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# Kuwait backs 'stable, secure and unified' Iraq: Ghanem

## Halbousi: Iraq's relations with Kuwait 'crucial and dynamic'



BAGHDAD: Senior parliamentary officials including Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem attend the Baghdad Summit for Parliaments of Iraq's Neighboring Countries yesterday. — KUNA

BAGHDAD: Kuwait's chief lawmaker praised an Iraqi-hosted conference for bringing together neighboring parliaments, saying Kuwait welcomes a stable and united Iraq that is open to its neighbors. "For our part in Kuwait, we say, without ambiguity and with clarity: We are with a stable, secure and unified Iraq," National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told top lawmakers from the host nation, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Jordan, Syria and Turkey.

The talks "give hope to the region's people, Iraqis in specific, that entering an age of peace and stability is possible, and that regional fighting and tension are not an inevitable fate as some tend to portray," he said. "Strategically, we support a prosperous and developed Iraq that enjoys growth and prosperity," Ghanem said. Iraq is a "neighbor," he said, and it is not in the interests of its neighbors for the country to be going through a period of turmoil.

This is the reason HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah chose to host the Iraqi reconstruction international donors' conference in early 2018, he explained. Ghanem described the talks as "unprecedented", commending the "will" of the nations gathered and the "tireless efforts" of Iraqi parliament speaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi in bringing them all together.

Halbousi described his country's relations with Kuwait as "crucial and dynamic" during the conference. He said there was "wide" understanding and that economic deals were in the "preparation phase" between

the two. He said that this was thanks to Kuwait's hosting of the global donor conference targeting Iraq's reconstruction in February last year.

Iraqis are "no longer anxious" about being one-dimensional and are today keen on building strategic partnerships with their neighbors, without "favoritism", Halbousi said. Iraq has signed agreements with Iran and Saudi Arabia, he said, while its relations with Turkey are "exceptional" as the two prepare for joint economic plans. Iraq is also keen to open its border crossings with Syria for trade, after doing so with Jordan.

The leading parliamentarians of Iraq's neighbors, including Ghanem, met Iraqi President Barham Saleh. Ghanem later attended a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdulmehdi, whereby both discussed bilateral relations and means to achieve "integration and cooperation" for the benefit of both countries.

The one-day roundtable brought together countries fiercely at odds across the region. Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria and Kuwait sent the heads of their legislative bodies, while Iran dispatched a senior parliamentary official. Hosted by Iraq's youngest-ever speaker of parliament, the 38-year-old Halbousi, the meeting lasted just shy of three hours.

The countries pledged to support stability, reconstruction and development in Iraq, which has been ravaged by several decades of conflict including a three-year battle against the Islamic State group.

Continued on Page 24



CAIRO: Chief Executive Officer of Al-Kharafi Group and Zain Bader Al-Kharafi meets Egyptian Prime Minister Mustafa Madhouli in the presence of Egypt's Communications Minister Amro Talaat.

## Al-Kharafi Group eyes new Egypt investments

CAIRO: Chief Executive Officer of Al-Kharafi Group and Zain Bader Al-Kharafi said the group is highly interested in the Egyptian market, adding "we inherited the love of Egypt from our father Nasser Al-Kharafi". He said the group is keen on increasing its investments in Egypt and expand its current projects that include investments in the field of constructions in the new administrative capital and other projects in the field of contracting and roads, in addition to being interested in investing in communications and Internet services, besides smart cities.

Kharafi spoke during his meeting with Egypt's Prime Minister Mustafa Madhouli to discuss the opportunities of expanding investments in Egypt, in the presence of Egypt's Communications Minister Amro

Talaat. Kharafi said the group's investments in the industrial sector in Egypt are on the increase, as it carried out expansions in the group's plants in Alexandria and other cities, besides its partnership with Japan's Mitsubishi in the Egyptian market.

The Egyptian prime minister appreciated the valuable contributions of Al-Kharafi Group in the Egyptian economy, adding the government is keen on extending all forms of support for serious investments and welcomed the group's desire to invest in the field of communications, Internet and smart cities. He indicated the government's interest in bringing investments in the field of manufacturing electric mass transport vehicles as well as electric cars.

Madhouli pointed to the government's

efforts to encourage national industry and increase local components, and replace imported commodities with locally manufactured ones in order to reduce the trade deficit and bring in hard currency, while emphasizing the government's support to all Arab and foreign investments that may contribute to achieving these goals.

Meanwhile, the communications minister spoke about the possibility of cooperating with Al-Kharafi Group in the field of establishing a data center, because it is one of the promising and important fields in Egypt. Kharafi welcomed cooperation in this field, and spoke about the expertise of the group in establishing and managing data centers, and its readiness to establish such centers within a maximum of 18 months.

## Visa curbs on 6 nationalities; job tests for expats mullied

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said various residency affairs managers have been instructed not to approve any visit or entry visa requests for nationals of Iraq, Syria, Yemen, Iran and Pakistan and refer them to Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, who will either approve and return the applications to the concerned departments for issuance or reject them. The sources added that the same applies to Bangladeshi applicants.

Meanwhile, well-informed sources at the manpower authority said the authority is studying subjecting expats applying to work in Kuwait to professional tests prior to bringing them here. The sources said the first phase of the tests will be done in Kuwait, and later determine the professions to be tested abroad after the professional standards division sets the job description of each profession. The sources justified the new decision to the fact that some expats had been recruited to work in certain professions but turned out to know nothing about them.

## Egyptians vote in referendum to extend Sisi rule

CAIRO: Egyptians voted yesterday in a referendum that aims to cement the rule of President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, the former coup leader who presents himself as a rock of stability in a turbulent region. Voters were being asked to back amendments to the constitution to allow Sisi, 64, to run for another six-year term while boosting his control over the judiciary and giving the military even greater influence in political life.

At a polling station in Manyal, a Cairo suburb overlooking the Nile, Mohamed Abdel Salam, 45, told AFP he was voting enthusiastically in support of the changes. "I don't care about the presidential terms," he said. "Sisi could stay forever as long as he's doing his job... and he has already done a lot!"

Continued on Page 1



CAIRO: Elderly Egyptian women cast their ballots at a polling station at a school in the neighborhood of Shubra yesterday. — AFP

## Trump seethes over report; poll numbers drop

WASHINGTON: A seething President Donald Trump launched a tirade Friday against the "bulls\*\*t" Mueller report on how he tried to thwart the probe into Russian interference in the 2016 election, while a leading Democratic opponent urged his impeachment. In early morning tweets, Trump called it "the Crazy Mueller Report" written by "Haters" and filled with statements that "are fabricated & totally

untrue". Some of the statements, he said, "are total bulls\*\*t & only given to make the other person look good (or me to look bad)."

Just 24 hours earlier, the president crowed "Game Over" after the report by special counsel Robert Mueller was finally released, following two years of investigations. Crucially, the report stated that Trump's election campaign never colluded with Russian meddling efforts, clearing the president of suspicions that he'd been in cahoots with the Kremlin. But Trump, spending the Easter weekend at his Florida golf resort, is now digesting the report's findings that he was happy to benefit from Russian dirty tricks and tried repeatedly to hamper Mueller's investigation.

The number of Americans who approve of

Trump dropped by 3 percentage points to the lowest level of the year following the release of a redacted version of Mueller's report on Thursday, according to a Reuters/Ipsos online opinion poll. There was also no let up for the president from opposition congressional Democrats. Senator Elizabeth Warren, who is vying to become the Democratic candidate against Trump in 2020, tweeted that the Democrat-led House "should initiate impeachment proceedings". And House judiciary committee chairman Jerry Nadler issued a subpoena to try to force publication of still more documentation from Mueller, as well as the portions of the probe that were blacked out for legal or security reasons.

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WASHINGTON: An illustration shows a Game of Thrones-styled montage from US President Donald Trump's Twitter page. — AFP



## Local



BAGHDAD: Iraqi President Barham Saleh meets with the leading parliamentarians of Iraq's neighbors, including Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA



Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdulmehti.

# Kuwait's top lawmaker meets Iraqi president, PM amid talks

## Speaker Ghanem participates in Parliaments of Iraqi neighbors' Conference

BAGHDAD: The leading parliamentarians of Iraq's neighbors, including Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, met Iraqi President Barham Saleh in the attendance of chief lawmaker Mohammad Al-Halbousi yesterday. The meeting, held amid an ongoing conference hosting the chief lawmakers in Baghdad, focused on the talks' topics of discussion. The president thanked the lawmakers for their attendance of the talks, and their dedication to seeing a stable Iraq in a stable region. The lawmakers, in turn, praised the talks as "unprecedented," resulting in a positive outcome for the future of Iraq and its stability. Ghanem later attended a meeting with Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdulmehti, whereby both discussed bilateral relations and means to achieve "integration and cooperation" for the benefit of both countries. The meeting also discussed issues of mutual signifi-

cance and how to face fast-paced development in the region.

Ghanem had arrived in the Iraqi capital Baghdad earlier yesterday to participate in the Parliaments of Iraqi neighbors' Conference. Upon arrival, Iraqi Parliament President Mohammad Al-Halbousi, and Kuwait Ambassador to Iraq Salem Al-Zamanan received Ghanem at Baghdad International Airport. Ghanem left Kuwait, heading a Kuwaiti parliamentary delegation that headed to Baghdad as part of a tour that also includes Russia. Ghanem was seen off by Deputy Speaker of the National Assembly Essa Al-Kandari, Minister of Justice, Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Dr Fahad Al-Afasi, Secretary General of the National Assembly Allam Al-Kandari, Iraqi Ambassador to Kuwait Alaa Al-Hashemi and Russian Ambassador to Kuwait Nikolai Makarov. — KUNA



National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with his Iraqi counterpart Mohammad Al-Halbousi shortly after arriving in Baghdad yesterday.

