenly short-handed Detroit snapped Portland's win streak at six with a home victory. The Pistons, who improved to 39-37, have won 11 in a row at home. Detroit won in an unlikely way, losing star forward Blake Griffin shortly before tipoff and catching fire only after a woeful first half of shooting and offense. Reggie Jackson scored a game-high 28 points, and Andre Drummond added 22, to lead Detroit. The Blazers fell to 48-28, including 19-19 on the road. Enes Kanter, who has been starting at center for Portland, had 20 points and a team-high 15 rebounds.

NETS 110, CELTICS 96

D'Angelo Russell scored 20 of his 29 points in the third quarter to lead host Brooklyn over short-handed Boston. Russell added 10 assists, Caris LeVert scored 15 points and DeMarre Carroll and Joe Harris chipped in 13 each as the Nets put a 2-5 road trip behind them in their first home game since March 11. Brooklyn (39-38) remained in seventh place in the Eastern



HOUSTON: Chris Paul #3 of the Houston Rockets shoots the ball against the Sacramento Kings at the Toyota Center in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Conference. Gordon Hayward had 19 points, and Marcus Morris and Daniel Theis added 16 apiece for the Celtics, who lost to the Nets for just the second time in their last 13 meetings.

HEAT 100, KNICKS 92

Dion Waiters had a season-high 28 points and added six assists as Miami defeated host New York. The Heat (38-38), who have a tenuous hold on the eighth and final playoff spot in the Eastern Conference, won their second straight game and reached .500 for the first time since Jan. 27. Miami got double-doubles from Goran Dragic (10 points, 10 assists), Kelly Olynyk (12 points, 11 rebounds) and Hassan Whiteside (17

points, 13 rebounds). New York's leading scorers were Emmanuel Mudiay (24 points), Luke Kornet (17) and Kevin Knox (16).

CLIPPERS 132, CAVALIERS 108

Montrezl Harrell scored 23 points off the bench as host Los Angeles recorded its 12th win in 14 outings by defeating Cleveland. Harrell shot 10 of 13 from the floor, and rookie Shai Gilgeous-Alexander went 9 of 12 to finish with 22 points for the Clippers (46-31), who also posted a 110-108 victory over Cleveland on March 22. Jordan Clarkson scored 26 points on 11-of-16 shooting from the floor, and rookie Collin Sexton added 21 for the Cavaliers (19-58), who fell to 6-32 on the road. — Reuters

Australia bowlers deny report of Warner rift

MELBOURNE: Australia's four frontline bowlers, Mitchell Starc, Josh Hazlewood, Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon, have denied a media report they were prepared to boycott last year's fourth test against South Africa if David Warner was picked for the match.

Vice captain Warner was suspended for the match in the immediate aftermath of a ball-tampering scandal in the third test in Cape Town, which resulted in a 12-month ban for the opening batsman and captain Steve Smith.

Local media, however, reported on Thursday that the bowlers had considered boycotting the match if Warner, who was identified as the instigator of the plot for Cameron Bancroft to scuff up the ball with sandpaper, was selected.

"We are extremely disappointed in an article (that) claims we intended to withdraw from the fourth test during last year's tour of South Africa had David Warner been free to play," the four bowlers said in a Cricket Australia statement yesterday.

"This claim is disappointing on a number of fronts but most importantly because it is false. As a team we are all focused on moving forward together and helping the Australian men's team prepare for the World Cup and the Ashes."

The statement is the latest episode in the long-running scandal, which forced Cricket Australia into a major overhaul of its organisational culture and administration after a damning review labelled it as 'arrogant' which had produced a 'win-at-all-costs' mentality in the team.

That hyper-aggressive mindset has disappeared under current test captain Tim Paine and his one-day counterpart Aaron Finch, but the board are keen on ushering Warner and Smith - their bans ended on Thursday - back into the side as quickly as possible.

CA have attempted to smooth the pair's return to the national side and published a curated video on their website earlier this month in which they reunited with the team in the United Arab Emirates ahead of the one-day series against Pakistan.

While pundits have questioned whether the playing group are accepting of their return, many have said they would be welcomed back if selected for the May 30-July 14 World Cup in England and Wales and the Ashes series that follows.

