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US labels Iran Revolutionary Guard 'terrorist organization'

Tehran retaliates, declares US 'state sponsor of terrorism', US forces 'terror groups'

Panel approves giving citizenship to 4,000 people

By B Izzak and A Saleh

KUWAIT: The National Assembly's legal and legislative committee yesterday passed a draft law calling on the government to grant Kuwaiti citizenship to up to 4,000 people during the current year. The draft law will now go to the interior and defense committee for approval, then it will be sent to the Assembly for voting. The bill gives the government flexibility on the number of people it wants to naturalize, as it does not oblige it to grant citizenship to the total number.

The Assembly has been passing such laws every year for more than a decade as a means of assisting the government to resolve the decades-old problem of 120,000 stateless people known here as bedoons. Rapporteur of the committee said that a minority group in the panel pointed out that there was no need for a law, as those who deserve to be naturalized should get citizenship without the need for a special law.

Meanwhile, MP Bader Al-Mulla yesterday announced filing a proposal, along with MP's Yousef Al-Fadhlah, Abdullah Al-Roumi, Abdullah Al-Kandari and Ahmed Al-Fadhl, to form a special independent committee to discuss issues related to citizenship, said informed sources, noting that the group demanded limiting granting citizenship to stop what it described as "fooling around with the Kuwaiti society's social fabric" in recent years by

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WASHINGTON: The United States yesterday designated Iran's elite military force, the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, a terrorist organization, ramping up already far-reaching attempts to undermine the Iranian government. President Donald Trump said in a statement that the "unprecedented" move "recognizes the reality that Iran is not only a State Sponsor of Terrorism, but that the IRGC actively participates in, finances, and promotes terrorism as a tool of statecraft." "The IRGC is the Iranian government's primary means of directing and implementing its global terrorist campaign," Trump said.

It is the first time the United States has designated part of a foreign government a terrorist organization, rather than guerrilla groups or other more informal entities. The move comes on top of Trump's decision to pull the United States out of an international deal with Iran that was meant to lift crippling economic sanctions in return for the government allowing its nuclear technology to be restricted and kept under close supervision. The Trump administration argues that Iran's government, which is locked in a deeply hostile standoff with top US ally Israel, cannot be trusted and should face

"maximum pressure".

Israeli's prime minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, warmly welcomed the move by his "dear friend" Trump. The terrorist designation for the Revolutionary Guards is meant to strike at the heart of the Iranian government's power structure. The elite force was formed after the 1979 Islamic revolution with a mission to defend the clerical regime, in contrast to more traditional military units that protect borders. At home, it has amassed strong political and economic influence. Abroad, the Guards' prized Quds Force, named for the Arabic word for Jerusalem, supports Iranian allies, including Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad and Lebanon's Hezbollah.

Later yesterday, Iran declared the US a "state sponsor of terrorism" and its forces in the region "terror groups", in a tit-for-tat response. In a statement carried by the official news agency IRNA, it slammed Washington's move as an "illegal and foolish act". In return, it "declares that it considers the regime of the USA a 'state sponsor of terrorism' and 'the Central Command of America, known as CENTCOM' and all forces related to it 'terrorist groups'," the statement said. "The IRGC unlike America and its



WASHINGTON: US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo announces that the US will designate Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a foreign terrorist organization during a press conference at the State Department yesterday. — AFP

regional allies who have always supported extremist and terrorist groups in West Asia region, have always been in the frontline of fighting terrorism and extremism in the region," the council added. Part of America's vast military presence around the globe, CENTCOM's area of command covers multiple war zones and

hotspots including Afghanistan, Iraq, Syria, Yemen and the Gulf.

Iran's top diplomat Mohammad Javad Zarif had earlier urged President Hassan Rouhani to place CENTCOM forces on Tehran's list of terror groups, his ministry said.

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Air strike halts Tripoli flights as thousands flee

TRIPOLI: Fighting raged around Tripoli and an air strike closed its only functioning airport yesterday, as Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar defied international calls to halt his advance on the capital. Thousands were also reported by the United Nations to be fleeing the capital city in the face of Haftar's surprise assault which has left dozens dead. The EU's foreign policy chief yesterday added her voice to those urging the eastern strongman to stop his offensive, in the wake of calls for restraint by the UN Security Council and the United States.

"I make a very strong appeal to

Libyan leaders and in particular to Haftar to stop all military activities ... and to return to the negotiation table", Federica Mogherini said after talks with EU foreign ministers. A security source at Mitiga airport, east of the capital, said no side had yet claimed responsibility for yesterday's air raid, which hit a runway without causing casualties. But the UN's envoy to Libya, Ghassan Salame, blamed Haftar's forces. "Salame condemns the aerial attack today by LNA aircraft", his office said in a statement, referring to Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army.

Mohammed Gniwa, a spokesman for national carrier Libyan Airlines, said the civil aviation authority decided "to suspend aerial traffic until further notice". An airport source, who did want to be named, confirmed the suspension. The oil-rich northern African country has

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TRIPOLI: Forces loyal to the internationally-recognized Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) drive on the tarmac of Tripoli's old airport yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

\$200m Ramadan aid for Yemen

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and the UAE, which lead a military coalition against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, offered yesterday \$200 million in aid to the country for the holy fasting month of Ramadan. The donation, announced simultaneously in Riyadh and Abu Dhabi, is part of a \$500 million aid package announced by the allies in November to tackle widespread hunger and disease in the war-torn country. The Ramadan aid will be split between various UN agencies, including the World Food Program, the children's agency UNICEF and the World Health Organization, officials in both countries said. — AFP

Banks sued over manipulation

DOHA: Qatar said yesterday it has filed three lawsuits in London and New York against Saudi and UAE banks for allegedly plotting to undermine its currency and bonds. Doha, which has faced an economic and diplomatic boycott by Gulf rivals since June 2017, also filed legal action in London against the Luxemburg-based Banque Havilland. First Abu Dhabi Bank is the largest lender in the United Arab Emirates while Samba Bank is one of the leading banks in Saudi Arabia. The lawsuits were filed based on an investigation launched by Doha into market manipulation, according to the statement, which said that further legal action may be taken as the probe was continuing. — AFP

Jordan raises marriage age to 16

AMMAN: Jordan's parliament yesterday amended marriage laws to allow judges in "exceptional" cases to permit minors to wed from the age of 16, up from a previous minimum of 15. The move was approved by both the house of representatives and the senate. The country's minimum marriage age is 18 under normal circumstances - but unions involving minors can be granted by a judge, so long as they meet a string of conditions, including the consent of the girl. According to justice ministry data, 77,700 marriages took place in Jordan in 2017, among which 10,434 cases - some 13.4 percent - betrothed a girl under the age of 18. — AFP

BJP vows to strip Kashmir rights, build grand temple

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday vowed to spend more than \$1.4 trillion on new infrastructure over five years to create much-needed jobs and to pursue his nationalist agenda if he wins an election that starts this week. Modi's right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) also promised \$300 billion for the country's hard-pressed farmers and rural development as it went all out to stop voters being tempted by opposition parties in the world's biggest election that runs from Thursday until May 19.

The BJP's big-spending manifesto was accompanied

by promises to keep its Hindu bedrock behind the party that won a landslide victory in 2014 but has lost key state elections in recent months. It made a new pledge to scrap a law that gives special privileges - such as preventing outsiders from buying property - to residents of Jammu and Kashmir, India's only Muslim-majority state. The party also reiterated its long-held desire to abolish Kashmir's autonomous status. Modi's party also said it was committed to building a grand Hindu temple in place of a Muslim mosque demolished by Hindu mobs in the city of Ayodhya in 1992.

The rights of outsiders in Kashmir and the temple promise have become flashpoint issues between Hindus and Muslims in recent years. Tens of thousands have died in an uprising lasting three decades against Indian rule in Kashmir, while the burning down of the five-century-old Ayodhya mosque led to riots in which more than 2,000 people, mainly Muslims, were killed.

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NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi gestures at an event to present the BJP election manifesto yesterday. — AFP

'Horse' remark sparks slander case in Dubai

DUBAI: A British woman has been prevented from leaving Dubai, police in the emirate said yesterday, after her ex-husband's new wife pressed defamation charges over comments posted on Facebook. Dubai police confirmed a 55-year-old British woman was being tried for defamation under the UAE's cybercrime law. Police said the woman had never been held in custody, but had confessed to making the statements and refused attempts to settle out of court.

While police would not disclose the woman's identity, the London-based group Detained in Dubai

identified her as Laleh Sharavesh, saying she had described her ex-husband's new wife as 'a horse'. Dubai police said that following a complaint by a Portuguese man and his Tunisian wife in 2017, a warrant had been issued requiring the woman to present herself to the police. "Upon her return to the country on 10 March 2019, the outstanding warrant prompted the immigration authorities at the airport to bring the matter to the British woman's attention," the police said in a statement. "She was requested to attend the nearest police station."

Britain said it was in contact with the UAE about the case and offering help to the Sharavesh. "We are offering consular assistance to Ms Sharavesh. We're very concerned about the situation," British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt told reporters in Luxembourg. "Our diplomats in the UAE have enor-

mous experience in dealing with consular cases ... so she is getting the best possible service" from the British authorities, he added.

The Detained in Dubai group said Sharavesh's Portuguese husband of 18 years divorced her to marry a Tunisian woman in Dubai. The man died last month and Sharavesh flew to Dubai with their daughter for his funeral, according to the group. While their teenage daughter was allowed to fly back, Sharavesh was not permitted to leave the country. The group said the charges are based on two comments Sharavesh posted under her ex-husband's new wedding pictures on Facebook in Farsi. "I hope you go under the ground you idiot. Damn you. You left me for this horse," she allegedly wrote. "You married a horse you idiot". Sharavesh's attorney could not be reached for comment. — AFP

Local

Houthis urged to hand over weapons in exchange of political participation

Kuwait 'staunch defender of Arab interests': Yemeni FM



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and other officials meet with the Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Yamani. — KUNA photos

By Nawara Fattahova, Agencies

KUWAIT: Yemeni Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Yamani said the war in Yemen will only end if the Houthis hand over their weapons in exchange of guarantees of political participation. "The Yemenis will not accept another copy of Hezbollah in Yemen," he said during a press conference held on Sunday during his visit to Kuwait. "Martin Griffiths, the United Nations Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Yemen, has a great and complicated mission, especially since the Houthis don't accept peace and don't respect the rules of international law. The legislative government will support Griffiths' efforts as we believe in the role of the United Nations," added Yamani.

Four months ago, both parties reached an agreement in Stockholm. "This agreement was accepted and supported internationally, but the Houthis didn't execute the first article of this agreement, which is to withdraw from Hodeida and Ras Eissa. The Houthis don't want peace as they are part of the Iranian expansion project, and the Yemenis will not accept control of armed militias," he pointed out. Yamani rejected talk that a GCC country aims to control the south of Yemen. "We should stop accusing others of betrayal. The Arab coalition was formed to stay in Yemen and it drew the red lines, which should be respected. Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates are supporting the legislative government," he added.

According to Yamani, US President Donald Trump

took the best decisions ever on the Yemeni conflict. "The Trump administration strongly supports Yemen against Iranian interventions and expansion plans. The US administration believes in its role of supporting the Arab coalition in Yemen to restore Yemeni legislation," stressed Yamani. "I'm against any cooperation or dialogue with Iran. They want to be the strongest in the region. They should stop commanding others what to do, and should forget about expanding if they want to be part of region's system. Iran is a terrorist fascist country and its political regime should be destroyed," he kept repeating.

Kuwait and the IH the Amir are supporting Yemen with humanitarian help. "Kuwait has always supported Yemen. Besides donations, Kuwait also hosted Yemeni discussions to reach peace. Kuwait is always supporting all Arab nations. Every hospital or school built in Yemen has Kuwaiti participation. During the past two years, Kuwait has granted over \$2 billion in humanitarian aid," he explained. "I met today Deputy Amir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad to discuss various issues including Kuwaiti support to relieve the suffering of Yemenis. I expect to form a joint committee (Kuwaiti-Yemeni) that will work on bilateral issues," Yamani concluded.



Kuwait, Yemen discuss security cooperation

Security cooperation

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah yesterday, held talks with the visiting Yemeni Foreign Minister on means of enhancing cooperation on issues of joint concern. The Ministry of Interior said in a statement the minister welcomed the visiting Yemeni official and his entourage, holding cordial talks with his guests. Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah, during the meeting, affirmed depth and distinctiveness of the relations between the State of Kuwait and the

brotherly Republic of Yemen. The two sides discussed a host of security issues of common interest and means of cementing cooperation at such levels.

Al-Yamani praised Kuwait's forceful and energetic defense of Arab interests. Kuwait, despite pressures it faces, always emerges as vigorous and passionate defender of the Arab world and its interests, Al-Yamani told reporters today on the sidelines of his official visit to Kuwait. In this regard, he highlighted Kuwait's active and remarkable role in the UN Security Council to support Yemeni interests, defend its legitimate government and promote the pro-legitimacy Arab coalition's view about developments in Yemen.

Kuwait was and continues to be a backer to the Yemeni people," Al-Yamani said. He recalled Kuwait's host of the intra-Yemeni talks in 2016 to help achieve a peaceful solution to the Yemeni crisis. The Yemeni top diplomat said he has held a series of fruitful talks with Kuwaiti officials. He noted that he has met His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and talked with him about a variety of issues.

During the talks, His Highness the Deputy Amir has reiterated Kuwait's readiness to offer all required to end the suffering of Yemeni people, Al-Yamani disclosed. He unveiled that the Yemeni and Kuwaiti sides are working to launch a joint committee to boost cooperation in various domains. Al-Yamani also stated that he has discussed with First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah several issues of common interest.

He revealed that he has mulled with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah cementing cooperation to upgrade Yemeni diplomacy. Al-Yamani touched upon efforts of UN Special Envoy for Yemen Martin Griffiths to achieve peace in Yemen. The UN envoy is doing a great job, but Houthis are not the ones who accept peace or respect its obligation, he argued. He cited as an example of this Houthi behavior, their failure to fulfill their obligation stipulated in "the first line of the agreement" reached in the UN-mediated talks in Stockholm four months ago, especially the withdrawal of their forces from the city of Hodeidah and Ras Issa areas. —Agencies

News in brief

Live ammunition drill

KUWAIT: Kuwait Coast Guard affiliated to the Border Security Sector will conduct a shooting drill using live ammunition in the territorial waters tomorrow, Public Relations and Security Media Department of the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. The ministry, in a statement, warned all sea goers to keep away from the shooting range 'Charlie' during the period. Marine patrol teams are as well prohibited from approaching the area for their safety. — KUNA

Dead fish wash ashore

KUWAIT: Kuwait Environment Public Authority (EPA) said it noticed quantities of dead fish, including catfish, washed ashore at Sulabikhat Area, and it was conducting field surveys to know the causes. EPA said in a statement it received a call about quantities of dead fish at Sulabikhat shore, and began coordinating with the Public Authority for Agriculture and Fish Resources to carry out necessary field surveys. EPA said it activated a national plan against dead fish, and that it would issue another statement to explain the causes of what happened. — KUNA

Arab emerging companies

DEAD SEA: Bahrain has announced the launch of a special program to provide support to 100 Arab emerging companies to enable them to formulate the Fourth Industrial Revolution. This came during the World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa, which concluded its work at the Dead Sea, Jordan, on Sunday, where Bahrain Economic Development announced selection of 100 Arab startups that achieved outstanding successes. According to a statement issued by the Forum, the program includes the possibility of entering the Bahraini market for companies selected as the best emerging Arab company for 2019 and special treatment to enable these firms to work in Bahrain and benefit from the lucrative environment. —KUNA

Kuwait-Morocco meeting

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti-Moroccan Higher Joint Committee will start its ninth meeting today; chaired by Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khalid Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, while the Moroccan Minister of Foreign Affairs Nasser Bourita will head the Moroccan side. Both sides are expected to discuss ways of strengthening bilateral relations in all fields, as well as discussing issues of mutual interest on the regional and international scenes. The meeting will be attended by working teams from both countries, covering various vital fields such as foreign affairs, consular, economic, trade, investment, cultural, scientific, sports and environment. —KUNA

Kuwait Relief Society distributes dialysis equipment in Irbil

IRBIL: Kuwait Relief Society distributed Sunday kidney dialysis equipment for hospitals in Iraq's Kurdistan province to treat the displaced persons in the region. Hospitals in Kurdistan are in need of kidney dialysis equipment, Kuwait Consul General in Irbil Omar Al-Kandari said, therefore Kuwait Relief Society provided these equipment to treat the displaced persons in Kurdistan.

Al-Kandari, in a statement to KUNA, said 5,500 people would benefit from the devices. He said Kuwait By Your Side campaign, launched by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, has been providing aid for the ailing Iraqi health sector. Al-Kandari said the regional government of Kurdistan offered health services for displaced Iraqis in the province despite the region's difficult circumstances. Jamal Al-Nouri, chairman of the relief committee at Kuwait Relief Society, said they have a full-fledged plan to help the displaced Iraqis in Kurdistan.

He said the society has multi-faceted humanitarian projects for the displaced Iraqis. Director General of the Health Department in Irbil Dr Saman Baraznji said kidney dialysis equipment were critical for many patients with kidney problems. Kuwait has sent tens of tons of medicine, medical equipment and ambulances for the displaced Iraqis. Kuwait also funded the construction of five clinics in refugee camps. —KUNA



IRBIL: Kuwait Relief Society distributes kidney dialysis equipment for hospitals in Iraq's Kurdistan province to treat the displaced persons in the region. — KUNA



Customs revenues reach \$1.2 billion

KUWAIT: Kuwait General Administration of Customs announced yesterday it has accomplished a "qualitative leap" in revenues for the fiscal year 2018-2019, with 12 percent growth to reach KD 367 million (about \$1.2 billion) compared to KD 331 million (\$1 billion) in 2017-2018. This "unprecedented" achievement was possible because of recent plans designed to attract importers, facilitate clearance of customs data, as well as develop customs systems from manual to automated, said Director General of the Administration of Customs, Counselor Jamal Al-Jalawi in a press statement.

He pointed out that Customs seeks to implement its strategic vision of developing work and customs' performance continuously by improving the business environment and facilitating customs procedures in line with Kuwait's new vision 2035 aimed at consolidating Kuwait's position at all levels without compromising national security. Al-Jalawi lauded efforts exerted by the customs staff to achieve and implement the visions, plans and directives of His Highness the Amir, stressing the continuous efforts of the Department to use all means that would raise the name of Kuwait and make it a global financial

and economic center in application of the Amiri vision.

He also commended directives by His Highness Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Council of Ministers, and relevant ministerial committees, which support all proposals and customs studies in this regard. He expressed hope the administration will achieve a qualitative leap for its cadres and customs exits during the current year, noting, "The unprecedented shift in revenues is doubling responsibility for us, however we will meet aspiration of our wise leadership." — KUNA



Director General of the Administration of Customs Counselor Jamal Al-Jalawi

Local

'Islamophobia', discrimination pose danger across the globe

Kuwait Acting PM chairs Cabinet session

KUWAIT: The Cabinet held its weekly session at Seif Palace yesterday under chairmanship of Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Following the meeting, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh stated that the ministers were briefed by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on his participation in the United Nations Security Council session, recently held in New York under the theme, "combating terrorism and other violent acts based on religion and race."

The UNSC session addressed a draft resolution condemning the terrorist crime that targeted worshippers at mosques in New Zealand. During the session, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled stated that "Islamophobia," rhetoric of hatred and discrimination pose a danger to safe communities throughout the world. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, in his

address to the UNSC session, called for facing the scourge for sake of peace, security and co-existence among nations of the globe.

Moreover, the State of Kuwait, through its UNSG membership, had issued a press release condemning the criminal act and called for bringing the culprits, architects and financiers into account. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled in today's government session, apprised the ministers with the visit to the country by the Yemeni foreign minister who lauded Kuwait's support for his people.

The ministers discussed parliamentary issues, examining some queries by MPs. They also looked into recommendations issued by the parliamentary legal affairs committee regarding a bill to approve aerial services accord with Cyprus, and another regarding tourist cooperating with Ukraine. The two bills were approved and referred to His Highness the Amir. They also discussed current political developments on the Arab and international arenas. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Acting Prime Minister and Minister of Defense Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presides over the Cabinet weekly meeting yesterday. — KUNA photos



Kuwait's Al-Mutlaa housing project expo



Kuwait Housing Authority touts marquee project

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Al-Mutlaa housing project is among the largest and most significant in the history of the country, according to the Public Authority for Housing Welfare's official spokesman. The residential project west of Kuwaiti city will stretch over 100 square kilometers, with 28,288 housing units adjacent to some 156 schools and 12 suburbs. Ibrahim Al-Nashi told the press on the side-

lines of an expo over the huge enterprise. The expo will share some of the most cutting-edge techniques to build housing units, amid competition between real estate firms with enticing offers on display, he added.

He broke down the project into four different phases dealing with main roads and infrastructure, saying construction is running on schedule, which is impres-

sive given the magnitude of the project. The expo is geared towards Kuwaiti citizens who have been given housing units in Al-Mutlaa city, according to Expo Tag, the organizer behind the four-day event. Events such as the expo fit into Kuwait's 2035 vision for sustained development, the company's general manager pointed out. — KUNA

Kuwaiti, American exchange insults, blows

KUWAIT: A Kuwaiti and an American exchanged insults and blows in a Fahaaheel mall. Police responded to a call and took the two women to the police station. Both were asked to bring medical reports, as investigations continue. In a separate development, police responded to a call about a fight between Arabs in Khaitan. All those involved were arrested and taken to concerned authorities. They are being deported, according to the interior ministry.

Mystery solved

Criminal detectives solved the mystery behind the disappearance of an Egyptian woman following a kidnapping complaint lodged by her husband. The woman was with two compatriots - with one attempting to blackmail her - who took her to a flat in Mahboula. But detectives foiled their plan.

The Egyptian told police his wife was missing from home, but later received a call from another Egyptian saying his wife was with him and heard her crying for help. Detectives traced the phone call to a Mahboula address and stormed the flat, and found the woman with two men. One of the suspects said he knows the victim and wanted to blackmail her, and brought his friend to assault her. The three were taken into custody and sent to the prosecution for further action.

Phone misuse case

Airport police sent a Lebanese who works for an airline to a Hawally area police station as she was about to leave for Beirut on vacation. The woman was found wanted on a phone misuse case. An employee discovered the woman was wanted and banned from traveling, so he took her to the airport police cen-

ter. The woman's husband cancelled his travel plans and went with his wife, who was sent to concerned authorities for further action.

Banned from Kuwait

Airport police sent three women - two Sri Lankan and an Indian - back to their countries as they were found banned from entering Kuwait, as they were previously deported. When their fingerprints were taken at the airport, they were found banned from entry.

Dispute turned into a fight

Police broke up a fight in a public hall in the presence of a diplomat, but the matter was resolved friendly. A security source said when those present noticed the dispute turned into a fight, they called police, but those involved decided to resolve the issue on a friendly basis. — Al Rai

CBK offers golden sponsorship for ACK job expo

KUWAIT: As part of its social responsibility activities and the efforts it exerts to

support the educational process and provide enough suitable job opportunities for Kuwaiti youth, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently provided golden sponsorship for ACK's annual Job Opportunities Expo. In this regard, CBK's Human Resources Manager Sadeq Abdullah said the bank's participation in the expo was meant to manifest CBK leaders' keenness on contributing to provide job opportunities for young citizens,

namely in the banking sector.

"This plan aims at attracting competent skilled youth to work in the private sector, where they can get ample good chances to get promoted to higher positions through motivating them," said Abdullah, stressing that CBK has always been keen on providing constant support to competent young citizens seeking job opportunities in the private and banking sectors.



Pollution, noise, danger and infection allowances

By Meshaal Al-Enezi,
Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: MPW employees syndicate's Assistant Secretary General Nayef Akrash Al-Azmi stressed that the syndicate had previously and repeatedly urged the Minister of Public Works to have the CSC approve the payment of pollution, noise, danger and infection allowances for a group of ministry employees retroactively from April 1, 2012. "The list has been submitted for over seven years now with no response from the CSC," he underlined, noting that the syndicate had called for forming a special committee with elements from the CSC, MoH and MPW to examine worksites and decide on the dangers employees face at those sites.

In another development, Kuwait Fire Services Directorate's deputy director general for the administrative and financial sector Maj Gen Saleh Ahmad Al-Ansari thanked the Civil Service Commission for its praise of KFSD for the second consecutive year for implementing laws, rules and decisions issued by CSC and its circulars correctly, as well as its keenness in maintaining cooperative links with the CSC, which resulted in not having any violations with regards to the employment supervision department to protect public funds in 2018 as well as 2017.

Kuwait Labor Union

Head of the committee temporarily entrusted to run Kuwait Labor Union, Duaij Khalifa Al-Azmi, called for holding an urgent assembly to elect a new executive board for 2019-2023, adding that nominations will be accepted from Monday, April 8 until Sunday, April 21, 2019 from 4:30 pm to 8:30 pm at the government sector employees syndicates union headquarters in Maidan Hawally.

KPA elects new board

Kuwait Pharmaceutical Association (KPA) elected a new board of directors headed by Waleed Al-Shemmari and including Ali Hadi as secretary general, Hussein Al-Enezi as treasurer, Abdul Aziz Al-Khalidi and Dalal Al-Jumaian as board members.

Car, basement on fire

KFSD received a call about a car on fire on Salmiy Road, so Jahra fire center responded and put out the fire without injuries. In another development, Farwaniya and Jleeb fire centers responded to a call about a fire in the basement of a 10-storey building. The basement was used as a carpentry shop and contained wood, foam and paints, which caused fire and smoke spread to the upper floors very quickly. Firemen evacuated the building and the fire was put out without injuries.



ABK Sponsors Annual Diabetes Symposium

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently announced its sponsorship of the Amiri Hospital's 6th Annual Diabetes Symposium, organized by the Hospital's Diabetes unit, scheduled to take place in May 2019. The Bank's sponsorship comes in line with its strong belief in playing an active and impactful role within the communities in which it operates, by supporting the development and advancement of different areas that will benefit Kuwait as a whole.

Commenting on the Bank's sponsorship, Fawzy Al Thunayan, ABK's General Manager of Board Affairs said: "Our role in the Banking sector is not only about providing the best financial services, but is part of an integrated role that entails a

complete involvement in the surrounding communities and its initiatives that will lead to a more successful and prosperous nation from all aspects.

Diabetes in this case, has always been an area of concern in Kuwait, especially with its high occurrence among children in specific, and we are keen to support such initiatives that lead to the advancement of our healthcare systems and professionals". The Head of the Diabetes Unit at Al-Amiri Hospital, Dr Abdunabi Al-Attar thanked ABK for its continued support of the hospital's initiatives. For more information on Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait please visit eahli.com or contact a customer service agent via 'Ahlan Ahli' at 1899899.

Local

Photo of the Day



Photo show Sheikh Ahmed Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Rent House on Fallaka Island. — KUNA

Inter-Parliamentary Union praises Kuwait for its stands towards Arab

IPU Young Parliamentarians' Forum discusses youth in parliamentary life

DOHA: Secretary General for Arab Inter-Parliamentary Union Fawaz Al-Shawabkeh yesterday praised Kuwait for its stands towards Arab, regional and international issues. He also praises Kuwait's approach in dealing with ongoing issues in the Middle East and worldwide. In a statement to KUNA, on the sidelines of the Inter-Parliamentary Union's (IPU) 140th General Assembly in Qatar, Al-Shawabkeh stressed on His Highness Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's political vision on handling such issues.

"This wisdom in dealing with various issues, gives Kuwait a highly respected position among countries all around the world," he continued. Al-Shawabkeh described His Highness the Amir as an "international stature" and one of the main diplomatic pillars since he was a foreign minister. The Secretary General praised the important role of Speaker of Kuwaiti Parliament Marzouq Al-Ghanem and his accompanying delegation in partaking in such international forums.

Young Parliamentarians

Meanwhile, IPU Young Parliamentarians' Forum discussed youth participation in parliamentary life, their role in political decision-making, the extent of progress made in this regard and measures required to address current challenges. The forum, which was held in Doha as part of the 140th Assembly of the IPU under the chairmanship of Osoro Morin, highlighted the results of a study conducted by the Inter-Parliamentary Union in 2018 on youth participation in national parliaments.

It included statistics on parliamentarians under the age of 30, 40 and 45, as well as the latest information on special mechanisms to encourage youth participation in parliamentary life. According to the study, which covered 202 parliamentarians in 150 countries, young people aged 30 and over accounted for 2.2 percent of parliamentarians, up 0.3 percent from 2016, reflecting a slight improvement in the overall share of young people in parliaments around the world.

The results indicate that just over 30 percent of the world's parliaments have no deputies under the age of 30, and nearly three percent of those councils have no members under the age of 40, while 76 percent of the upper councils in parliaments have no members under 30 years old. Europe and the Americas respectively are leading the other regions of the world in the share of young parliamentarians who are younger than 30, 40 and 45 years, said the study.