## Zain strategic partner of 16th Arab Media Forum

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its strategic partnership of the 16th edition of the Arab Media Forum. The event, which inaugurates today (Sunday) at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC), comes under the patronage of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Zain has been the strategic partner of the Arab Media Forum during the past eight consecutive years, as the company is keen on enriching the various media and cultural aspects within the community, being a leading private sector company in the country. Zain believes in the strong impact media has on individuals and communities, and it strives to reach out to all of the different segments of the society through this very vital tool.

This year, the 16th edition of the forum will feature the participation of over 250 Arab media figures and over 150 students of media and journalism from all over the Arab world.



KUWAIT: From the event's press conference.

The event will also feature 12 panel discussions, workshops, and open talks that will host high-profile executives from the Arab world, including foreign affairs ministers, media and information ministers, owners and executives of Arab media institutions, and more. In addition, the event will also feature many media personalities, journalists, authors, and actors. This year, the event hosts the Sultanate of Oman as the 16th edition's guest of honor.

Zain's strategic partnership of this forum highlights its social commitment, as the company believes in the importance of the role

press and media plays in the development of communities. Zain will continue supporting this very important sector which carries significant and informative messaging to the public at large and the communications world as a whole.

The Arab Media Forum has proven itself to be one of the region's most prominent events that attend to Arab media. Since 2003, the event brought together many ministers, editors-in-chief of local and regional newspapers, media executives, journalists, academics, authors, actors, businessmen, and social figures from all around the Arab world.

## KT Managing Editor guest lectures at GUST

KUWAIT: Kuwait Times Managing Editor Jamie Etheridge gave a guest lecture last week at Gulf University for Science and Technology (GUST) on the challenges facing modern journalism in Kuwait. Speaking to Prof Dr Rounwah Bseiso's Writing for

Mass Media class, Etheridge discussed journalism as the fourth estate, the rise of digital and social media, journalism vs other forms of news and information, and answered student's questions. — Photo by Noor Yacoub / GUST



## Gulf Bank champions arts with Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre

KUWAIT: Gold sponsor Gulf Bank is championing the arts, with sponsorship of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre's new production of 'Memoirs of a Sailor'. The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre which brings back the 'Memoirs of a Sailor' musical, will run from April 24 to 27, 2019 and April 29 to May 2, 2019. The musical is an epic written by the late poet Mohammed Al-Fayez and composed by musician Ghannam Al-Daikan. With the participation of Kuwaiti veteran singer Shadi Al-Khaleej, dramatized and scripted by novelist Saud Al-Sanousi, it is inspired by the stories from the bygone days of Kuwait and its people, quoting from texts the "Memoirs of a Sailor" for the late poet Mohammed al-Fayez.

Falling under Gulf Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility program, the sponsorship is in line with the bank's long-standing commitment to raising awareness of Kuwait's heritage and traditions. 'Memoirs of a Sailor' tells the story of a sailor's hardships, as he longs for home and his family in a distant Kuwait, while working as a pearl diver. The tale covers a range of events, documenting the suffering, hopes and memories of the sailor throughout his journey.

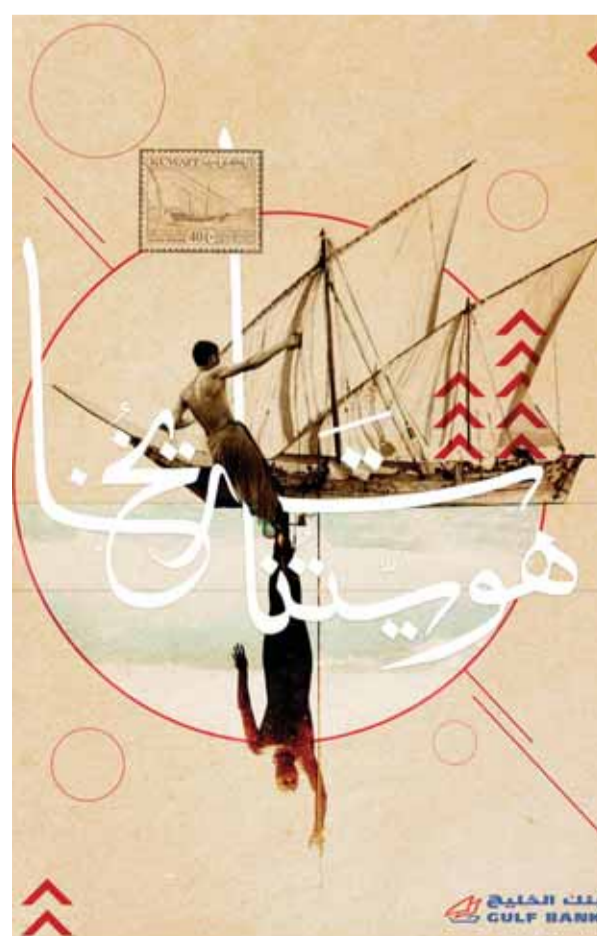
Ahmad Al Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communication, Gulf Bank, said of the sponsorship: "Gulf Bank is committed to the promotion of Kuwait's heritage and traditions, which are a key component of its corporate social responsibility program. The bank supports a number of social activities and events throughout the year, that emphasize Kuwait's identity, highlighting its past, and preserving its traditions, and we are delighted to be sponsoring the renowned work of the late Mohammed Al-Fayez and Ghannam Al-Daikan."

The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre is a multidisciplinary public space striving to entertain,

educate and inspire the people of Kuwait. Providing a space for dialogue to share and showcase skills and knowledge, the cultural center is a platform for educational and cultural exchange. Moreover, the cultural center functions as an influential entertainment and culture powerhouse and productive space for the region.



Ahmad Al-Amir



## Russian Parliament welcomes Ghanem's visit to Moscow

MOSCOW: Chairman of Russia's Federation Council Valentina Matviyenko described Kuwait's National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem's upcoming visit to the Russian capital as an "important event." Ghanem's visit is undoubtedly significant for both countries, Matviyenko said yesterday, indicating that Russia and Kuwait are linked with historic and fruitful partnership based on principles of equivalence, mutual interests respect, and mutual benefits cooperation. They enjoy steady bilateral economic and commercial ties, particularly in energy and investment, in addition to education, science, and culture, said the Russian top lawmaker.

"We are cooperating actively and coordinating our steps toward securing stability and security in the Gulf region and the Middle East in general," said Matviyenko. The Russian and Kuwaiti parliaments contribute jointly to addressing urgent bilateral and international issues, and that dialogue between them is so practical and transparent, she noted, expressing her hope that such characteristics would be the base for Ghanem's scheduled talks with Russian officials. Russian-Kuwaiti talks would include conducting a traditional evaluation of the current state of cooperation and future prospects between the Russian Federation Council and Kuwaiti National Assembly, in addition to overall issues related to their relationship, noted Matviyenko. "We will also tackle subjects and planned projects from all angles during our talks, particularly in fields of technology and economy," she said, indicating that humanitarian communication requires an exceptional support from both countries and parliaments.

The Russian-Kuwaiti talks would also address, in details, ways to boost cooperation between them and other countries as well, she added, expressing her conviction that both countries must invest more in their bilateral cooperation. The two sides will also emphasize in their discussions on a number of political, diplomatic, and parliamentary issues on regional

and international levels, including ways to crystalize joint efforts to resolve the turbulent situation in the Middle East, back a political settlement in Syria, and combat international terrorism, she mentioned. "We will consolidate all potentials toward enhancing Russian-Kuwaiti parliamentary efforts to achieve a further development in the two countries' cooperation and achieve stability and security in the entire Middle East region," affirmed Matviyenko. She recalled His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Russia in 2015 and meeting with President Vladimir Putin at Sochi resort, during which they discussed ways to bolster cooperation between the Russian and Kuwaiti parliaments.

Furthermore, Matviyenko expressed her appreciation to Speaker Ghanem and his fellow MPs for their active participation at the Inter-Parliamentary Union conference in Saint Petersburg in 2017, adding his upcoming visit reflects the solid mutual parliamentary cooperation between the two countries. The Russian-Kuwaiti parliaments communicate and interact consistently at international arenas, she noted, adding their stands toward several regional and international issues are usually similar. Matviyenko also expressed her conviction that Russian and Kuwaiti parliamentarians would support their mutual political initiatives, adding, thus, it is important they keep up their regular meetings, exchange of opinions, and hearing each other's views.

Moreover, the Russian Federation Council chief expressed sincere appreciation of the Kuwaiti leadership and parliament for their constant support of her country, parliament, and people. Both Russian and Kuwaiti lawmakers join forces to make "goodness" for their people via finding solutions to their bilateral relationship, international political, and economic issues without conflicting national interests of their countries and citizens, she said. The Russian and Kuwaiti parliaments' efforts aim to strengthen joint understanding, trust, and ties between the two countries and people, Matviyenko said, indicating that they also have a significant role in resolving the ongoing conflicts in the Middle East. Kuwait and its parliament enjoy distinctive trust and status in the region, she noted, adding such qualities prompted her country's government and parliament to keep up their coordinating steps with Kuwait toward regional and international issues. — KUNA



Local

# East Taima residential project 27 percent complete: Minister

## Kuwaiti volunteers help treat Syrian refugees in Jordan

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Bushehri stressed that 27 percent of the East Taima residential project has been completed, noting that the project is going well ahead of schedule. During a field visit to the project yesterday accompanied by the Public Authority for Housing Welfare's Director Bader Al-Weqayan, his deputies Ali Al-Hubail and Nasser Khoraiot, Bushehri checked a sample housing unit and was briefed about the project in general. The minister also stressed that the contractor must respect the project schedule and finish it by Dec 2020.