Both Warner and Smith are currently playing in the Indian Premier League Twenty20 competition, while Finch's side finish their five-match one-day series against Pakistan later in Dubai. They already hold a 4-0 advantage and have now won their last seven one-day internationals in succession. — Reuters

Ashes rivals Warner and Bairstow combine in IPL record stand

BANGALORE: David Warner and Jonny Bairstow set a record for the highest opening stand in the Indian Premier League (IPL), with both players notching centuries for Sunrisers Hyderabad yesterday. Warner and Bairstow put on 185 in just 16.2 overs in a 118-run victory over Virat Kohli's Royal Challengers Bangalore, surpassing Gautam Gambhir and Chris Lynn's opening stand of 184 against Gujarat Lions in the 2017 season.

Former Australia vice-captain Warner is fighting for a spot in their World Cup squad after completing a 12-month suspension for his involvement in the ball-tampering scandal in Cape Town last year. The 32-year-old showed he has lost none of his power-hitting ability as he finished unbeaten on 100 from 55 balls, which included five fours and five sixes.

Warner was playing the anchor role, while Bairstow stepped up the scoring rate to belt 114 from 56 deliveries, before falling to Indian leg-spinner Yuzvendra Chahal. England opener Bairstow smashed 12 fours and seven sixes for his second-ever Twenty20 hundred, while Warner recorded his third consecutive 50-plus score to top the IPL scoring charts this season.

"He's great fun, just going ahead with hitting the ball," Bairstow said of Warner after Hyderabad finished with 231-2. "It's fantastic to bat in the middle with him."

With the colossal partnership in Hyderabad, Warner and Bairstow also became the first pair to make three consecutive 100-run partnerships in the IPL. "Must say everything about their partnership has been extraordinary. Some serious shots and hard running between the wickets in this heat. Truly remarkable," Indian batting great Sachin Tendulkar said on Twitter.

Chasing 232 to win, Bangalore lost five wickets for

Chiefs pull off dramatic late win over Jaguares

BUENOS AIRES: Waikato Chiefs continued their Super Rugby revival after a horror start to the season with a dramatic 30-27 win over Argentina's Jaguares in Buenos Aires on Saturday. Two substitutes combined to snatch the match-winning try for the New Zealanders on 78 minutes with loose forward Taleni Seu breaking from a scrum and sending scrum-half Te Toiroa Tahuriorangi over.

Full-back Damian McKenzie raised his match points tally to 20 by converting from near the touchline to give the Chiefs a three-point advantage which they defended until full-time. It was the second away victory in a row for the Chiefs after losing their first four matches in the 15-team southern hemisphere championship.

A draw with fellow Kiwis the Wellington Hurricanes stopped the rot before they humiliated the Northern Bulls 56-20 in South Africa last weekend. Victory in Argentina lifted the Chiefs four places from last to 11th in the combined standings while the Jaguares remained 14th and the Tokyo-based



BANGALORE: Sunrisers Hyderabad cricketer Jonny Bairstow (R) celebrates with his teammate David Warner (L) after scoring century (100 runs) during the 2019 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Sunrisers Hyderabad and Royal Challengers Bangalore at The Rajiv Gandhi International Cricket Stadium. — AFP

just 30 runs, including captain Kohli and South African talisman AB de Villiers. Afghanistan off-spinner Mohammad Nabi finished with four wickets for Hyderabad as the hosts clinched a convincing victory.

Earlier, South Africa fast bowler Kagiso Rabada was in his shorts and relaxing in the dressing room before being forced to make a quick transition and conjure up his lethal yorkers for the Delhi Capitals in their pulsating Super Over win.

The Delhi side, coached by Australia's World Cup winning captain Ricky Ponting, needed 18 off three overs against the Kolkata Knight Riders to win their Indian Premier League Twenty match but spectacularly fluffed the chase.

Opening batsman Prithvi Shaw, 19, had made the

Sunwolves fell to the bottom.

This was the third match between the teams and all have been close encounters won by the away side with Chiefs 30-26 victors in 2016 and Jaguares 23-19 winners last season. "It was bitterly disappointing to be beaten at home after leading by four points with just a couple of minutes remaining," admitted Jaguares captain and centre Jeronimo de la Fuente.

"Losing three matches in a row is not a nice situation to be in and now we travel to South Africa for the second time this season, to face the Bulls in Pretoria." The Chiefs survived early pressure to dominate the opening half and build a 17-6 half-time advantage on a perfect night for rugby at Estadio Jose Amalfitani in the Argentine capital.