The forum listened to some experiences and practices in enhancing youth participation in parliamentary life, while others put forward proposals to raise participation rates through raising awareness and developing political culture among young people and reviewing laws that do not allow those under the age of 30 to run for parliament. The agenda included the election of the Young Parliamentarians' Council, which includes two representatives (men and women) for each region of the world for a term until April 2021, with the new members meeting next Wednesday to elect a speaker. — Agencies



Kuwait follows Libya 'with deep concern'

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday said it is following "with deep concern" the recent situation unfolding in Libya, calling on all "our Libyan brethren" to immediately cease hostilities in a bid to stop further bloodshed. This military escalation doubles sentiments of concern and regret in a time the international community is looking forward, as well as hoping for the Libyan people to engage in a political process and respond to efforts by UN envoy to Libya Ghassan Salameh, said an official source at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

A political solution to the current crisis is the best means to secure Libya's stability and maintain its sovereignty, noted the source in a statement. Libya has been through a political and military crisis since the overthrow of former dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. The recent escalation emerged when anti-government forces led by General Khalifa Haftar claimed that they had been targeted by an air strike about 50 kilometers south of Tripoli, thus the current military situation. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's information technology and communications department in cooperation with the relations and information department participated in the Kuwait University's e-government week. The department said participating in such activities aims to make a qualitative move and deep-rooted change in the process of providing information, presenting government services and increasing students' awareness, in addition to knowing the type of services presented in order to save time and effort.

MoE terminates the contracts of 176 expatriates

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources announced that Ministry of Education (MoE) recently terminated the contracts of a new group of 176 expats including 135 social workers and librarians, 20 engineers, eight accountants, seven legal investigators and six employees working at the educational research department. The sources added that a list of the employees' names had been submitted to minister for approval.

Local biofuel loan

KNPC will start paying the biannual installments of the KD 2.1 billion local biofuel loan signed with local banks on April 28, 2016, said informed sources, noting that the payments would be biannually paid until April 28, 2026 with a one percent interest rate.

University aptitude tests

Manager of Kuwait University's center of evaluation and measurement Dr Rawa

Al-Jarallah announced that 8,600 high school students had registered to undergo aptitude tests on May 4, 2019. Jarallah added that the center is fully prepared for the tests and has allocated three different sites to hold them, which will help reduce traffic congestions at each site and help students show up on time.

Fingerprint systems

The foreign ministry officially contacted Kuwaiti embassies abroad demanding the use of fingerprint systems as soon as possible for all staff members, said informed sources, noting that the system is already used in some embassies where host countries allow the system, which is not the case in France, which considers the system a violation of privacy.

Custom dept employees

Head of the custom department employees' syndicate Ahmed Oqlah Al-Enezi blamed Ports Authority officials for preventing custom employees from entering Shuwaikh Port to do their jobs. "We are not holding a sit-in - it was the Ports Authority that closed the front gate and prevented employees from entering," Enezi explained, noting that the problem is in asking employees to pay a KD 180 annual fee for using the authority's parking spaces. "It is unacceptable to overburden employees with such fees to park their vehicles," he added.

Building a new economic model for the Arab world

Russian-Arab Business Council meets, Putin praises its effectiveness

DEAD SEA: The World Economic Forum on the Middle East and North Africa has concluded sessions on Sunday, during which participants discussed several issues under the theme of "Towards Building New Cooperation Systems." The forum, which was attended by Kuwaiti Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf and Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel, along with about 1,000 officials from 50 countries, dealt with four main themes over two days.

The themes included Building a new economic model, managing a suitable environment for the Arab world, reaching a common ground in a multi-polar world and the industrial revolution in the Arab world. During the forum, 32 sessions were held on several topics related to the new standards of public education, geographical distribution of banks in the region, new health care platforms, investment in human resources and cyber risk management. Participants highlighted globalization and role of technology in tackling corruption and shaping the future of tourism in Jordan. They also discussed the issue of peace and conflict in the region, new energy in the Middle East, prospects for geopolitical situation and fifth generation developments in communications.

They discussed water challenges in the region, the role of women in economic development, the importance of data, the future of smart cities, the redistribution of responsibilities and tasks in the region, the future of Islamic banking, solid waste management and reconstruction in the region, environmental leadership and the design of modern industry. The forum sessions witnessed general discussions on energy and natural



The 12th session of the Russian-Arab Business Council

resources in a number of Arab countries, as well as discussing the status of the Middle East, Asia and Europe in a global context.

Russian-Arab Business Council

In another development, the 12th session of the Russian-Arab Business Council kicked off in Moscow yesterday with participation of ranking and eminent Russian and Arab personalities. Russian President Vladimir Putin, in a cable to the conferees, said the council proved its efficiency, over the past years, noting its role in interaction among business quarters in Russia, the Middle East and North Africa.

The council contributes to creating adequate conditions for increasing

and diversifying trade, investments and joint ventures in industries, agriculture, energy, technology, transports and infrastructure, Putin said. The "Arabia Expo" held during the event is a platform for educating Russians about Arab states' economic, scientific and technological accomplishments and helping in exchange of creative ideas and proposals among the businessmen, he has added.

Moreover, Putin expressed hope that the forum would lead to creating new cooperation mechanisms to boost exchanges, cement relationships and boost understanding between the Russian and Arab nations. Addressing the session, Russian Foreign Minister Sergei

Lavrov affirmed Russia's "commitment to deepen cooperation" with Arab countries, revealing that the council would be held at a ministerial level in Moscow, on April 16.

Trade exchanges between the Arab world and Russia reached \$22 billion last year, he also disclosed. Arab and Russian companies are currently executing more than 400 investment projects, worth more than \$40 billion, including \$25 billion earmarked by Moscow as loans, Lavrov said. For his part, Sami Al-Otaibi, Chairman of the Saudi Chambers of Commerce, said the kingdom Vision 2030 has paved the way for new partnerships and investments, in cooperation with a large number of countries including Russia. — Agencies

Amir attaches great attention to orphans

CAIRO: His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is paying great attention to orphans support, said supervisor of the foster families department of the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi. The UN proclamation of His Highness the Amir as a humanitarian leader was not for nothing, but rather for his active role in humanitarian support including for orphans inside and outside Kuwait, Al-Ajmi said in a speech at the first Arab conference for the post-care given to former inmates of orphanages.



Dr Khaled Al-Ajmi

The conference, held Sunday under the patronage of the Arab League and in collaboration between the Egyptian Ministry of Social Solidarity and the Cairo-based Watanyia for the Development of Orphanages. The services and support given to orphans in Kuwait are "the best in the world," he stated. Al-Ajmi noted that Kuwait is striving to implement the UN sustainable development goals relative to orphans care. Up to 60 percent of orphans in Kuwait are hosted by foster families, he boasted, stressing that they enjoy a decent life. Al-Ajmi pointed out that the Ministry of Social Affairs also offers after-care to orphans including financial and emotional support and follow up their conditions after they leave orphanages.

He added that the ministry has entered into partnerships with civil society organizations including one with the Kyan Family Welfare Association to provide many services or orphans whose parents are unknown including housing. The conference, which brought together scores of post-care experts in Arab countries, aims to improve orphans care and follow-up systems in the Arab region through exchanging experiences and highlighting best practices to integrate former inmates of orphanages into their societies. —KUNA



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International

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019



Hoax busters:
Indonesia's front
line in the war
on fake news

Page 9

Filipino nurses find English tests too daunting

Page 8



TRIPOLI: Fighters from a Misrata armed group loyal to the internationally recognized Libyan Government of National Accord (GNA) prepare their ammunition before heading to the frontline on the outskirts of the capital yesterday. —AFP

Tripoli offensive highlights global splits

Foreign powers back or oppose bewildering array of groups

PARIS: The attempted offensive by Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar on Tripoli has thrown into sharp relief the divisions between world powers over how to end the chaos that has riven Libya since the 2011 overthrow of Muammar Gaddafi. Over the last years, competing factions and militias have sprouted up controlling different parts of Libya, leaving foreign powers to back or oppose a sometimes bewildering array of groups. Haftar's controversial and surprise offensive on Tripoli, launched last week, has forced interested parties to lay their cards on the table about what they believe is the best way to restore order in the north African country. Where do key regional powers in the Gulf, Turkey, neighbour Egypt as well as Russia and key EU players France and Italy stand?

Egypt, Saudi and UAE: Haftar's allies

On one side of the struggle is Haftar, the military commander and strongman of eastern Libya. And on the other Fayeze Al-Sarraj, who leads the United Nations-endorsed Government of National Accord, which has control of Tripoli. The key allies of Khalifa are the United Arab Emirates, Egypt and increasingly Saudi Arabia while he is strongly opposed by their regional foe Qatar as well as Doha's chief supporter Turkey. "The fighting in Libya has turned

into a proxy war between Gulf rivals," according to James Dorsey, a senior fellow at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies in Singapore.

Neil Partrick, a Middle East specialist based in Britain, told AFP that Haftar has had the support of Egypt and the United Arab Emirates from the outset while recently Saudi Arabia began openly backing him as well. Previously Riyadh had been "discreetly backing" Haftar while publicly professing political support for the UN-backed government in Tripoli. But the strongman was invited to visit Riyadh in March in a show of support, Partrick said.

Italy, Turkey and Qatar: Friends of Sarraj

On the other side of the fight, the UN-backed Sarraj government retains substantial support from Italy, which has close ties with and strong economic interests in its former colony. "Historically, the Italians have always maintained very good relations with Tripoli," said Ali Bensaad, professor at the French Institute of Geopolitics, pointing to Italy's interests in Libyan energy reserves through its oil firm ENI. In addition to Italy, Sarraj has backing from Turkey and Qatar, "but a Qatar that is currently weakened by its (diplomatic) isolation" due to the blockade from other Gulf nations, particularly Saudi Arabia and the

UAE, according to Bensaad. The support of Rome, a colonial power in the early 20th century, also has a lot to do with its "priority (of) ending the flow of migrants" coming from Libya, said Arturo Varvelli, head of the North Africa Program at the Italian Institute for International Political Studies in Milan.

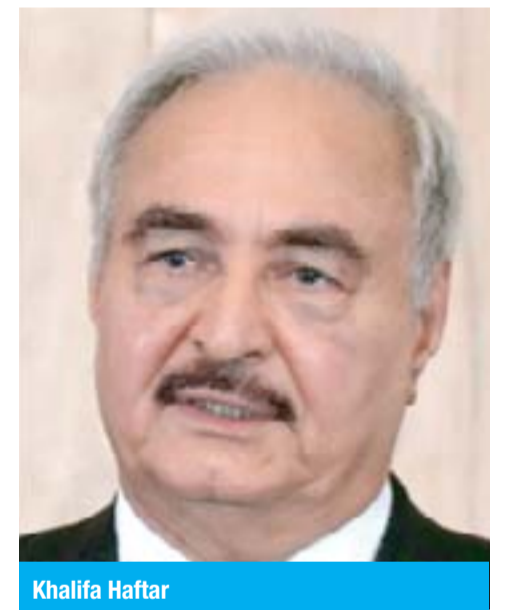
France and Russia: Ambiguous games

For its part, France has ostensibly played the role of mediator between Haftar and Sarraj, organizing two meetings between the Libyan rival leaders, one in July 2017 and the other in May 2018. But in reality the French position is less clear, and Paris - which maintains close ties with Cairo, Riyadh and Abu Dhabi - has been accused of favoring Haftar's side in the power struggle. "France is no longer playing the role of mediator," said Bensaad. "Its strategic alliance with the Gulf countries is pushing it to mold its geopolitical strategies."

In July 2016, France announced the death of three soldiers in a helicopter accident in Libya, where they had been supporting Haftar's forces during an intelligence-gathering mission. "The French position is ambiguous," said Varvelli, arguing Paris had from 2015 "endorsed Haftar to demonstrate French commitment to the fight against radical Islamists." French



Fayeze Al-Sarraj



Khalifa Haftar

involvement in Libya under President Emmanuel Macron has caused tensions in the past with Italy, which has historically been the lead European power in the country. "France and Italy are on the same wavelength," French Foreign Minister Jean-Yves Le Drian claimed on Saturday.

Meanwhile, Russia has been seen as an enthusiastic supporter of Haftar, hosting

meetings with him in Moscow. But since his offensive, Moscow has in public at least distanced itself from the military strongman, with the Kremlin calling "on all sides to reject actions that could provoke bloodshed in battle and the deaths of civilians". "If he (Haftar) wants to maintain an internal and international legitimacy, he cannot afford a bloodbath," said Varvelli. —AFP

Iliescu to be tried for 'crimes against humanity'

BUCHAREST: Romania's former president Ion Iliescu has been ordered to stand trial for crimes against humanity for his role in the deadly aftermath of the 1989 revolution that toppled the country's communist regime, prosecutors said yesterday. "It is a particularly important moment for Romania's justice system that is fulfilling a debt of honor to history," chief prosecutor Augustin Lazar told reporters. The announcement caps a long-running investigation made more difficult by an official reluctance to revisit the 1989 revolution's bloody aftermath.

Iliescu, now 89, had been a minister in the government of communist dictator Nicolae Ceausescu and went on to lead the National Salvation Front, which took control of the country after the uprising which began in the western city of Timisoara on December 16, 1989. Iliescu was elected president in 1990 and served another term from 2000 to 2004. It is now up to a Romanian high court to set a date for the trial.

Iliescu was indicted last December with three others. Two of them - former deputy prime minister Gelu Voiculescu and former air force commander Iosif Rus - will also stand trial. The case against former prime minister Petre Roman has been dropped for lack of evidence. Prosecutors accuse Iliescu and Voiculescu

of "directly spreading misinformation through televised appearances and press releases, contributing to the institution of a generalized psychosis".

Their pronouncements increased the risk of "instances of friendly-fire, chaotic shooting and contradictory military orders", prosecutors have said, with 862 people killed after December 22 when Iliescu took control. The men's actions also allegedly helped lead to the conviction and execution of Ceausescu and his wife "through a mock trial". Iliescu will also have to answer accusations of "crimes against humanity" over the smashing of a protest in Bucharest in 1990 that left four people dead.

Both Iliescu and Voiculescu have denied any wrongdoing with Voiculescu describing the accusation as an "act of political revenge". According to prosecutors, 275 people have already faced legal action over their role in the attempted crushing of the uprising. However, according to victims' support groups, only a few dozen have been convicted. The fall of Ceausescu came at the end of a momentous year in which communist regimes collapsed across central and eastern Europe - with the Berlin Wall coming down in November - presaging the demise of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. — AFP



Ion Iliescu

Radar images prove Pak F-16 shot down: Indian air force

NEW DELHI: India's air force presented what it called "irrefutable evidence" yesterday that it downed a Pakistan fighter jet in February, as the regional foes offer competing narratives over what happened in the dogfight. Pakistan has repeatedly denied that it lost an F-16 over the skies in Kashmir while a US magazine, citing top defense officials, has also cast doubt on India's assertion that a jet was shot down. India lost an MiG-21 Bison in the aerial skirmish and its pilot was captured by Pakistan and later returned, cooling one of the most serious military confrontations between the nuclear-armed rivals in decades.

But India has long maintained that its pilot first fired on an F-16, sending the damaged jet crashing into Pakistan-administered Kashmir - something Islamabad says never happened. In a press conference Air Vice Marshal R G K Kapoor repeated this assertion, reading out the evidence gathered by India and displaying radar images he said proved the Pakistan jet was struck and crashed. "There is no doubt that two aircraft went down in the aerial engagement on 27 February 2019," Kapoor said Monday, reading from a prepared statement.

India's air force "has irrefutable evidence of not only the fact that F-16 was used" on the day of the dogfight, but that it was shot down by the Indian jet, he added. Kapoor said further "credible information and evidence" backed this version of events but could not be released due to confidentiality concerns.

It comes just days after Foreign Policy magazine cited two unnamed senior US defense officials who said that US personnel recently conducted a count of Pakistan's F-16s and found none missing. The magazine quoted one of the officials as saying that Pakistan invited the US to physically count its F-16 fleet. The dogfight happened after Pakistani aircraft entered Indian airspace a day after Indian aircraft carried out an airstrike on what it said was a "terrorist training camp" in Pakistan.

That in turn was in response to a suicide bombing on February 14 in Indian-administered Kashmir that killed 40 Indian troops and which was claimed by a militant group based in Pakistan. Doubt has also been cast over the success of India's airstrike, which Amit Shah, president of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), has claimed killed 250. Pakistan denied that there was any damage or casualties. Independent reporting by multiple local and international outlets who visited the site also found no evidence of a major terrorist training camp - or of any infrastructure damage at all. Pakistan said it shot down two Indian planes and lost none of its own, but India said that it lost only one aircraft. Initially Pakistan said it had captured two Indian pilots but the military later clarified it had just one pilot in custody. — AFP

International

Erdogan sees 'theft' in Istanbul results, hints at possible re-run

Opposition CHP says security of election in jeopardy

ISTANBUL: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan yesterday questioned the results of Istanbul's mayoral elections which his party candidate narrowly lost, saying there had been "theft at the ballot box". Erdogan's Justice and Development Party (AKP) demanded a recount in the capital Ankara and Istanbul citing irregularities after tallies showed the party was defeated in both cities last week - in what would be a major setback in a decade and a half in power.

Erdogan's remarks appeared to signal more AKP challenges over Istanbul, the country's economic hub and largest city, echoing commentary in pro-government media denouncing a "ballot box putsch" during the March 31 election. "We are seeing that some organized crimes have been carried out," Erdogan said at a press conference before a trip to Russia, without giving details. "There is an element of robbery in all of this. There was some theft at the ballot box."

Erdogan said the margin between the two Istanbul candidates was too small for anyone to claim victory, suggesting when there was a problem with a percentage of votes in other countries, appeals and even new elections were not unusual. "No one has the right to declare themselves victorious with a difference of around 13,000-14,000 votes," Erdogan said.

In Ankara, the Supreme Electoral Council yesterday officially handed opposition CHP candidate Mansur Yavas his mandate. Erdogan's AKP won most votes nationwide in the election, but voters appeared to punish the party in the two big cities with Turkey's economy in recession and inflation in double digits after a currency crisis last year. Defeat in Istanbul would be especially sensitive for Erdogan who grew up in one of its working-class districts and began his political career as the city's mayor.

AKP's candidate for Istanbul, former premier Binali Yildirim, and opposition CHP's Ekrem Imamoglu both declared victory soon after initial results showed a dead

heat. Electoral authorities later said Imamoglu was winning by around 20,000 ballots, but that gap has narrowed during a week of recounting. The difference is now less than 16,000 ballots. The two candidates each received more than four million votes. "The AKP is broadening its appeal in Istanbul every day. The next step could be asking to redo the election," pro-government columnist Abdulkadir Selvi wrote in yesterday's *Hurriyet* newspaper, but added he did not think the election would be cancelled. Imamoglu, a former mayor of one of the city's local districts, has already declared himself Istanbul mayor and called on the AKP to accept the result.

Narrowing lead

The opposition appealed yesterday for electoral authorities to stay impartial. "I appeal to the jurists at the Supreme Electoral Council: Your independence and your objectivity are very important," CHP party chief Kemal Kilicdaroglu said during a press conference. "Now the Supreme Electoral Council has entered a process that damages the security of the ballot boxes, the security of the election. This is the real danger," Kilicdaroglu told reporters in Ankara. AKP vice-president Ali Ihsan Yavuz said: "What we want is for the votes that were made in the ballot box to be recorded as they were actually made."

After 16 years in power, Erdogan is praised by supporters, especially by more religiously conservative Turks, who say he oversaw a period of economic growth. But his critics at home and among Western allies say he has undermined democracy by purging dissent, especially after a 2016 failed coup Ankara blames on a US-based Muslim cleric. In 2017, Erdogan won a referendum that granted him broader executive powers as president.

"The irony is that from an institutional standpoint Erdogan in his consolidated executive presidency is the strongest he's been, but from a political standpoint he's



MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) shakes hands with Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ahead of a meeting at the Kremlin yesterday. — AFP

the weakest," Lisel Hintz, assistant professor of international relations at Johns Hopkins University, said. Hintz added Erdogan could face "serious splits from within" following the AKP's "less than stellar performance in major urban centers and its inability to get the economy

back on track". Erdogan campaigned hard portraying the local vote for mayors and district councils as a fight for the nation's survival, but the election became a test of AKP's support after the economic slowdown hit Turkey. — Agencies

Defiant Sudan protesters seek army talks

KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters yesterday called on the army to hold talks on forming a transitional government, as thousands braved a deadly crackdown for a third day to urge the military to back them. The east African country has been rocked by more than three months of protests that erupted over a hike in bread prices before transforming into nationwide demonstrations against President Omar al-Bashir's iron-fisted 30-year rule. At the biggest rally so far, thousands of protesters have since Saturday been camped out around the army headquarters in Khartoum which also houses Bashir's residence and the defense ministry. They are calling on the military to protect them and to back calls for Bashir to resign.

"When the army is here, we have no fear," protesters flashing victory signs chanted as military vehicles with soldiers fanned out around the complex, onlookers said. Riot police have fired tear gas at the protesters, but they have failed to dislodge them. Officials say 38 people have died in protest-related violence since December. Interior Minister Bushara Juma said seven protesters died on Saturday when forces tried to disperse them and 15 were wounded along with 42 members of the security forces. In all, 2,496 protesters were arrested.

The group spearheading the protests yesterday appealed to the army for talks on forming a transitional government. "We call on the Sudanese armed forces to talk directly with the Alliance for Freedom and Change for facilitating the peaceful process of forming a transitional government," said Omar el-Digeir, a senior member of the group.

Digeir said the protest organizers had also formed a council to initiate talks with security forces and the international community aimed at agreeing a transition that gives power to a "transitional government that represents the wish of the revolution". "We reiterate our people's demand that the head of the regime and his government



KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters rally in front of the military headquarters in the capital yesterday. — AFP

have to immediately step down," Digeir said. Reading from a statement, he also called on the armed forces "to withdraw their support for a regime that has lost its legitimacy" and to support the "people's alternative for a transition to a civilian democratic government".

'Protecting the people'

Since protests erupted across Sudan in December agents of the powerful National Intelligence and Security Service (NISS) and riot police have cracked down on demonstrators, but the army has not intervened. Soldiers put up barricades in streets near the army compound after reinforcements of intelligence agency members and riot police arrived in the early hours, witnesses told AFP. "After that, security forces began firing tear gas at protesters," one said on condition of anonymity. Gunshots were also

heard, witnesses said, but it was unclear who fired.

Some activists on the ground said it was the army shooting in the air, but this could not be confirmed independently. Protest organizers urged the military to protect the demonstrators. "We want you, the young officers and soldiers, to remain committed to the role of the national army, which is of protecting the people," said the Sudanese Professionals Association. A few hours later security personnel again fired tear gas at the demonstrators, witnesses said.

Protest organizers urged the residents of Khartoum and nearby areas to join the demonstrators. Crowds of people carrying food and water were later seen walking towards the complex to take part in the protest, according to onlookers. Some companies have told employees not to come into work "until further notice". — AFP

Netanyahu, Gantz make final pitches before Israeli vote

JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu sought to energize supporters on the eve of today's elections with warnings and controversial promises, while his centrist challenger urged voters to tell the premier the country has had enough. The general election in which Netanyahu is seeking to extend his already 13 years in office despite corruption allegations against him is expected to be close, with ex-military chief Benny Gantz posing a serious threat.

They spent the campaign's final hours exhorting voters with two different strategies: Netanyahu repeatedly warned that his Likud was at risk of losing, while Gantz made the case that Israel was on the verge of historic change. The truth was more complicated, with opinion polls giving Netanyahu's Likud and Gantz's Blue and White a similar number of seats in the 120-seat parliament. Under those polls, both would fall far short of an outright majority and would need to pull together a coalition.

If polling trends hold, Netanyahu would be best placed to do so thanks to smaller right-wing parties allied to him. There have however been repeated warnings of the unreliability of polls in the past and the fact that many voters say they remain undecided. Netanyahu's claims that Likud may lose were widely seen as a way to ensure his base of supporters turn out to vote.

'Who can do this?'

Netanyahu has made last-minute appeals to the right, issuing a deeply controversial pledge to annex settlements in the occupied West Bank. If done on a large-scale, applying Israeli sovereignty there could end any remaining hopes for a two-state solution with the Palestinians. In an interview on Sunday, Netanyahu said US President Donald Trump, who is expected to release his long-awaited deal for Israeli-Palestinian peace sometime after the election,



TEL AVIV: Retired Israeli general Benny Gantz takes a picture with his supporters during a campaign event yesterday. — AFP

was aware of his plans to do so. He said he planned to apply sovereignty gradually, and that he did not differentiate between Israel's large West Bank settlement blocs and the isolated ones located deep in the territory on land the Palestinians see as part of a future state. "Who else can do this? Who can do this? Come on. Honestly," Netanyahu said, making the case as he has throughout the campaign that he is Israel's essential statesman. "Who can stand in front of the world? Who can stand in front of the American Congress? Who can move public opinion in that direction?"

Gantz has called Netanyahu's pledge an "irresponsible" bid for rightwing votes. He says he favors a "globally backed peace agreement" that sees Israel hold on to the large settlement blocs in the West Bank and maintain security control over the territory. Gantz has also highlighted his security credentials while saying he will heal divisions he accuses Netanyahu of exacerbating. "There's a need for change and an opportunity for change," Gantz told Israel's army radio yesterday. "Israel needs to choose a direction of unification, connection and hope - or of extremity." The two were also engaging in typical pre-election campaigning, including Gantz riding a motorcycle to his rally on Sunday and Netanyahu visiting Jerusalem's main market yesterday. — AFP

Artificial limbs change lives for wounded Gazans

GAZA: Walking up and down stairs at a Gaza medical center, Palestinian amputees are learning to use their new artificial limbs after being wounded by Israeli fire at border protests. The Health Ministry in the Hamas Islamist-run territory said 136 wounded Palestinians have undergone amputations since the demonstrations began in March 2018. "It was only one bullet, one bullet turned my life upside down," said Abdallah Qassem, 17, struggling to stand steady while trying on his new artificial legs.

Qassem said the bullet struck one leg and then penetrated the other as he sat on the ground with friends at a rally on May 14, the day the United States moved its embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, fuelling Palestinian anger. "I had dreamt of becoming a photojournalist but I aim to study computer science," he told Reuters. The Gaza Artificial Limb and Polio Center is run by the Gaza municipality. On its first floor, technicians were producing limbs with material from the International Committee of the Red Cross.

Protesters at the demonstrations are demanding the end to a security blockade imposed on Gaza by Israel and Egypt, and want Palestinians to have the right to return to land from which their families fled or were forced to leave during Israel's founding in 1948. Around 200 Gazans have been killed by Israeli troops so far in the protests, according to Palestinian Health Ministry figures. An Israeli soldier was also killed by a Palestinian sniper in July. UN investigators say Israel has used excessive force. Israel says it has no choice but to use deadly force to protect the border from militants and infiltrators.

In the southern Gaza town of Khan Younis, Suhaib Qudeih and his sister Nazeeha each lost a leg to Israeli gunfire. "Before the injury, I used to work and make 4,000 shekels (\$1,100 a month). I used to bring the sweetest food to my children. — Reuters

News in brief

Hamas leader jailed without trial

JERUSALEM: Israel yesterday handed down a six-month detention order without trial for a West Bank leader of Palestinian Islamist group Hamas, his family and an Israeli intelligence service said. Hassan Yousef, a co-founder of Hamas, was arrested on April 2 at his home in the occupied West Bank, according to the Palestinian Prisoners' Club NGO. He was given a six-month administrative detention order yesterday, his family said. Yousef had been released from a previous imprisonment in October 2018. "We condemn this decision. He suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure," his son Owais said, pointing out he had spent around 20 years in prison. — AFP

Israel jails French consulate worker

BEERSHEBA: An Israeli court yesterday sentenced a former French consulate worker to seven years in prison for smuggling guns from the Gaza Strip after a plea bargain. Romain Franck, who worked as a driver for the consulate, went on trial after being accused of exploiting reduced security checks for diplomats to smuggle 70 pistols and two automatic rifles from the Gaza Strip to the Israeli-occupied West Bank. The plea bargain reached convicted Franck for smuggling 29 pistols after he confessed to most of what he was charged with. He was also given a fine of 30,000 shekels (\$8,000) and an 18-month suspended sentence. Franck's lawyer Kenneth Mann said he intended to request that he serve his sentence in France. — AFP

Rhino poacher crushed, eaten

JOHANNESBURG: A suspected rhino poacher was trampled to death by an elephant and his body devoured by lions in South Africa's Kruger National Park, officials said yesterday. South African rangers have recovered the skull of the man in the vast Kruger sanctuary, which has borne the brunt of much of the country's poaching crisis. According to a park spokesman, rangers were alerted after the victim's alleged accomplices told his family that he had been crushed to death by an elephant. The man's remains were discovered on Thursday after a two day search involving aircraft and rangers on foot, with the help of the victim's accomplices. — AFP

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International

Deadlock in London keeps Brexit hanging in the balance

May to visit Merkel and Macron before summit

LONDON: Britain's exit from the European Union hung in the balance yesterday as Prime Minister Theresa May tried to coax the Labour Party into agreeing a divorce deal, two days before an emergency summit where she will try to delay the April 12 departure.