Minister Jenan Bushehri

**Syrian refugees**  
Chairman of the GCC Catheterization Society, Kuwaiti cardiac diseases consultant Dr Mohammed Hamdan Al-Mutairi, announced the success of a voluntary medical visit to Syrian refugees in Jordan, where in collaboration with Rahma International and GCC doctors, the society's team examined over 50 patients and successfully conducted 17 catheterizations. In other news, Farwaniya hospital's obstetrics and gynecology department concluded a workshop organized by a visiting doctor from Lebanon, said head of the department Dr Amal Al-Khodor, noting that the visiting doctor Zaki Sulaiman also conducted 15 successful surgeries for critical cases.

**Rumaihiya roads**  
Ministry of Public Works' (MPW) maintenance engineering sector offered a tender to conduct general maintenance on Rumaihiya roads and yards for public bidding, said informed sources, adding that no maintenance had been done in Rumaihiya since 2009.

**Hajj convoys**  
Well-informed sources said that the ministry of awqaf has selected eight hajj convoys for easy hajj performance this year, noting that the convoys with the cheapest prices had been selected to serve 245 Kuwaiti pilgrims and 125 bedoons. The sources added that these convoys will charge KD 1,300 per Kuwaiti pilgrim, while bedoons will pay KD 1,000-1,300.

**Schools suspended**  
The disability authority's deputy director Anwar Al-Ansari announced suspending three special needs schools and withdrawing their licenses for violating the authority's conditions and rules. Ansari added that violating educational facilities are usually warned and given grace periods to remove the violations, and in case they do not, suitable penalties of up to license withdrawal are imposed. Ansari added that the manpower authority also fines private sector companies that do not allocate four percent of the total Kuwaiti manpower working for it for the disabled.



KUWAIT: Egyptian nationals living in Kuwait casted their votes in a referendum on constitutional amendments at the Egyptian embassy on Friday. —Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

local spotlight

### Licenses not a luxury



By Muna Al-Fuzal

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Local newspapers recently published reports that the interior ministry has withdrawn thousands of driving licenses from expatriates who have changed their profession or obtained the licenses illegally. According to news reports, legal action has been taken against people involved in this issue. So far, the ministry has withdrawn a total of 37,000 driving licenses due to violation of traffic laws and changes in profession from 2015 to 2018.

I think it is a large number, and although the MoI has the right to take back all driving permits that were given to some people without justification, I believe that this is not the end of the matter for several reasons. I must say that I know that getting a driving license is becoming difficult in many countries including the GCC, and Kuwait is no exception. In many countries, the fees are also high because there are many elements involved in getting the licenses related to road capacity and population. Some countries also apply a certain percentage over the number of driving licenses.

In Kuwait, having a car is not a luxury - it is a necessity. Yes, the road capacity is not enough and traffic is hectic, but traffic jams are an issue everywhere around the world and not only in Kuwait. In Kuwait, due to the hot weather and the fact that many employers prefer those with driving licenses as many companies don't provide staff shuttles, it is normal that there will be people who will do anything to get the dream license.

It is known that to obtain a driving license, an expat must go through a process which requires having a minimum salary of KD 600, an accepted profession with MoI regulations, a degree and residency in Kuwait for two years. Some professional categories of expat workers are exempted, such as experts, judges, doctors and some others, but not everyone.

I believe these exemptions are required due to the nature of their work, and their income usually matches with MoI rules. But the ministry found that some expats have been obtaining driving licenses in illegal ways by making false statements about their profession. Thus their salary may not match MoI terms.

According to the general directorate of traffic, any citizen or expat must have a valid and effective driving license, otherwise they will not be allowed to register and renew a vehicle under their name. As for the expatriate, in the event of changing the profession, the driving license will be cancelled if the new profession does not meet MoI requirements, and no vehicle will be registered in their name. I think this move aims to ensure that people will abide by traffic laws and reduce illegal drivers and vehicles.

### Firemen rescue teens off Salmiya beach

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Salmiya sea fire station men heard cries of people on the beach, and when they rushed to the area, they noticed three young men were drowning. Sea rescue teams rushed in their boat and rescued them, although one was in critical condition. A fireman was also injured and taken to hospital. Meanwhile, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said a call was received about a body floating across a restaurant on the seafront. Firemen recovered the body and handed it over to forensics. In other news, Farwaniya security men arrested five persons in an abnormal condition in Omariya, based on a video on social media. The arrest was made in a public park.



KUWAIT: This handout photo shows three young men after they were rescued from drowning in Salmiya.



Emergency medical personnel help one of the teenagers into an ambulance to be taken to hospital.

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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People play volleyball on the beach as the Pink Moon rises in the sky over Salmiya, some 20 kilometers east of Kuwait City on Friday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

# Belgian youth express admiration for Kuwait's diplomacy

## Twelve students attend event hosted by Kuwait's ambassador

**BRUSSELS:** A group of Belgian students mainly of political relations and international diplomacy have expressed their admiration and praise for Kuwait's diplomacy in the region and around the world. This was stated by the 12-member group following an event organized by the Ambassador of Kuwait to Belgium, European Union and NATO, Jassem Al-Budaiwi, at his residence in Brussels Thursday evening. "Our event today goes with the embassy's effort to reach out to all sectors of the society in the Kingdom of Belgium," Budaiwi said after the dinner reception for the group who are members of United Nations Association (UNA) in the Flanders region of Belgium.

Budaiwi noted that the event is part of the UNA youth diplomacy series where members are invited to visit an embassy and learn about the political viewpoints of countries all over the world. "It has members from different cities and sectors in Belgium. Most of them are students of political science and international relations. They are the future of Belgium and Europe," he said. "Today's event provided the Belgian participants a coherent picture of the role Kuwait plays regionally and globally in many aspects including the humanitarian aspects and the role of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who was named as the world humanitarian leader by the international community," he said.

Budaiwi spoke about Kuwait's diplomatic efforts to establish peace and security in the region be it in Syria, Yemen and Palestine and to sort out differences among the Gulf countries. He also referred to Kuwait's growing and strong ties with both the EU and NATO. The Belgian participants were given a first-hand briefing by two Kuwaiti diplomats, Ali Al Yahya and Abdullah Al-Sharrah, through a direct video-link with Kuwait's representation in the UN in New York. The two diplomats presented Kuwait's priorities and activities as the current non-permanent member of the UNSC as well as its relationship with the UN and answered to questions posed by the Belgian students.

A number of the Belgian participants spoke about their impression about the dinner event. Mariere van Isegem, a law student from the University of Ghent, said she is very interested in international politics and relations. "The gathering was very good and friendly," she said and added that her impression about Kuwait has

changed after the event. "I had an opinion that Kuwait was a very harsh country and there were lots of laws and rules, but now I can see it is not like that and everyone is friendly. I found that Kuwait is actually doing a lot of things which I did not know before like the role of women in Kuwait and that they were allowed to take up high positions, also diplomatic positions," she said. "I am quite impressed and would like to visit Kuwait," she added.

Ricardo Avelar who is studying political science at the Free University in Brussels said he discovered many things about Kuwait. "I am really, really impressed by the contribution that Kuwait gives to the rest of the region and to the rest of the world. I was not aware of this before," he said. Avelar who is President of the UNA of the Brussels branch said the mission of the association is to show how the UN works.

"It has been an incredible opportunity to see the openness of Kuwait and the doors of the Kuwait embassy were open to show the students the role of Kuwait's foreign policy. I will share this knowledge with the other students of the university," he said and added "if you ask me which country I would like to visit in the region I would definitely say Kuwait." Simon Herteleer, who works for the Atlantic Treaty Association (ATA), said one of the problems that people face in Europe is that they consider the Middle East as one region rather than many countries living together. "And this kind of events really helps us to see the differences within the region but also commonalities how the different countries live together," he said.

Brussels-based ATA is an international civil-society organization of 38 countries that trains, educate, and informs on foreign affairs and security issues relevant to NATO. Herteleer who has visited Egypt and Palestine said he loves the Arab culture. "It is a very warm culture." His previous impression in his mind about Kuwait was "oil, oil, oil," but you see Kuwait's role in the world is much larger and similar to Belgium. It wants to build bridges and be a connector between different cultures."

"Even in the UNSC one of Belgium's goals is to foster peace and you can see that it something that Kuwait is working on that as well," he said. Both Belgium and Kuwait are currently non-permanent members of the SC. "Today's event showed that even if you are a small country with a small population you have a big and positive



BRUSSELS: Ambassador of Kuwait to Belgium Jassem Al-Budaiwi speaks to the Belgian students group. — KUNA

impact," he added. Hanne Vandersteegen, who is doing her Masters in governance and development in the city of Antwerp, said she got intrigued by the Arab culture during her visit to Jordan last November. "It is very nice that the Kuwaiti ambassador invites us to his residence and takes the time to explain everything that we want to know. He was open and we could ask him about everything and I know more about Kuwait now" she said.

Hanne said she found the presentation by Kuwait's

diplomats in New York about their work very interesting. The United Nations Association Flanders Belgium was established in 1976, to inform the public in Belgium of the work of the United Nations, the principles of international cooperation, and how the UN system addresses and resolves contemporary global issues. Through activities such as conferences, seminars, lectures, it raises awareness about the need for international cooperation and consultation. — KUNA

## Plans to create 25,000 new jobs in Kuwait tourism sector

**KUWAIT:** Leader's Group for Consulting and Development General Manager Nabila Al-Anjari hailed the first Kuwait Travelers Forum and its recommendations. Anjari deemed the forum as a national youth initiative that will enhance the culture of tourism. Anjari had taken part in the forum recently organized by the Youth Authority and attended by scores of Kuwaiti travelers and stakeholders. The forum included various activities and came up with recommendations to activate tourism and create an alternative source of national income, facilitate the issue of entry visas, set special touristic programs and utilize social media in promoting Kuwaiti heritage.

In a speech she delivered under the title of 'Tourism as a Means to Improve Life, Revive Economy and Achieve Strategic Development', Anjari stressed Leader's Group's readiness to cooperate with the ministry of state for youth affairs in such projects and initiatives. Speaking about her own experience in tourism and hospitality, Anjari stressed that tourism is a humane, economic and sociocultural activity.