A McKenzie penalty three minutes into the second half stretched the lead to 14 points before the Jaguares took control and scored two converted tries to draw level. Full-back Joaquin Tuculet scored the first after a millimetre-perfect cross-field kick by fly-half Joaquin Diaz Bonilla and loose forward Pablo Matera the second.

Another McKenzie penalty put the Chiefs ahead again only for Matias Orlando to score a try for the Jaguares which fellow substitute Santiago Gonzalez Iglesias converted.

Trailing 27-23, the Chiefs established a foothold deep in Jaguares territory and almost scored several times before Tahuriorangi darted over for the decisive try. — AFP

Sri Lankan Test captain arrested

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan Test cricket captain Dimuth Karunaratne has been arrested and charged with driving under the influence of alcohol after an accident in the capital, police said yesterday. Karunaratne, 30, was taken into custody following the pre-dawn accident that resulted in the driver of a three-wheel taxi being taken to hospital.

"We have released him on personal bail, but he was asked to be in court today for a magisterial inquiry," a police spokesman said, adding that his vehicle was detained. The incident comes as Sri Lanka cricket officials mull who to name as captain of the one-day squad for the World Cup hosted by England and Wales from May 30.

Karunaratne, who led Sri Lanka to a stunning Test series victory against South Africa last month, had been in the frame to lead the one-day side as well. Sri Lanka's cricket board said it would investigate the incident.

"Sri Lanka Cricket will also follow the due process as per his 'Player Contractual Obligation' ... and conduct an inquiry in order to take necessary action," the board said in a statement. — AFP

Sports

Harper launches first Phillies home runs in win over Braves

Dodgers continue power play in 18-5 win over D-backs

PHILADELPHIA: High-priced offseason acquisitions Bryce Harper and J.T. Realmuto hit their first home runs for Philadelphia and sparked the Phillies to an 8-6 win over the visiting Atlanta Braves on Saturday.

Realmuto ripped a two-run shot into the center field bleachers that put the Phillies ahead to stay in the fifth inning, and Harper hammered a 465-foot solo homer in the seventh. Maikel Franco was 2-for-3 with three RBIs and homered for the second straight game. The winning pitcher was Adam Morgan (1-0), who retired the only batter he faced in the fifth. The losing pitcher was rookie Wes Parsons (0-1), who surrendered the homer to Realmuto. Atlanta's offense was paced by Freddie Freeman, who went 4-for-5 with two doubles and two RBIs. Dansby Swanson and Charlie Culberson each hit two-run homers, their first of the year.

DODGERS 18, DIAMONDBACKS 5

Cody Bellinger hit two home runs, and Joe Pederson reached base six times, while Kenta Maeda pitched 6 2/3 much-needed innings, as host Los Angeles shook off the effects of a 13-inning loss on Friday to defeat Arizona. Pederson and Austin Barnes also hit home runs as the Dodgers scored in double digits for the second time in three games. Pederson and Bellinger each have three home runs in the first three games. Jarrod Dyson, Alex Avila, Adam Jones and David Peralta all hit home runs for the Diamondbacks. Dodgers catcher Russell Martin pitched a scoreless inning, and Diamondbacks catcher John Ryan Murphy pitched the final two innings, giving up seven runs on eight hits. Maeda (1-0) allowed three runs and five hits with two walks and six strikeouts.

MARINERS 6, RED SOX 5

Jay Bruce hit a three-run homer, and right-hander Mike Leake (1-0) pitched six strong innings to help host Seattle defeat Boston. Trailing 6-2, the Red Sox scored three times in the ninth on errors-two throwing errors and one fielding error-on three consecutive plays by rookie third baseman Dylan Moore. With closer Hunter Strickland injured, Mariners right-hander Nick Rumbelow caught Xander Bogaerts looking to end the game and record his first career save. Leake

allowed two runs on seven hits, with two walks and seven strikeouts. He walked two and struck out seven.