Brexit has already been delayed once but May is asking the EU for yet more time as she courts veteran socialist Jeremy Corbyn, whose Labour Party wants to keep Britain more closely tied to the EU after Brexit. May heads to Berlin and Paris today to meet Chancellor Angela Merkel and President Emmanuel Macron and will be phoning other leaders before setting out the case for another delay at tomorrow's EU summit in Brussels.

Nearly three years after the United Kingdom shocked the world by voting by 52 percent to 48 to leave the EU, May warned that Brexit might never happen, but said that she would do everything possible to make sure that it did. Labour's Brexit point man, Keir Starmer, said May's government had so far not changed its position on Brexit and so no way forward had been agreed.

"Both us and the government have approached this in the spirit of trying to find a way forward. We haven't found that yet. We will continue to do that," Starmer said.

"The ball is the government's court," he added. "We need to see what they come back with and, when they do, we will take a collective position on that." What Starmer termed exchanges of communication had taken place over the weekend and, while no talks were scheduled for yesterday, he said things could develop. He said an agenda had been circulated that included the idea of

a confirmatory referendum. May's spokeswoman said she hoped further formal talks could take place later yesterday, adding: "The PM wants us to be able to agree with the opposition as soon as possible."

She said May wanted Britain to have an independent trading policy - something hard to reconcile with Labour's demand for membership of a customs union - and that both sides would need to compromise.

Brexit delay?

The 2016 referendum revealed a United Kingdom divided over much more than EU membership, and has sparked impassioned debate about everything from secession and immigration to capitalism, empire and what it means to be British. Yet, more than a week after Britain was originally supposed to have left the EU, nothing is resolved as the weakest leader in a generation battles to get a divorce deal ratified by a deadlocked parliament.

EU leaders, fatigued by the serpentine Brexit crisis, must decide tomorrow whether to grant May, who has asked for a postponement until June 30, a further delay. The decision can be vetoed by any of the other 27 member states. Without an extension, the United Kingdom is due to leave the EU at 2200 GMT on Friday, without a deal to cushion the economic shock.

While the EU is not expected to trigger such a potentially disorderly no-deal exit, diplomats said all options were on the table - from refusing a delay to granting May's request or pushing for a longer postponement. The EU's chief Brexit negotiator, Michel Barnier, was yesterday meeting Prime Minister Leo Varadkar in Ireland, which depends heavily on Britain as both a market and a transit point and would be hit



LONDON: Britain's Defense Secretary Gavin Williamson (left) and Britain's International Development Secretary and Minister for Women and Equalities Penny Mordaunt arrive in Downing street in central London yesterday. — AFP

hardest by a no-deal Brexit.

But May is boxed in at home: Brexit-supporting lawmaker Mark Francois demanded she resign and called on the party to vote on forcing her out. As the crisis grinds on, one survey suggested that voters wanted a strong leader willing to force through reform

of a political system that has been found badly wanting by Brexit. Research by the Hansard Society found that 54 percent of voters wanted a strong leader willing to break the rules, while 72 percent said the political system needed "quite a lot" or "a great deal" of improvement. — Reuters

Filipino nurses find English tests too daunting

MANILA: Bracing for life after Brexit, British hospitals badly need more nurses like Filipino Jobie Escalona, but she twice flunked a mandatory English language test that asked her to write up the merits of immigration and computer education in school.

The 23-year-old Escalona, with three years experience in a private hospital in Manila, lost almost 3 months salary paying nearly \$600 to sit the tests. Fed up, she was ready to give up on Britain and try Canada, one of several other countries short of nurses, until her father persuaded her to take the test a third time. "I was already losing hope," she told Reuters. Finally, in January last year, she passed, having at last got a subject she felt comfortable writing about in the tough written section of the test. Asked to compare team and individual sports, Escalona had little trouble: "I was able to relate to it because I am a swimmer."

But, her tortuous experience doesn't bode well for Britain's chances of adequately filling alarming staffing gaps in its healthcare services. With Brexit looming, the supply of nurses from European Union countries has almost dried up, with lots going home. And of the many foreign nationalities employed in Britain, Filipinos made up the largest number, with 10,719, according to a parliamentary paper.

As of June last year, 16 percent of

nursing jobs in hospitals and community health services were held by foreigners - nearly a quarter of whom were Filipinos.

Britain is already facing a shortage of 40,000 nurses, and once it leaves the EU, if it ever happens, the gap could widen to 50,000, enough to staff more than 40 small to medium-sized hospitals, according to a report commissioned by the Cavendish Coalition, a group of health and social care organisations.

Out of their comfort zone

The staffing crisis is increasing Britain's dependency on hiring from low cost countries like India and the Philippines, where English is widely spoken, yet the language test has proved to be a major obstacle. Philippine recruitment firm Louis International Manpower Services has received 1,000 job orders for nurses since 2015. It has only filled a quarter of them.

"It is not because of the lack of applications, but the English test," said Lilibeth Villas, documentation officer at the firm. "We have applicants who were interviewed in 2015, but they have not passed the test yet." Run by the British Council, IDP Education and Cambridge Assessment, the International English Language Test System (IELTS) gauges applicants' ability to speak, listen, read and write, and is used by employers around the world.

Questions in the academic written section asks candidates to write short essays on diverse subjects. Examples given on the IELTS website included interpreting graphs on changes in radio and television audiences, and gender variations between full and part-time students, and discussing the pros and cons of nuclear technology and of regulating car ownership. — Reuters

Brexit axe looms for British office-holders in France

RENNES: After Britain leaves the European Union some 900 Britons serving on local councils in France will also have to give up their seat at the table. Like all EU citizens living in another member country, Britons in France have the right to vote in local elections and stand for election to their local council. But in leaving the bloc Britain will forfeit that right, meaning that British residents will no longer be able to represent the communities some have served for years.

Sandra Sheward and her husband moved to the western French region of Brittany 13 years ago. "Our children fled the nest and we decided to drop out of the rat race in London," said Sheward, 58, a former training specialist for a property services company.

The pair restored a farmhouse on the edge of Saint-Caradec, a riverside village of 1,200 people, where Sheward was courted by the mayor to join his slate of candidates for the municipal council in 2014.

Being the only non-French councillor, and one who has yet to fully master the language, has not been an obstacle, says Sheward, a born organizer who developed the village's Christmas art market and helped set up a yoga class, among other activities. "She doesn't speak much during council meetings but when she does it's always very constructive," Mayor Alain Guillaume said.

In a region that draws large numbers of British tourists and where a number of Britons have second homes, it's also helpful to



LONDON: Anti-Brexit demonstrators from Yorkshire demonstrate outside the Houses of Parliament in central London yesterday. British Prime Minister Theresa May will meet with German and French leaders Angela Merkel and Emmanuel Macron as she scrambles to find a Brexit breakthrough ahead of tomorrow's crucial EU summit. — AFP

have a native English speaker to call on for translations and other assistance.

But if Britain leaves the EU as expected, Sheward will be forced to bow out of politics at the next local elections in 2020. "French villages are like ghost towns so it has been nice to be on the council. You get to meet more people!" said Sheward, who has applied for residency in France. "I'd like to be re-elected but it depends on Brexit," she said, adding with a sigh: "I just wish they'd get on with it so that we too can get on with our lives."

'Mad Englishwoman with dogs'

According to official British statistics, France is home to a little over 157,000 British citizens, making it the biggest expatriate British community after that of Spain. Outside Paris, large numbers are to be found in Brittany and the southwestern Dordogne region. France has given them a year after

Brexit to apply for residency but many have decided not to wait for divorce day to get their papers in, swamping local authorities.

The government has attempted to fend off panic, with former European Affairs Minister Nathalie Loiseau assuring in March: "We want them to stay. They are an asset for France."

About 10 kilometers to the west of Sheward's village in Brittany, an Englishwoman is also a lynchpin of her community. Jacqueline Bertho, 60, from Yorkshire, ended up in France in 2000 after a divorce, and began a new life in "Kreiz Breizh"-Breton for the center of Brittany, where she lives with her Breton husband and their daughter. In the village of Saint-Guen (population 450), which is "very rural, like 1960s Britain", the chatty 60-year-old is a well-known figure. "I'm the mad Englishwoman with the dogs," she jokes. — AFP

India's Election Commission: Buried under tide of accusations

NEW DELHI: Did Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi break election rules by addressing the nation on an anti-satellite test recently? Is it right to have a channel dedicated to the leader? Can the country's armed forces be called "Modi's soldiers"?

Ahead of a general election that starts on Thursday, the Election Commission of India (ECI) says it is swamped with hundreds of thousands of such questions and accusations of violation of election rules. Many are coming via ever expanding social media.

"The commission will only move when there is sufficient material," said Sandeep Saxena, a deputy election commissioner, adding that social media and mobile phones often tell people of things immediately, which it takes the panel time to learn. "We normally ask our own field functionaries," he told Reuters. "It takes 12 hours or so to establish, only then we go for action."

Opposition parties have accused the

panel of being biased in favor of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), which they say gives Modi an unfair advantage in the election. There is even a threat to jail commission officials if Modi is ousted.

The BJP denies special treatment from the panel, an autonomous constitutional body tasked with the smooth conduct of the world's biggest democratic exercise with as many as 900 million eligible voters. The panel, which has a staff of 300 at its headquarters in New Delhi, the capital, and more in India's states, has said it is impartial and acting against the guilty irrespective of party affiliation.

But the model code of conduct has become a joke, said Tarun Kumar, an official of the main opposition Congress party, because NaMO TV, a recently launched television channel that broadcasts Modi's rallies live, as well as promotional material for the ruling party, was still on air, despite complaints.

"Everyday, I think that the Election Commission has sunk to its lowest, only to be proved wrong next day!" said Yogendra Yadav, a political activist and former pollster.

The top complaints the panel has ruled on or is examining are a speech by the chief minister of the northern state of Uttar Pradesh, Yogi Adityanath of the BJP, in which he associated the armed forces with Modi by calling them "Modi's soldiers", the panel says on its website. — Reuters

French PM sees tax cuts as solution to 'yellow vest' anger

PARIS: The French government must implement bold tax cuts in response to the "yellow vest" protests, Prime Minister Edouard Philippe argued yesterday as he revealed the results of a major public consultation on the crisis. Giving the first conclusions of a "Great National Debate" which was launched in January, Philippe said that French citizens had expressed "an enormous exasperation" over the country's tax burden, which is the highest in the world.

"The debates show us very clearly which way to go. We need to lower taxes, and lower them more quickly," Philippe who told an audience in Paris. The "yellow vest" protests, so called for the fluorescent vests worn by demonstrators, began in small-town France in mid-November, initially over fuel taxes before spiralling into a nation-wide revolt against President Emmanuel Macron.

The 41-year-old came to power in May 2017 promising pro-business reforms and tax cuts for companies and investors to encourage job creation, earning him a reputation as a "president of the rich." Philippe, a center-right fiscal hawk who has previously called for tax cuts and reductions in public spending,



PARIS: Attendees stand next to a wall bearing the inscription "Voices of French citizens" during the "Great National Debate" restitution, a months-long exercise launched in January as a response to protests by "yellow vest" demonstrators, in Paris yesterday. — AFP

said the government needed to go further.

"We have reached a point where hesitating would be worse than an error, it would be an offence," Philippe added. "The need for change is so radical that any conservatism, any feebleness would be unforgivable in my view." Macron is expected to announce his conclusions in a major speech in the next fortnight, with the "Great National Debate" billed as a watershed moment in his nearly two-year-old presidency. Though he is known to favor further tax cuts too, he has ruled them out without reductions in public spending - which could prove hugely controversial.

Successive French leaders have faced street protests every time they attempted to trim France's vast public sector, underlining the difficult balancing act ahead for France's youngest ever president.

The country has the highest taxation rate in the world, according to the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, with taxes equivalent to 46.2 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP).

French public spending is the second-highest in the world after Finland and is the equivalent of 56.8 percent of GDP, according to the OECD. — AFP

International

Modi-led alliance closes in on majority, show opinion polls

A rise in nationalist sentiment seen boosting chances

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling alliance will be just a few seats short of a majority in parliament, bolstered by a rise in nationalist sentiment over hostilities with arch foe Pakistan, a survey showed yesterday, days before voting begins.

About 900 million people are eligible to vote in the election starting on Thursday, in which Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party-led group is taking on the Congress and its allies and a clutch of regional parties.

The election had become tighter because of discontent in the countryside over a weak rural economy and lack of jobs for young people. But over the last month, support for Modi's Hindu nationalist party has grown following a spike in tension with Pakistan, the polls say.

The BJP and its allies are expected to win 267 of the 543 parliament seats at stake, the CVoter polling agency said, just five short of the halfway mark required to rule. The latest estimate is down sharply from the alliance's current tally of 330 seats secured when Modi swept to power in 2014, promising to transform Asia's third-largest economy.

Modi ordered air strikes in February on the suspected camp of a militant group based in Pakistan that had claimed responsibility for a deadly car bombing in disputed Kashmir, dramatically ratcheting up tension



MUMBAI: India's Congress Party candidate Priya Dutt (left) and her Bollywood actor brother Sanjay Dutt speaks with the media after Priya filed her nomination in Mumbai yesterday ahead of the upcoming Indian national elections. — AFP photos



MUMBAI: Bollywood actress and India's Congress Party candidate Urmila Matondkar arrives to file her nomination in Mumbai yesterday ahead of the upcoming Indian national elections.

with the neighboring nation.

Pakistan sent war planes into Indian Kashmir the next day and the two nuclear-armed foes engaged in their first air duel in decades. "In the immediate aftermath of the Balakot strikes the percentage of those strongly satisfied with the government rose

to a recent all-time high of 52 percent," CVoter said, referring to the raid in Pakistan's Balakot area.

A second poll by India TV-CNX pre-poll said Modi's alliance would clear the halfway mark, winning 275 seats. Modi has made his strong stance on national security a key part

of the BJP's election campaign.

Yesterday, the party said it would scrap decades-old special rights for the people of Muslim-majority Jammu and Kashmir so as to integrate the state more closely with the rest of the country, a move the party's base has long sought. Political leaders in

Muslim-majority Kashmir, where India is battling an armed insurgency against its rule, have warned that repealing the law could trigger unrest. Kashmir's special constitutional status prevents outsiders from buying property in the state, among other restrictions. — Reuters

Second group of Rohingya arrive in Malaysia within weeks

KUALA LUMPUR: Forty-one Rohingya were found on a Malaysian beach yesterday, police said, the second group of the Muslim minority to arrive in the northern Malaysian state of Perlis, the first group believed to have landed in the country in almost a year.

The latest batch, which consisted entirely of men, were found yesterday on the same beach as the previous boatload, local police chief Noor Mushar Mohamad said. "This is definitely the work of human smuggling syndicates working with local syndicates," he said. "I fear there could be more Rohingya arrivals unless maritime enforcement agencies step up patrols urgently."

Noor Mushar said initial investigations indicated they could have travelled in a large boat before being transferred to smaller craft by local criminal gangs and ferried ashore. They have been handed over to immigration authorities, he said.

It was not clear whether they had departed from Bangladesh or Myanmar, or when they had arrived.

About 740,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar for Bangladesh following a brutal military clampdown in their home country in August 2017, joining hundreds of thousands already living in crowded camps.

The traditional route to Malaysia is by



TEKNAF: Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) paramilitary personnel carrying assault rifles disembark as they have been deployed on Saint Martin's island, a small island in the Bay of Bengal in Teknaf, on Sunday. — AFP

boat from Myanmar or Bangladesh. Refugees arrive either in Thailand and head overland to Malaysia, or arrive directly in Malaysia. But arrivals have fallen markedly since 2015 when Thailand launched a crackdown, which disrupted the lucrative trade and led to smugglers abandoning huge numbers of refugees at sea.

Relatively affluent, Muslim-majority Malaysia has long been a favorite destination for Rohingya, where they are a source of labor in low-paying industries such as agriculture and construction. Bangladesh deploys border guards to island near Myanmar.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh on Sunday deployed heavily-armed border guards to an island near its southern border with Myanmar for the first time in 20 years, officials said.

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) distributed images showing dozens of troops carrying assault rifles disembarking at Saint Martin's island, a small island in the Bay of Bengal that has caused diplomatic tensions between the neighbors.

The BGB said the troop deployment was part of "regular activities" to ensure border protection and curb drug trafficking. But the force's lieutenant colonel, Sarker Mohammad

Mustafizur Rahman, told AFP it was the first time since 1997 their men had landed there.

"After more than 20 years we felt we should deploy," he said. The deployment comes just two months after Bangladesh's foreign ministry summoned Myanmar's ambassador in Dhaka to protest the inclusion of Saint Martin inside their territory in some maps printed inside the Southeast Asian country.

He was also summoned in October last year, after a Myanmar government website depicted the island as within Myanmar's territory. Ties between the neighbors have soured since the Myanmar military launched a crackdown on the Rohingya minority in Rakhine, a troubled western state bordering Bangladesh.

The brutal operation has forced some 740,000 Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh since August 2017, transforming parts near the border into the world's largest refugee camp.

Muslim-majority Bangladesh has accused Myanmar of perpetrating genocide against the Rohingya, who share some cultural and linguistic similarities with Bangladeshis in the country's southeast. — AFP

culated by fans, detractors and for-hire fake news fabricators known as buzzers.

Misinformation emerged in the 2014 election, which Widodo won, said Ari Nurcahyo, a political analyst at the Para Syndicate think tank.

"Now it's much more difficult to contain so the effect is more destructive, not only for the candidates but also for society," he said. "If it's not dealt with properly then we'll have serious issues even after the election."

Hoaxes, hate speech

Fears are growing that fake news is cracking open social and religious fault lines in the Southeast Asian nation of 260 million, which has significant ethnic and religious minorities, including Hindus, Christians and Buddhists. Indonesia's reputation for religious tolerance has already been tested in recent years by extremist violence and the increasingly prominent voice of Islamic hardliners.

"What scares me is when hoaxes are mixed with hate speech because they often use false information to spread animosity along on ethnic, racial and religious lines," said Ferdinandus Setu, spokesman for Indonesia's communication and information ministry.

The ministry created an 80 person, around-the-clock fact-checking team to debunk hoaxes and other fake news, with officials announcing the results at regular press briefings.

Joining the offensive are hundreds of vol-

unteers at the NGO Mafindo, which is among two dozen organizations that belong to a unique digital verification coalition called CekFakta-linked to Indonesia's top news outlets.

Widodo, who still leads Subianto by a wide margin, has blamed false information for hurting his chances in vote-rich West Java, the Muslim majority country's most populous province. Online, Widodo haters say he is selling off the country to China and other foreign interests.

Or they claim he is a communist, intent on banning the daily call to prayer and legalizing gay marriage-unpopular moves that the practicing Muslim has never advocated.

But Subianto also has online detractors who air falsehoods such as that the retired general wore smart glasses to give him an unfair edge during televised presidential debates.

"Both sides are playing with rumors, altering facts and data," said Syamsuddin Haris, a political analyst at the Indonesia Sciences Institute. Despite the huge volume of fake news, pollsters say that among committed supporters of either presidential candidate, false stories make little difference either way in terms of their voting choice.

The real target-and the places the hoaxes can make a difference-is the undecided voters which are estimated to number as much as 15 percent of the huge electorate and maybe enough to tip the balance. — AFP

Nepal expedition to re-measure height of Everest

KATHMANDU: Nepal is sending a team of government-appointed climbers up Mount Everest to remeasure its height, officials said yesterday, hoping to quash persistent speculation that the world's tallest mountain has shrunk. Four government surveyors will depart tomorrow for Everest, which lies on the Himalayan range straddling the border of Nepal and China.

Its official height is 8,848 metres (29,029 feet), first recorded by an Indian survey in 1954. Numerous other teams have measured the peak, although the 1954 height remains the widely accepted figure. But a heated debate erupted in the aftermath of a massive earthquake in Nepal in 2015, with suggestions the powerful tremor had knocked height off the lofty peak.

Nepal's Survey Department commissioned a team of surveyors in 2017 to prepare for an Everest expedition in the hope of putting the matter to rest.

"We are sending a team because there were questions regarding the height of Everest after the earthquake," the expedition's coordinator from the Survey Department, Susheel Dangol, told AFP.

Four government surveyors have spent two years fine tuning their methodology for measuring the peak, collecting read-

ings from the ground and training for the extreme conditions they will encounter at the top of the world. They will ascend the treacherous mountain armed with advanced equipment to collect the remaining data to derive the true height of the peak, officials say.

"It will not be easy to work in that terrain, but we are confident our mission will be successful," said the expedition's leader and chief surveyor, Khim Lal Gautam, who summited Everest in 2011.

It also provides Nepal a chance to measure the fabled mountain for which it is famous, the impoverished country having never conducted its own survey.

In May 1999 an American team added two meters to Everest's height when it used GPS technology to survey the peak. That figure is now used by the US National Geographic Society, but otherwise not widely accepted. Later, Nepal became embroiled in a diplomatic row with China after the latter claimed the peak was four meters shorter than the accepted height.

Nepal rests on a major fault line between two tectonic plates: one bearing India that pushes against the other carrying Europe and Asia, the process that created the Himalayas. — AFP

Facebook claims headway against abuses ahead of India election

MENLO PARK: Facebook has said it has made strides in its efforts to prevent online abuses in the Indian national election that starts this week but acknowledged that gaps remain in its "election integrity" efforts. During a media tour of the company's election operations center at its Menlo Park headquarters in California on Friday, company officials touted new fact-checking efforts for suppressing misinformation and technological advances such as the ability to detect when videos had been doctored.

But Katie Harbath, Facebook's public policy director for global elections, said measures including a better system for verifying the buyers of political advertisements remained imperfect and called for more government regulation of ad-spending disclosures. Excited for failing to stop Russian manipulation in the 2016 US presidential vote, Facebook has ramped up efforts to prevent abuses in subsequent elections, including the 2018 American midterms and the recent Brazilian and Mexican contests. Governments in many countries, including India and the UK, are contemplating strict new regulations for social media companies.

India, where Facebook has more users than in any other country, is shaping up as a major test. On April 1, the company said it had removed more than 500 accounts and 138 pages linked to India's opposition Congress party for "coordinated inauthentic behavior." Facebook's term for the use of fake accounts and other deceptive

methods to promote a message.

It also took down a page with 2 million followers which, according to Facebook's review partner Atlantic Council think tank, was "pro-BJP" (India's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party) and a supporter of Prime Minister Narendra Modi. Harbath said the company can now quickly detect viral, politically sensitive stories and refer them for fact-checking by outside organizations. The officials also touted heavy investment in technology for detecting doctored videos and text inside pictures, but acknowledged that that they have been unable to stop some duplicates of videos that have been identified as spurious.

Facebook has partnered with seven fact-checkers in India. If a post is found to be untrue, the company says it reduces the circulation of such fake posts by more than 80 percent, but slightly modified versions of the same images, video or text can escape detection and spread further.

Reuters earlier this month found instances of edited posts circulating on Facebook which the company's own fact-checkers had said were false. Deceptive political advertising has become another hot-button problem for the company. Facebook has toughened the rules in India and political ads now include "published by" and "paid by" disclaimers. Users can also access a library that allows them to search and find out more about political advertisements.

Harbath said political ad purchases in India now require either a certificate from the Election Commission or a physical address in India, as well as a phone number and group name of the entity purchasing the ad. While Facebook will check that the address and phone number are legitimate, the company agreed that the same person could make up multiple entities at the same address, without any available record of the original source of money. — Reuters

Hoax busters: Indonesia's front line in the war on fake news

JAKARTA: A small army of "hoax busters" in Indonesia is trying to hold the line against a swarm of fake news that threatens to sway millions of voters as the world's third-biggest democracy heads to the polls. While many countries fret about the explosion of online falsehoods, observers say Indonesia's enormous social media audience-and low levels of digital literacy-make its April 17 polls particularly vulnerable.

A whopping 130 million people-about half the population-spend an average of over three hours daily on social media, one of the highest rates globally. Analysts say much of what they are reading about the 245,000 candidates, who are standing for everything from the presidency to local legislative seats, is untrue.

The online battle is particularly fierce over the reputations of President Joko Widodo, who is running for re-election, and his challenger Prabowo Subianto. Both are hit daily with false reports and doctored headlines cir-

Analysis

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Reps want census data on citizenship for redistricting

John Murante, a conservative Nebraska senator, last year introduced a bill to prevent non-citizens from being counted when the state redraws its voting maps. He said the effort aimed to ensure each election district contained similar numbers of voters, but opponents argued it intended to undermine the political power of immigrant communities. Murante's bill died after its critics pointed out a lack of granular data on where the state's non-citizens live. That data may soon be available.

The Trump administration believes its proposed question about citizenship on the 2020 Census will help states that want to draw citizens-only voting districts in the next round of redistricting by providing the first comprehensive data on non-citizens in about 70 years, according to a Reuters review of court and federal register documents and interviews with more than a dozen state lawmakers.

Such a change would provide a new opportunity for Republican-controlled states - those most likely to adopt citizens-only redistricting - to redraw their voting maps in a way that could help their party win more state-level elections. Currently, state and federal voting districts are drawn to be roughly equal in population, regardless of how many residents can legally vote. That means tallies for district-drawing purposes include non-citizens, such as green-card holders and undocumented immigrants.

Democrats and immigrant rights activists say this system ensures elected leaders represent everyone in their district who depends on public services such as schools and trash pickup, regardless of voting eligibility. Republicans argue that districts should be the same size so each vote carries the same weight. If one district has far fewer eligible voters than another, each vote there has more influence on election outcomes. That's a problem for Republicans because the eligible voters in immigrant-heavy districts tend to support Democrats.

Trump administration officials have been considering the merits of citizens-only redistricting since 2017 - well before announcing their intention in March 2018 to add the citizenship question to the decennial survey, according to court documents filed as part of litigation over the citizenship question. And in December, the Census Bureau issued a notice in the Federal Register saying that if any states "indicate a need for ... citizenship data" to use in redistricting, it would "make a design change" to provide it.

Republican lawmakers in Texas, Arizona, Missouri and Nebraska told Reuters they would consider making use of the citizenship data if it became available. The tactic is prohibited at the federal level by past US Supreme Court decisions that have interpreted the US constitution as requiring that US House districts be based on total population. But the court, in a 2016 case known as *Evenwel v. Abbott*, left the door open for state-level districts to use other metrics.

James Whitehouse, the chief of the Census Bureau's Redistricting & Voting Rights Office, called the federal register notice routine. "We're supposed to provide states with what they identify as needing," he said. US voting districts are drawn at the state level, most often by state legislators, giving the party in power control over how the lines are redrawn. While both Republicans and Democrats frame the debate over citizen-only districts around fairness, demographic experts point out that both sides have a lot at stake politically.

Data from the nonpartisan APM Research Lab showed that 95 of the 100 US congressional districts with the highest foreign-born populations are represented by Democrats. Similar data for state-level seats was not available. Redrawing such districts with citizen-only populations would give Republicans a better shot by expanding the districts into more conservative areas, said Albert Kauffman, a professor at St. Mary's School of Law in San Antonio who has studied redistricting and opposes excluding non-citizens. In Texas, a citizens-only map could strip Latino voters of majorities in two or three state senate seats and six or seven state representative seats, Kauffman said, pointing out that Hispanic voters traditionally lean left. "Democrats know they would probably lose seats at every level," Kauffman said.

Immigrant rights activists and Democratic-led cities and states have sued the Trump administration to prevent it from asking census respondents about their citizenship, and the Supreme Court will decide by June if the question can remain. Opponents argue the administration aims to use the question to intimidate immigrants out of responding to the census, which would cost their communities political representation and a share of about \$800 billion in annual federal aid allocated based on population. The administration disputes that. Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross said his decision to add the question was aimed at getting the Justice Department the comprehensive citizenship data it needs to better enforce Voting Rights Act provisions that protect minorities from discrimination. — Reuters

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Sudanese protesters rally in front of the military headquarters in the capital Khartoum yesterday. — AFP

Women take leading role in Sudan protests

Sudanese women are taking a leading role in protests against President Omar al-Bashir, which have gained added inspiration from the demonstrations in Algeria, opposition figures said at a London conference. Sara Abdelgalil, head of the UK branch of the Sudan Doctors' Union, told AFP that Bashir had tried to suppress women during the 30 years he has been in power. "This regime could not crush down women and women's ability to fight for change and freedom," said Abdelgalil, a doctor who moved to Britain in 2001 but is in contact with protest leaders. "Sudanese women's resistance and resilience overcome this suppression," said the 44-year-old.