She urged all concerned bodies to promote the concept of 'Tourism, a Means and



KUWAIT: Leader's Group for Consulting and Development General Manager Nabila Al-Anjari is honored during the forum.

Goal' and utilize tourism in boosting living standards, that will eventually lead to a flourishing economy and integrated strategic development. Anjari stressed a plan has been already set to utilize tourism in creating new sources of income, creating over 25,000 new job opportunities and promote Kuwait as a touristic destination.

## KNPC douses 'limited' fire at Ahmadi Port Refinery

**KUWAIT:** State-owned Kuwait National Petroleum Company (KNPC) said it extinguished a "limited" fire in an oil processing unit at Al-Ahmadi Port Refinery, south of the country. "KNPC firefighters managed to secure the fire, classified a category (I) of limited risk, rapidly and without any losses," Deputy CEO and spokesman Bassim Al-Issa said yesterday. Production at the refinery was unaffected by the incident, he underlined, adding that "work is being carried out to return the unit to its regular state." Investigations into the causes behind the incident are also ongoing to ensure it is not repeated. KNPC remains steadfast in its commitment to the safety of its various sites in order to ensure the safety of its employees and that the flow of its operations moves according to schedule. — KUNA



Local

# Japan's post-disaster reconstruction symbol reopens with Kuwait's help

## Japanese governor thanks Kuwait for reconstruction assistance

**Fukushima, JAPAN:** Japan's national soccer facilities considered as a symbol of reconstruction from the 2011 disaster fully reopened yesterday through a massive restoration project, in which Kuwait has made great contributions. With attendance of Japanese Princess Hisako, Reconstruction Minister Hiromichi Watanabe, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Hasan Mohammad Zaman and other dignitaries, a ceremony was held to celebrate the full resumption of J-Village, one of the country's biggest soccer complexes in the northeastern region. The complex straddling towns of Naraha and Hirono was forced to close in 2011 due to the magnitude 9 earthquake and tsunami that left nearly 19,000 people dead or missing, as well as the ensuing nuclear meltdowns. Located just 20 km away from the crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear plant, the facilities had served as an operational base to battle the nuclear accident. As a result, J-Village's functions as a national soccer-training center had been suspended until last July, when it partially reopened after a seven-year hiatus.

Following the catastrophe, upon directives of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Kuwait extended the donation of 5 million barrels of crude oil worth about \$500 million to help post-quake reconstruction in the three hardest-hit prefectures including Fukushima. Home to the damaged nuclear plant, Fukushima Prefecture has been using its allocated share of JPY 15.4 billion (\$138 million) in various projects, such as support to small and medium-sized companies affected by the nuclear accident, restoration of cultural properties and rebuilding homes of disaster victims.

According to the Fukushima prefectural government, in carrying out the restoration of J-Village, the prefecture utilized Kuwait's donation of about JPY 3 billion



Fukushima, JAPAN: Japanese Princess Hisako, Reconstruction Minister Hiromichi Watanabe, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Japan Hasan Zaman and other officials attend the ceremony. —KUNA photos



Balloons released during a ceremony held to celebrate the reopening of the J-Village in Fukushima, Japan.

(\$27 million) to construct a new eight-story accommodation building and pursue promotional activities for J-Village's reopening, including yesterday's ceremony. In the complex, a plaque engraving the gratitude to Kuwait is displayed, which says, "The project is made possible by the donation from Kuwait provided through the Japanese Red Cross Society for the recovery from the Great East Japan Earthquake and Tsunami in 2011."

In his speech at the ceremony, Fukushima Governor Masao Uchibori explained that J-Village first opened in 1997 as Japan's first national football training center and has worked to promote sport and activate the local region. It was used as a training camp for the Japan national football team for the FIFA World Cup, for various national tournaments and for the training camps of various top teams, attracting some 500,000 people annually until the 2011 nuclear crisis.

The Tokyo Olympics next year will be held under the banner of the 'Reconstruction Olympics,' with the Japanese government trying to show case the country's reconstruction from the

2011 disaster to the world. Pointing out that J-Village will be the starting point for the Japan leg of the Olympic torch relay, Uchibori said, "We will be happy to send out a message at home and abroad that any difficulties can be overcome. Having completed roles of J-Village as a logistics hub and a housing for workers engaged in the cleanup and other operations, the governor underlined his determination to address full restoration of his prefecture. We shall continue to contribute to the promotion of sports in this area, and deal with the revival and creation of the entire Fukushima."

Meanwhile, Watanabe affirmed that Japan is steadily advancing along the path of reconstruction. J-Village is recognized as a symbol of post-disaster reconstruction. "After starting from J-Village, the torch will travel across the country. I wish that the Olympic torch will become a glimpse of hope that lights up the disaster-struck areas" the minister said. Speaking after the ceremony, Zaman said he is pleased to be part of the landmark ceremony at the invitation of Fukushima Governor. "Kuwait's donation

to Japan, which was extended by an initiative of HH the Amir, has played a significant role in realizing the reopening of J-Village," the ambassador said. "Today's event is an excellent opportunity and it is our pleasure to help with Japan's reconstruction," he said. J-Village is called a sacred place for Japanese soccer fans and players. With the full reopening, J-Village facilities, including 10 soccer pitches, a 5,000-capacity stadium, an all-weather practice field, a lecture hall in addition to the Kuwait-dedicated accommodation building became available on a site of 49 hectares.

Uchibori meanwhile renewed gratitude to Kuwait for its "generous assistance" and "sincere support" after the 2011 triple disaster of an earthquake, tsunami and nuclear meltdown. Fukushima Governor Masao Uchibori voiced his appreciation during his talks with Ambassador Zaman on the sidelines of the reopening ceremony. "The restoration and the revitalization of our prefecture is in progress despite of some difficulties, and Kuwait's solidarity will boost our confidence," Governor Uchibori said.

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## 2019 KUWAIT-KOREA



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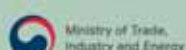
**Date** May 2 (Thursday) 01:30 PM – 5:30 PM  
**Location** Messilah Room 1, 2nd floor, Jumeirah Hotel, Kuwait  
**Contents** Pre-arranged 1:1 business meetings with the Korean official delegation

**For Registration and Details, Contact :**

- Mr. Zoher Ali (Oil&Gas) : 6664-8945
- Mr. Mohamad Obeid (Medical) : 6699-6083
- Mr. Mithun Cherian (Others) : 9093-7326
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CATEGORY	No.	COMPANY NAME/WEBSITE	PRODUCTS
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	02	Spring Peace Corporation <a href="http://www.springpeace.co.kr">www.springpeace.co.kr</a>	Construction Materials, Equipment
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	07	ForU <a href="http://en.for-u.co.kr">http://en.for-u.co.kr</a>	Wireless medical camera
	08	MOM HEALTHCARE <a href="http://www.Momhc.com">www.Momhc.com</a>	Magnetic waist protector
	09	HANSUNG MEDICAL CO.,LTD <a href="http://www.hsm01.com">www.hsm01.com</a>	High Pressure Steam Sterilizer
	10	Powerful X Co., Ltd <a href="http://www.powerfulx.com">www.powerfulx.com</a>	Muscle & Skin recovery cream
Others	11	Heerim Architects & Planners <a href="http://www.heerim.com">www.heerim.com</a>	Architectual Design & Management
	12	NIT KOREA Co.,Ltd. <a href="http://www.nitkorea.com">www.nitkorea.com</a>	Plasma air pollution prevention facility
	13	Michigan Technology <a href="http://www.mdaldof.com">www.mdaldof.com</a>	Water treatment plants.
	14	ECOPRO CO., LTD <a href="http://www.ecopro.co.kr">www.ecopro.co.kr</a>	N2O Abatement System, CO2 Absorbent
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	17	ACE Engineering Co.,Ltd <a href="http://www.acecontainer.com">www.acecontainer.com</a>	Container, Defence Industry, Tri-con
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	19	SIGONGmedia <a href="http://www.sigongmedia.co.kr/eng">www.sigongmedia.co.kr/eng</a>	Digital online education platform
	20	JL TECH N/A	Food Packing Machine.

Organizers







Bangladesh girl burned to death on teacher's order

## US 'House of Horrors' parents jailed for torture and abuse



CUTUD, Philippines: Philippine Christian devotees are nailed to crosses during a reenactment of the Crucifixion of Christ ahead of Easter in the village of Cutud near San Fernando. Frowned upon by the Church, the ritual crucifixions and self-flagellation in the north of the country are extreme affirmations of faith performed every Easter in Asia's Catholic outpost. — AFP

# Extreme Easter: Flogging, crucifixions

## A blood-soaked display of religious fervor in the Philippines

**SAN FERNANDO:** A man was nailed to a cross with up to 10 more to follow while barefoot men beat themselves with flails on Good Friday, in a blood-soaked display of religious fervor in the Philippines. Frowned upon by the Church, the ritual crucifixions and self-flagellation in the north of the country are extreme affirmations of faith performed every Easter in Asia's Catholic outpost. Wilfredo Salvador stared at the sky and appeared to mumble a prayer after the slight 62-year-old with wild grey hair and a long beard became the first local zealot this year to hang from a wooden cross.

"I will not stop this for as long as I am alive, because this is what gives me life," said Salvador, a fisherman who has been volunteering to be crucified for 14 straight years since recovering from a nervous breakdown. Assistants costumed as Roman centurions drove eight-centimeter (three-inch)

spikes through each of his hands and feet before the wooden cross was raised briefly for the crowds to see. He was treated and bandaged at a first aid tent after the village square ritual - then nonchalantly walked back home.