ORIOLES 5, YANKEES 3

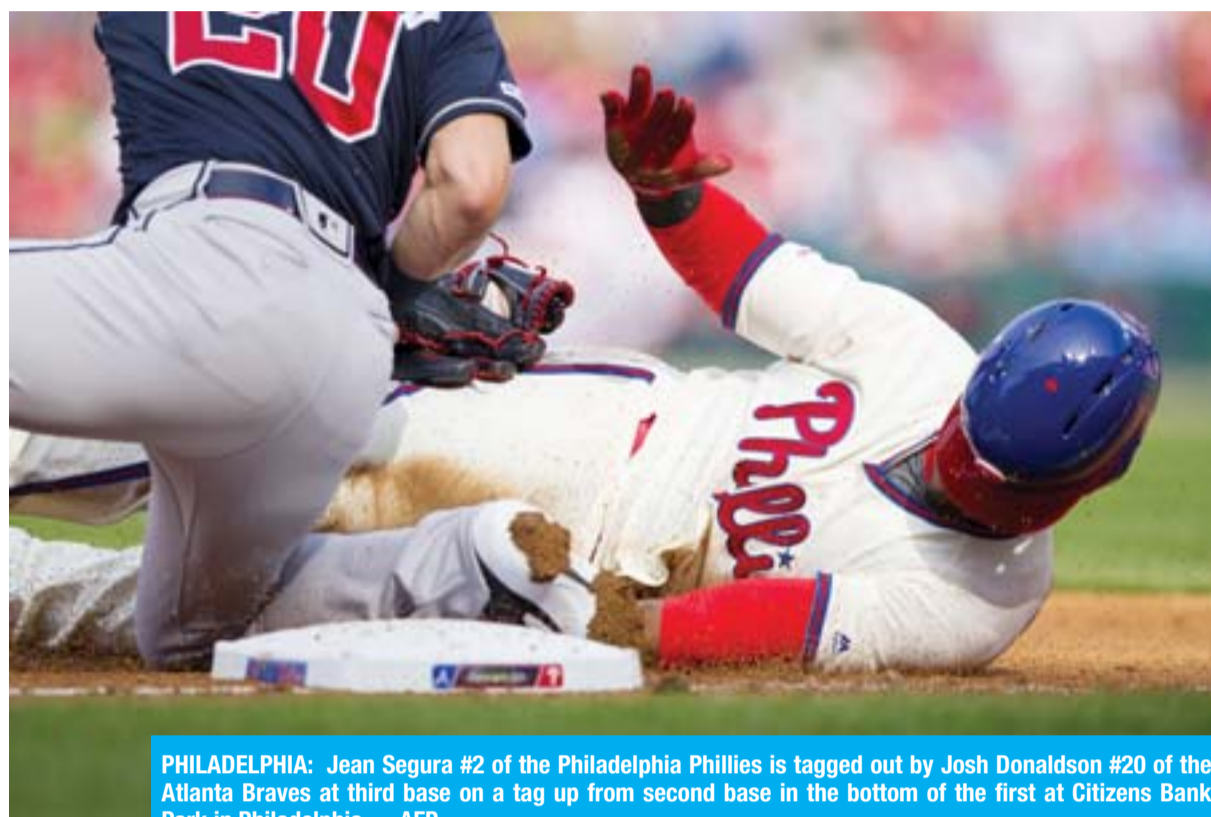
Jesus Sucre tied a career high with three RBIs, Mike Wright recorded his first career save and Brandon Hyde picked up his first managerial win as Baltimore held on at Yankee Stadium. Baltimore's Jimmy Yacabonis (1-0) worked three innings, following "opener" Nick Karns. Yacabonis gave up one run and three hits with two walks and two strikeouts. James Paxton (0-1) gave up two runs (one earned) and four hits in 5 2/3 innings for the Yankees. He struck out five and walked one. Troy Tulowitzki hit his first home run for New York in the bottom of the ninth, when the Yankees scored twice but fell short.

METS 11, NATIONALS 8

J.D. Davis lined a two-run single with the bases loaded to snap a tie in the eighth, and Jeff McNeil had four hits and drove in two runs as New York won at Washington. The Nationals scored four in the ninth, including a three-run double by Ryan Zimmerman with two outs, before Edwin Diaz entered the game and got the last out by retiring Kurt Suzuki for his second save of the season. The winning pitcher was Justin Wilson (1-0), who pitched a scoreless bottom of the seventh. Trevor Rosenthal (0-1) gave up the hit to Davis and didn't record an out, allowing four runs on three hits and a walk.

RANGERS 8, CUBS 6

Texas slugger Joey Gallo crushed a go-ahead three-run homer 433 feet, and host Texas scored a combined five runs in the seventh and eighth innings come from behind and knock off Chicago. Asdrubal Cabrera had three hits, including a home run, and drove in two runs for the Rangers. Kyle Schwarber had three hits including a home run and drove in two runs for the Cubs, and Willson Contreras also had three hits and two RBIs. Reliever Shawn Kelly (1-0) got the win, pitching 1 1/3 scoreless innings, and Jose Leclerc picked up his first save. Cubs reliever Carl Edwards Jr. (0-1) didn't retire a batter, allowing three runs on two hits and two walks.