Protests in Sudan against the government's decision to triple the price of bread began on Dec 19 in the central town of Atbara, quickly spreading to the capital Khartoum and other towns. Officials say 32 people have died in protest-related violence so far, while Human Rights Watch has put the death toll at 51. The Sudanese Professionals Association (SPA), which the doctors' union is linked to, is leading the protests.

'My son thought I was dead'

Nemat Malik, an 80-year-old nurse and a university professor in Khartoum, said she was pleased to see so many women - particularly students - taking part. "This regime is a lot of harassment and oppression for women especially. Women have suffered a lot. They look at how you dress and they can give you lashes. That's why we should be very much interested in overthrowing this regime," she said. Sudan adopted sharia law in 1983, but since then has only implemented it randomly.

Under Bashir, who came to power with the help of Islamists in 1989, some rules have been tightened. According to Sudanese non-governmental groups, some 15,000 women were sentenced to flogging in 2016. Isnan Fagiri, 65, a doctor who also teaches in Khartoum, said she was detained for two and a half months by Sudanese security forces to keep her away from the protests. "From day one when this government came to power, they started to design laws against women. Don't wear trousers, cover your hair, don't speak loudly... That's why we felt that we need to change the government."

Fagiri said she was held with nine other women in a room measuring six metres by four with only five beds. She suffers from diabetes, but was not allowed treatment for 15 days and could not see her family for a month. "My son thought I was dead," said Fagiri, who in 2009 co-founded a campaign group for women's rights.

'Revolution winning'

At their conference in London, the Sudanese medical professionals alleged that security forces have stormed hospitals and fired at injured protesters. But participants said they were encouraged by events in Algeria, where president Abdelaziz Bouteflika resigned last week after two decades in power following massive street protests. "What happened in Algeria is exactly what we are calling for," Abdelgalil said, noting however that Algerians "have not been subjected to violence and human rights violations and killings and detentions" during the protests. But the Sudanese women believe "the revolution is winning". "The government has collapsed. All they depend on is the security forces," alleged Abdelgalil. Fagiri added: "It's a matter of days or weeks." — AFP

Ethiopian Airlines statement on the preliminary report of the accident on ET 302

Ethiopian Airlines Aviation Group, which is the largest and the most successful aviation group in Africa, would like to acknowledge the preliminary report of the accident of ET 302 on March 10, 2019 and would like to appreciate the hard work of the investigation team. The preliminary report clearly showed that the Ethiopian Airlines pilots who were commanding flight ET 302 on March 10 followed the Boeing recommended and FAA approved emergency procedures to handle the most difficult emergency situation created on the airplane. Despite their hard work and full compliance with the emergency procedures, it was very unfortunate that they could not recover the airplane from the persistence of nose diving. As the investigation continues with more detailed analysis, as usual we will continue with our full cooperation with the investigation team.

Group CEO, Tewolde GebreMariam said: "All of us at Ethiopian Airlines are still going through deep mourning for the loss of our loved ones and we would like to express our deep sympathy and condolences for the families, relatives and friends of the victims. Meanwhile, we are very proud of our pilots' compliances to follow the emergency procedures and high level of professional performances in such extremely difficult situations. We are also very proud of our global standard Pilot Training Center and the Ethiopian Aviation Academy, which is one of the largest and most modern in the world equipped with state-of-the-art and latest training technologies.

"I would also like to take this opportunity to thank our valued customers, the travelling public, the media and global aviation professionals for the remarkably high level of vote of confidences and strong support that you have been giving us starting from the day of this tragic accident. We will double our efforts every single day to win your confidence and

earn your business. Your safety will remain our topmost priority and we will continue to work together with our partners around the world to make air travel safer and more comfortable. My highest appreciation also goes to my 16,000 colleagues at Ethiopian Airlines for their resilience, high standards of professionalism and their continued commitment for operational excellence and their award-winning customer services, which enabled us to continue our business without any operational disruption, flight delays or flight cancellations."

About Ethiopian

Ethiopian Airlines (Ethiopia) is the fastest growing Airline in Africa. In its seventy plus years of operation, Ethiopia has become one of the continent's leading carriers, unrivalled in efficiency and operational success. Ethiopian commands the lion's share of the pan-African passenger and cargo network operating the youngest and most modern fleet to more than 119 international passenger and cargo destinations across five continents. Ethiopian fleet includes ultramodern and environmentally friendly aircraft such as Airbus A350, Boeing 787-9.

Boeing 787-9, Boeing 777-300ER, Boeing 777-200LR, Boeing 777-200 Freighter, Bombardier Q-400 double cabin with an average fleet age of five years. In fact, Ethiopia is the first airline in Africa to own and operate these aircraft. Ethiopia is currently implementing a 15-year strategic plan called Vision 2025 that will see it become the leading aviation group in Africa with six business centers: Ethiopian International Services; Ethiopian Cargo & Logistics Services; Ethiopian MRO Services; Ethiopian Aviation Academy; Ethiopian ADD Hub Ground Services and Ethiopian Airports Services. Ethiopian is a multi-award winning airline registering an average growth of 25 percent in the past seven years.

Enthronement of Japan's Emperor Akihito

Emperor Akihito ascended to the Japanese throne on Nov 12, 1990 in a tightly choreographed ceremony steeped in tradition but with hints of modernity. Akihito, aged 56, had already succeeded his father, Emperor Hirohito, immediately on his death the previous year after the longest reign in Japan's history. His official enthronement ceremony took place at the end of a long period of mourning and in the presence of 2,500 dignitaries including royalty from around the world.

It was the first such event under Japan's post World War II pacifist constitution in which the emperor was no longer revered as a "living god", becoming only "the symbol of the state and of the unity of the people". Ahead of Akihito's April 30 abdication in favor of his son, here is an account - based on AFP's reporting from the time - of the day that he took the throne.

Ancient tradition

In a break with the past, the Chrysanthemum Throne had been moved for the occasion to Tokyo from the former imperial capital of Kyoto, where all previous enthronements had taken place. Installed in the Imperial Palace, the large octagonal black-and-gold structure, topped by a great golden phoenix, had next to it a slightly smaller throne for Empress Michiko. They overlooked an internal court adorned with two rows of banners under which were lined up 20 imperial guards, 40 bearers of ceremonial objects and 12 gong and drum players, an AFP report described.

The ceremony lasted half an hour, starting when members of the imperial family, wearing traditional layered costumes, slowly entered the throne room. Only Akihito's mother, the Empress Dowager, was absent, being ill. Akihito was the last to enter. He wore a ceremonial costume whose form has not changed since Japan's Heian period (8-12th centuries) and is made up of multiple layers of silk robes and a black headdress. Michiko, who arrived just ahead of her husband, wore a "junihitoe", a multi-layered kimono weighing nearly 10 kg.

Foreign royals

"It is a bit like Japan has returned to the Heian era," one impressed guest said. Among the nearly 500 foreign dignitaries in attendance were about 70 heads of state and 20 prime ministers as well as US vice president Dan Quayle. In the front row were Belgium's King Baudouin and Queen Fabiola. Behind them were 20 members of other royal families, including the Prince and Princess of Wales, Charles and Diana.

'Banzai'

In one of the signs that Akihito would be closer to the people than his more formal father, he shunned the ancient language usually used for such occasions, "speaking very politely but comprehensibly to the ordinary Japanese", AFP reported. "I proclaim my enthronement to those at home and abroad," declared the 125th emperor of Japan from his elevated throne. Prime Minister Toshiki Kaifu responded briefly, standing upright to address the emperor - another departure from past custom. He then exclaimed "banzai" ("long live the Emperor") three times, joined by the 2,500 invitees.

Two hours later, the imperial couple - now in Western dress with the empress in a white gown and a small tiara - walked out of the palace under a radiant sun and climbed into an open-topped Rolls Royce. Smiling, they waved to the gathered crowds as the car travelled the nearly five kilometers to the residence Akasaka Palace, their residence.

Closer to the people

Thousands of police were deployed along the route, two or three deep, in front of the 100,000 people who had turned out to see their new emperor. Akihito "does not want to be inaccessible, living as a recluse in his Tokyo palace as did his father," AFP reported ahead of the ceremony. "A reserved man, who is quite solitary, he appears in public smiling and warm, sporting well-cut double-breasted suits, breaking with the formal style of his father before whom Japanese had to bow very low and lower their eyes," one story said.

But the day was not without trouble: Police reported around 30 incidents in Tokyo before and during the enthronement ceremony, including fires in Shinto religious shrines and underground trains. They were blamed on anti-imperial far-left groups. — AFP



Business

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May meeting crucial for oil market: Al-Falih

Russia signals OPEC, allies could raise output from June

RIYADH: The Saudi energy minister yesterday said it was premature to say whether a consensus existed among OPEC and its allies to extend oil supply cuts but a meeting next month would be key. A joint OPEC and non-OPEC ministerial committee known as the JMMC is due to meet in May. Saudi Arabia and Russia are members of the panel, which includes other major oil producers that took part in a global supply-cutting agreement last year, such as Iraq, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, Nigeria and Kazakhstan.

"JMMC will be a key decision point because we will certainly by then know where the consensus view is and, more importantly, before we ask for consensus, we will know where the fundamentals are pointing," said Saudi energy minister Khalid Al-Falih.

"I think May is going to be key," he added. Oil inventories remain higher than average but the market is on its way towards rebalancing, Falih said. "I don't think we will need (to do more) ... the market is on its way towards balance. We have done a lot more than others," he added, referring to the possibility of Saudi

Arabia cutting output further below its target under the global deal.

"We are getting to a stage where inventories are starting to stabilize and come down but still significantly above what I would consider a normal level." Russia, which is cutting oil output in tandem with OPEC, also said production cuts would stay in place at least until June, when Washington's next steps on reducing Iranian and Venezuelan oil exports become clearer.

No change in trading currency

The United States has been increasing its own crude exports steeply and US President Donald Trump has been pressing OPEC to lower the oil price by boosting production. US policies targeting Iran and Venezuela have introduced a new level of uncertainty for OPEC as the producer group struggles to predict global supply and demand. Washington is also advancing a bill, known as NOPEC, that could expose OPEC members to US antitrust lawsuits.

The NOPEC move prompted Saudi Arabia

to threaten to sell its oil in currencies other than the dollar if Washington passes the bill, three sources familiar with Saudi energy policy told Reuters last week.

However, the kingdom's energy ministry yesterday said the report was "inaccurate" and does not reflect its position on the matter. "The Kingdom has been trading its oil in dollars for decades, which has served the objectives of its financial and monetary policies well," the ministry said in a statement.

It added that Saudi Arabia would not risk its key policy priority—as a stabilizing force for global energy markets—through a fundamental change to the financial terms of oil trading in its relationships around the world.

Falih also told reporters at an oil event in Riyadh that there was no change to the kingdom's policy of trading oil in US dollars. "Absolutely not. There is no change whatsoever to our long-standing policy," Falih said. The United Arab Emirates' energy minister, Suhail bin Mohammed Al-Mazroui, also said that the use of the dollar as the main oil-trading currency could not be changed



RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih speaks — AFP

the Russian state's direct investment fund, was the first Russian official to predict a deal with OPEC in 2016 and since then has become a key defender of the pact despite pressure from domestic oil firms to drop the agreement.

Dmitriev, an envoy for Moscow in the Middle East in general and Saudi Arabia in particular, had in recent months said it was still too early to terminate output cuts, echoing the position of OPEC's de facto leader, Saudi Arabia. But in an apparent change of position, Dmitriev said yesterday supply cuts may not be required after June. "It is quite possible that given the improving market situation and falling stocks, (OPEC and its allies) could decide in June this year to abandon supply cuts and subsequently increase output," Dmitriev told a conference in Moscow.

"This decision will not mean the end of the deal, but a confirmation that participants continue their coordinating efforts when it is important not only to cut but to increase output depending on market conditions," he told the conference. — Reuters



Committed to Transparency

KIPCO's 2019 Shafafiyah (Transparency) Forum will take place after the company's General Assembly meeting. KIPCO will present a review of 2018 and guidance for 2019 to shareholders and institutional investors.

The event will take place on **Wednesday 10th April, 2019**, at 1:00 p.m., 56th floor, KIPCO Business Center, KIPCO Tower, Sharq, Kuwait City.

The event will be broadcast live on the company's website: www.kipco.com

For further information, please call **2294 3477**



Business

Modi rivals see India election gain over demonetization, job losses

Small businesses hit by 'acute monetary shock'

TIRUPPUR, India: More than two years after the surprise withdrawal of most of India's currency from circulation, the painful consequences stalk its architect as he seeks another term at the helm of Asia's third-largest economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced the "demonetization" in November 2016, justifying the sudden move as a means to flush out cash being hoarded by wealthy tax cheats.

But ordinary businesses reliant on cash were kneecapped, banks thrown into chaos and the entire Indian economy recoiled from what one global lender described as an "acute monetary shock".

"Work came to a complete standstill... Many people lost their jobs," said S Subbramanian, a cotton spinner at the Tiruppur textile hub in southern Tamil Nadu state. For nearly three weeks the looms stopped spinning in the southern Indian garment factory where he weaved yarn for a living, the business crippled by a sudden cash shortage.

The impact lingers across the country today—and Modi's opponents are tapping into that discontent as voting gets underway this week. "This one, ill-thought decision destroyed crores (tens of millions) of jobs and drove lakhs (hundreds of thousands) of small enterprises out of business," Rahul Gandhi, the leader of the main opposition Congress party, told supporters at a recent rally.

It is in industrial hubs across India such as Tiruppur that this message could strike a chord.

Factories that survived the cash ban were forced to immediately pare back costs and growth estimates to absorb the shock. "Many businesses still have not recovered to pre-demonetisation levels," said T.R. Vijaya Kumar, the general secretary of Tiruppur Exporters' Association.

The economy at large took a hit, with growth slowing. An estimated 11 million jobs were lost in 2018 as a

direct result, according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy.

Modi insisted the pain was necessary and would modernize the economy, raise tax revenues and improve the lives of millions living at the margins.

Double pain

Demonetization was a broadside few anticipated. Many small businesses were still shell-shocked when Modi announced his second major economic reform—the introduction of a national consumption tax.

The goods and services tax (GST) was broadly welcomed as a necessary reform to unify India's more than \$2 trillion economy into a single market, replacing a patchwork of central and state levies.

But the roll-out was criticized as haphazard and rushed, and for some businesses the double-tap in the wake of demonetization was too much.

"Everything changed" in the aftermath of these twin policies, said small trader Omar Sharif, in a fabric market in Tiruppur. "I don't know about the big traders but small ones, like me, have been badly affected," he said.

Dhamodharan Ramasamy, the chief executive of garment exporter Season Clothing Industries, said the tax roll out could have been handled more carefully.

"One big issue was that people hadn't even recovered from the first jolt when they received the second one," he said. Congress has sought to exploit this unhappiness within trading communities in the hope of chipping away at Modi's support.

Gandhi and the opposition have attacked the prime minister's economic record day after day on the campaign trail, accusing Modi of failing to plan for India's future and create work for millions of young job seekers. Critics say the cash crisis disproportionately hit the poor, forcing many to queue for days at banks to convert their savings into legitimate tender.



Indian farmers walk at sunset along the dry banks of the Ghaghara River, a tributary of the river Ganges, in Revelganjhat near Chhapra, in the Indian state of Bihar. — AFP

"The cash ban robbed people of their most basic property rights in quest of a pipe dream," Gandhi said. Congress ruled India for much of its post-independence history but was reduced to a rump in the last election by Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party.

Gandhi is hoping to avoid a repeat of 2014, and analysts say ground could be made up by painting Modi as a reckless economic steward. "Citizens may not entirely understand the new tax regime but they'll

remember the cash ban, which directly affected their daily lives," Sunil Sinha, principal economist and director with a unit of Fitch Ratings, said.

But Parsa Venkateshwar Rao, a veteran journalist and political commentator, said that while demonetization had been "voodoo economics", the economy has since recovered and voters have moved on. "It is a faded memory now," he told AFP. "Demonetization is not the main issue in this election." — Reuters

German big business dives into politics with pro-EU message

MUNICH: It's not often German big business openly dabbles in politics, but many companies are urging their employees to reject eurosceptics and right-wing populists in May 26 European Parliament elections.

From Volkswagen to Eon and Thyssenkrupp, Germany's corporate titans have become unusually engaged in defence of an open Europe, a position that is in their own strategic interest. "Vote for Europe on 26.5.—it's about freedom, it's about prosperity, it's about our Europe," read a huge poster in downtown Munich unveiled yesterday by Bavarian industry federation VBV.

It was the latest such initiative after the VCI chemical industry association recently launched a "Ja zu Europa" ("Yes to Europe") campaign. Alarmed by projections that see the far-right garnering at least one in five votes in the polls, the head of the German Employers' Confederation, "boss of bosses" Ingo Kramer, in February warned of the "serious" threat extremist forces pose to the European project.

"I ask all German companies to clearly show their colours," he wrote, cautioning that "anti-Europeans from the left and the right" could end up obstructing the European Parliament. Hubertus Bardt, head of the IW economic research institute, said that "never before have I seen so many companies publicly call for people to go and vote". "Businesses are realising the



importance of European integration," he told AFP.

Open markets, free trade

Most of the initiatives have come from large export-driven corporations that "are among the biggest beneficiaries of the European single market," said Alexander Kritikos from the German Institute for Economic Research (DIW).

The rest of the European Union accounted for 780 billion euros (\$870 billion) worth of German exports last year, its biggest market. "Developments such as Brexit, increasing populism, euroscepticism and nationalism pose an enormous economic risk, especially for companies of this size," said Andrea Roemmele of the Hertie School of Governance.

She said big business profits from the European single market and favours a strong EU that can assert economic interests on the

world stage, while "nationalist efforts, such as those we see in the USA under President Trump, mean declining revenues".

Among other German business players, the Central Association of German Trade has published a "Yes to Europe" leaflet, while Ruhr industrial region giants Thyssenkrupp, RWE, Eon and Evonik will also encourage their employees to vote.

Thyssenkrupp boss Guido Kerkhoff told local media last month that "we need to better explain why we need open markets and free trade to succeed, not a withdrawal into our national shells".

Volkswagen will also issue a "clear call for a vote", its human resources chief Gunnar Kilian said earlier this year, stressing that "for European unity, for our common values, for peaceful cooperation ... our democracy needs every voice". — AFP

Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Abolfazl Mehdob Niya as the lucky winner of the Al-Thuraya Salary Account monthly draw. The draw

rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win a Nissan Patrol SUV every month. With every KD 10 available in the account, the customer receives one chance to enter the draw.

The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti Dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year.

Investors hit pause as central bank, Brexit risks loom

LONDON: World stocks paused yesterday after a strong recent run, as potential flashpoints including a crucial Brexit summit and central bank meetings loomed, and investors began to look ahead to an earnings season that may be disappointing. Signs of further stimulus from China helped Asian shares touch seven-month highs, but investors' enthusiasm was fleeting.

MSCI's world equity index was flat and European stocks slipped 0.2 percent as weak data from Germany and investor caution ahead of a string of political and monetary policy events held the market back. In a document published on the central government's website late on Sunday, Beijing said it would step up a policy of targeted cuts to banks' required reserve ratios to encourage financing for small and medium-sized businesses.

German exports and imports both fell more than expected in February, data showed yesterday, in the latest sign that Europe's largest economy will likely have meager growth in the first quarter amid increased headwinds from abroad. Futures for the S&P 500 and Nasdaq eased 0.2 percent, indicating a weaker start on Wall Street.

Globally, stock markets have had a stellar first quarter. The MSCI All-Country World index had its best quarter in more than eight years. "Today's very minor move down has to be seen in light of recent developments," said Britta Weidenbach, head of European equities at DWS. "We're back at the levels where the correction started last year."

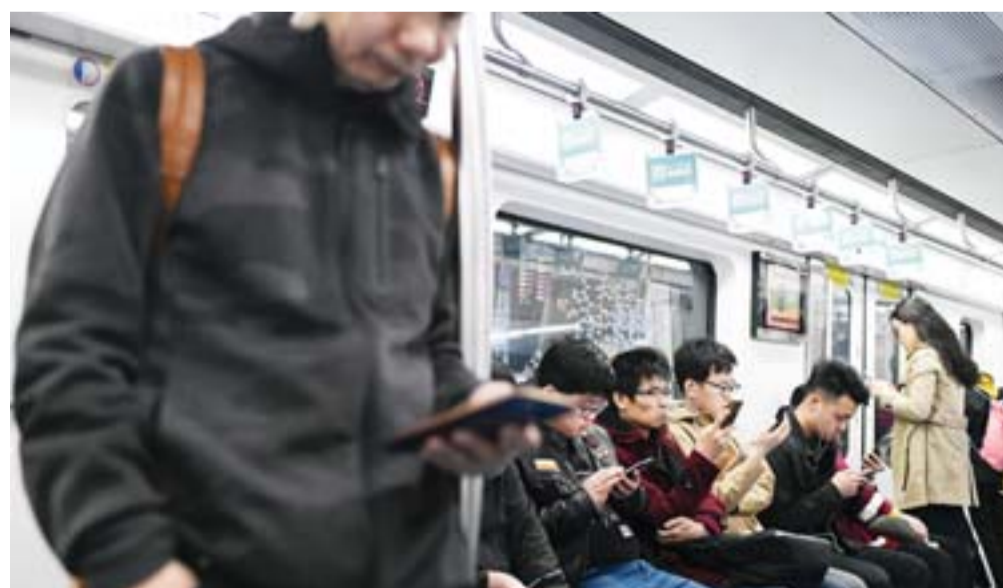
So now the question certainly is, what's next? The European Central Bank will update the market tomorrow, the same day as a crucial European Union Summit on Brexit, while China and the EU will hold a summit on trade on Tuesday. "European institutions will be under the spotlight in the coming days as they attempt to display proactivity in trade negotiations, on Brexit and in monetary policy," wrote economists at Swiss private bank Landolt & Cie in a note to clients. — Reuters

China to relax residency curbs, boost growth in new push

BEIJING: China will relax residency curbs in many of its smaller cities this year and increase infrastructure spending, the state planner said yesterday, in a fresh push to boost the urban population and revive slowing economic growth. The National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) said it aims to increase China's urbanization rate by at least 1 percentage point by the end of this year.

The latest push is part of its longer-term goal of bringing 100 million people into the cities over the five years to 2020. In 2018, 59.6 percent of China's population lived in urban areas.

"This will provide strong support for maintaining sustained and healthy economic development and overall social stability," the NDRC said in a notice on its website. The NDRC will scrap restrictions in cities of 1 to 3 million on coveted household registration permits for out-of-towners, which include migrant workers and college graduates. For cities of 3 to 5 million, which include many provincial capitals, such restrictions will be "comprehensively relaxed", although the NDRC did not provide specifics on such moves. Such permits, known



BEIJING: Commuters use their mobile phone as they ride on a subway in Beijing yesterday. — AFP

as "hukou", have been used to control internal migration in China for many years. Without a permit, a resident of a city is denied access to many public services, such as education and healthcare. These restrictions have often been blamed for pushing migrants to the margins of society in China's cities.

Under China's multi-year crackdown on the country's property investment bubble, internal migrants are also often categorized as speculative buyers and have been subject to local

purchase curbs, adding to pressures on these communities. The Financial News, a newspaper controlled by China's central bank, on Monday called for local governments to prepare policy plans to prevent fluctuations in the property market that negatively impacted consumer rights and financial stability.

But critics in the real estate and securities industries say any easing of these policies could undermine authorities' efforts to control property speculation. — Reuters

Sub-Saharan economic growth recovery to take longer: WB

NAIROBI: The World Bank has cut its growth forecast for Sub-Saharan Africa this year to 2.8 percent from an initial 3.3 percent, it said yesterday.

The commodity price slump of 2015 cut short a decade of rapid growth for the region, and the bank said growth would take longer to recover as a decline in industrial production and a trade dispute between China and the United States take their toll. The bank's 2019 forecast means economic growth will lag population growth for the fourth year in a row and it will remain stuck below 3 percent, which it slipped to in 2015. In its latest report on the regional economy, the bank also cut its 2018 growth estimate to 2.3 percent from last October's prediction of 2.7 percent growth for last year.

"The slower-than-expected overall growth reflects ongoing global uncertain-

ty, but increasingly comes from domestic macroeconomic instability including poorly managed debt, inflation and deficits," the bank said. Nigeria, South Africa and Angola, which make up about 60 percent of sub-Saharan Africa's annual economic output, were all facing various challenges, curbing their contribution to the growth momentum, the bank said.

"This downward revision reflects slower growth in Nigeria and Angola, due to challenges in the oil sector, and subdued investment growth in South Africa, due to low business confidence," it said.

Nigeria's economy grew by an estimated 1.9 percent last year, up from 0.8 percent the previous year, the World Bank said, reflecting a modest pick-up in the non-oil sector.

South Africa came out of recession in the third quarter of last year but investors were still cautious due to policy uncertainty, the bank said. In the meantime Angola, the region's third-biggest economy, remained stuck in recession, as oil production remained weak. High inflation and heavy debt loads discouraged investors in economies such as Zambia and Liberia, hitting their growth prospects, the World Bank said. — Reuters

Business

Ahli United Bank announces its partnership with '500 Startups'

Third annual MENA Dojo Investors Day on May 2

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank has announced its partnership with "500 Startups" for its third annual MENA Dojo Series A Program and its first of its kind pitch competition in Kuwait - Kuwait Falcon's Nest Pitch Competition.

Kuwait Falcon's Nest Pitch Competition will be held on April 16th. It is exclusively designed for Kuwaiti start-ups. Applications are open from the 7th of April 2019 till the 14th of April 2019. The competition is a great opportunity for Kuwaiti startups to showcase their businesses. An expert panel of judges will select 5 finalists to go through a short mentorship program led by a Silicon Valley and global team and showcase their learning on the MENA Dojo Investors day on May 2nd, 2019. For more information and to apply online visit falconsnest.500.co.

As part of the agreement, Ahli United Bank will be part of the judging panel, participate in workshops and actively look to support and guide selected Startups through their important early stages.

In a press release, Tareq Muhmood, Acting CEO at AUB said: "We are delighted with this

partnership with "500 Startups" in its first initiative in Kuwait (Falcon's Nest Competition) and hope to present through this partnership both support and assistance to Kuwaiti start-up projects. This initiative fits well within our vision of the vital importance of those enterprises as a channel for creating business opportunities for our talented young people who possess both ambition and ability to develop ideas. Furthermore, we strongly believe that such start-ups certainly contribute to our thriving economy."

Muhmood added: "We also believe that young people are the hope of the future. This belief motivates us to place our young people at the top of our priorities in terms of our service and product offerings that are designed with their aspirations and needs in mind. For this reason, it is only natural for us to focus on their needs through our social



Tareq Muhmood

work program, and to this end, we make relentless efforts to help our young people to embrace the spirit of innovation and leadership through constructive national projects that benefits both its owners and our beloved country." It is worth mentioning that the MENA Dojo Series A program is a hybrid investment program designed for startups that have reached a certain level of scale and are likely to raise a Series A in the next six to nine months. Start-ups taking part receive \$ 150,000 of investment in addition to a 4-week intensive program. 500 Startups brings a roster of mentors from its Silicon Valley and global team focused on instilling a growth mindset, growth hacking and marketing techniques.

500 Startups is one of the leading early stage venture funds and seed accelerators in the world. It was incorporated in Silicon



Valley, USA and is on a mission to discover and back the world's most talented entrepreneurs, help them create successful companies, and build thriving global ecosystems.

Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 7th April 2019 announcing the names of its winners for the week from the 31st March till the 4th April 2019, in which five winners will receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- Hashem Abdulsouf Askar Al-Saffar
- Saud Rahial Minadi Alanazi
- Abdulmohsen Ghloum Husain Khajah
- Nabil Asaad Ibrahim
- Eman Mahmood Hamza

The second of Gulf Bank's Al-Danah quarterly draw 2019, for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 26 June 2019, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 on 25 September 2019. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al-Danah millionaires will be announced at a live event.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and



non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to their account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

The Al-Danah draws are all approved by and held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. Furthermore, Gulf Bank has partnered with Ernst and Young Kuwait (EY) with reference to "Al-Danah Prize Draw" system in order to assist in assessing processes, technical controls considering relevant parameters and provide recommendations in-line with industry leading practices. The study was conducted in line with industry standards and control requirements relevant to similar prize draw schemes wherein, a detailed review of prize draw management system along with draw scheme parameters, data extraction for draw, filtration of customers as per defined business criteria and necessary system interactions was conducted to advise on any potential areas of improvements.



New NAFTA deal 'in crisis' bruised by elections, tariff rows

MEXICO CITY/OTTAWA: More than six months after the United States, Mexico and Canada agreed a new deal to govern more than \$1 trillion in regional trade, the chances of the three countries ratifying the pact this year are receding.