Nine other men and a woman were set to be nailed to wooden crosses in three other villages in the region within the day, the local tourism office told reporters. Earlier Friday, hundreds of barefoot men wearing crowns of twigs and black shrouds walked silently on the side of a village road in the scorching tropical heat, flogging their backs with bamboo strips tied to a length of rope. While many of the 80 million Filipino Catholics spend Good Friday at church or with family, others go to these extreme lengths to atone for sins or seek divine intervention in a spectacle that has become a major tourist attraction.

"This is a religious vow. I will do this every year for as long as I am able," 38-year-old truck driver Resty David, who has been self-flagellating for half his life, told AFP. He said he also hoped it would convince God to cure his cancer-stricken brother. Blood and sweat soaked through the penitents' pants with some spectators grimacing with each strike of the lash. Some hid behind their companions to avoid the splatter of gore and ripped flesh.

Many in the crowds had driven for hours to witness the crucifixions - the frenzied climax of the day's gory spectacle that Catholics say is a re-enactment of the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Gorman tourist Annika Ehlers, 24, was among them. "I'm a little bit overwhelmed. It's very intense. I haven't expected something like this," she told AFP after

watching Salvador's crucifixion. The bloody spectacle has played out every year in villages around the city of San Fernando, about 70 kilometers (40 miles) north of Manila, despite Church entreaties to spend Lent in quiet prayer and reflection.

"The crucifixion and death of Jesus are more than enough to redeem humanity from the effects of sins. They are once in a lifetime events that need not be repeated," Catholic Bishops' Conference of the Philippines official Father Jerome Secillano said. "Holy Week... is not the time to showcase man's propensity for entertainment and Pharisaical tendencies," he added. Nearly 80 percent of people in the Philippines are Catholic, a legacy of the nation's 300 years of Spanish colonial rule that ended at the turn of the 20th century.— AFP

## Journalist shot dead in N Ireland's unrest

**DERRY:** A journalist was shot dead during riots in Northern Ireland in what police were treating as a terrorist incident following the latest upsurge in violence to shake the troubled region. "Lyra McKee was murdered during orchestrated violence in Creggan" in the city of Derry, also known as Londonderry, police chief Mark Hamilton said in a statement.

Republican political party Saoradh said a "republican volunteer" was trying to "defend people" from the police late Thursday when the shot was fired that "accidentally" hit McKee. Belfast-born McKee, 29, had earlier posted an image from the riots, accompanied by the words "Derry tonight. Absolute madness." Images of the unrest posted on social media showed a car and van ablaze and hooded individuals throwing petrol bombs and fireworks at police vehicles.

Saoradh said "heavily armed" police went in to Creggan "to attack republicans in advance of upcoming Easter Rising Commemorations." "The inevitable reaction to such an incursion was resistance from the youth of Creggan," added the statement. Police chief Hamilton said "a single gunman fired shots in a residential area of the city and as a result wounded Ms McKee. "We are treating this as a terrorist incident and we have launched a murder enquiry," he added. Police later said that they were hunting for more than one person.

Some officials blamed Thursday's unrest on the "New IRA", a republican paramilitary group opposed to the shift towards non-violent tactics to bring about a united Ireland. The Saoradh party denies claims it is the political wing of the New IRA. McKee had written for The Atlantic magazine and BuzzFeed News and was named

by Forbes Magazine in 2016 as one of their "30 under 30" outstanding figures, according to her literary agent Janklow & Nesbit. Her partner Sara Canning paid tribute, saying "our hopes and dreams and all of her amazing potential was snuffed out by this single barbaric act."

### 'Truly senseless'

Thursday's unrest raised memories of past decades of violence in Northern Ireland. "We cannot allow those who want to propagate violence, fear and hate to drag us back to the past," said Ireland's Prime Minister Leo Varadkar. "This was an act of fear. This was an act of hate. This was an act of cowardice. Those who carried it out do not share the values of our nation, nor our Republic," he said.

British counterpart Theresa May said the killing was "shocking and truly senseless". Visiting US House of Representatives Speaker Nancy Pelosi joined in a minute's silence, saying it was "especially poignant" on Good Friday. The violence erupted in the run-up to the Easter weekend, when Republicans opposed to the British presence in Northern Ireland mark the anniversary of a 1916 uprising against British rule. A car-bombing and the hijacking of two vans in Londonderry earlier this year were also blamed on the New IRA.

Michelle O'Neill, the deputy leader of Irish republican party Sinn Fein, condemned the killing. "My heart goes out to the family of the young woman shot dead by so-called dissidents," she wrote on Twitter. "This was an attack on the community, an attack on the peace process." Arlene Foster, leader of the Democratic Unionist Party, which is in favor of Britain's presence in Northern Ireland, described the death as "heartbreaking news". "Those who brought guns onto our streets in the 70s, 80s & 90s were wrong. It is equally wrong in 2019. No one wants to go back," she wrote on Twitter.

### History of Troubles

The Good Friday Agreement in 1998 largely brought an end to three decades of sectarian bloodshed in Northern Ireland between republican and unionist paramilitaries, as well as British armed forces, in a period known as "the Troubles". Some 3,500 people were killed in the conflict-many at the hands of the Irish Republican Army (IRA).

Some have expressed fears that recent attacks could be a sign that paramilitaries are seeking to exploit the current political turbulence over Northern Ireland and its border with the Republic of Ireland caused by Brexit. Derry was the scene of one of the darkest episodes in the Troubles in 1972, known as Bloody Sunday, when British troops opened fire on a civil rights demonstration and killed 13 people. A 14th victim later died of his wounds. A former British soldier was charged with murder last month over the killings. — AFP



DERRY: A picture shows an Irish Republican Army (IRA) sniper warning sign over-looking the Bogside area of Derry in Northern Ireland yesterday. Two teenagers have been arrested over the killing of journalist Lyra McKee shot dead in Derry, Northern Ireland. — AFP

## Indian amputates finger after voting for wrong party

**NEW DELHI:** An Indian man chopped off his index finger in desperation after voting for the wrong party in the country's national election. Pawan Kumar became confused by the symbols on the electronic voting machine and voted for Prime Minister Narendra Modi's party instead of its regional rival in Uttar Pradesh state on Thursday, his brother told AFP. Distraught, the 25-year-old Kumar went home and chopped off his finger with a meat cleaver. Even though votes are cast electronically at polling stations, the index finger of every voter is marked with indelible ink after they cast ballots, to make sure they do not vote again.

"He was very happy that he was voting for the first time ever," Kumar's brother Kailash Chandra told AFP by phone. "But once he realized his mistake, he was so distraught that he chopped off his inked finger." "Every time he saw his ink-marked finger, he felt angry," Chandra said the family rushed Kumar to the hospital, and videos circulating online showed the first-time voter sporting a bandaged hand standing over the butcher's knife outside a toilet.

"I wanted to vote for elephant but it went to flower," Kumar says on one video, adding that he had not been pressured to cast his ballot for a particular party. The lotus is the symbol of the Bharatiya Janata Party while the Bahujan Samaj Party, part of an alliance fighting Modi in the northern state, uses the elephant. The party symbol is used on voting machines along with the candidate's photographs. Thursday was the second day of India's marathon election which started on April 11 and runs through to May 19. — AFP



## International

# Hidden but hopeful: The youth of Myanmar's cloistered Wa region

## Authoritarian rulers virtually cut off the region from rest of Myanmar

**PANGHSANG:** High up in the eastern mountains of Myanmar bordering China, Wa is one of Asia's most remote areas - and not an easy place to grow up. Cloistered and highly-militarized, Wa's authoritarian rulers have virtually cut off the region from the rest of Myanmar. It has a special status within the country - free from the laws of the central state yet still tethered to the Southeast Asian nation.

But it looks to China, whose money, weapons and political heft has buttressed Wa's unique status. Checkpoints lock it off from the outside. Inside, authorities tightly control all aspects of life. Poverty stalks the mountainous zone - with many women prodded into massage parlours in the capital of Panghsang or other shady towns on the Chinese border, while men work on low wages in casinos, restaurants and building sites.

The currency is the yuan and the business language is Chinese - a challenge to many of the other ethnic groups in Panghsang for whom it is not a native tongue. Then there's conscription, all registered families in Wa must give at least one member to the region's 25,000-strong standing army. Young boys and girls, some barely teens, sign up. In return they earn around 200 yuan (\$30) a month and get free bed and board.

Regional drug police say the Wa run a nar-

co-state pumping out the world's largest amount of meth, claims local leaders vehemently deny. This week they opened their doors for a colorful military parade marking 30 years since they secured a ceasefire with the Myanmar army. It gave glimpses of life on the fringes, just out of reach of the economic miracle of 'big brother' China and cut off from Myanmar. As a party atmosphere enveloped the proudly ethnically diverse town, AFP caught up with a few young people - rare voices from a far away area.

### The soldier

Aung Aung, 20, an ethnic Shan, was conscripted to the United Wa State Army (UWSA) two years ago. "It's hard to say whether it's difficult being a soldier. It's life... if you say it's not difficult, it's not difficult. "I'm generally happy in the military. But I do get depressed as well. But today my stress has gone away. I danced and my stress disappeared."

### The worker

Nan Sai Lao, 19, an ethnic Shan, "I grew up here. I love my hometown. My friends and I often visit the nearby mountains. At night we cook and eat Wa curries, we dance at ethnic celebrations like this one. "I have finished my Chinese language school. I'm currently work-

ing at our family restaurant." "I haven't been to other places yet, but I want to visit a Myanmar state, maybe Bagan (home to Buddhist stupas)."

### The student

Nilar Oo, 19, ethnic Lahu-Wa. "I'm studying outside of Wa but I plan to move here. I like this place because my ethnic group are from here. I'm learning Chinese, I might come after I understand it better. "There is a disciplined society here and the environment is good. I want to do business here. "There are many places to have fun. There are many night clubs here and casinos. There is happiness here."