PHILADELPHIA: Jean Segura #2 of the Philadelphia Phillies is tagged out by Josh Donaldson #20 of the Atlanta Braves at third base on a tag up from second base in the bottom of the first at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia.— AFP

BREWERS 4, CARDINALS 2

Christian Yelich set a franchise record by homering for the third consecutive game to open the season, and host Milwaukee held on to beat St. Louis. Travis Shaw and Mike Moustakas also homered for Milwaukee. Yelich, the reigning National League Most Valuable Player, has three homers in his first 10 at-bats. Kolten Wong went 3-for-3 with a double and an RBI to lead St. Louis at the plate. Brewers right-hander Brandon Woodruff (1-0) limited the Cardinals to two runs on six hits in five innings. Cardinals right-hander Dakota Hudson (0-1) drew the loss in his first career start. He surrendered four runs (three earned) on seven hits in 4

1/3 innings. He walked two and fanned six.

RAYS 3, ASTROS 1

Tyler Glasnow, who went 0-5 with a 10.38 ERA during spring training, allowed one run and six hits over five innings, and host Tampa Bay defeated Houston. Glasnow (1-0) gave up a solo home run to Alex Bregman in the first inning before the 6-foot-8 right-hander blanked Houston over the next four. Michael Perez had two hits, a run scored and an RBI in the No. 9 spot to lead the Tampa Bay offense. Astros starter Collin McHugh (0-1) allowed two runs and three hits over five innings, striking out nine and walking one.—Reuters

Solskjaer is a breath of fresh air for United, says Jones

LONDON: Phil Jones has saluted Ole Gunnar Solskjaer as a "breath of fresh air" after Manchester United made a winning start to the manager's permanent reign. Solskjaer was handed a three-year contract last week after a successful spell as interim boss since December.

The former United striker's astute leadership has revived a club in turmoil during his predecessor Jose

Mourinho's reign. Fan favourite Solskjaer has led United into the Premier League's top four and the Champions League quarter-finals.

There was a celebratory atmosphere ahead of Watford's visit to Old Trafford on Saturday. Then Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial goals sealed a narrow 2-1 win. Solskjaer knows it was a "sloppy" display and Jones accepts it was far from United's best, but the long-serving defender is excited for the future and loving life under the Norwegian.

"The lads are buzzing. He's come in, he's been a breath of fresh air for us. He's put arms around the shoulders of people who needed it," Jones said. "His man management skills are terrific and he's definitely what we need going forward. Everyone can see that he has laid foundations.

"The fans, the media, everyone can see what he's

done and how he wants to play since he has come, and we've shown that in quite a few games. "It's positive, we're looking forward and we're pleased with the result." With a remarkable 35 points since Solskjaer's arrival from Molde, United are the Premier League's form-team even though the title remains out of reach for this season at least. Asked what United's blistering run will do for their trophy chances in the Solskjaer era, Jones said: "I don't think we're far away.

"Obviously we had a poor start to the season. It's sort of like a story of two halves of the season, really. "He's come in and done a terrific job. I'm delighted he's here now and we can move forward and progress under him. "That's the vision for the players, the staff, the fans, everyone involved in this football club, to win trophies. "It's a wonderful place to play football and that's where we want to get back to." — AFP



Matches on TV
(Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE

Arsenal FC v Newcastle United FC 22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2

Emery urges Suarez to take his chance as Arsenal climb back to top four

LONDON: Unai Emery has challenged Denis Suarez to finally make an impact as Arsenal bid to climb back into the Premier League's top four against Newcastle today. Suarez has struggled since his January loan move from Barcelona and the Spanish midfielder is yet to make a competitive start for the Gunners.

But a series of impressive displays at Arsenal's recent training camp in Dubai could have earned the 25-year-old a chance to shine when Newcastle visit the Emirates Stadium. Suarez played the full 90 minutes and created a goal for Carl Jenkinson in Arsenal 3-2 friendly victory over Al Nasr.

With Granit Xhaka facing a late fitness test and Lucas Torreira suspended, Arsenal boss Emery is encouraged by Suarez's timely improvement. "He is okay for starting in the first XI, to give us this impact," Emery said.