The three countries struck the United States-Mexico-Canada agreement (USMCA) on Sept. 30, ending a year of difficult negotiations after US President Donald Trump demanded the preceding trade pact be renegotiated or scrapped. But the deal has not ended trade tensions in North America. If ratification is delayed much longer, it could become hostage to electoral politics.

The United States has its next presidential contest in 2020, and Canada holds a federal election in October. The delay means businesses are still uncertain about the framework that will govern future investments in the region.

"The USMCA is in trouble," said Andres Rozental, a former Mexican deputy foreign minister for North America. Though he believed the deal would ultimately be approved, Rozental said opposition from US Democrats and unions to labor provisions in the deal, as well as bickering over tariffs, made its passage in the next few months highly unlikely.

Canada's Parliament must also ratify the treaty and officials say the timetable is very tight. Current legislators only have a few weeks work left before the start of the summer recess in June, and members of the new Parliament would have little chance to address ratification until 2020.

Trump, a Republican, has shown frustration with the Democratic-led US House of Representatives for failing to sign off on the USMCA. He has threatened to pull out of the old pact, the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), if Congress does not hurry up. If Trump did dump NAFTA, the three nations would revert to trade rules in place before it came into effect in 1994.

Tariffs

Canada and Mexico are seeking exemption from US tariffs on global metal imports imposed last year. The metals tariffs were not included in the USMCA and Mexico and Canada are impatient to resolve the issue. Mexico has repeatedly threatened to target new US products by the end of April in retribution if tariffs are imposed. Meanwhile, Trump on Thursday threatened to slap tariffs on Mexican auto exports unless Mexico does more to stop drug traffickers and illegal immigration.

Mexico's government is in the final stages of completing a new list of potential U.S. imports to be targeted, said Luz Maria de la Mora, a Mexican deputy economy minister.

"There's going to be a bit of everything," she told

Reuters, declining to give details of how the list - originally encompassing products such as bourbon, cheese, motor boats, pork legs, steel and apples - could be modified.

De la Mora would not be drawn on whether Mexico could refuse to ratify USMCA if steel tariffs are not withdrawn, saying only: "All options are on the table."

In Ottawa, Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland said this week her government was "constantly" looking at its own retaliation list, noting that Trump's tariffs left the country over C\$16 billion worth of space to strike back. Freeland did not say when that list could change, and a government source, speaking on condition of anonymity, said it might not be necessary. Still, Freeland said Canada was coordinating with Mexico about its options.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, who faces a tough re-election battle, on Thursday rejected accepting quotas on Canadian steel and aluminum in exchange for US tariffs being dropped. Trudeau was criticized during the USMCA negotiations for giving ground to Trump on access to Canada's dairy sector.

Workers

US Democrats have threatened to block the USMCA unless Mexico passes legislation to improve workers' rights, a demand shared by the Canadian government. A bill already in Mexico's Congress to strengthen trade unions should be approved this month, the government says.

Trump blamed NAFTA for millions of job losses in the United States as companies moved south to employ cheaper Mexican labor. Trump is running for re-election in 2020, and his 'America First' policy will likely feature prominently in the campaign. Forcing Mexico and Canada to rework NAFTA was one of Trump's signature pledges during his shock win in 2016, and Democrats are pulling out the stops to avoid losing again.

"The closer the election gets, the harder it will be for Democrats to grant Trump a victory" by ratifying the USMCA, said Sergio Alcocer, a former deputy Mexican foreign minister.

Some Democrats are pushing to change the deal - an idea that both Canadian and Mexican officials resist. "People need to be very careful around opening up what could really be a Pandora's box," Freeland said on Thursday.

Canadian officials say they fear that if one part of the treaty were reopened, it could spark clamor for other sections to be renegotiated as well. — Reuters

Five questions for the ECB

LONDON: Just a month after the European Central Bank halted plans to normalize policy and delayed a rate increase into 2020, further signs of weakness in the economy and a whiff of panic among investors is putting the central bank back in the spotlight. No policy changes are expected at tomorrow's ECB meeting, especially since some board members are traveling to Washington for the International Monetary Fund's spring meetings.

But talk of tiered rates to ease pressure on banks, global recession fears and a sense of alarm that pushed 10-year German bond yields below zero percent for the first time since 2016 suggest the ECB news conference may prove lively.

We look at five key questions on the radar for markets:

1. How close is the ECB to action to offset the impact of negative interest rates on banks?

A debate on whether to "tier" the negative interest rates that banks pay on the idle cash they park at the ECB is now underway, judging by recent ECB comments and the minutes from the March meeting.

"It's not an obvious next step, but one that the ECB will have to face at some point," said James Rossiter, senior global strategist at TD Securities. "We don't expect anything official in the ECB's statement, but it will be difficult for (ECB chief Mario) Draghi to avoid questions on this."

Dutch central bank Governor Klaas Knot has said he would need to see clear evidence that negative rates were hurting lending to the real economy. ECB Vice President Luis de Guindos said last week that while the bank is studying ways to cut its charge on banks' deposits, euro zone lenders should look closer to home for the causes of their meager profits.

The debate is important because if the ECB introduces tiered rates, that might suggest it is preparing to keep interest rates low, below zero percent, for longer than anticipated. No surprise then, that money markets have scaled back expectations of a rate rise and even started to factor in the risk of a rate cut this year.

2. What about TLTRO III, can we expect more details?

In March, the ECB offered some details of what TLTRO III will look like: the loans will have a two-year maturity

and be offered on a quarterly basis from September until March 2021.

The ECB's March meeting minutes showed the bank is still ironing out details. Key questions for investors now are what interest the banks will have to pay on the loans and where the funds can be deployed. Barclays analysts, for example, expect banks will be given an incentive to take up the loans through better borrowing rates than the main refinancing operations (MRO), which provide the bulk

of liquidity to the euro zone banking system. Eurozone bank stocks and government bonds are sensitive to any TLTRO news. Yields on short-dated Southern European bonds have dropped, suggesting investors expect Italian banks in particular to take up the loans.

A closely watched underlying inflation figure that excludes volatile food and energy prices slowed to 1.0 percent in March, its weakest reading since April 2018.

Economists note the timing of



of liquidity to the euro zone banking system. Eurozone bank stocks and government bonds are sensitive to any TLTRO news. Yields on short-dated Southern European bonds have dropped, suggesting investors expect Italian banks in particular to take up the loans.

3. Does the ECB see any green shoots for the economy?

The ECB is not expected to change its assessment that risks to the economy are tilted to the downside but officials are worried about the downside risks to the growth and inflation forecasts.

Unexpectedly weak manufacturing activity data from Germany rattled markets last month, and a brief inversion of the U.S. bond yield curve fuelled concerns about global recession risks. Germany's leading economic institutes last week slashed their 2019 forecast for growth in Europe's biggest economy and warned growth might be even lower if there is a no-deal Brexit. Not all the data have been bad, and economists point out a pick-up in data from China — the world's number two economy — and signs of strength from the euro zone services sector.

4. How concerned is the ECB that ultra-loose policy has failed to lift inflation expectations?

Even after last month's unexpect-

Easter distorts the inflation numbers and that the April data should prove more encouraging. "It might not feel or look like it, but inflation has been delayed rather than derailed," said Jefferies senior European economist Marchel Alexandrovich.

The ECB will be hoping that's the case, especially since inflation expectations have tumbled. A key market gauge of long-term inflation expectations tracked by the ECB is near its lowest level since 2016. It is down 20 basis points this year — more than it fell the whole of 2018.

5. Is the ECB ready for a no-deal Brexit?

Draghi told European Union leaders recently that the ECB, the Bank of England and the European Commission have made all the necessary preparations for a no-deal Brexit, according to a recent report.

But Draghi and other officials have also stressed that markets are not fully pricing in the risk of Britain's exit from the EU without a deal — a warning the ECB chief may repeat this week. A no-deal Brexit might also affect market liquidity, the EU commissioner in charge of financial services said last week.

Any clarity on Brexit is likely to be met with relief by investors and boost sentiment. The ECB is no doubt paying close attention. — Reuters

Cain, Moore nominations for Fed seats on track: Kudlow

WASHINGTON: Top White House officials on Sunday defended President Donald Trump's plan to name two political loyalists to the Federal Reserve board of governors, brushing aside controversies over their personal lives and qualifications to help run the world's most powerful central bank.

White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow and acting White House Chief of Staff Mick Mulvaney used appearances on Sunday morning talk shows to defend Trump's plan to nominate economic commentator Stephen Moore and businessman and former presidential candidate Herman Cain to fill open board seats at the Fed.

"The president stands behind both of those gentlemen right now," Kudlow said on CNN's "State of the Union." "We have two open seats. The president has every right in the world to nominate people who share his economic philosophy." Trump has been highly critical of his handpicked

Fed chairman, Jerome Powell, after a series of interest rate increases and other actions last year that Trump feels have held back an economy that would be otherwise growing like a "rocket ship."

The rate increases have left the central bank's target interest rate still low by historical standards, and among monetary policy officials were considered a cautious hedge against a return of inflation in an economy that last year was going faster than expected. Keeping inflation under control is a key mission of the Fed, and higher rates help do so by discouraging borrowing and spending.

But "there is no inflation," Kudlow said. Instead there was "worry that the central bank is not taking account of a weak world economy, some financial tightening in the marketplace," and made monetary policy too restrictive.

The Fed said it was weak inflation, weakening global growth, and financial volatility that led it last year to put further rate increases on hold and shift other policies as well. Still, Kudlow said the president believed that the Fed was fundamentally flawed in its view that at some point very low unemployment will lead to higher inflation.

"That idea 'has been disproven for decades,' he said. "We believe more people working and succeeding does not cause inflation."

"President Trump has every right to put people on the Federal Reserve Board with a different point of view," Kudlow said. "He wants people on the Fed who share his philosophy. It is not a political issue. — Reuters

What's On



Guest Speaker from BIG Holding speaks at GUST Real Estate Investment Class

Gulf University for Science & Technology (GUST) Real Estate Investment class, led by Dr Abdullah Al-Falah, welcomed Engineer Abdulrahman Al Khannah, GUST alum and Group CEO of Beyout Investment Group Holding (BIG Holding). The event was organized in collaboration with the Gulf Financial Center (GFC).

Dr Al-Falah said: "The purpose for inviting experts from the market with real life example is very important for students to understand real estate from investment perspectives. The concept of BOT, which our guest speaker explained yesterday is one of the attractive real estate investment approaches which has a great poten-

tial in Kuwait. In addition, as students are required to develop their real estate projects for this course, now they have good understanding about the concept of BOT and can consider it as their investment approach for their projects."

The seminar, entitled, "BOT Models: Buying vs BOT", educated students about the Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) system, a form of project financing wherein a private entity is assigned a concession from the private or public sector to finance, design, construct, and operate; as stated in the concession contract. During the seminar, Eng Al Khannah demonstrated two models from different perspectives, including the traditional model and the BOT

model to showcase the difference and highlight how BOT projects operate under the real estate field.

The first model titled "Mubarakiya Project", explains the difference between buying a project from the government versus the BOT model with a residual value equal to the purchase price after 10 years, and based on financial indicators such as Return on Investment (ROI) and the Internal Rate of Return (IRR).

The second model titled "Education Project", explains the same scenarios of the Mubarakiya, but shows the importance of identifying objectives from each transaction from both perspectives: the government and the investors. Based on the financial data provided, Eng Al

Khannah concluded that in both scenarios, the BOT model will have a much higher ROI and IRR after the 10 years period when compared to the traditional model.

Eng Al Khannah said: "BOT is the best model for operating projects, because expensive real estate effects the feasibility of the project. Students need to fully comprehend the BOT system and understand how it could be used as a mechanism to finance infrastructure projects." GUST's Gulf Financial Center continuously hosts workshops and seminars for students, staff, faculty, and the Kuwait community as a whole, to provide knowledge and shed light on pertinent developments in the financial industry.



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Suad Al-Sabah Publishing and Distribution House announced the continuation of receiving entries in Abdullah Al-Mubarak and Suad Al-Sabah competitions that had been launched in the 1980s to encourage creative Arab writers, until September, 2019. The entries would be reviewed by specialized jury panels in various fields. Abdullah Al-Mubarak award competitions for scientific creation includes four categories while Suad Al-Sabah award also includes four categories for intellectual and literary creation.



Al Diwan Restaurant launches theme nights

The guests of Al Diwan restaurant at Holiday Inn Salmiya experienced an amazing evening while enjoying the most delicious cuisines and wonderful live entertainment. The dinner hosted a great number of social media gurus, journalists and media delegates as well as the hotel corporate clients, who were welcomed upon their arrival by Michael Jabbour, the hotel General Manger, Deputy General Manager, Qassim Al Ashek, and the Marketing and Sales team.

Jabbour addressed the invitees and warmly welcomed their presence and expressed his appreciation for their constant support for the hotel throughout the years. He stressed on the hotel's continuous strive to innovate and offer new and distinct choices in the hotel's international restaurants. He invited guests to taste the scrumptious new choices and enjoy the wonderful vibes.

The buffet included live cooking prepared by expert chefs of fresh seafood, grills, sushi, as well as an assorted International salads and delicious desserts. This evening was one of a series of theme nights and Brunches which the restaurant recently launched, such as the

seafoodnight every Wednesday, where guests enjoy freshly prepared seafood choices. While on every Thursday night, guests experience the authentic Egyptian atmosphere and taste the various famous Egyptian dishes enjoying the live performance of the oriental music band.

And in every Friday Al Diwan offers culinary festival brunch where guest enjoy splendid variety of American, Lebanese, Chinese, Japanese, Indian and international cuisines. On Saturday, the restaurant will be serving up the best barbecue in town, where guests enjoy the finest grilled meat and other mouth-watering dishes.

Al Diwan Restaurant features a buffet with a variety of international platters that are carefully prepared by experienced chefs to satisfy all tastes and ages. The restaurant is open for breakfast where guests can start their day the healthy way, for lunch to enjoy the international culinary, and for dinner where you experience new tastes in every day. Al Diwan Restaurant enjoys a prime location near the indoor and outdoor play area where your little ones can enjoy variety of fun activities.



Under auspices of sheikh Duajj Al-Khalifa Al-Sabah and with the attendance of the Egyptian singer Shireen, the Kuwaiti actress Ahlam and a number of wedding planners, the Symphony Style Kuwait Hotel recently held its annual wedding requirements exhibition.



Health & Science

Against the tide: Thai 'floating temple' defies coastal erosion

A dangerous combination of climate change, industrial farming and rapid urbanization

SAMUT CHIN: As sea waters slowly rose around his temple and his neighbors fled inland, Thai abbot Somnuek Atipanyo refused to budge and is today a symbol of the fight to restore the country's fast-eroding coastlines. A dangerous combination of climate change, industrial farming and rapid urbanization are endangering the Gulf of Thailand's coasts, stripping away precious mangrove trees and leaving some buildings like Somnuek's surrounded by sea water. In the 30 years since the waters started encroaching, most of his neighbors in the fishing village of Samut Chin moved several hundred meters inland to rebuild their wooden homes.

Standing in his saffron robes near his monastery on stilts—dubbed the "floating temple"—the 51-year-old monk points out to sea at the spot where the local school once stood. "This temple used to be in the middle of the village," he tells AFP in Samut Chin, about an hour south of Bangkok. "If we moved it, people wouldn't even know there had ever been one here," he says of the temple, accessible only by a small footbridge today. These shores were once protected by extensive mangrove forests—the Gulf of Thailand boasts some of the largest in the world—a natural defense against coastal erosion thanks to their extensive roots that stabilize the shoreline. But it's a been a losing battle to preserve them.

Replanting in the 'heart'

Mangrove forests have been cleared for extensive development of shrimp and salt farms, along with new houses and hotels that have popped up thanks to a development boom in recent decades. Thailand lost almost one third of its vast coastal mangrove forests between 1961 and 2000, according to a report from the nation's Department of Marine and Coastal Resources and the UN Environment Program. Climate change is also having an impact: stronger waves and more ferocious monsoons

have wiped out mangroves in the Gulf of Thailand, which is especially vulnerable because its waters are so shallow.

"The waves and tides are higher than before," said Thanawat Jarupongsakul, who advises Thailand's government on its policy to combat erosion. Asian and Caspian coastlines are the two areas in the world most affected by coastal erosion, according to a study published last year in the scientific journal Nature. It's a global problem: tens of thousands of square kilometers of land have been lost from coastal erosion around the world—between 1984 and 2015 the equivalent of the surface area of Haiti was lost, the study said.

In Thailand a quarter of the country's shores—or about 700 kilometers (500 miles) — are eroding, some "severely", according to data shared with AFP by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. Now there is a push to restore Thailand's precious mangrove ecosystem through a national voluntary tree replanting scheme, including near Somnuek's island monastery.

On a recent sunny afternoon, scores of people spent the day wading chest-deep in the sea to replant mangrove trees. Clad in headscarves and hats, they gingerly reach down into the water to plant young saplings along lines of bamboo poles that help offer some protection against the waves. "This project is called 'Planting a forest in people's hearts,'" said Wason Ditsuan, who runs the program. Set up in 2016 by Bangkok city authorities, the project has so far replanted 84 acres of mangroves across the country.

Temple selfies

Wason is hoping his project will succeed where others have failed. Nearly 10 years ago, government adviser Thanawat helped residents in Samut Chin replant mangrove trees but some areas were too far gone to recover. "Even if you plant a lot of mangroves, it cannot help," he said. Another strategy is to drill pylons of cement into the



SAMUT CHIN, Thailand: This aerial photo shows a view of a Buddhist temple isolated by coastal erosion in Samut Chin village, off the shore of Samut Prakan. — AFP

seabed—and on the shoreline itself—to act as a substitute for the mangrove roots.

This has proven successful so far in the tourist town of Pattaya further along the coast, where the pylons have helped to reclaim several metres of beach. But it's a race to keep up with rapid development along the shore, Thanawat said. As for Somnuek's stretch of coast,

though further erosion has stopped for now, there is little hope his temple will ever see dry ground again. But the flooding has brought one unexpected advantage: dozens of tourists that flock to the so-called floating temple for Instagram-worthy selfies. "The fight against coastal erosion has brought fame," village head Wisanu Kengsamut said. — AFP



FLORIDA: Photo shows a team of hunters from the Big Cypress National Preserve holding a female python measuring over 17 feet in length and weighing 140 pounds with 73 developing eggs. — AFP

US team captures huge python using tracking devices

MIAMI: Researchers in Florida using a new approach to combating a destructive invasion by enormous pythons have captured one of the biggest ever, a 17-foot-long (5.2 meters) specimen large enough to eat a deer, they said. The female snake is longer than a one-story building is high, and weighs 140 pounds (64 kilograms). It is one of the biggest pythons ever caught in southern Florida, according to a post on the Facebook page of the Big Cypress National Preserve. The researchers found the enormous reptile by using male pythons fitted with radio transmitters, allowing them to track the male and locate breeding females, according to the post.

"The team not only removes the invasive snakes, but collects data for research, develops new removal tools and learns how the pythons are using the preserve," the park said. The 17-footer was found to contain 73 developing eggs. The reptiles have no natural predators in Florida and multiply rapidly, posing "significant threats to native wildlife," the researchers said. The snakes can decimate native wildlife, killing small animals like rabbits, birds and opossums, and even eating creatures as large as alligators and adult deer. The Burmese python is considered an invasive species since it first appeared in the area in the 1980s.

With anywhere from 30,000 to 300,000 pythons now in southern Florida, the US Interior Department banned their importation in 2012. The Florida Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission has sponsored hunting programs to target the reptiles. But such efforts have failed to slow their spread, and the commission in 2017 held hearings around the state to seek creative ideas for

containing the monstrous creatures. Among the ideas to emerge: introducing snake-killing Australian terrier dogs, stringing barbed wire around trees to protect birds, or using drones fitted with infrared sensors to conduct aerial surveillance.

Another idea—introducing mongooses, which are famed in Asia for their ability to kill cobras—came from one Victoria Olson of Fort Lauderdale. "They have been successful in Puerto Rico & The US Virgin Islands to eradicate snakes and yes, they can kill a python," she said, according to the Sun-Sentinel newspaper of Fort Lauderdale. Pythons are not known as being particularly brainy. Since some have choked to death on golf balls they thought were eggs, one man suggested setting out hundreds of fake eggs. Asked about such ideas, a state wildlife spokeswoman noted diplomatically that public input is greatly valued. But, she told the Sun-Sentinel, "we want to give each suggestion the time for evaluation it deserves." — AFP

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- ◆ Faculty member of (BEST).
- ◆ Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

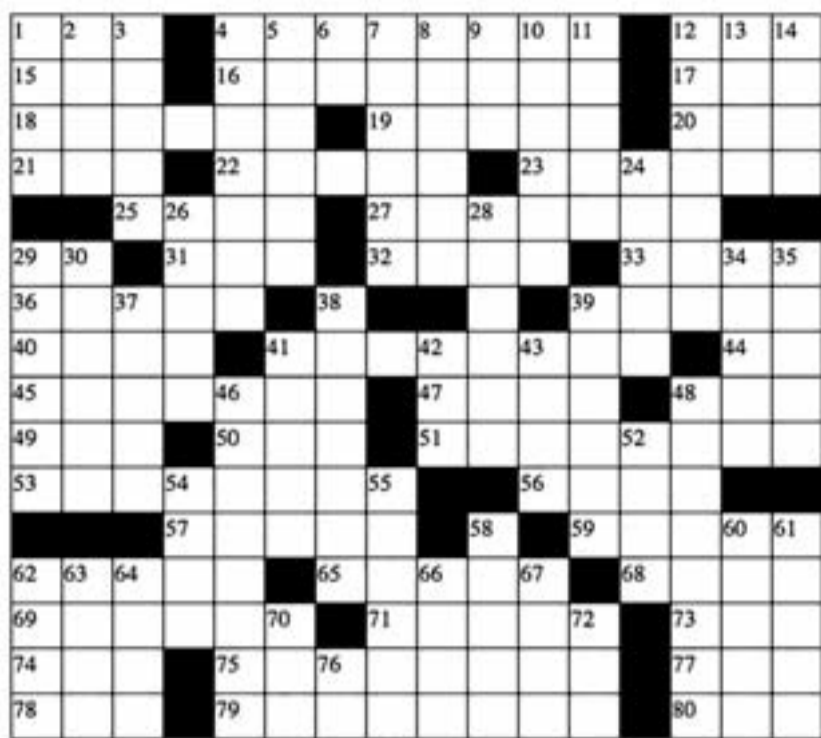
Scope of clinical Practice.

- ◆ Bariatric surgeries.
- ◆ Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- ◆ Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- ◆ G.I. surgeries.
- ◆ Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- ◆ Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com **Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228**
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Stars

CROSSWORD 2178



ACROSS

1. A conspicuous disparity or difference as between two figures.
4. A legal right to use and derive profit from property belonging to someone else provided that the property itself is not injured in any way.
12. The compass point that is one point south of due west.
15. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
16. Someone who tells a story.
17. Imperial dynasty that ruled China (most of the time) from 206 BC to 221 and expanded its boundaries and developed its bureaucracy.
18. Cheap showy jewelry or ornament or clothing.
19. Earlier a god.
20. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
21. Any of various primates with short tails or no tail at all.
22. A slender graceful young woman.
23. Rig used in drilling for oil or gas.
25. A dissolute man in fashionable society.
27. Taxonomic kingdom comprising all living or extinct plants.
29. The local time at the 0 meridian passing through Greenwich, England.
31. An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.
32. Long-bodied long-tailed tropical American wildcat.
33. A small cake leavened with yeast.
36. Dressed or clothed especially in fine attire.
40. A coffin along with its stand.
44. A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
45. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
47. (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
49. An acute inflammatory disease occurring in the intestines of premature infants.
50. The compass point that is one point north of due east.
51. (chemistry) Relating to or containing the carboxyl group or carboxyl radical.
53. Characterized by lightness and insubstantiality.
56. A card game in which players bet against the dealer on the cards he will draw from a dealing box.
57. The extent of something from side to side.
59. The Mongol people living the central and eastern parts of Outer Mongolia.
62. Most important element.
65. The dialect of Ancient Greek spoken in Thessaly and Boeotia and Aeolis.
68. A notable achievement.
69. Any elementary particle that interacts strongly with other particles.
71. A sloping mass of rocks at the base of a cliff.
73. A master's degree in business.
74. A resource.
75. Strengthen or make more firm.
77. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).

78. The universal time coordinated time when a transmission is sent from Earth to a spacecraft or other celestial body.
79. In a modest manner.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
2. A city in northwestern Syria.
3. A person who handles or caresses in a clumsy or over-familiar manner.
4. Not asked for.
5. One who is employed to saw wood.
6. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
7. Liqueur poured over shaved ice.
8. In a hasty and foolhardy manner.
9. (Sumerian) Sun god.
10. The outermost region of the sun's atmosphere.
11. A distinguishing feature of one's personal nature.
12. In consequence of which.
13. Capital city of the Apulia region on the Adriatic coast.
14. An unforeseen obstacle.
24. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
26. Sour or bitter in taste.
28. A large fleet.
30. A room equipped with toilet facilities.
34. Not fitting closely.
35. Of or relating to or involving an area.
37. An area of sand sloping down to the water of a sea or lake.
38. Proceed or issue forth, as from a source.
39. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
41. To fix or set securely or deeply.
42. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
43. (Middle East) An ornamental metal cup-shaped holder for a hot coffee cup.
46. Resembling air or having the form of air.
48. Outer membrane covering an axon.
52. Toward the mouth or oral region.
54. An open vessel with a handle and a spout for pouring.
55. A mountain in the central Himalayas on the border of Tibet and Nepal (27,890 feet high).
58. A boneless steak cut from the tenderloin of beef.
60. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
61. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
63. Dense growth of hairs covering the body or parts of it (as on the human head).
64. Severe diabetes mellitus with an early onset.
66. A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
67. A round shape formed by a series of concentric circles.
70. (used as a combining form) Recent or new.
72. An infection of the sebaceous gland of the eyelid.
76. A public promotion of some product or service.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Emotional change is in the process of creating new ways of thinking in your life now. This could involve a new romance or rekindling an old one. Either way, you're in store for some hectic days ahead. You have a need to do something different. Your loved one may have issues with this change and may cause trouble through agreements. You want to be on the go, perhaps even enjoying higher education in the process. Go to it Aries, if it makes you happy. Change is inevitable. Make it something that motivates and sparks progress in your life.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Your management style and the way you look at the job helps you to improve work habits of those around you. Working together with your job friends means a lot to you. You may take on higher education for the sake of your work life. Psychology may hit your hot button at this time. You have energy and the motivation to do better at work and at home. Extra hours don't bother you as long as you can see the work you've finished meaning something in the long run. Step back and look your love life over before making any changes. Desire for change is pressing now, Taurus. Converse with your lover gently.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

At times you're thinking in a foggy manner, then immediately some moments later you're thinking clearly. This isn't the best way to work throughout your day. You're feeling two ways at once, Gemini twins. Perhaps being the twins and the stars are why it's disconcerting. Habits are in a cycle of change once again. It seems as if that just happened yesterday too. Variety in a number of items are making you take notice and work toward making all better. It seems your life is working on multiple items including love too. Get some rest and hang on for the ride.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Those who live close to you such as neighbors take on a more connected-to-you role than they used to do. They're becoming like block family and are appreciated in much the same manner. These neighbors satisfy a deep emotional need for which you're glad. You're straddling the fence now in which direction your life will take. On one hand you want secure love. On the other, you may have a decision to make. Think over any decision long and hard before you participate in something that could hurt you or your family.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You may want to discuss with your significant other vacation plans so that you can get them set in stone. Europe? You need the time off and this is a way in which to ensure it, Leo. Be careful while driving that you don't violate a traffic law. The ticket may take away from that vacation in which you're looking so forward. Your job is on your mind and you're mildly thinking of changing occupations. Patience isn't a virtue you care to keep so you need to think of something that won't make you work for people exactly and a job that allows you the opportunity to move and shine, like the sun you are.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

A major life change has just started where letting go of past success is a necessity. Once you do though you can make room for more success in the future. Children, lovers and people close to your heart reside in your thoughts more now. You'll find that those are the real good things in life. But you're not through yet, Virgo. You're on to bigger and better. Learning and communication are two very big assets in your future. You love exploring new ideas and make the most of them when you turn them into something you can use.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Being out and about satisfies a need you have for change. Perhaps you can take work out of the office and enjoy learning new items that can be put to use later. You find that you need variety now, the more the merrier. That could be in the lover's department. Looking for a new lover can be fun and entertaining as long as you don't have unresolved baggage. Coming to grips with your past allows you to start renewed and refreshed. Enlist your friends for help. They know you better than anyone and can probably fix you up on a grand date with just the right person.