### The conscript

San Sai Aung, ethnic Shan, 17, a UWSA soldier like his father. "I want to be a doctor. I want to take care of patients. I can study here to be a doctor and work in the hospital here. "I try to learn by going to hospital whenever I have free time. I want to study how doctors take care of their patients."

### The outsider

Kyar Khor She, 24, ethnic Lahu. "I have been here since 2012 working as a cook. Many things have changed... there were not



**PANGHSANG:** People take photos during a ceremony in Panghsang to commemorate 30 years of a ceasefire signed with the Myanmar military in the Wa State. — AFP

this many houses when I arrived. Roads are better now. I'm happy to be here. Making money is easy here. "But I don't have many friends now... I barely go out at night. I want

to visit around. But I haven't got many friends." "I'm not going to stay here for good. I came here and I'm staying just for a while to earn money." — AFP

## Bring 'criminal Bashir' to justice, say Darfur victims

**NYALA:** Hawwa Yousef is still haunted by memories of the day when mounted gunmen swept through her village in Sudan's Darfur region in 2004, killing scores of villagers including her son. Then president Omar Al-Bashir unleashed the notorious Janjaweed militia on ethnic minority villages like hers in a scorched earth campaign to eradicate support for rebels who took up arms the previous year.

Now that Bashir is behind bars in a Khartoum prison after being toppled by the army last week, Yousef is determined to see him face justice. "The regime's militia attacked when women were collecting water for their families and livestock," said the 70-year-old, who still lives in a relocation camp.

"The villagers tried to chase the armed men but they killed eight villagers including my son," she told AFP in the sprawling Kalma camp outside South Darfur state capital Nyala. "I want Bashir to face justice. He is a criminal." A decade and a half on, hundreds of thousands of Darfuris who lost loved ones, homes and livelihoods in the brutal campaign of repression ordered by Bashir and his aides, still live in miserable conditions in camps.

Some 300,000 people were killed as the feared tribal militia, who covered vast distances on horseback or camels, eliminated anybody suspected of providing support for the rebels. Some 2.5 million people were crammed into makeshift relocation camps as the militia depopulated vast swathes of Darfur, a region the size of France, torching villages and crops and stealing or killing livestock. The Arab pastoralists recruited into the Janjaweed had a long-standing enmity towards the settled minority groups of the region's fertile uplands that Bashir and his lieutenants ruthlessly exploited.

### 'Real peace'

As protest leaders in Khartoum focus on securing a civilian ruling body to replace the current transitional military council, the dominant demand in Darfur is for justice for Bashir and his henchmen. "I want to see Bashir in court," said Yousef's daughter Khadija. "If the new government wants real peace, we want them to bring him to justice. "There was a pregnant woman who was pleading to be freed, but they shot her- they killed her and her baby right there."

Bashir, 75, faces charges from the International Criminal Court in The Hague of war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide related to his government's response to the rebellion in Darfur. He has repeatedly denied the charges. Sudan's new military rulers have said they prefer that Bashir and any other citizen be tried in



**NYALA:** Hawwa Yousef, 70, a Sudanese woman who survived an attack by gunmen in 2004 which left scores of people dead including her son, is pictured in Kalma camp outside South Darfur state capital Nyala. — AFP

Sudan. But they have also said that Bashir's handover to the ICC for trial is a matter for a future civilian government they have pledged to forge.

Darfuris have differing views about where Bashir should be tried but all agree that he should face justice. "I lost my husband and my son when the regime's militia attacked my village Abu Jabra," said Ayesha Mohamed Hamid, 50, who lives with her five children in Al-Salam camp, south of Nyala, and now works in a brick factory. "Bashir has committed genocide. He must be brought to justice," she said. "I prefer he face justice in Sudan. That way we can exert our rights."

### 16-year wait

Posters of destroyed homes, burnt villages and women raped in Darfur have been put up outside army headquarters in Khartoum which has become the focal point of the nationwide protests. But many Darfuris feel that their demand for justice should be a bigger priority for protest leaders. The Janjaweed were largely formed and led by two leading figures of the Bashir government-Musa Hilal and Mohamed Hamadan Dagolo, widely known as Himeidi. While Hilal is now in custody, Himeidi is a leading figure in the military council that replaced Bashir.

His Rapid Support Force operates under the ambit of Sudanese army and its paramilitaries are routinely seen around the capital securing infrastructure. They are also tasked with securing the eastern border with Ethiopia and Eritrea. "I believe it's not only Bashir, but all those responsible for the crimes should be brought to justice," said Awatif Abdurrahman, a resident of Sakli camp, near Nyala. "Here we have waited for 16 years for justice... Not only Bashir, but all those responsible for the crimes should face justice," he said. "I'm calling on those people at the sit-in not to leave the square until we achieve our demand." — AFP

Israel. After a severe flare-up between Israel and Hamas last month the ceasefire was hammered out amid fears of escalation. Hamas said the truce would see Israel ease its crippling blockade of the strip in exchange for quiet. Israel has not publicly commented on the reported agreement.

### 'Accelerate the implementation'

Among measures to help Gazans was a plan to resume blocked aid from Qatar through a UN cash for work programs. In November, the Gulf state, which is a long-time Hamas ally, committed to around \$15 million a month in aid over six months. Part of the funds were originally used to pay salaries of Hamas employees, but this was stopped after political opposition in Israel.

Khalil al-Haya, deputy head of the Hamas political bureau in Gaza, told AFP Friday that the alternative plan was stalled at the UN. "The Qatari funds exist and the funds allocated by the World Bank (for the cash for work programs) exist," he said. "But the pace of the implementation of the United Nations mechanisms is slow," he said, adding an appeal to UN envoy Nickolay Mladenov. "We call on the United Nations and Mr Mladenov to accelerate the implementation." Two million Palestinians live in impoverished Gaza, crammed between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean.

Israel, which has fought three wars with Hamas, has blockaded the enclave for more than a decade, and Egypt often closes Gaza's only other gateway to the outside world. On April 1 Israel expanded the fishing zone around Gaza, increasing it in one area to the largest distance in years, in what Hamas officials said was the first step in implementing its "understandings" with the Jewish state. "The understandings are in place," al-Haya said. "Some of them are going well, such as fishing." — AFP

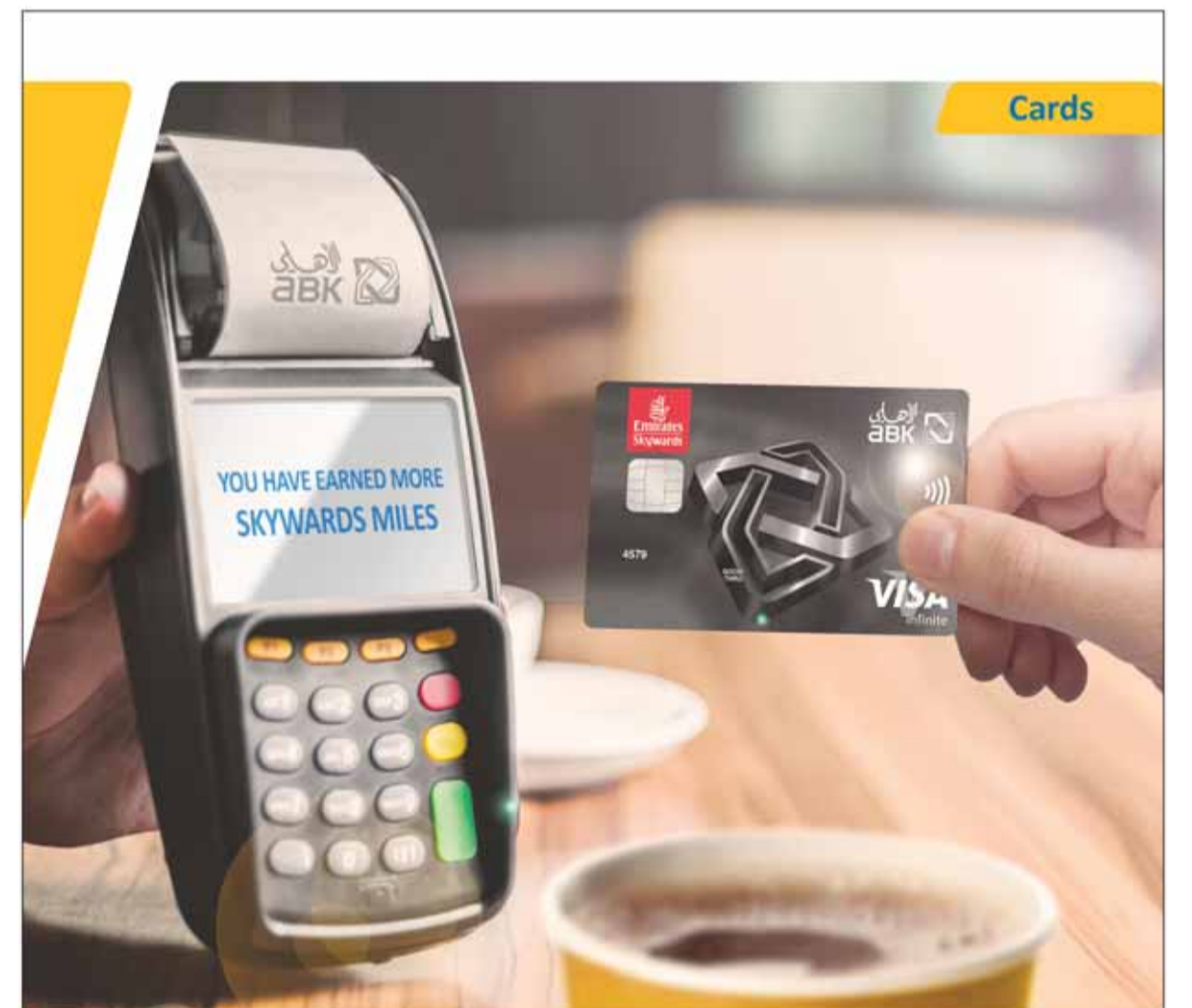
## Malian government quits; anger mounts over massacre

**BAMAKO:** Ethnic violence that has gripped central Mali has led to the downfall of the government, accused of failing to stem bloodshed that has claimed about 600 lives. A statement from President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita's office late Thursday said he had accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Soumeylou Bouye Maiga and his entire cabinet. Maiga was appointed in December 2017 and renamed to the job only last September, after Keita was re-elected. But he became the lightning rod for anger, led by influential Muslim clerics and vocalized by mass

protests, over massacres in the Mopti region, an ethnic mosaic in the centre of the country.