"We are going to need everybody, every player for the next matches. "We decided to go away to train for four days and play a match in Dubai. But it's the same idea, the same spirit." Emery was keen to work with Suarez again after signing on loan at Sevilla in 2014-15.

Asked about the time it had taken Suarez to settle in north London, Emery added: "It's normal. Now we have a lot of players ready, with a big mentality and with a big performance to play and help us."

Beating Newcastle would give Arsenal a 10th successive home league win, equalling a run they last enjoyed in the 1997-98 season in Arsene Wenger's first full campaign as manager. A victory is essential after Arsenal dropped to fifth place on Saturday as a result of Manchester United's 2-1 win over Watford.

Emery's men are one point behind United and can't afford to drop points as they battle to qualify for next season's Champions League via a top four finish or winning the Europa League. With so much at stake, Emery is nervously monitoring Arsenal's fitness updates.

"We trained on Friday morning and some players were rested to give them one day more before training with us on Saturday," Emery said. "That's Aaron Ramsey, Dinis Mavropanos. But they can be okay and ready for today.

"Xhaka also rested and we are going to wait for Saturday and Sunday. But the first previews from the doctor's analysis is that they can be okay to play on Monday."

Newcastle manager Rafael Benitez has warned his players not to ease up as the inch closer to guaranteeing their safety. The Magpies are seven points above the bottom three and their 35-point total is just three short of the number Benitez believes will be enough to stay up. Newcastle have lost only one of their last six league games, but Benitez is taking nothing for granted. "If you see what Arsenal are doing, they are doing really well, so we cannot expect that it will be an easy game," he said.—AFP

Sporting Kansas City embarrasses Montreal 7-1 in MLS clash

LOS ANGELES: Sporting Kansas City crushed the Montreal Impact 7-1 on Saturday, Krisztian Nemeth scoring a hat trick in the romp that marked the 12th time in Major League soccer history a team won by six or more goals.

Nemeth became the first Hungarian to score an MLS hat trick. Johnny Russell scored twice and Felipe Gutierrez and Gianluca Busio added a goal apiece. Nemeth and Russell were the beneficiaries of speedy Gerso Fernandes' work in the first half, when Sporting built a 3-0 lead.

Fernandes himself had connected 90 seconds into the game but the goal was ruled offside and it was Russell who opened the scoring in the 10th minute. Fernandez, harrying the Montreal defense, fed Nemeth and Gutierrez for open goals before the break. Sporting continued to dominate a Montreal side missing injured Ignacio Piatti and suspended Zakaria Diallo in the second half. Russell scored his second of the game in the 50th minute, dribbling past a defender before beating Evan Bush with a shot in the opposite corner.

SKC scored its fifth of the game in the 68th minute, when Russell crossed for Nemeth, the latter having no trouble finding the back of the net. Substitute Busio, 16, scored a sixth goal for the hosts in the 78th minute when he found himself alone in front of Bush after having recovered the ball from a Montreal defender.

Following a turnover in the 84th minute, Nemeth completed his hat trick to give SKC a 7-0 lead. Finally, in the 89th minute, Saphir Taider scored his fourth of the season—preventing Kansas City from matching the largest margin of victory in MLS history. The match in Kansas City wasn't the only lopsided contest of the day. Carlos Vela completed his first MLS hat trick with a sensational curling second-half goal as Los Angeles FC beat the San Jose Earthquakes 5-0.

San Jose keeper Daniel Vega's frightful clearance error paved the way for Vela's opener. Mexico's Vela added a goal in first-half stoppage time, then lofted in his stunning left-footed shot from outside the area in the 66th. Former Quake Steven Beitashour and Diego Rossi also scored for LAFC, who remained unbeaten atop the Western Conference standings.— AFP



TURIN: Juventus' French midfielder Blaise Matuidi (R) holds off Empoli's Ivorian midfielder Hamed Junior Traore during the Italian Serie A football match Juventus vs Empoli at the Juventus stadium in Turin.— AFP

Kean steps up in Ronaldo absence to rescue Juventus against Empoli

MILAN: Rising teenage star Moise Kean stepped up in the absence of Cristiano Ronaldo to rescue a 1-0 win for Juventus against lowly Empoli on Saturday as the champions opened up an 18-point lead at the top of Serie A.