Scorpio (October 23-November 18)

You're not seen as warm and fuzzy now. Stay away from a new job interview or speaking with someone about trying to get something you want. You may not be seen in your best light at this time. You feel as if you're going and coming in anything but unison. Though you're clear minded it seems your thinking in a scattered manner. Change is happening and you're embracing it heartily. Variety is your keyword both at work and at home. You may be looking for a new love to fill your life. Excitement seems to fill your world now.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Your mind should have been on romance yesterday. Then you'd be in a better mood today. Your mind was made up to redecorate but you don't want to look at a color or anything having to do with making your home any prettier. Being unsure of how you feel, you don't know whether you're coming or going, want to keep your home or sell it and buy something entirely new. What you do know is you don't feel like doing it now. You can barely stand to talk with anyone. It's a good thing this doesn't affect your work except for that one itty bitty hard feeling you may have against a work mate.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Change is coming which may not be easy to take but you'll make it. Yin and Yang are giving you their perspectives with this feeling of needing the past and coming to terms with it before you can build your future. You're ready for whatever life brings your way. Habits changing are only a part of this new phase in your life. Being able to implement and accept the change quickly is the key to making it work for you. Capricorn. Just keep on, keeping on. Everything will be alright. Sounds like a country song, doesn't it?



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Excitement for working is on top of your list now. Ideas can be put into action and tried with you're already knowing what the end result will manifest. You're also in the mood for taking better care of yourself now. Getting out for a lunch time walk around the parking lot gives you the nature you now realize calms you and lets you think. Also, noticing how changes in your diet can make you feel better too goes a long way to making you feel healthier. Aquarius. Changes are occurring in your habits as well. Let the new, and most often better, transitions happen. If you don't like them, you can always revert back or make another change.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You want to try new things all over your life. That can make for times that are just a bit scary for some. You've got the need for independence and freedom. Two words that can bring fear to the one you love and at work. You have a need to be respected which motivates you to do more at work and at home. Being a wall flower is not your way right now, Pisces. You want to be seen. Moreover, you want to be praised too. You're happy to be alive and you've got good faculties with your mind and body.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Autumn - Word Search



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OCTOBER
PUMPKIN
RAKE | SCHOOL
SEASON
SEPTEMBER
SQUASH
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Yesterday's Solution

Australia

The hidden message is:
AUSTRALIA'S MOUNT AUGUSTUS IS THE LARGEST ROCK IN THE WORLD

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2019



An airplane flies over Panama Bay, in Panama City during sunrise. — AFP

The horns of the Broto, a Central African tradition under threat

The young man picks up a heavy wooden horn, raises it to his lips and with widened eyes and puffed cheeks starts to blow. A primal rumble emerges from the mouth of the instrument. On a stony hill in Bambari, deep in the heart of the Central African Republic, 14 other horns start to sound, each with a unique hum, and an impromptu polyphonic concert gets underway.

The musicians-clad in clothes made of bark that are called kundou-mark the rhythm with a rolling step, shaking their aikposso, little bells made of palm leaves attached to their ankles. Local people emerge from their homes, delighted to hear something that is not gunfire but rather the comforting resonance of a horn sculpted by nature itself. "People in Bangui think that the Broto are dead and gone-but they're still here!" exclaims Bruno Hogonede, head of the Ongo-Broto band, one of the last orchestras in the CAR devoted to the heavy horn.

Carved from tree roots, with its origins lost in the mists of time, the horns of the Broto people, a part of the wide-ranging Banda ethnic group, play a ceremonial role.

The instrument's earthy timbre is the sound of choice at traditional events and the Ongo-Broto used to perform in France, Algeria and elsewhere. But the ancient instrument faces an uncertain future. The CAR plunged into violence in 2013, destroying musicians' livelihoods.

"The looters came, the instruments were destroyed in the fires," said musician Jean Noel Kilo. "We had to start again from scratch." "Broto musicians play at ceremonies, weddings, parties, funerals... but during the crisis, they didn't get many invitations," said Albert Kotton, director of the Boganda Museum in the CAR capital Bangui, which specializes in the nation's diverse cultural traditions.

Made by termites

Walking down from the hill after the off-the-cuff rendition, Hogonede stopped in front of a hollow root emerging from the reddish laterite soil. "This is an opo root. The trumpet shape is caused by termites-they hollow out the root from within," he said. "What I really like is that it's our ancestors who taught us this. And now I'm

teaching young people in turn." In the past, young men learned to play the Broto horn as part of their initiation into manhood, a tradition handed on from generation to generation.

The role of the horn in the initiation ritual has faded away as younger children are taught the instrument and its strange overlapping sounds. The note and its overtones require extreme accuracy to deliver properly, for the pitch and feel of the sound depend crucially on the shape and width of the root. The Broto are one of about 50 communities in the Banda ethnic group, which is widespread in central CAR.

Kotton, the museum director, said little was known about the ancestral origins of the Broto horn. One of the museum's treasures were a few tapes of horns being played that was made decades ago by an Israeli specialist in ethnic music, Simha Arom. The traditional role of the Broto horn "is quietly being lost," said Kotton. "What our ancestors used to do isn't what young people are doing today." —AFP

“
But they're
still here!
”



Broto musicians blow into the side of their wooden instruments to produce a deep, resonant sound from the bell. — AFP photos



Ariana Grande urges her fans to protect their peace, energy

The 'god is a woman' hitmaker took to social media to share a sweet message to her 150 million followers as she told them not to "run themselves to the ground and exhaust themselves". In a video posted to her Instagram story, she said: "Hi everyone! I'm in L.A. I just finished my first 10 shows on tours and I'm rehearsing for Coachella and getting ready, but I just wanted to say hi and remind you guys to protect your peace and your energy and to not forget to take care of yourselves and protect your space, because we have a lot of work to do here and a lot of family and friends and love and important things to take care of. I just want to make sure you don't run yourself to the ground and exhaust yourself. And remember to protect your energy and do things that are good for you. And that you are loved and not alone. You deserve the best there is, and I love you. I have a lot of followers and it's weird, so if I can use that to spread any kind of positivity or light, I just wanted to send it your way. Remind you life is beautiful if you allow to be and if you put your energy in the right place. So here I am, reminding you." Ariana had previously thanked her fans for always being there for her in a series of posts to her story. The '7 Rings' hitmaker wrote: "U make everything better. thank you for your energy. truly. I love y'all, so much. u have no idea how much y'all help me / how happy u make me. sharing a state / this life with y'all is so beautiful. thank u so much for being here, and for reminding me why i am too! — Bang Showbiz

New Netflix series inspired by real-life teen drug king



Actors of the TV show 'How to sell drugs online (Fast),' Danilo Kamperidis, left, and Maximilian Mundt, pose during the 2019 Cannes International Series festival, in Cannes.

A new Netflix series billed as the teenage "Breaking Bad" is inspired by a real-life German youth who ran an online drug empire from his bedroom, its creators said. The makers of "How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)" even met up with Maximilian S on one of his days out of prison where he is serving seven years for "running the Amazon of illegal drugs"—selling everything from MDMA to marijuana.

While his mother thought of him as a "lazy and grumpy" 19-year-old who wouldn't leave his room, he made 4.4 million euros (\$4.9 million) worth of Bitcoin in little over a year from his Shiny Flakes online store. Police still couldn't access all of his Bitcoin accounts when he was jailed in 2015.

"When you think of the drug business, you think of the Cali cartel and Pablo Escobar," said the series' makers Philipp Kassbohrer and Matthias Murmann Sunday as it was premiered at the Canneseries festival in the French Riviera resort. "But this young German weirdo guy who was doing this himself was having a big effect on the European drug market.

'Best dealer in Europe'

"He was the best dealer in Europe and he didn't just do it in the Darknet (that part of the internet hidden from public view), he did it in the clearweb," Murmann said.

"You could find his site on a normal browser. It had customer reviews and everything: 'If you liked this drug, you might like to try this...'" The young man they would later know as "Max"—who was treated as a juvenile by the courts—turned up one day at their offices when the series was still being shot after he heard his story had been picked up.

"We thought he was making it up. But it was him," said Murmann, a self-confessed geek himself. "He had to sleep in jail but he could travel around during the day. It was interesting to get his mindset," and to find out how proud he was of the "customer experience". He even showed the director "how he arranged the MDMA in boxes. 'No, I did it like this,'" he said. It as a real headspin for the actors," Murmann recalled.

By that point, shooting had already begun of the show, which they had turned into a buddy story of a 17-year-old high school student who sets up a drugs site with his wheelchair-bound best friend to try to win back his girlfriend, who has returned for a year out in the US as pill-popping party animal.

'He was a bit too smart'

"It was inspired rather than based on him because when we dug into his true story we found it was very short and boring," Kassbohrer added. "He was a little bit

too smart. He only made one big mistake and that's why he got arrested... but when he turned up, it was a weird bridge with reality."

The pair, whose BTF studio makes late-night TV shows and computer games, used fast editing and smartphone-style pop-ups to recreate the superconnected lifestyles of Generation Z teenagers. Kassbohrer said "Max" was like many of this age group, trying to make their mark but in his own terribly misguided way.

"He really is a nice guy but you cannot forget that he did something very criminal and he was connected to people who were doing even bigger criminal things. "He didn't think it through, he was just focusing on the user experience and the technical side," Kassbohrer added. In fact he was so proud of his "customer experience" that he gave an interview to "a journalist friend of ours when he was still dealing and told her that he even had a customer services and marketing department, when it was just him in his room."

He had that "Steve Jobs thing" of not fully thinking through the consequences. Kassbohrer said, "just like Jobs hadn't worried about people dying in China to make iPhones." "How to Sell Drugs Online (Fast)" goes online on May 31.—AFP



(Left to right) Actors Eva Longoria, Eugenio Derbez, Michael Pena and Isabela Moner speak on stage.



Actress Octavia Spencer speaks on stage.



Actress Natalia Reyes appears on stage.



Actors Dwayne Johnson, left, and Jason Statham appear on stage during the CinemaCon Universal Pictures special presentation at the Colosseum Caesars Palace in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP photos

'Cats' and 'Downton Abbey': Universal Studios presents upcoming films

Big screen versions of the celebrated musical "Cats" and TV series "Downton Abbey" and another entry in the "Fast and Furious" franchise: Universal Studios on Wednesday presented its forthcoming releases at CinemaCon in Las Vegas. Explosions, epic brawls and of course lots and lots of cars: "Fast & Furious Presents: Hobbs and Shaw," with Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson and Jason Statham, is faithful to the many movies that preceded it in the franchise.

But in the latest edition, Johnson also pays tribute to his Samoan origins, performing a ritual Siva Tau dance on screen. "I'm so proud to show my culture as well," he said. The villain of the film is Idris Elba, who will also feature in "Cats." In addition to the British star, the musical's cast includes Oscar winners Judi Dench and Jennifer Hudson, as well as singer Taylor Swift. Another Oscar winner, Octavia Spencer, makes her horror debut with "Ma," which shows "how the effects of childhood bullying last for a long time and how long revenge can wait," she said.

Among the most anticipated releases is "Downton Abbey," the big screen sequel to the adventures of the aristocratic Crawley family, which kept many viewers spellbound for six seasons. This time around, the family is awaiting a visit from the king and queen of England.—AFP



Charlize Theron speaks on stage.



Actress/singer Jennifer Hudson performs during the CinemaCon Universal Pictures special presentation.



Dancers perform in front of the Logo of Paramount Pictures studio to announce Rocketman.

Hamilton, Schwarzenegger tease new 'Terminator'

Thirty-five years after time travel and a war against synthetic intelligence of the future threw them together, resistance leader Sarah Connor and cyborg assassin the Terminator enjoyed a nostalgic reunion Thursday in Las Vegas. Arnold Schwarzenegger and Linda Hamilton, the stars of 1984 blockbuster "The Terminator," took center stage at annual movie industry convention CinemaCon to delight fans with footage of the sixth entry in the sci-fi action franchise, "Terminator: Dark Fate."

"I'm so excited to have everyone back. Jim Cameron and Linda Hamilton, the whole team is back together," said Schwarzenegger, introducing his co-star and the legendary director of the original, who takes producing duties this time around. "It's where it all began in 1984, and it changed my

life," the 71-year-old Hollywood star and erstwhile politician added. The latest installment, due out in November, is seen as one of the movie events of the year, and an opportunity to get the \$1.8 billion franchise back on track after three releases that made money but disappointed critics.

The original and its sequel, "Terminator 2: Judgement Day" (1991), enjoy respective average ratings of 100 percent and 93 percent on movie website Rotten Tomatoes and are seen as touchstones in 20th century cinema. Such was the cultural cachet of those films that action hero Schwarzenegger was dubbed "the Governor" when he parlayed his Hollywood fame into success on the political stage. The Austrian-born former bodybuilder was voted in as governor of California in a historic 2003 recall vote—but proved the win was no fluke by

routing opponent Phil Angelides to get re-elected.

And in a wiping clean of the more recent slate, "Terminator: Dark Fate," helmed by "Deadpool" director Tim Miller, picks up where "Judgement Day" left off. Hamilton, 62, told fans playing Sarah Connor, a wide-eyed ingenue who turned into one of cinema's most recognizable action heroes and a feminist icon, had changed her life. "I can't wait to share this movie with all of you," she told the audience at CinemaCon, which is made up mainly of the managers and owners operating the theaters and other businesses projecting the films.—AFP

Actor Arnold Schwarzenegger speaks on stage.





(Left to right) Jimi Westbrook, Kimberly Schlapman, Karen Fairchild, and Philip Sweet of Little Big Town perform onstage during the 54th Academy Of Country Music Awards at MGM Grand Garden Arena in Las Vegas, Nevada.—Reuters



US singer Kacey Musgraves poses with the awards for Female Artist of the Year and Album of the Year.



US singer Shane McAnally poses with the award for Songwriter of the Year.

Country stars shine in Vegas at Academy of Country Music awards



US singer Jason Aldean poses with the Dick Clark Entertainer of the Decade Award.



Thomas Rhett poses with the award for Male Performer of the Year.

Country music royalty turned out in force on Sunday for a glittering night of live performances and honors at the 54th annual Academy of Country Music awards. Host Reba McEntire, marking a record 16th time in the job, wasted no time in addressing one of the evening's touchy subjects - the lack of women nominees in some top categories. Noting recent snow in Las Vegas, where the awards were held in a live, performance-heavy broadcast, McEntire quipped "it was so cold it froze us women out of entertainer of the year."

Grammy award album of the year winner Kacey Musgraves was glaringly absent from the all-male nominees top category. The honor went to Keith Urban, whose wife actress Nicole Kidman appeared genuinely shocked at his win. But Musgraves took home both the album of the year and female artist of the year awards. Accepting the latter, Musgraves said "I'm so thankful for the chance to share my political perspective," dedicating the award to women who felt pressure to silence themselves.

And women ruled the MGM Grand Garden Arena stage as Chrissy Metz, of hit NBC show "This Is Us," made her live TV performance debut, alongside country stars Lauren Alaina, Mickey Guyton and Maddie & Tae for a stirring rendition of "I'm Standing With You." Jason Aldean and Florida Georgia Line opened the show with a rousing performance of "Can't Hide Red," but some on social media took offense to Tyler Hubbard's American flag suit, branding it a "disgrace" besmirching a sacrosanct national symbol.

Dan + Shay scored three straight early wins, for song of the year and single of the year for "Tequila," also winning duo of the year. Male artist of the year went to



Dan Smyers, left, and Shay Mooney of US musical duo Dan + Shay Dan + Shay hold their awards for Single of the Year, Song of the Year and Duo of the Year.

Thomas Rhett. The star-laden three-hour show marked an upbeat return to celebrating country music after last year's awards assumed a somber note following the October 2017 mass shooting, also in Las Vegas, that killed 58 people at a country music festival.

Aldean, who was performing when shooting broke out, received the ACM artist of the decade award. Other A-list country stars performing included Blake Shelton, Luke Bryan, Chris Stapleton, Urban, Brooks & Dunn, Miranda Lambert, McEntire and George Strait. — Reuters



Australian singer Keith Urban poses with the award for Entertainer of the Year.



US singer Ashley McBryde poses with the award for New Female Artist of the Year.



Blake Shelton performs onstage.



US singer Chris Janson poses with the award for Video of the Year.



Whit Sellers, Trevor Rosen, Matthew Ramsey, Geoff Sprung and Brad Tursi of US band Old Dominion pose with their awards for Group of the Year.



Lanco band members hold their awards for New Duo or Group of the Year award.



Kelly Clarkson, left, performs with Shay Mooney of Dan + Shay onstage.



THE ART OF PUPPETEERING: MEET THE PUPPETEERS BEHIND IFTAH YA SIMSIM

While puppeteering might seem like a lot of fun, it requires dedication, practice and skill to perfect.

This is especially true for the puppeteers behind the Middle East's nostalgic hit show, Iftah Ya Simsim. "One of the first things people do wrong when they puppeteer is moving their hand too much," explained Iftah Ya Simsim's Creative Director and puppeteer Ammar Al-Sabban. "The trick is to make the puppets' moves seem human. When they speak, you should only move the lower half of the 'mouth' to speak, like a jaw. Otherwise the whole head flies around and the puppet won't maintain eye contact with whoever they're speaking to."

It's these little tricks and more that make puppeteering for Iftah Ya Simsim's muppets such a nuanced job. Al-Sabban, the puppeteer for the Arabic-speaking Ka'aki and Gargur (Cookie Monster and Grover), explained that he needed to practice with his own handmade puppet months before getting it right. His colleague, Iftah Ya Simsim's human actor and puppeteer Abdullah Rafah, recounted a similar uphill struggle when first puppeteering for the show's famous furry red favorite, Elmo. Mastering his character's mechanisms and mannerisms over the show's three seasons allowed Rafah to inject subtle characteristics that bring Elmo to life.

"People love when Elmo tilts his head to the side when he's listening," explained Rafah. "It's like a kid. It's endearing and gives him an added dimension even when he's not speaking." For the two puppeteers, bringing inanimate objects to life is only half of the fun. What really makes the job worth it is seeing the children immediately embrace the magic created by the show's muppets. The love the puppeteers and their furry friends receive is what makes long hours of raised arms and sore shoulders worth it. "It brings joy to people," said Al-Sabban. "It's magical how you can bring a puppet to life and say whatever you want to say and people will listen and laugh."

Diverse characters

The pair are joined by four other talented puppeteers on the show: Duha Haifawi, who plays the only girl puppet, Shams; Michel Jabali, the desert-bound penguin; Maher Mzowak, the bossy Melsoon; and Abdullah Qassim, Iftah Ya Simsim's flagship camel No'man. In addition to the main cast, there are two "Anything Muppets", assistant puppeteers who handle the furry extras or assist with bigger puppets like Ka'aki, Kamiran Kanjo and Maryam Al

Atouly are the show's go-to hands when it comes to butterflies fluttering in the background, frolicking cows and stray limbs.

The group of actors represent a range of characters as diverse as themselves. The personalities and voices each muppet requires takes intensive training, understanding and dedication. For Mzowak, becoming Melsoon meant staying true to his bird's portrayal in the original Iftah Ya Simsim and Mzowak's own take on the character. "When I was six-years-old, I used to love Iftah Ya Simsim," recalled Mzowak. "I used to copy Melsoon, his voice, his tone and his 'hoo hoo'."



When he landed the role as the bird, it came naturally to the seasoned actor. "The [original] Melsoon was kind, intelligent and a little angry," said Mzowak. The puppeteer says that while the new Melsoon is quick to get frustrated and annoyed by small things, "he still has a good heart also and lots of knowledge [to share]."

Haifawi, who recently moved to the UAE from Jordan to puppeteer, shared similar sentiments. Since Haifawi joined later in production, she had to work quickly and hard to acquire the skills, voice and attitude of the sprightly and energetic muppet. "Shams' voice is loud and high-pitched," said Haifawi, explaining that while the muppet's voice was easy to do, it still required plenty of practice and precision to film skits and musical segments. "I didn't expect it to be this challenging but it gets easier everyday" One of those challenges lies in maneuvering the puppets realistically.



Ready to air

No'man, which is a full-suit muppet maneuvered by Abdullah Qassim, requires the actor to spend hours in costume. The muppet is full of wires and screens and can weigh up to several kilos. But that does not deter Qassim, who says the children he entertains as the singing and dancing camel makes all the sweat worth it. Qassim never lets his fatigue show while in character, allowing No'man's serendipitous personality shine. Qassim's challenge is the physical toll required to play an otherwise carefree character. On the other hand, Habib the penguin's puppeteer, Jabali, has the reverse problem. As a small, flightless Arctic bird in the desert, Habib must contend with large emotional weight of being an outsider.

Of Habib's portrayal, Jabali says, "He's an expatriate, immigrant or even a refugee. Since he's new to Iftah Ya Simsim, he faces many difficulties and challenges. But he adapts and continues to adapt every day to new things he did not previously know." Each muppet comes with his or her own bag of surprises and challenges. Mastering the voices, perfecting the movements and staying true to character are some of the most important skills needed to bring the puppets to life.

Once again, Elmo, No'man, Shams and friends are back on screens across the Middle East. Thanks to the hard work and love of show's puppeteers - and with a little help from their furry, lovable friends - the third season of Iftah Ya Simsim is ready to air this Ramadan.

Revolving around the R's

This season, Iftah Ya Simsim will open up its gates to a host of new people and places in an effort to showcase the GCC's widespread diversity of people and cultures. The upcoming episodes will revolve around three main themes: Relationships, Respect and Resilience. Each episode centers around an emotion and the effect it has on a child and his or her surroundings; some important emotions dealt with include: Anger, Sadness, Happiness, Frustration, Disappointment, Loneliness, Guilt, Pride, Excitement, Jealousy, Fear, Disgust, and Anxiety. Broader themes feature Speaking Up, Staying Hopeful, Recognizing Safe Spaces and Environmental Awareness.

The launch of the show's third season and its themes coincides with the Year of Tolerance in the UAE and a GCC wide effort to support tolerance and understanding. The segments used to convey these lessons were filmed largely in Abu Dhabi, with some additional recordings in Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and employ the talents of people from all over the MENA region and world. Internationally, Iftah Ya Simsim's themes parallel a global trend of rejecting violence and promoting compassion. Children will learn means of resolving interpersonal conflict by thinking outside the box, using effective language and vocabulary, and managing and understanding their own feelings and those of others.

Opposites attract

The nostalgic Middle Eastern show is celebrating its third season this year, as well as the 40th anniversary following its original launch in 1979. While Iftah Ya Simsim's goal to educate and entertain has never changed, the show has welcomed many different characters over the years. These include an exciting new set of original muppets and a few familiar faces from Sesame Street.

Since its conception, Iftah Ya Simsim has built world in which everyone, no matter what shape, size or color, has a place. Even when it seems like they are at odds with one another, the puppets' unique personalities go hand-in-hand. Perhaps the most obvious example is Habib, a penguin who makes a home for himself in the desert in spite of his origins.

The third season has strived to celebrate that diversity in its colorful cast of characters and stories. Together, the puppets learn that their differences, big and small, are what make them special as individuals and stronger as friends. This camaraderie is played out in the dynamics that come about when the friends are paired up. Six-year-old 6' No'man has been a fixture of the Simsim world since its very first episode. He began as a happy-go-lucky camel who has since matured into a more empathetic friend. Rather than clashing with his smaller, louder friends, No'man's gentle giant demeanor complements the their gregariousness, particularly that of three-year-old Elmo.

What Elmo lacks in No'man's size he makes up for in spirit. He was introduced to Iftah Ya Simsim in 2016 alongside Kaaki and Gargur in an effort to add recognizable faces to the show's small roster. But, with the exception of the self-adoring Gargur, fame is the least of the puppets' concerns. All Elmo wants is to be happy and to share that happiness with his friends, who wish the same in return (and maybe a cookie for Kaaki).

Another pair who prove opposites attract are the Simsim scientists, the ever-curious Shams and book-loving Melsoon. Shams, an avid learner, channels her inquisitiveness with passion; firing to and fro with unceasing ideas and questions. Melsoon, on the other hand has a left-brained personality that starkly contrasts with his friends' boisterous spirits. Yet, surprisingly, his musings provide an oft-needed weight to the gangs' antics and Shams' energy.

The threads of friendship are tightly woven between the furs of the puppets. Throughout season three, each character has his or her turn to work alongside a different friend. The various challenges they overcome together are made possible by their diverse range of skills, personality traits and, most importantly, tolerance.



In this file photo a guitar owned by Prince called 'Love Symbol' is displayed during a media preview for an exhibit called "Play It Loud: Instruments of Rock and Roll" at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York.



In this file photo 'Number One' belonging to Jimmy Page is displayed during a media preview.



In this file photo members of the media get a look at a group of guitars during a media preview. — AFP photos

Guitars of the greats rock halls of New York's Met museum

The art of rock and roll is getting its due at an upcoming show at New York's Met museum, which is decking its halls with instruments from the genre's greats. The storied Manhattan institution has amassed a staggering collection of rock memorabilia and instruments from superstars including Chuck Berry, Eric Clapton, Prince, Joan Jett, Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Keith Richards, Bruce Springsteen and Elvis Presley for the show "Play It Loud: Instruments of Rock & Roll," set to open Monday.

The exhibit put on in partnership with the Cleveland-based Rock & Roll Hall of Fame celebrates "tools of innovation and outstanding artistic innovation," Max Hollen, the Metropolitan Museum's director, told journalists at a preview. The more than 130 instruments from 1939-2017 in the show are organized to depict how musicians used and advanced emerging technologies throughout the 20th century to create new sounds and styles.

In addition to instruments, the Met is displaying flamboyant costumes of rockers along with show memorabilia like gig posters and even the remnants of smashed guitars. "Instruments are some of the most personal objects connected to musicians, but as audience members we are primarily used to seeing them from far away, up on a stage in performance," said Jayson Kerr Dobney, the show's curator. "This exhibition will provide a rare opportunity to examine some of rock and roll's most iconic objects up close."

Holy grail

Steve Miller-whose Steve Miller Band is known for such hits as "The Joker" and "Fly Like An Eagle"-told journalists that "he was stunned by the power and the elegance and the intelligence" of the show, which he loaned several guitars to. He praised curators for their work to

"cut through years of nonsense designed to trivialize these instruments." Led Zeppelin's Jimmy Page, whose iconic "Stairway to Heaven" guitar is on display, voiced awe at making it into the Met, which he dubbed "the holy grail."

"For me to be here... I never would've even dreamt about it, even as a kid," Page said. "I was really keen to be able to loan whatever I could to make it come alive." The show came under some criticism when it was announced, because the initial teaser before the full list of more than 80 artists was released spotlighted just one woman, Grammy-winning contemporary rocker St. Vincent. Indie rockstar Neko Case voiced her anger, tweeting "Do you really think NO OTHER WOMEN, OR FEMALE IDENTIFYING performers contributed to rock n' roll?"

But the show was ultimately more inclusive than it first appeared, and Dobney addressed the gender issue in the show's catalog: "Rock and roll was for many years a boys'

club," he writes with Hall of Fame curator Craig Inciardi. "In the 1950s and 1960s, and even beyond, the women in rock and roll bands, were primarily limited to vocals, the reason they were under-represented in these pages."

Along with Jett and Mitchell a number of female performers are represented including Patti Smith and Lady Gaga, whose enormous futuristic piano is featured in the exhibit to run from April 8 until October 1. At the show's preview Don Felder of The Eagles played the intricate solo from the band's hit "Hotel California." He said that after arriving in New York as a 20-something, "the very first thing I did the following day is I came to the Met." "It's such an incredible honor that 50 years later, this guitar would be hanging" here, Felder said of his double-neck Arctic White instrument.—AFP



Tulips are seen in Lafayette Square across from the White House in Washington yesterday. — AFP

Britain takes aim at social media bosses in world first

LONDON: Britain will make social media bosses personally liable for harmful content and shut down offending platforms under a "world-leading" government plan published yesterday in response to the spread of online abuses and crimes. The long-delayed and eagerly anticipated proposals lay the groundwork for legislation that could be passed in the coming months. They were drawn up after consultations with social media moguls such as Facebook chief Mark Zuckerberg and have faced little resistance from other platforms that have also been blamed for inciting harmful behavior online.

But some of the proposals have sparked concerns from free speech groups. "What we're proposing today is that companies that deal with user-generated content should take greater responsibility for keeping those users safe," culture and media minister Jeremy Wright told BBC radio. "These are world-leading proposals." Australia also fast-tracked legislation last week that threatened jailed time for social media executives who failed to enact the "expeditious removal" of footage of terrorism and other odious crimes.

Australia's laws came in direct response to last month's live broadcast by Facebook and YouTube of the slaying of 50 Muslim worshippers in New Zealand. Britain's initiative was born out of public anger over the 2017 suicide of a 14-year-old girl who followed social media accounts about depression and self-harm. The proposed UK regulations would see social media companies accept "duty of care" obligations that require them to identify and remove "online harms". Those that fail would be first issued warnings and then hit progressively with more punitive sanctions.