On Wednesday, lawmakers from the ruling and opposition parties submitted a motion of no confidence blaming Maiga and his administration for failing to clamp down on the unrest. "A prime minister will be named very soon and a new government will be put in place after consultations with all political forces" from the ruling and opposition sides, the statement from Keita's office said.

In an address Tuesday, Keita said he had "heard all the anger, decoded all the signals, understood all the messages" from around the country. Maiga came under pressure over his handling of a flare-up of inter-communal violence which, according to a UN tally, has claimed some 600 lives since March 2018 and forced thousands from their homes. Public discontent escalated after a massacre on March 23 claimed 160 lives in the village of Ogossagou near the border with Burkina Faso. — AFP



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## International

# Trump speaks with Libya warlord, in sign of Washington's support

## Libyans accuse France of backing Tripoli assault

**UNITED NATIONS:** The White House has revealed that President Donald Trump reached out personally to Libyan warlord Khalifa Haftar, as a push at the United Nations to broker a ceasefire hit trouble. Observers see Trump's words of praise for the strongman, at the expense of internationally-recognized leader Fayez Al-Sarraj, as evidence of US support that explains Haftar's determination to pursue his offensive to seize Tripoli.

Trump and Haftar spoke on Monday "to discuss ongoing counterterrorism efforts and the need to achieve peace and stability in Libya," according to the White House. A statement said that Trump "recognized Field Marshal Haftar's significant role in fighting terrorism and securing Libya's oil resources," adding that "the two discussed a shared vision for Libya's transition to a stable, democratic political system." The White House did not say why it delayed giving news of the phone call.

### Fighting till the end

Haftar, seen by his allies Egypt and the United Arab Emirates as a bulwark against Islamists, has declared he wants to seize the capital, now controlled by a UN-recognized government and an array of militias. The military commander backs a rival administration based in eastern Libya that is refusing to recognize the Tripoli government's authority. On Thursday, Russia and the United States opposed a British bid backed by France and Germany at the UN Security Council to demand a ceasefire in Libya. Russia insisted on having no criticism of Haftar in the proposed resolution, while the United States said it wanted more time to consider the situation.

Diplomats say the signaling from Washington goes a long way toward explaining Haftar's aggressive strategy in the face of strong condemnation by the European powers and the UN. "Haftar believes he has to fight until the end," said one diplomat at the UN speaking on the condition of

anonymity. Despite some military setbacks, Haftar maintains that he "can prevail," according to several others. News of Trump's phone call "clarifies" the US position, noted another diplomat, after Britain fought in vain for five days to try to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire and unconditional humanitarian access to the combat zones.

### UN authority undercut

In terms of international backing, Haftar enjoys the support of Egypt, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Russia and now, clearly, the United States. Sarraj, whose control over his country remains extremely tenuous, is backed by Qatar and Turkey. Haftar would not have unleashed his offensive without a green light from his backers, and getting him to back down from the "impasse" will depend on their will, the diplomats said.

### France of backing assault

Meanwhile, Hundreds of "yellow vest" protesters demonstrated in Tripoli against an offensive by military strongman Khalifa Haftar on the Libyan capital and accused France of backing him. Wearing the trademark yellow vests of French anti-government demonstrators, they were among thousands of Libyans who flooded a central Tripoli square to rally in support of the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA). "We are surprised by France's conduct in the face of the Tripoli attack," read a sign held up by the demonstrators.

Portraits of French President Emmanuel Macron and the leaders of Egypt and Saudi Arabia were also carried by demonstrators or placed on the ground for people to trample them. Haftar is seen by his allies - Egypt and the United Arab Emirates - as a bulwark against Islamists who have gained a foothold in Libya after the 2011 uprising that ousted and killed dictator Muammar Gaddafi.

"Other countries must stop interfering in Libyan



**TRIPOLI:** Libyan women wave national flags and chant slogans during a demonstration against strongman Khalifa Haftar in the capital Tripoli's Martyrs Square. — AFP

affairs," Haifa Ferjani, a 23-year-old protester said. "France says it is a friend but secretly backs those attacking our city and our homes," added the young woman. The French embassy in Libya on Friday tweeted - in Arabic - that Paris was "opposed to the attack" on Tripoli and urged all par-

ties to abide by a ceasefire and engage in peace negotiations. Khalifa Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army (LNA), based in the country's east, launched an offensive on April 4 to take Tripoli, the western seat of the UN-recognized GNA. — Agencies

## What is the New IRA?

**LONDON:** Northern Ireland police suspect a "violent dissident republican" of fatally shooting journalist Lyra McKee in Londonderry, with fingers being pointed at a group calling itself the New IRA. Here are some facts about the organization.

### Formation

The New IRA came into being in 2012 following the merger between two groups - the Real IRA and Republican Action Against Drugs (RAAD). The Real IRA was formed in 1997 by dissident members of the Irish Republican Army (IRA) unhappy about the group's ceasefire that year, preferring to "realize their vision through violence rather than democracy and politics", according to Gemma Clark, history lecturer at the University of Exeter. RAAD was a republican vigilante group, focused mainly in Londonderry - also known as Derry - that targeted suspected drug dealers with "punishment shootings" and pipe bomb attacks.

### Make up of group

Irish authorities believe the group comprises around 200 members. They include "old-school republicans... people who've got training and knowledge in building bombs" and "newer recruits who are young, maybe who might not even have been born when the paramilitary ceasefires happened," said Clark. The younger recruits "are coming from these very deprived areas like Creggan, where the journalist tragically got shot yesterday", she added, saying they had become "radicalized by memories of the past."

### The aims

The group ultimately wants to bring about a united Ireland, putting them in conflict with Protestants of British descent who want the province of Northern Ireland to remain under British control.

### Activities

The group has been behind a number of gun and bomb attacks on British forces, gangland figures, prison officers and police, and has ramped up its activity in recent months. It sent letter bombs to British Army offices in England in 2014, the first republican action in Britain since 2001. It sent incendiary devices to transport hubs in London in March and is suspected of being behind a car bomb at a Londonderry court in January. It was also blamed for provoking unrest between republicans and police in the city last year.

### Republican schism

The group's members are disillusioned by the republican movement's leaders, including Gerry Adams, former leader of political party Sinn Fein, who believe that a united Ireland is best realised through politics and demographic change within Northern Ireland. Sinn Fein's leadership immediately condemned McKee's murder. "These so-called dissident groups who took her life offer nothing, only hardship and suffering," party president Mary Lou McDonald said. "They do not represent the community."

### Political turmoil

Tensions have been fuelled by the twin political shocks of Brexit and the collapse of the power-sharing assembly in Belfast, established following the Good Friday Agreement, said Clark. "There is something of a power vacuum at the moment, I don't think you can underestimate the damage it is doing," she said of the strife in Belfast, which raises the possibility of Britain taking direct rule of the province once again, something bitterly opposed by republicans. Brexit has also conjured the spectre of a hard border being erected on the Irish border as Ireland, unlike Britain, will stay in the European Union. "It's a very serious, scary prospect," said Clark. "The border was the focal point of so much violence during the Troubles. It's a symbol of what they (republicans) hate, the partition of the Ireland." — AFP

## 'House of Horrors' parents jailed for torture and abuse

**RIVERSIDE:** A California couple were handed life sentences Friday after admitting to imprisoning and torturing 12 of their 13 children in a grisly "House of Horrors" case that shocked the world. David Allen Turpin, 57, and his wife Louise Anna Turpin, 50, had pleaded guilty to 14 felony counts - including cruelty, false imprisonment, child abuse and torture of their children aged three to 30 - and will serve at least 25 years before they are eligible for parole.

In an emotionally wrenching hearing, several of the children professed continued love for their parents, who lived in the city of Perris, 70 miles (112 kilometers) southeast of Los Angeles. "I never intended for any harm to come to my children. I'm sorry if I've done anything to cause them harm," David Turpin told the court in the nearby city of Riverside, via a statement read out by his attorney. The case came to light last year when one of the children, aged 17, escaped through a window from the couple's home and called the emergency services.

Both Turpins fought back tears throughout the hearing, with Louise visibly trembling as two of her own children came into court. "My parents took my whole life from me, but now I'm taking my life back," one of the couple's daughters said, while a son said he still loved his parents and had forgiven them. According to excerpts of the initial emergency call released during court proceedings, the escaped girl told the dispatcher two of her siblings were chained to beds so tightly that their skin was bruised.

## Peru's Garcia denies claims in a suicide note

**LIMA:** A suicide note in which Peru's Alan Garcia denied corruption charges against him set the backdrop Friday for the ex-president's funeral, two days after he put a gun to his head and pulled the trigger as police arrived to arrest him on bribery charges linked to the Odebrecht graft scandal. The sweeping affair, which has tainted politicians across Latin America, swept up another Peruvian ex-president when a judge ordered 80-year-old Pedro Pablo Kuczynski jailed for up to three years on Odebrecht-related money laundering charges.

"I've seen others paraded in handcuffs and living a miserable existence, but Alan Garcia will not suffer such an injustice or circus," the late ex-president, 69, wrote in a note to his six children. It was read out at his funeral by his sobbing daughter Luciana. Garcia (1985-90, 2006-11) and Kuczynski (2016-2018) are two of four former Peru presidents embroiled in various corruption scandals. He had a long and controversial political career in which he seemed obsessed with his legacy.