The 19-year-old—who burst into the limelight during Italy's opening Euro 2020 qualifiers—came on as a substitute in Turin and three minutes later scored his third league goal of the season after his double against Udinese earlier this month.

"I am neither (Lionel) Messi nor Cristiano but one day I hope to become like them," said Kean after Juventus got back winning after their first league defeat of the season to Genoa before the international break.

Second-placed Napoli travel to Roma on Sunday looking to close the gap to 15 points with nine games remain-

ing. Ronaldo had been rested by Juventus against Genoa and the Portuguese star is now recovering from a right thigh injury picked up on international duty.

Argentina striker Paulo Dybala also pulled up with a thigh problem during the warm-up before Saturday's game. Coach Massimiliano Allegri said he had wanted to ease the pressure on Kean by opting for Rodrigo Bentancur to replace the Argentine. "Scoring two goals for Italy in as many games, having all that attention, it uses up a lot of energy both physically and mentally," said Allegri.

"He (Kean) returned from international duty and looked like he barely knew where he was.

"He's got the qualities to be a great player, but so did many who have lost their way over the years."

Kean's form, with goals for Italy against Finland and Liechtenstein, gives Allegri more options ahead of his side's Champions League quarter-final against Ajax.

Kean became the second youngest player after Mario Balotelli, aged 18 years and 242 days in 2009, to score eight Serie A goals. "I'm ready to pursue new records," he warned. "What Mister Allegri says is right: I hope to become like the greatest players in the world, through commitment and hard work."

Juventus are without wingers Douglas Costa and Juan Cuadrado, with centre-back Andrea Barzaghi also out injured. The seven-time defending champions struggled to break down the Tuscans who were targeting a second straight win under new coach Aurelio Andreazzoli.— AFP

25 Park In-bee birdies 18 to seize LPGA Kia Classic lead

26 Ashes rivals Warner and Bairstow combine in IPL record stand

27 Kean steps up in Ronaldo absence to rescue Juventus against Empoli



Spurs own goal gives Liverpool vital win

Late goals hand Chelsea thrilling win over unlucky Cardiff



LIVERPOOL: Liverpool's Dutch defender Virgil van Dijk (L) fails to reach the ball during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur at Anfield in Liverpool, north west England yesterday. — AFP

LIVERPOOL: A 90th minute own goal from Tottenham defender Toby Alderweireld gave Liverpool a dramatic 2-1 win to maintain their lead at the top of the Premier League. Spurs keeper Hugo Lloris parried out a back post header from Mohamed Salah but the ball struck the Belgian central defender and rolled over the line.

Liverpool are on 79 points with Manchester City, who won at Fulham on Saturday, on 77 points but with a game in hand. Roberto Firmino opened the scoring in the 16th minute getting between the Spurs central defenders to meet a perfectly shaped cross from left-back Andy Robertson with a firm header.

Tottenham were well on top after the break however it was no surprise when they drew level-Harry Kane swinging a wonderful cross-field pass to Kieran

Trippier whose low ball was flicked on by Christian Eriksen and Lucas Moura drove home the loose ball.

Spurs could have made it even worse for Jurgen Klopp's side five minutes from the end but Moussa Sissoko blasted over at the end of a dangerous counter-attack. Then came the late winner as Anfield erupted with relief and delight.

Earlier, late goals from Cesar Azpilicueta and Ruben Loftus-Cheek helped Chelsea complete a thrilling comeback to beat Cardiff City 2-1 away in the Premier League yesterday. With Chelsea heading for an embarrassing defeat against third-bottom Cardiff, their captain Azpilicueta dragged them back into the match with a headed goal that appeared to be offside.

The visitors then completed the fightback when substitute Loftus-Cheek stormed in at the back post

to plant a header in the bottom corner. Maurizio Sarri's Chelsea stayed sixth in the table with 60 points, level with fifth-placed Arsenal, who have played a game fewer, and a point behind Manchester United in fourth. Cardiff's plight looks increasingly bleak as they are now five points adrift of the safety zone with seven games remaining. Chelsea, who started without talisman Eden Hazard and midfielder N'Golo Kante, struggled to create chances and failed to hit a single shot on target in the first half.