The government paper suggests that these include "the creation of new liability (civil fines or extended to criminal liability) for individual senior managers". The most serious would see Internet service providers block non-compliant websites and apps. "This would only be considered as an option of last resort and deploying such an option would be a decision for the independent regulator alone," the plan says.

The regulations would only apply in Britain and should have no immediate impact on users elsewhere in

the world. But they may prompt other governments to take notice and follow suit. Wright suggested the fines would be substantial. He noted that those available to European Union authorities implementing the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) rules on data privacy reached "up to four percent of a company's turnover". "We think we should be looking at something comparable here," Wright told BBC television.

Wright's office is navigating a minefield of problems regulating an industry that largely functions outside the bounds of existing legislation - and whose harms are open to interpretation and remain undefined. A joint letter sent by media executives to the British government in February stressed that legislation must be "technically possible to implement in practise... (and) be targeted at specific harms". The government paper lists both "harms with a clear legal definition" and "harms with a less clear legal definition".

The first include terrorist activity and a range of cyber-stalking and hate crimes. The second lists disinformation and "violent content" as a whole. What types of

harm fall where would be established by a new regulator whose enforcement powers would be funded by the social media companies themselves.

The social media boom was born in the spirit of a libertarian Silicon Valley ethos of innovation and non-interference from government. But the industry is now facing a litany of dangers that range from the spread of state propaganda to promotion of teen suicide and livestreaming or murders and serious crimes. The techUK industry lobby group admitted yesterday that platforms' attempts at self-regulation have fallen short. But it also urged the government to avoid "creating discrepancies in law between the online and offline worlds".

Twitter UK public policy chief Katy Minshall said her platform would work with the government "to strike an appropriate balance between keeping users safe and preserving the open, free nature of the Internet." Britain's Article 19 free speech group also warned that the proposed legislation "could violate individuals' rights to freedom of expression and privacy". — AFP

Air strike halts Tripoli flights...

Continued from Page 1

been rocked by violent power struggles between an array of armed groups since the NATO-backed overthrow of dictator Muammar Gaddafi in 2011. Haftar, a former Gaddafi military chief, has emerged as a major player. His LNA backs an administration in the country's east in opposition to the UN-backed Government of National Accord.

Having seized control of much of eastern Libya - and buoyed by a series of victories in the desert south - Haftar turned his sights on Tripoli, vowing to "cleanse" it of "terrorists and mercenaries". After a pause overnight, fighting resumed yesterday morning around the capital's destroyed main airport, some 30 km south of Tripoli, and the rural area of Wadi Rabi further east.

World powers have expressed alarm at the violence, saying it threatens to further destabilize Libya and derail UN-led efforts to find a political solution to the country's woes. The US has appealed for an "immediate halt" to combat operations and the UN Security Council has called on Haftar's forces to stop their advance. On Sunday Russia blocked proposals for the council to adopt a formal statement, instead insisting that all Libyan forces be urged to stop fighting, diplomats said. Moscow is a key supporter of Haftar, along with Egypt and the United Arab Emirates. But the Kremlin yesterday urged "all sides to reject actions

that could provoke bloodshed in battle and the deaths of civilians".

Fierce clashes Sunday near Tripoli saw Haftar's fighters and other powerful western Libyan armed groups exchanging fire including air strikes. Forces backing the Tripoli-based GNA on Sunday announced a counteroffensive dubbed "Volcano of Anger". Spokesman Colonel Mohamed Gnounou said it was aimed at "purging all Libyan cities of aggressor and illegitimate forces", in reference to Haftar's fighters.

Unity government health minister Ahmad Omar told Libya's Al-Ahram television station late Sunday that around 50 people had been wounded along with those killed. His ministry yesterday put the death toll at 35. Haftar's forces have said 14 of their fighters have died. The UN Humanitarian Coordinator in Libya, Maria Ribeiro, said yesterday the fighting had displaced more than 2,800 people, blocked rescuers from reaching casualties and damaged electricity lines. She again urged the warring parties to implement a temporary humanitarian ceasefire.

The previous day, fighting raged throughout a two-hour window set by the UN for a pause in hostilities for civilians and the wounded to flee. Haftar's offensive has threatened to plunge the country into a full-blown civil war and once again thwart diplomatic efforts to find a solution to Libya's woes. It was launched just days ahead of a planned UN conference aimed at uniting Libya's rivals and paving the way for elections. The UN's Salame has insisted the international community is "determined" to go ahead with the April 14-16 conference. The UN mission in Libya said on Twitter that Salame met yesterday with unity government head Fayez Al-Sarraj in Tripoli to discuss how to "assist at this critical and difficult juncture". — AFP

od of 1959 to 1991.

The lawmakers also called for setting strict conditions to grant citizenship to Kuwaiti women's children, including they should be born, raised and live in Kuwait and that their non-Kuwaiti fathers should have died. They also called for special restrictions on granting citizenship to bedoons and halting the process for 10 years to examine the cases of those who got citizenship using fake documents.

The legal committee also decided to separate two draft laws related to the judiciary - the first on the independence of the judiciary and the other on allowing people to dispute judges. It was decided to merge the second law with the arguments law. MP Fadhl yesterday blasted the cooperative societies union and charged that some co-op officials were manipulating prices of essential commodities and committing violations for personal interests. He said that lawmakers have been discussing the possibility of forming a special panel to investigate what he called manipulation of prices at cooperative societies.

Panel approves giving citizenship...

Continued from Page 1

granting citizenship to people who do not deserve it, merely for profiteering and winning those people's loyalty and support of the government when voting on various bills.

The sources added that the lawmakers want to set some measures that will help control the government's actions, through preventing nationalizing Kuwaiti citizens' wives, which they claim has become a business for some male citizens through which they get paid in return for getting married to non-Kuwaiti women. The lawmakers said over 80,000 non-Kuwaiti women had been granted citizenship since 1991, which is a lot more than the 10,000 women who got citizenship in the peri-

BJP vows to strip Kashmir rights...

Continued from Page 1

"Nationalism is our inspiration and inclusion and good governance is our mantra," the prime minister said at the manifesto launch.

Modi remains very popular in India, but his government has come under fire over its handling of the fast-growing economy, particularly the failure to create jobs for the millions of youths coming on the labor market each year and the severe debts hitting farmers. Facing criticism from the opposition Congress party, the BJP said more than \$1.4 trillion would be spent during the next five-year term if it wins. It promised metro trains for 50 cities and to double the national highway network.

On top of the rural development, each farmer would get an annual handout of 6,000 rupees (\$86). Thousands of farmers have killed themselves in recent years because of crippling debts. The party set 75 targets - divided between the economy and its longstanding aim to transform society - to be reached by 2022 when India marks its 75th anniversary of the end of British colonial rule. "It (the manifesto) is multi-layered and multi-dimensional because our society is very diverse. We can't have a one-size-fits-all kind of policy," Modi said.

While the BJP promises also included lower taxes for

the middle-classes and more health facilities, the prime minister has built his reputation over the past five years as being a hawk on national security. Home Minister Rajnath Singh said Indian security forces would be given "a free hand" to rein in extremist violence. In February, India and Pakistan staged tit-for-tat air strikes as they faced off in their worst confrontation in years over Kashmir. The action appears to have bolstered Modi's standing.

The vow to scrap a constitutional amendment providing special rights to Kashmir could also spike tension in Kashmir. The BJP has long supported ending Kashmir's special status, but its proposal is currently before the Supreme Court. Repeal would bring widespread unrest, Kashmiri political leaders warned. "Let them do it and it will pave the way for our azadi," Farooq Abdullah, president of Kashmir's National Conference party, told an election rally, referring to freedom for the region. "They are wrong. We will fight against it," Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami, the leader of a left party in Kashmir, warned of "disastrous and unimaginable repercussions".

Last week, the Congress manifesto promised a 72,000 rupee (\$1,045) payment to each of India's poorest 250 million families. A Congress statement lambasted the BJP. "They had promised 20 million jobs every year. On the contrary the country has lost 4.7 million jobs," said Congress, which trails the BJP in opinion polls. "The youth are staring at a bleak future," it said. "Remember the good old days before 2014 when Indians had jobs and a PM that didn't lie to them," Congress said on Twitter, with a hashtag calling the BJP manifesto a gimmick. — Agencies

US labels Iran Revolutionary...

Continued from Page 1

Zarif blasted the US move on Twitter, saying it was timed to support Netanyahu ahead of today's parliamentary election in the Jewish state. "A(nother) misguided election-eve gift to Netanyahu. A(nother) dangerous US misadventure in the region," he wrote.

Addressing reporters following Trump's announcement, Secretary of State Mike Pompeo warned all banks and business of consequences of dealing with the Revolutionary Guards from now on. "The leaders of Iran are racketeers, not revolutionaries," Pompeo said. "Businesses and banks around the world now have a clear duty to ensure that companies with which they conduct financial transactions are not conducted with the IRGC in any material way."

A senior Trump administration official said the new measure would criminalize contact with the Guards and "enable our prosecutors to bring charges to those that

bring material support to the IRGC". "The IRGC is interwoven into the Iranian economy.... The safest course is to stop doing business with the IRGC. If you do business with the IRGC you run the risk of bankrolling terrorism," said the official, speaking on condition of anonymity. Another official said the force has "been a principal driver of violence on a vast scale for many decades" in an attempt "to reshape the Middle East in Iran's favor."

The dramatic escalation of Washington's attempt to undermine Iran's leaders comes on the eve of Israeli elections where close Trump ally Netanyahu is seeking to extend his 13 years in office. Trump, who describes himself as the most pro-Israeli US president ever, has recently recognized Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, as well as previously moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to the contested city of Jerusalem.

"Thank you, my dear friend, US President Donald Trump, for having decided to declare Iran's Revolutionary Guards a terrorist organization," Netanyahu said in a statement issued minutes after the White House announcement. "Thank you for responding to another important request of mine, which serves the interests of our countries and countries of the region." — Agencies

Sports

Keys defeats Wozniacki for first time to claim Charleston title

Muguruza retains Monterrey title as injured Azarenka retires

CHARLESTON: Madison Keys overpowered Caroline Wozniacki 7-6(5) 6-3 to win the Charleston Open and defeat the former world number one for the first time on Sunday.

The win, her first on clay court, broke a nearly two-year drought for the eighth seeded American, who claimed her fourth career title. Her previous two losses to Denmark's Wozniacki had been on hard courts when Keys failed to win a set.

"I think I served really well today, said Keys, who had predicted on Saturday that playing on clay would be beneficial in her bid to defeat Wozniacki. "I also felt I kept a lot of pressure on her, making a lot of returns and keeping rallies going and not going for things too early," said the world number 18, who won 76 percent of points on her first serve, and fired six aces. "More than anything I really trusted my game and went for my shots."

That was most evident late in the first set and the tiebreak. The big-serving Keys trailed 5-6 in the opening set before forcing the tiebreak, which remained close until 4-3 when the fifth-seeded Wozniacki double faulted.

Keys won the next point but twice had backhand errors to allow Wozniacki to pull within 6-5. A backhand down the line enabled Keys to finally claim the set. "I just knew the games I was losing in the first set I was just being too tentative and not really trusting my shot," said the 24-year-old American.

"I knew I had to go for it. I think that's how I have to play... 100 percent believing in my game."

Keys broke Wozniacki in the sixth game of the second set to go up 4-2 and when she made it 5-2

that all but clinched the match.

"It's definitely been a really great week for me, especially after having some really tough losses the last couple of weeks," Keys said. "It definitely is a very good springboard for heading over to Europe."

Meanwhile, Spain's Garbine Muguruza successfully defended her Monterrey Open title on Sunday when Victoria Azarenka retired injured from her first WTA singles final in three years. Second seed Muguruza was leading the match between the two former world number ones 6-1 3-1 when Azarenka decided she was unable to continue because of an injury to her right leg. "It's unfortunate I couldn't give my best today, but I tried my hardest," a tearful Azarenka, who had not previously reached final since the birth of her first child in December 2016, said at the presentation.

"I want to say thank you to my son Leo, who is not with me here. I would love him to be here to share this with me because it is special." The crowd responded with a chant of "Vika! Vika! Vika!". Muguruza's victory never looked in doubt and ensured that the record run of different women winning WTA titles this season would be extended to 16 tournaments.

The former French Open and Wimbledon champion broke the pained Belarusian three times in the first set and again in the fourth game of the second. "It's a great feeling to come back and defend a title," Muguruza said in a courtside interview. "It's never easy."

Azarenka received treatment on her leg during a medical time-out between sets, but it became apparent as the second set began that her movement had



Madison Keys with her Charleston Open trophy.

become significantly hampered. Azarenka was grimacing and stretching after nearly every point and, after Muguruza broke for a 3-1 lead, the two-time Australian Open champion decided to call it quits. The Belarusian had entered the final full of hope after surprising top

seed Angelique Kerber 6-4 4-6 6-1 in Saturday's semi-finals. Azarenka had won her only previous meeting with Muguruza in the round of 16 at the Miami Open in April 2016, when she went on to win the title in her most recent final before Sunday. — Reuters

Zain sponsors 8th GCC College Games

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its Gold sponsorship of the eighth edition of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Universities and Higher Education Institutions Games. The event, hosted this year by the State of Kuwait and organized by the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET), came under the patronage of Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah.

The event's organizing committee recognized Zain for sponsoring the event with the attendance of the Director-General of the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training (PAAET) Dr. Ali Al Mudhaf, Deputy Director-General of PAAET's Academic Support Services Dr. Jasem Al Ostad, and Dean of Student Affairs and Head of the Organizing Committee Dr. Hussain Al-Mukaimi.

Zain's support to this event came as part of its strong belief in the important role the private sector plays in developing the youth and sports sectors in Kuwait. The company makes this concept a reality by sponsoring and supporting various major sporting events in Kuwait, including this regional event held on the GCC level.

The eighth edition of the GCC Universities and Higher Education Institutions Games featured competi-



KUWAIT: Al Mudhaf, Al Ostad, and Al Mukaimi recognizing Zain for its support to the event.

tions in eight different sports: football, futsal, volleyball, swimming, tennis, table tennis, athletics, and cross country running. The event witnessed the participation of over 700 athletes from across Kuwait and GCC public universities.

Zain's support to this event comes in line with its keenness on encouraging the various efforts that contribute to developing the Kuwaiti youth and sports sectors. The company puts the support of Kuwaiti sports at the forefront of its priorities under the umbrella of its

Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy, and Zain's support of Kuwaiti champions results in many achievements that the company is proud of one year after another.

Zain is proud to support all initiatives that contribute to elevating the Kuwaiti sports scene, and the company remains committed to supporting and sponsoring different types of sports competitions, emphasizing its dedication to the further progress of Kuwaiti youth and sports.

Excitement builds for Masters as McIlroy eyes Career Slam

AUGUSTA: Newcomers, past winners and a host of green jacket hopefuls made final preparations Sunday at Augusta National on the eve of official practice rounds for the 83rd Masters. The year's first major championship begins Thursday at the famed course under the Georgia pines with Rory McIlroy making his 11th Augusta National start and fifth attempt to complete a Career Grand Slam by winning the Masters.

The 29-year-old Northern Ireland star, a four-time major champion, has finished between fourth and 10th in each of the past five years at the Masters, sharing fifth last year, and is a Las Vegas oddsmakers pick to win this time.

If he dons the green jacket next Sunday, McIlroy would become only the sixth player to have won each of the major titles at least once in his career, joining legends Tiger Woods, Jack Nicklaus, Gary Player, Ben Hogan and Gene Sarazen.

"It would be a massive achievement. It would be huge," McIlroy said during his run-up to Augusta. "But I can't think about it that way." Among those driving down Magnolia Lane to Augusta National's clubhouse early was 22-year-old Aaron Wise, a South African-born American who won last year's PGA Byron Nelson title to claim his first Masters berth.

"Right now I'm just soaking it all in," Wise said. "We can all remember the great moments and great shots just from having watched on TV." Wise, whose family moved to the United States when he was three, was last year's US PGA Tour Rookie of the Year. He missed the cut in three prior major starts as he and 16 other newcomers prepare for their Masters debuts.

"Coming to Augusta I feel good. I love the place," said two-time Masters champion Bubba Watson. "I'm thankful just to be here." Watson was on hand for the start and finish of the Augusta National Women's Amateur on Saturday and was among presenters in Sunday's Drive, Chip and Putt Championship for youth.

"The buzz is unbelievable," said Australia's Adam Scott, the 2013 Masters champion. "It gets me excited for next week." The biggest excitement is coming for defending champion Patrick Reed, who is now based out of the Champions Locker Room.

"This year, having all the extra activities, extra things going on, it's going to be a lot of fun," Reed said. "I honestly can't wait. "To come back and experience what it's like to be on the first tee as defending champion is going to be an awesome experience. Just can't wait to cherish all the moments." Anticipation is building outside the course as well. Signs are already posted saying "Golf Tickets Needed" in hotels and on the sides of the road with people looking for a deal on one of the toughest tickets in sport.

Along Washington Road, the highway golfers take to reach Magnolia Lane, several restaurants have their party tents assembled and ready for the visitors from around the world to arrive. The most exclusive meal of the week will be Tuesday's Champions Dinner, where Reed serves the menu he has dreamed about having since he was a teenager—ribeye steak, macaroni and cheese, creamed spinach and creamed corn. "I'm definitely going to fatten everyone up," Reed said. —AFP

Conners seals Masters berth with Texas win

SAN ANTONIO: Canada's Corey Conners delivered a roller coaster final round to win his first professional title at the Valero Texas Open on Sunday and book a fairytale berth at next week's Masters at Augusta.

The 27-year-old from Ontario only made it into the San Antonio tournament after battling through qualifying last Monday, where he won a six-way playoff to claim the final slot in the field. But the unheralded Canadian completed a remarkable week at TPC San Antonio's AT&T Oaks Course by firing a six-under-par 66 to finish two shots clear of Charley Hoffman, with a 20-under-par total of 268.

With Sunday's final round delayed by nearly two hours after heavy rain deluged the course, Conners quickly moved to the top of the leaderboard with four birdies in his opening five holes to eclipse overnight leader Kim Si-woo who struggled to get going.

But Conners' smooth start unravelled with a run of four consecutive bogeys on the sixth, seventh, eighth and ninth holes as he reached the turn at level par for the day. That protracted wobble opened the door to veterans Hoffman and Ryan Moore, who were both mounting final day charges to storm up the leaderboard.

Conners responded brilliantly after the turn however, reeling off three birdies on the 10th, 11th and 12th holes before moving one shot clear of the field at the 14th with his eighth birdie of the day. Conners then rolled in a pressure-filled 10-foot par putt to preserve his lead on the 15th heading to the final three holes. A superb 7-iron to six feet set up a birdie on the short par-three 16th and after Hoffman could only send his own birdie attempt rolling wide, Conners was suddenly two shots clear with two to play.

It got better on the par-four 17th, with Conners curling a 12-foot birdie putt to take him three clear heading to the 18th. With that commanding lead, Conners was never going to be denied and played the last conservatively to bag a comfortable par. The victory will have a transformative effect on Conners' season, securing his PGA Tour card while gaining entry to several prestige event in addition to next week's Masters. Hoffman meanwhile will also head to the Masters in good spirits after posting an impressive five-under-par 67 in the final round. — AFP

Ko claims first major title at ANA Inspiration

LOS ANGELES: Reigning rookie of the year Ko Jin-young captured her first major championship on Sunday, holding off fellow South Korean Lee Mi-hyang to win the ANA Inspiration by three strokes.

The 23-year-old Ko finished in style by draining a long birdie putt on 18 for a two-under 70 final round in the first major of the season at the Mission Hills Country Club near Palm Springs, California.

"I won the tournament and that's a happy moment," Ko said. "I thank God, I thank my parents, I thank my grandparents. It is an honour for me to join so many great Korean players. I'm honored to be here."

Ko, who is in her second year, finished with a 10-under 278 total for her fourth LPGA title. She also won the Hope Founder's Cup last month.

Ko celebrated her win by taking the traditional dip with her caddie Dave Brooker in Poppie's Pond—the water hazard located off the right and back of the green on 18.

Lee finished alone in second after shooting a two-under 70 while American Lexi Thompson was third with a brilliant final round of 67 to reach a six-under 282 total.

Kim In-kyung and Carlota Ciganda, of Spain, tied for fourth at five under, five strokes back of Ko.

Ko started the round with a one shot lead. She played steady golf on the front nine with two birdies but saw her lead slip to just one stroke over Lee when she made bogey on the 15th hole. She landed her approach in the bunker and then two-putted on the green. It was her second bogey in three holes.

But Ko got one back by sinking a superb putt for a birdie on the par-four 16th. She parred 17 then iced the win with an emphatic 20 foot birdie putt on 18.



RANCHO MIRAGE: Jin Young Ko of South Korea imitates a "selfie" with the Dinah Shore Trophy after winning the ANA Inspiration on the Dinah Shore course at Mission Hills Country Club in Rancho Mirage, California. — AFP

Not only is she the fifth South Korean to win here, Ko is the 15th in history to win a major. The only country that has more major wins is the United States. "I can't believe it," said Ko. "I was nervous on all my shots."

Thompson also made a run at Ko but her seven-stroke deficit was too much to make up. "It feels amazing," Thompson said. "I birdied the first hole and actually hit a ball out of bounds on number three but still managed to make bogey. My caddie helped out tremendously."

In addition to the professionals, five amateur players competed in the event continuing a long-standing tradition of exemptions for top women amateurs. Patty Tavatanakit, who is ranked third in the world, finished as the top amateur in the field after closing with a four under 68 a tie for 26th with nine others—including fellow Thai Pornanong Phatlum. — AFP

Sports

Sanchez hits three of Yanks' seven homers in walloping Orioles

Bellinger shines as Dodgers sweep Rockies

BALTIMORE: Gary Sanchez homered three times while Clint Frazier homered twice as the visiting New York Yankees belted seven homers in defeating the Baltimore Orioles 15-3 Sunday afternoon. Sanchez finished with six RBIs in his first career three-homer game, while Frazier drove in four runs. The victory completed a sweep of the three-game series. New York also got homers from Gleyber Torres and Austin Romine and finished with 14 overall during this sweep. The first 18 runs the Yankees scored in this series came via the long ball. Domingo German (2-0) carried a no-hitter into the sixth inning and gave up two runs on two hits in six innings plus two batters.

ANGELS 7, RANGERS 2

Mike Trout homered in his fourth consecutive game, and host Los Angeles scored seven unanswered runs defeating Texas in Anaheim, Calif. It was the Angels' third win in a row after dropping the first game of the four-game series to the Rangers. In the series, Trout hit five home runs, drove in nine, and reached base in 13 of 18 plate appearances (6-for-11, six walks). For the season, Trout is hitting .393 with a .581 on-base percentage and 1.000 slugging percentage.

DODGERS 12, ROCKIES 6

Cody Bellinger had three hits, including a homer, Max Muncy also homered, and Los Angeles pounded host Colorado. Justin Turner and Corey Seager had two hits apiece to help L.A. sweep the weekend series from Colorado. The two home runs give the Dodgers 24 on the season, and they have hit at least one in all 10 games. Joe Kelly (1-1) got the win in relief, and Bellinger scored four times. He has an 11-game hitting streak going back to last season.

BREWERS 4, CUBS 2

Christian Yelich went 2-for-3 with a home run and three RBIs, and host Milwaukee held on to beat Chicago. Travis Shaw also drove in a run for Milwaukee, which earned a 2-1 series victory over its divisional rival. The Brewers have won eight of 10 games to start the season. Right-hander Zach Davies (1-0) picked up the victory after limiting the Cubs to two runs (both unearned) on five hits in 5 2/3 innings. Willson Contreras hit a two-run home run in a losing effort for the Cubs. Ben Zobrist added three singles for Chicago, which dropped its third series in a row. Right-hander Kyle Hendricks (0-2) gave up four runs on eight hits in four innings.

ASTROS 9, ATHLETICS 8

Jose Altuve worked a four-pitch walk with the bases loaded in the ninth inning, and host Houston completed a three-game series sweep of Oakland. Altuve forced in Aledmys Diaz, who finished 2-for-4 with two runs and

four RBIs. Roberto Osuna (1-0) earned the win for Houston with a perfect top of the ninth. Josh Phegley, Chad Pinder and Robbie Grossman homered for Oakland. The Astros tied the game with two runs in the bottom of the eighth inning against right-hander Lou Trivino before recording four walks against Athletics closer Blake Treinen (0-1), who surrendered the tying run in the eighth on a sacrifice fly by third baseman Alex Bregman.

RED SOX 1, DIAMONDBACKS 0

Mitch Moreland homered on the first pitch of the seventh inning and five pitchers combined on a three-hitter as Boston salvaged the finale of their season-opening 11-game road trip with a victory over Arizona in Phoenix. The Red Sox finished their trip at 3-8. Boston avoided its fifth 2-9 start and first since 2011. Moreland hit his third homer of the trip when he got just enough of a first-pitch cutter from Diamondbacks starter Merrill Kelly (1-1). He lifted the pitch just high enough to clear the right field fence as right fielder Adam Jones attempted to make a leaping catch.

BRAVES 4, MARLINS 3

Shortstop Dansby Swanson lined the game-winning single into left field with the bases loaded to give host Atlanta a walk-off win against Miami. Swanson had given the team a 3-2 lead with a homer in the fourth inning. He became the first Atlanta shortstop to have three homers in the first nine games of a season. Miami's Curtis Granderson tied the game at 3 with one out in the ninth with a pinch-hit solo homer to straightaway center field against closer Aroldys Vizcaino. Granderson had struck out five times in the first two games of the series. Vizcaino (1-0) got the win, while Adam Conley (0-2) took the loss.

NATIONALS 12, METS 9

Anthony Rendon and Victor Robles each scored three runs as Washington raced to an 11-run lead before hanging on to beat host New York. Washington took advantage of 12 walks issued by two Mets pitchers. Every player in the Nationals' starting lineup walked at least once, except winning pitcher Max Scherzer (1-2). Mets starter Zack Wheeler (0-1) walked seven, while Tim Peterson, who relieved Wheeler in the fifth, walked five. The Nationals batted around during a five-run second inning, when Wheeler walked two and gave up RBI singles to Scherzer and Robles, a two-run double to Adam Eaton and a sacrifice fly to Howie Kendrick.

CARDINALS 4, PADRES 1

Right-hander Adam Wainwright struck out nine while holding San Diego to one run over six innings and Paul DeJong hit a go-ahead two-run double in the fourth to allow host St. Louis to avoid being swept in its first series



PHOENIX: David Peralta #6 of the Arizona Diamondbacks hits a double against the Boston Red Sox during the ninth inning of the MLB game at Chase Field in Phoenix, Arizona. The Red Sox defeated the Diamondbacks 1-0. —AFP

of the season at Busch Stadium. The Cardinals added single runs in the seventh and eighth, respectively, on Matt Carpenter's sacrifice fly and Kolten Wong's squeeze-bunt single, to end the Padres' three-game winning streak. Wainwright (1-0), who gave up four runs in four innings in his first 2019 start after making only eight starts last year due to elbow and hamstring injuries, allowed five hits and no walks while throwing 100 pitches. Jordan Hicks, hitting triple digits with his fastball, got a four-out save with three strikeouts.

RAYS 3, GIANTS 0

Tampa Bay got a second-pitch home run from Yandy Diaz and then dizzied host San Francisco with a variety of unusual strategies in its interleague victory and a series win. Christian Arroyo had an RBI single against his old team and five pitchers, led by starter Yonny Chirinos (2-0), combined on a five-hitter, sending the Rays to their third series win of the young season. The Giants lost their third straight series. Rays reliever Adam Kolarek moved from the mound to first base after allowing a leadoff single to open the bottom of the seventh. Chaz Roe came on to strike out Evan Longoria, before Kolarek returned to the mound and got the next two hitters to retain a 2-0 lead. The Rays also used four outfielders on occasion against Brandon Belt, who went 0-for-3.

PHILLIES 2, TWINS 1

Rhys Hoskins hit a two-run home run and Zach Eflin allowed one run over seven innings to pick up his second win of the season and lead host Philadelphia past Minnesota. Eflin, who pitched five shutout innings in his first start of the season on Tuesday, an 8-2 win at Washington, gave up six hits and no walks while striking out five. He has allowed nine hits and a walk over 12 innings this season while striking out 14 to go with a 0.75 ERA. Hoskins also doubled and Bryce Harper walked twice as Philadelphia won despite finishing with just four hits. Hector Neris pitched a 1-2-3 ninth and ended the game with back-to-back strikeouts of Jonathan Schoop and Nelson Cruz to pick up his first save.

TIGERS 3, ROYALS 1

Christin Stewart drove in two runs and scored another as streaking Detroit won its fifth straight game by sweeping a three-game series from visiting Kansas City. Stewart, who hit a grand slam on Saturday, had two hits. Nicholas Castellanos and Jeimer Candelario scored the other runs for Detroit. Tyson Ross (1-1) recorded his first win with the Tigers, tossing seven strong innings. He allowed one run on five hits while walking one and striking out eight. Shane Greene struck out two in the ninth while recording his seventh save. — Reuters

Hot English summer to aid subcontinent teams: Pietersen

MUMBAI: The English weather will play a major role during the World Cup and teams from the Indian subcontinent stand to gain if hot and dry conditions prevail during the May 30-July 14 tournament, former captain Kevin Pietersen has said. England, which last hosted the quadrennial showpiece in 1999, has witnessed more batsmen-friendly conditions in recent past with scores of 300 regularly posted in one-day internationals held in the country.

A hot English summer will translate into dry pitches on which the batsmen and spinners from the subcontinent teams are expected to thrive. "It is going to be weather dependent," Pietersen told reporters in Mumbai at a promotional event last week.

"Last year was one of the most beautiful English summers since 1976. It was the hottest summer recorded in the UK with hardly any rain at all, conditions were extremely dry. "If the conditions are like they were last summer, then I think the subcontinent teams are going to have a massive role to play in the World Cup. "If they are not and it's horrible and green and seaming, then it's going to play in England's favour and the team that copes best in those circumstances."

While many see it as England's best chance to win their maiden 50-overs World Cup, India will also be among the favourites. Led by Virat Kohli, the two-time champions have more or less a settled batting line-up even though they continue to search for a reliable number four in the batting order.

Opener Rohit Sharma agreed the English conditions could have a big say on their team selection. "I think we are pretty much settled. There are a few spots which everyone know about," Rohit, Kohli's deputy in limited-overs formats, said.

"It all depends on what the captain, coach and selectors think about the combination. Whether we need to go with the extra seamer, extra middle order batsman, extra opening batsman or an extra spinner.

"The conditions in England will matter the most. The last time when we were there the conditions were really dry. I don't know if it will be the same again. If it is like that then we need to get an extra spinner, as simple as that. If it's not then we should probably get an extra seamer." All 10 participating teams will have to submit their 15-member squads by April 23, while injury replacements can be named until May 23. —Reuters

Kolkata's Lynn gets lucky after another bail fail

MUMBAI: Australian Chris Lynn was tempted to visit a casino to cash in on his luck after a miraculous reprieve while batting during Kolkata Knight Riders' Indian Premier League (IPL) victory over Rajasthan Royals on Sunday.

The 28-year-old was on 13 when he inside-edged a delivery from paceman Dhawan Kulkarni onto his stumps and started walking off without bothering to look behind. Kulkarni was celebrating too but it was soon cut short when the bowler realised that the ball had hit up the zing bail but failed to dislodge it, ricocheting off the leg stump to the fine-leg boundary for a four instead.

Lynn went on to score 50 off 32 deliveries in Kolkata's successful eight-wicket win chasing Rajasthan's 139-3 that put them at the top of the IPL table with four wins from five matches. "I always like to ride my luck," Lynn told team mate Harry Gurney in a video posted on the IPL website.

"I inside-edged it, and then I heard a second noise. I thought (the wicket-keeper) might catch it or the bails might come off, but I got lucky. "I might actually go the casino tonight!"

It was the third time in this year's IPL that a batsman had benefited from the bails refusing to be dislodged. Rajasthan were also on the receiving end in an earlier match when Jofra Archer's delivery rolled onto the stumps but Chennai Super Kings captain Mahendra Singh Dhoni, yet to open his account, survived as bails could not be dislodged.

Dhoni, who went on to make a match-winning 75 off

Smith ends worries of fitness, form with patient innings in IPL

NEW DELHI: Former captain Steve Smith laid to rest any concerns about his fitness and form ahead of the naming of Australia's World Cup squad with his first half century of this year's Indian Premier League on Sunday.

The 29-year-old Smith, who underwent elbow surgery earlier this year, top-scored with 73 not out for Rajasthan Royals in their relatively meagre total of



JAIPUR: Kolkata Knight Riders cricketer Chris Lynn plays a shot during the 2019 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Rajasthan Royals and Kolkata Knight Riders at the Sawai Mansingh Stadium in Jaipur. — AFP

46 deliveries, suffered the heartbreak himself on Saturday when bails did not fall despite his direct hit with Punjab opener Lokesh Rahul short of his ground.

Rajasthan captain Ajinkya Rahane appeared as bewildered as the bowler and was involved in a long conversation with the on-field umpire after Sunday's

incident. "The rules are what they are, but I told the umpire, at least don't declare it a boundary," Rahane said. "It's already so tough for the bowlers in T20, and in such a situation, a ball can, maybe, declared a dead ball. That was my conversation with the umpires." — Reuters

139 for three in Jaipur. Smith's innings lasted just 59 balls but he was relatively circumspect at the start against some tight bowling from spinners Piyush Chawla and Sunil Narine.

West Indies all-rounder Narine (47) then combined with Australia's Chris Lynn (50) in a 91-run opening partnership in 8.1 overs to set up an eight-wicket victory with 37 balls to spare. Despite the loss, Smith's innings would have pleased Australia's selectors as they mull over their squad for the defence of the one-day World Cup in England and Wales.

Instead of a traditional all-out attacking innings normal in the Twenty20 format, Smith worked the ball into gaps and had scored just 39 runs from his first 40 balls before he accelerated in the final overs.

The innings drew some praise from West Indies batting great Brian Lara during the commentary of the match. "He is not a big-hitter of the ball," Lara said. "He's not an Andre Russell or a Ben Stokes. He gets the gaps. I respect him."

Former England captain Michael Vaughan also tweeted that a six by Smith off Narine would put to bed any concerns over the elbow. Smith's 12-month international ban for ball tampering only ended 10 days ago and he has started slowly with scores of 20, 28 and 38 in his three matches before Sunday's innings.

He had been playing mostly Twenty20 tournaments around the world during the ban. He also played club cricket in Sydney before having the surgery. Both Smith and former Australia vice-captain David Warner missed last year's IPL following the imposition of the bans by Cricket Australia for their roles in the ball-tampering scandal that rocked their national team.

Australia are expected to name their team for the defence of their World Cup title over the next week, with the 15-man squads needing to be finalised by April 23. India captain Virat Kohli's miserable IPL season continued on Sunday when his Royal Challengers Bangalore lost to the Delhi Capitals by four wickets, their sixth defeat in six matches this season. —Reuters

Sports

Choupo-Moting goal-line howler as PSG miss chance to clinch French title

Second-placed Lille drew 1-1 at Reims

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain squandered the chance to clinch the Ligue 1 title in record-equalling time on Sunday after a 2-2 draw at home to Strasbourg, with Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting's incredible miss from on the goal-line costing his team dear.

PSG were handed the opportunity to win their sixth French crown in seven seasons after second-placed Lille drew 1-1 at Reims earlier.

That left Thomas Tuchel's side knowing that three points at the Parc des Princes would see them retain the title and wrap it up with eight games to spare, matching the speed with which Laurent Blanc's team became champions in 2016. Choupo-Moting gave them an early lead with his third Ligue 1 goal, but later in the first half he somehow succeeded in turning a net-bound Christopher Nkunku shot onto the post while standing on the line. "I wondered if I was offside and it all happened very fast. I touched the ball, it hit the post and, well, it's a real shame because the ball was going in," Choupo-Moting told Canal+.

Fresh from winning the League Cup last weekend, Strasbourg had equalised prior to Choupo-Moting's howler when Nuno Da Costa turned in a Lionel Carole cross, and they found themselves 2-1 up in the 38th minute when Anthony Goncalves lashed home from 22 yards. Kylian Mbappe came off the bench on the hour mark but it was another PSG substitute who made it 2-2 with eight minutes remaining. Julian Draxler sent in a corner from the right and Germany defender Thilo Kehrer headed home. However, having drawn at home to PSG back in December, mid-table Strasbourg then held on for a point. Cameroon international Choupo-Moting started with Mbappe rested and Neymar, Angel Di Maria and Edinson Cavani all unfit-the latter watched from the stands sporting a beret.

"He is an excellent back-up player to have but if you start a lot for PSG you need to have confidence and he lacks that," said Tuchel of Choupo-Moting.

"He was very unfortunate because he started very well and then he stopped that ball on the line which would have made it 2-1 for us.

"I don't know why he did that. In English you say it's Murphy's law." Still a huge 20 points clear at the summit and with a game in hand, PSG will now hope to secure the eighth league title in their history when they go to Lille next weekend. A point will be enough in that game, but PSG should have finished the job here-Choupo-Moting's miss was one of the worst you are ever likely to see, while Dani Alves hit the bar after the break.

Earlier, Jose Fonte's 56th-minute header had Lille on course to take all three points away to Reims, but substitute Remi Oudin's 78th-minute leveller-initially ruled out for offside but then given after a VAR review-denied the visitors.

Lille are more concerned with holding off the teams below them as they look to secure second place, which provides automatic qualification for next season's Champions League group stage.

The draw at the Stade Auguste-Delaune moved them five points clear of third-placed Lyon, who slumped to a shock 3-1 loss at home to relegation-threatened Dijon on Saturday. "If we had won I think we would have sealed our place on the podium," said Lille coach Christophe Galtier.

"We are 11 points ahead of Saint-Etienne but there are still 21 points to play for." Fourth-placed Saint-Etienne drew 2-2 at Amiens on Saturday, while Marseille, in fifth, were beaten 2-0 at Bordeaux on Friday. Reims are just a point behind OM in sixth and are level on points with Patrick Vieira's Nice, who beat Montpellier 1-0. —Agence



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's Cameroonian forward Eric Choupo-Moting fails to score a goal from the goal line during the French L1 football match Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) vs Strasbourg at the Parc des princes stadium in Paris. — AFP

Salah, Keita, and Belfodil share glory

PARIS: Liverpool pair Mohamed Salah and Naby Keita and Ishak Belfodil of Hoffenheim were the standout Africans in the major European leagues at the weekend. Guinean Keita equalised at Southampton with his first Premier League goal and a brilliant solo effort from Egyptian Salah put the Reds ahead en route to a 3-1 win and top place.

A couple of wasted first-half chances by Algerian Belfodil at Augsburg were quickly forgotten as he scored a 21-minute hat-trick in a 4-0 Bundesliga triumph.

ENGLAND

MOHAMED SALAH (Liverpool)

He rode to Liverpool's rescue with a superb strike in a 3-1 win at Southampton that lifted the Reds back to the top of the Premier League. Struggling to find the winning goal against obstinate opponents, Jurgen Klopp's side were lifted by a moment of magic from Salah in the 80th minute. When Liverpool cleared a Saints corner, Jordan Henderson headed the ball into Salah's path deep inside the Reds' half and the reigning African Footballer of the Year accelerated away before planting a fine finish into the far corner from the edge of the area.

NABY KEITA (Liverpool)

The Guinea midfielder scored his first Premier League goal to spark Liverpool's win against Southampton. Trailing to Shane Long's early goal, Liverpool were indebted to Keita for breaking his duck in English football at last. Signed from German club

Leipzig in July, Keita has endured an erratic season but he saved his maiden goal for a crucial moment, rising to head home in the 36th minute.

WILFRIED ZAHA (Crystal Palace)

Arguably Palace's two standout players this season contributed to the 1-0 win at Newcastle that manager Roy Hodgson believes assures them of Premier League football next season. Ivory Coast winger Zaha produced some more of his box of tricks which provoked DeAndre Yedlin to bring him down in the penalty area with nine minutes remaining and spot-kick specialist Luka Milivojevic tucked away his 10th successful penalty of the season to seal victory.

SPAIN

SAMUEL CHUKWUEZE, KARL TOKO EKAMBI (Villarreal) Nigerian Chukwueze and Cameroonian Toko Ekambi could not prevent Villarreal from losing 2-1 to Real Betis and dropping back into La Liga's bottom three. The pair have 23 goals between them this season but drew blanks as Villarreal slipped behind Real Valladolid with seven games to play.

ITALY

KALIDOU KOULIBALY (Napoli)/CHRISTIAN KOUAME (Genoa)

Koulibaly missed the chance for a late winner in a 1-1 draw against 10-man Genoa, whose goalkeeper Ionut Radu got his foot to an effort from the Senegal defender in front of goal. Genoa's Ivorian striker Kouame was denied by Napoli goalkeeper Orestis Karnezis.

FRANCK KESSIE (AC Milan)

Ivorian Kessie earned praise from coach Gennaro Gattuso as he returned from suspension in a 2-1 defeat at champions Juventus after a sideline bust-up with teammate Lucas Biglia. "He's an important player for us," said Gattuso. "He and Biglia made a mistake but they apologised. I know what he can give me as a player and as a person."

GERMANY

ISHAK BELFODIL (Hoffenheim)

The midfielder continued his sparkling run of form with a 21-minute hat-trick in Hoffenheim's 4-0 win at Augsburg. Belfodil wasted two good opportunities in the first half but was on fire after the break, scoring with a diving header and twice after counter-attacks. He has scored nine goals in his last seven games, taking his season tally to 10.

FRANCE

ERIC MAXIM CHOUPO-MOTING (PSG)

Cameroon international Choupo-Moting gave PSG an early lead against Strasbourg at the Parc des Princes as the French giants went in search of the win which would have sealed the Ligue 1 title with eight games to spare. Later in the first half, however, Choupo-Moting somehow managed to turn a net-bound Christopher Nkunku shot onto the post in one of the worst misses imaginable. The match finished 2-2, putting PSG celebrations on hold.

NUNO DA COSTA (Strasbourg)

The once-capped Cape Verde international scored his eighth league goal of the season as Strasbourg made Paris Saint-Germain wait at least another week to seal the Ligue 1 title. The 28-year-old slotted in right-footed just before the half-hour mark to make it 1-1, before PSG needed a late Thilo Kehrer header just to grab a point.

PAPE MOUSSA KONATE (Amiens)

The 26-year-old Senegalese striker grabbed both Amiens goals in a 2-2 draw at home to St Etienne, who lie fourth and are well-set for a place in Europe next season. The widely-travelled Konate, who played in Israel, Russia, Italy and Switzerland before arriving in Ligue 1 in 2017, pulled his team level at 1-1 midway through the first half and put the relegation-fighting club ahead on the hour mark. — AFP

Napoli draw with Genoa puts Juventus coronation on hold

NAPOLI: Napoli drew 1-1 with ten-man Genoa on Sunday to ensure that Juventus will have to wait another week to seal an eighth consecutive Serie A title. The champions have a 20-point advantage on second-placed Napoli, who they have beaten in both their head-to-head clashes, with seven games to go.

Juventus, who beat AC Milan 2-1 on Saturday, needed Napoli to lose to win the Scudetto for the 35th time, ahead of their Champions League quarter-final first leg against Ajax next week. A draw next weekend at lowly SPAL would be enough for Massimiliano Allegri's side to win the title which would be the first in Italy for Cristiano Ronaldo.

Despite their numerical advantage, Napoli struggled to contain the visitors who inflicted the only league defeat this season on Juventus last month. Genoa went a man down when Stefano Sturaro was sent off on 28 minutes following a VAR review for a diving studs-up tackle on Allan. Dries Mertens blasted in the opener on 34 minutes, but Darko Lazovic pulled Genoa level just before the break. Genoa goalkeeper Ionut Radu ensured his 14th-placed side went away with a point with a string of fine saves including two late on Mertens and Kalidou Koulibaly.

"It was an unexpected performance that makes an alarm bell ring, if we play like this in London, then we're in trouble," said Napoli coach Carlo Ancelotti ahead of next week's Europa League game against Arsenal.

"We absolutely must wake up, demonstrate the value and potential that this group has and find our true identity. Luckily we have four days to fix things."

Atalanta missed the chance to move fourth and into the Champions League berths at the expense of AC Milan with a 0-0 draw against Inter Milan at the San Siro. The side from Bergamo were without suspended Colombian striker



NAPLES: Napoli's Algerian forward Adam Ounas (C) shoots on goal despite Genoa's Argentine midfielder Esteban Rolon (R) during the Italian Serie A football match Napoli vs Genoa at the San Paolo stadium in Naples. — AFP

Duvan Zapata, who has scored 20 Serie A goals this season, and had to settle for a point as Inter consolidated third position.

Inter are five points ahead of city rivals Milan who are ahead of Atalanta on goal difference. Mauro Icardi returned to the San Siro for the first time since a defeat by Bologna on February 3, and was greeted with a mixture of whistles and cheers from the home crowd.

The Argentine striker had scored on his return at Genoa last weekend following six weeks out after being stripped of the captaincy over a contract dispute. Teammate Matias Vecino thought he had scored minutes into the game but the goal was disallowed for offside, with Icardi also denied early.

The visitors' best chance came in the 48th minute when Alejandro Gomez failed to connect with a great Josip Ilicic

cross in front of goal. The race for Champions League football next season remains tight with just Atalanta, Roma, Lazio and Torino all within touching distance of the top four. Claudio Ranieri's Roma returned to the Europa League places after a 1-0 win over Sampdoria on Saturday, and are sixth one point off the Champions League spots. Lazio were held 2-2 at home against Sassuolo and sit seventh, three points off the top four, but with a game in hand, and just ahead of Torino.

Senad Lulic grabbed a point for Lazio five minutes into injury time to rescue a draw after their midweek defeat by SPAL. In Florence, substitute Daniel Ciofani earned a late win for second-from-bottom Frosinone to crush Fiorentina's Europa League hopes. Fiorentina drop to 12 points off the Europa League berths, with coach Stefano Pioli's position at risk. — AFP



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE	
Liverpool v FC Porto beIN SPORTS HD 2	22:00
Tottenham Hotspur v Manchester City beIN SPORTS HD 1	22:00

Error-prone Lloris backs Spurs to rock Man City

LONDON: Hugo Lloris has endured a mistake-filled season, but the Tottenham goalkeeper knows his costly blunders will be forgotten if he can lead his side to Champions League success against Manchester City.

Lloris will captain Tottenham in today's All-English quarter-final first leg showdown with City at the north London club's new stadium. And the France star will be firmly in the spotlight on what promises to be a busy evening given City's attacking prowess.

Lloris has been well below his best for much of this term, with his latest clanger coming in the last minute of a damaging 2-1 defeat at Liverpool last weekend when he sparked a Toby Alderweireld own goal by spilling Mohamed Salah's header.

The 32-year-old has shown alarmingly bad judgement all season. In Tottenham's 2-2 group stage draw against PSV Eindhoven, Lloris suffered a rush of blood as he needlessly sprinted outside his penalty area to foul Hirving Lozano, earning a straight red card that inspired the Dutch side to snatch a last equaliser.

Lloris had already been at fault for Barcelona's opening goal in the 4-2 group stage defeat at Wembley, which saw Tottenham fall behind with barely a minute on the clock. The France captain was also embarrassed in last year's World Cup final by Croatia's Mario Mandzukic, although that blunder was ignored as his country carried home the trophy.

In the midst of these howlers, Lloris was arrested for drink-driving in London, an offence that earned him a 20-month driving ban and £50,000 fine. Despite such a wretched run of form, Lloris has retained the support of Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino.

Reports in recent weeks claim Pochettino has no intention of looking for another keeper at the end of the season, such is his faith in Lloris. Part of that belief is grounded in Lloris's role as an influential figure in the dressing room.

That leadership earned him the captain's armband and was on show as he issued a rallying cry to his team-mates ahead of the City clash. With Tottenham bidding to reach their first European semi-final since the 1984 UEFA Cup, Lloris knows the team will need the vocal backing of the home support to rattle City.

Pep Guardiola's Premier League title chasers are eyeing an unprecedented quadruple after reaching the FA Cup final and winning the League Cup already this season. It should be a raucous occasion as Tottenham finally deliver on their much-derided promise that their £1 billion abode would be the only place in London to watch Champions League action this season.

When Tottenham spent over half of this season playing at their temporary Wembley home due to delays in finishing the new arena, it appeared the PR boast, splashed on posters all around London, would come back to bite them.

But the sparkling 62,062-capacity stadium was opened amid much pomp for the 2-0 win over Crystal Palace on Wednesday. — AFP

25 Keys defeats Wozniacki for first time to claim Charleston title



26 Kolkata's Lynn gets lucky after another bail fail



27 Choupo-Moting goal-line howler as PSG miss chance to clinch French title



Warriors earn top seed in West

Lakers deal Jazz a setback in playoff positioning



OAKLAND: Klay Thompson #11 of the Golden State Warriors handles the ball against the LA Clippers at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, California. — AFP

OAKLAND: The Golden State Warriors celebrated their final regular-season game in Oracle Arena with a third-quarter explosion Sunday night, producing a 131-104 win over the Los Angeles Clippers in Oakland, Calif., that clinched top seeding throughout the Western Conference playoffs. The win was Golden State's fifth in a row and 30th of the season at home. The Warriors' first-round opponent, which will be the eighth seed in the West, has yet to be determined. The playoffs begin next Saturday. The Clippers' third straight loss dropped them to 47-34 and closer to a first-round matchup with the Warriors. The Clippers are battling Oklahoma City (47-33) and San Antonio (47-34), both of which won Sunday, for the sixth, seventh and eighth playoff spots in the West. Curry finished with a game-high 27 points for the Warriors, who improved their all-time regular-season record at Oracle Arena to 1,166-770. Like the Warriors, all five Clippers starters scored in double figures, led by Landry Shamet with 17. All but two of Shamet's points came on 5-for-6 3-point shooting.

TRAIL BLAZERS 115, NUGGETS 108

Damian Lillard scored 30 points, and Al-Farouq Aminu added a season-high 23 points and 11 rebounds as Portland rallied for a victory over visiting Denver. The Trail Blazers closed the game on a 17-3 run to register their ninth win in the last 11 games. CJ McCollum made his return to the Portland lineup after missing 10 games with a knee injury. McCollum collected nine points, six rebounds and six assists in 25 minutes. Gary Harris scored 18 points to lead Denver, which won the season series with Portland 3-1. The Nuggets played without center Nikola Jokic, forward Paul Millsap and guard Jamal Murray, all given the night off for rest. They need to win their final two games, or get one win and a Rockets loss in their finale at the Thunder, to secure the West's No. 2 seed.

LAKERS 113, JAZZ 109

Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 18 of his 32 points in the fourth quarter to help Los Angeles hold off visiting Utah, whose chances of gaining home-court advantage in the first round of the playoffs were damaged. The Jazz (49-31), who also saw their seven-game winning streak snapped, trail Portland by two games for fourth place in the West with two games left for each team. JaVale McGee had 22 points and eight rebounds, and Alex Caruso had 18 points and 11 assists for the Lakers. Rudy Gobert had 21 points and 10 rebounds to lead the Jazz. Donovan Mitchell scored 19 points but missed all 10 shots in the second half.

BUCKS 115, HAWKS 107

Giannis Antetokounmpo scored 30 points with nine rebounds, and Khris Middleton added 21 as Milwaukee recorded its first 60-victory season since 1980-81 in beat-

ing visiting Atlanta. Antetokounmpo, who is now six points away from 2,000 for the second consecutive season, was back on the court for the Eastern Conference champions after missing Saturday's game against the Brooklyn Nets because of a sore left calf. Alex Len scored a career-high 33 points for the Hawks, who were playing without starters John Collins (ankle) and Trae Young (wrist). DeAndre Bembry added 13 points for Atlanta, which already has been eliminated from playoff contention.

NETS 108, PACERS 96

D'Angelo Russell scored 20 points, and Brooklyn clinched its first playoff berth since 2015 by leading most of the way in a win over host Indiana. The Nets clinched at least the seventh seed after the Detroit Pistons lost to the Charlotte Hornets earlier Sunday, and could have secured the No. 6 seed if Orlando had lost its game at Boston later on Sunday. Russell shot 7-for-15 and made a 3-pointer for the 60th straight game. The Pacers lost for the ninth time in 12 games and officially are locked into the fifth seed. Even if Indiana and Boston finish tied, the Celtics own the head-to-head tiebreaker. Domantas Sabonis led Indiana with 17 points and Thaddeus Young—who was a starting forward in 2015 for the Nets—added 16.

MAGIC 116, CELTICS 108

Orlando clinched its first postseason berth in seven years with a road win against Boston, ended the Magic's longest playoff drought in franchise history. Terrence Ross scored 14 of his 26 points in the fourth quarter, and Nikola Vucevic had 25 points and 12 rebounds for the Magic, who were perfect (22-for-22) from the free-throw line. The Magic are tied with Brooklyn for the sixth seed in the Eastern Conference with one game left in the regular season. Kyrie Irving led the Celtics with 23 points, and Al Horford added 18.

RAPTORS 117, HEAT 109

Danny Green scored 21 points—including seven in overtime—as Toronto defeated visiting Miami, sweeping the four-game season series. Miami's playoff hopes were severely damaged by the loss. The Heat are now one game behind the Pistons—and tied with the Hornets—in the race for the eighth and final playoff spot in the East. Pascal Siakam added 23 points and grabbed 10 rebounds, and Norman Powell also had 23 points off the bench for the Raptors. Dwyane Wade scored 21 points for the Heat, who have lost four in a row.

HORNETS 104, PISTONS 91

Kemba Walker scored 31 points, Frank Kaminsky added a season-high 24 and Charlotte kept its playoff hopes alive in beating host Detroit for its third straight win, clinching a

four-game sweep of the season series. The Hornets (38-42) moved into ninth place in the Eastern Conference playoff race and are one game behind the No. 8 Pistons (39-41). Charlotte holds the tiebreaker edge over both the Heat and the Pistons. Walker added eight rebounds and seven assists and the Hornets also got 17 points from Jeremy Lamb. Detroit has now lost four straight and seven of its last nine. Blake Griffin scored 16 but was hobbling much of the day with a knee injury.

ROCKETS 149, SUNS 113

James Harden flirted with a triple-double, Clint Capela posted added 22 points and 13 rebounds, and Houston closed out its home schedule with a 36-point dismantling of Phoenix. The Rockets turned in their second consecutive blowout win on their home court to keep hold of the third seed in the Western Conference. Houston led 117-77 entering the fourth quarter against the short-handed Suns. The Rockets have won six straight, all by double digits by

an average of 25.8 points per game. Harden posted 30 points on 10-for-14 shooting with 13 rebounds and nine assists as the Rockets set an NBA record with 27 3-pointers. The Suns, missing a half dozen regulars, have dropped eight of their last 10 games.

THUNDER 132, TIMBERWOLVES 126

Paul George and Russell Westbrook each scored 27 points as Oklahoma City had to come from behind, scoring 37 fourth-quarter points, to win its third consecutive game by beating Minnesota in Minneapolis. Oklahoma City's first three-game winning streak since winning four in a row from Feb. 5-11 has kept the Thunder in contention for the sixth spot in the Western Conference. Westbrook also finished with 10 rebounds and 15 assists for his 136th career triple-double. Westbrook is just two behind Magic Johnson for second all-time in the category. Karl-Anthony Towns finished with 35 points, hitting 13 of 14 from the free-throw line, and Andrew Wiggins had 24 points. — Reuters

Mane steps out from Salah's shadow to lead Liverpool's double charge

LIVERPOOL: Sadio Mane has grown used to playing second fiddle to Mohamed Salah in the two seasons since the latter joined the Senegalese at Liverpool. However, the fact Jurgen Klopp's men top the Premier League in their quest to end a 29-year wait to win the title and face Porto in the first leg of a Champions League quarter-final at Anfield today, is largely thanks to Mane.

As Salah's goals dried up in an eight-game drought prior to Friday's 3-1 win at Southampton, Mane assumed the mantle as chief goal getter with 11 in his last 13 Liverpool appearances taking his tally for the season to 20.

That run included a double away to Bayern Munich last month that eased the five-time European champions past the German giants and eyeing another shot at Champions League glory. His first goal in particular at the Allianz Arena was a demonstration in the 26-year-old's pace, skill and calmness in front of goal.

Mane controlled a raking long pass from Virgil van Dijk, rounded Manuel Neuer and then dinked the ball into an unguarded net. "I'm going to have to watch back 500 times," admitted Klopp after the game. "It's astounding what he did."

Mane scored 10 Champions League goals in all last

season, including in the final. However, his brave header in Kiev to bring Liverpool briefly level was quickly forgotten amid the furor over Salah's early shoulder injury that saw him hobble off and aided Real Madrid's route to a third straight European title.

While Salah now carries himself with a swagger from the star status he has earned over the past two years, Mane's humble nature means he often remains under the radar for a player of his quality.

In September he was filmed helping to clean the toilets at his local mosque just hours after scoring in a vital away win at Leicester. Last week in an internal interview with Liverpool's club media, he detailed a daily routine that consists of healthy eating, prayer and early nights.

"That's how a normal day for me looks. This is my dream, this is something I've always wanted to do, and I am so grateful that I am able to do it now," he said. "My dream came true, to play for one of the biggest clubs in Europe with a great team, a great manager." Porto are already very aware of the threat Mane poses. When the sides met in the last of the Champions League last season, he scored a hat-trick in a 5-0 first leg rout in northern Portugal that killed the tie as a contest even before it even returned to fortress Anfield.—AFP