Aron Gunnarsson's long-throws for striker Oumar Niassy troubled the Chelsea defence for the majority of the match and it was key to Cardiff's breakthrough just after the interval. The visitors failed to clear the delivery launched into the box, leaving midfielder Harry Arter to whip the ball back in for Victor

Camarasa, who fired a first-time finish into the top corner. The hosts had two penalty appeals turned down, with defender Sean Morrison tugged down by Marcos Alonso and Antonio Rudiger in two separate incidents. "We worked three weeks for this but to get let down by decisions... no major decisions went for us," Cardiff manager Neil Warnock said.

"It's the best league in the world but the worst officials. They don't understand what is at stake. They shouldn't make mistakes at this level. "My players feel like they have been kicked in the teeth. We've been kicked so many times. I don't deserve officials like that today. There is no excuse for that, it's criminal."

Cardiff next face a trip to second-placed Manchester City on Wednesday, while Chelsea host Brighton and Hove Albion. — Reuters



MIAMI GARDENS: Ashleigh Barty of Australia poses with the winner's trophy after defeating Karolina Pliskova of the Czech Republic during the Women's Final of the Miami Open. — AFP

Barty capture WTA Miami Open title

MIAMI: Ashleigh Barty's transformation is complete after the Australian defeated Czech fifth seed Karolina Pliskova 7-6 (7/1) 6-3 Saturday to win the biggest singles title of her career at the WTA Miami Open. The 22-year-old Aussie quit tennis five years ago after finding the mental grind of the tour too much to bear, turning to professional cricket in a bid to find sporting happiness.

Barty, however, knew she had the tennis skills to compete at the very top and after returning in February 2016, has taken her career to an elite level, culminating in her first-ever WTA Premier Mandatory title to follow on from the US Open doubles crown she won last September.

Barty, a junior Wimbledon winner at age 15, will rise from 11th to number nine in the world rankings and become the first Australian woman since Sam Stosur in June 2013 to crack the top 10. "It feels like it's a long time ago now since I took the break and since I came back," said Barty, who also reached the doubles semi-finals at the Hard Rock Stadium with Victoria Azarenka.

"It's been a few years now, but I certainly feel like I'm a very different person. I feel like I'm a more complete player. I'm a better player. "I was an average cricketer and I'm

becoming a better tennis player. "I feel like when I play my best, I'm good enough to match it with the very best in the world." Barty hit 15 aces and 41 winners compared to 22 from an out-of-sorts Pliskova. "I had to keep it physical, make as many balls as possible and keep my running shoes on," Barty said.

Barty's victory means that for the first time ever there have been 14 different winners in 14 WTA events so far this season. Pliskova, who will rise to fourth in the rankings despite a disappointing final, badly struggled with her serve and movement, off the pace mentally and physically after reaching the quarter-finals or better in her five prior tournaments this year.

"She played well and I was super tired," said the Czech. "The conditions were different to the night matches I played. For sure I could play better but she went for it in the tie-break. "The first set was key for the match and one I should have won. It was tough to fight in the second."

The 27-year-old Czech, who beat Barty 6-4, 6-4 in the round of 16 at last year's US Open, came into the final with 31 aces, most in the women's draw, but she won only 65% of points on her first serve compared to 86% from Barty.

"She served great," said Pliskova who defeated Simona Halep in the semi-finals and denied the Romanian the chance to reclaim the world number one ranking.

When the Australian double faulted at 1-1 to hand Pliskova an early break, it wasn't the start Barty sought and more errors in the following game allowed Pliskova to extend her lead. Barty then began to settle down and crisply struck a forehand winner to break Pliskova for the first time. The

Aussie started superbly in the tie-breaker, moving 5-1 ahead before Pliskova hit long to seal the set for Barty, who broke early in the second set to signal it would be her day. "It's been an amazing fortnight of tennis and it's pretty cool to have played a good match on such a big stage. "It was always going to be a match of small opportunities so getting the first set was massive. "There were zero expectations coming into this tournament, I just saw it as an opportunity to get better every day but I have grabbed my chance with both hands. "I am proud of myself," she said. — AFP

Lewis Hamilton wins Bahrain Grand Prix

SAKHIR: World champion Lewis Hamilton won the Bahrain Grand Prix yesterday as Charles Leclerc saw his hopes of a maiden victory shattered by his misfiring Ferrari. Hamilton claimed victory under the safety car in front of Mercedes teammate Valtteri Bottas, who won the season-opener in Australia, with pole sitter Leclerc taking third place. Sebastian Vettel, in the second Ferrari, was fifth just behind Max Verstappen in a Red Bull. — AFP