"I leave to my children the dignity of my decisions, to my colleagues a signal of pride and my body as a sign of my contempt for my opponents because I already fulfilled the mission given to me," wrote Garcia. He accused authorities of using corruption investigations as a tool for "humiliation, harassment and not to find truths," then wrote dramatically: "Others sell themselves, but not me." In his suicide note, Garcia "victimizes himself, blames opponents for his sit-



**LIMA:** People carry the coffin with the remains of late Peruvian ex-president Alan Garcia during his funeral procession in Lima. — AFP

uation, then sacrifices himself for the sake of his party," historian Juan Luis Orrego opined on RPP radio.

### Ex-president Kuczynski to jail

Kuczynski, currently being treated for hypertension and heart issues at a private hospital, was sentenced to 36 months of pre-trial detention as he is being investigated for money laundering, the Peruvian court handling corruption cases said on Twitter. Kuczynski's attorney Cesar Nakazaki said he will appeal the decision because he considers it "unjust against a person who is of ill health." Kuczynski, a successful Wall Street banker and former economy minister before becoming president, had already been under pre-trial detention and was banned from leaving the country.

Prosecutors said that if Kuczynski remains free, he may attempt to obstruct the investigation. Kuczynski allegedly received Odebrecht kickbacks for granting them a contract to build a highway from Lima through Brazil to the Atlantic Ocean, and another to build



**CALIFORNIA:** This combination of pictures shows booking photos of David Allen Turpin (right) and Louise Anna Turpin. A California couple were jailed for at least 25 years after admitting to imprisoning and torturing 12 of their 13 children in a grisly 'House of Horrors' case that shocked the world. — AFP

### 'Cruel and inhumane'

She struggled to tell the operator her home address, saying: "I've never been out. I don't go out much." She told responding officers that the house was so dirty she couldn't breathe and that she and her siblings never took baths. "They chain us up if we do things we're not supposed to," she said. "Sometimes, my sisters wake up and start crying (because of the pain)." An officer who interviewed the teen after her escape said she was so emaciated that he first thought she was a child.

He said the girl described being forced to sleep 20 hours a day and in the middle of the night eating a combination of lunch and dinner that most often consisted of peanut butter sandwiches, chips and microwaved food. One of the older children also told investigators that the couple would lock him and his siblings in cages as punish-

ment and beat them with paddles. Since their rescue, the children have been in the care of child and adult protective services. The Turpins moved from Texas to California in 2010. Investigators have said it is unclear what prompted the abuse.

Turpin professed his love for the youngsters before the sentence was pronounced, while his wife read her own statement, apologizing to her children and adding: "I only want the best for them. Their happiness is very important to me." Superior Court Judge Bernard Schwartz told the Turpins their children's lives had been permanently altered, by their "selfish, cruel and inhumane" actions. They were given credit for an early admission of guilt that spared their children the pain of testifying against them at trial.

### 'Scared to death'

Turpin, an aerospace engineer, had registered as the principal of their purported home school program set up through the California Department of Education. But prosecutors said the enterprise was bogus, and accused Turpin of lying on forms filed with the state. Sheriff's Deputy Manuel Campos testified in a preliminary hearing about his interview with the initial escapee, recalling how the girl's hair was filthy and her skin was caked with dirt. He said the girl admitted "being scared to death" about fleeing but felt desperate to get out and leapt from an open window.

Campos said the teenager had been planning an escape for two years and was ultimately able to procure a mobile phone discarded by her older brother. She used it to snap pictures of her younger sisters - all of whom were severely malnourished - chained to beds. The girl's only exercise was pacing back and forth in the room she shared with her two younger sisters, according to the deputy. District Attorney Mike Hestrin said the victims were allowed to shower only once a year. — AFP

## In S Sudan, illness is as deadly as war

**UDIER:** By the time he was brought into the remote clinic in northeastern South Sudan, two-year-old Nyachoat was already convulsing from the malaria attacking his brain. After being given medication he lies flat asleep, naked and feverish, attached to a drip, his anxious mother sitting on the bed next to him. Nyachoat could be saved, but others are not so lucky. In South Sudan mind-bending horrors abound of war, ethnic violence, rape, hunger and displacement.

But for civilians living in the shadow of conflict, the greatest danger is often being cut off from health services, whether due to violence or lack of development in the vast, remote areas that make up much of the country. According to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which supports the tiny clinic where Nyachoat is recovering in Udiar village, 70 percent of all illness deaths are due to easily treatable malaria, acute watery diarrhoea and respiratory infections. In case of more serious illness there is "no place" to go, said Nyachoat's 22-year-old mother Buk Gader.

A study by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (LSHTM) last year showed almost 400,000 people had died as a result of South Sudan's nearly six-year war. Half of these were due to violent deaths, and half because of the increased risk of disease and reduced access to healthcare as a result of the conflict. ICRC health field officer Irene Oyenya said the Upper Nile region was particularly affected. "There were (aid) organizations which were supplying primary healthcare, but then during the war, most of the organizations got evacuated" and pulled out of the country, she said.

Udiar is a village with a dirt airstrip whose sun-baked sand, which when not used by twice weekly ICRC flights bringing medicine and supplies, serves as a football pitch for youths. It is also a pedestrian highway for those who come from far flung huts and cattle camps to market. In the tiny market, there is little fresh food available. Villagers can buy red onions or sit for a strong Sudanese coffee, infused with ginger, while in the dry season nomadic Falata herdswomen in flowing dresses sell milk from their cattle.

A brick building next to the airstrip, its roof long blown off in a storm, is the village school, but for several days in a row no teacher shows up. In the surrounding villages, women are hard at work mudding their huts and re-thatching the roof in anticipation of the rains to come within weeks. — AFP



## International

# Bangladesh girl burned to death on teacher's order

## Death of 19-year-old Rafi sparks protests

**DHAKA:** A schoolgirl was burned to death in Bangladesh on the orders of her head teacher after she reported him for sexually harassing her, police said yesterday. The death of 19-year-old Nusrat Jahan Rafi last week sparked protests across the South Asian nation, with the prime minister promising to prosecute all those involved. Rafi was lured to the rooftop of the Islamic seminary she attended where her attackers asked her to withdraw the sexual harassment complaint she had filed with police.

When she refused, she was doused in kerosene and set on fire. Police said Friday that one of the 18 people arrested in connection with her death had accused the school's principal of ordering the attack. The teacher "told them to put pressure on Rafi to withdraw the case or kill her if she refused", senior police superintendent Mohammad Iqbal, who is leading the investigation, told AFP.

Rafi had gone to police in late March to report the sexual harassment, and a leaked video shows the local police station chief registering her complaint but dismissing it as "not a big deal". Iqbal said at least five of those under arrest, including three of Rafi's classmates, had tied her up with a scarf

before setting her on fire. "The plan was to pass the incident off as a suicide. But it fell through after Rafi managed to come downstairs while on fire because the scarf burnt and freed her hands and feet," he said.

Rafi suffered burns to 80 percent of her body and died in hospital on April 10. But she recorded a video before her death, repeating her allegations against the principal. "The teacher touched me. I will fight this crime till my last breath," she said. She also identified some of her attackers. Rafi's brother Mahmudul Hasan Noman said people close to the principal had also put pressure on the family to withdraw the case against him. "They told us that it was a conspiracy against him and that it was fabricated," he told AFP.

The case has caused outrage in Bangladesh, with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina vowing that "none of the culprits will be spared legal action." A police official told AFP that they had also arrested the ruling party's local chapter head, over allegations he advised one of the prime suspects to flee. Scores of protesters from campaign group Student Community Against Rape and Sexual Violence rallied in central Dhaka Friday demanding a judicial probe into the role of

the police in the killing. "Police are not guilty of negligence but are rather involved in the murder of Nusrat. The (sexual harassment complaint) was filed on March 27, but police took no prompt action," the group's convener Shibly Hasan said, according to the online edition of the Daily Star newspaper. Rights groups say the number of rape and sexual assault cases has increased in Bangladesh because authorities have failed to prosecute attackers. "The horrifying murder of a brave woman who sought justice shows how badly the Bangladesh government has failed victims of sexual assault," Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director at Human Rights Watch, said in a statement.

"Nusrat Jahan Rafi's death highlights the need for the Bangladesh government to take survivors of sexual assault seriously and ensure that they can safely seek a legal remedy and be protected from retaliation," she added. The local Manusher Jonno Foundation, a non-governmental group, says at least 39 children under the age of 18 have been raped in the country since April 2. Another eight have been subjected to attempted or sexual harassment, the groups says. — AFP



**DHAKA:** Bangladeshi women hold placards and photographs of schoolgirl Nusrat Jahan Rafi at a protest in Dhaka, following her murder by being set on fire after she had reported a sexual assault. — AFP

## Indian election watchdog stops Modi web series

**NEW DELHI:** India's poll watchdog yesterday ordered producers to stop streaming a web series on Prime Minister Narendra Modi, weeks after it banned a Bollywood film and clamped down on a TV channel devoted to the right-wing premier. The Election Commission of India - an autonomous body tasked with overseeing the world's biggest democratic exercise - said the online web series was in violation of its rules. Under Indian election regulations, the publication of any content which is deemed as campaign material or propaganda is not allowed during the voting period.

Any political advertising must also be approved by the election authorities so that all spending is accounted for. India's mammoth six-week vote began on April 11 and will

run until May 19, with results due on May 23. When it ordered a halt to the streaming of the online series, the commission said any biopic material which has the "potential to disturb the level playing field" should not be displayed until after the polls have closed.

The series, titled "Modi: Journey of a Common Man" is produced by Eros Now and traces Modi's journey from childhood to becoming the prime minister of the world's largest democracy. Earlier this month, the commission banned the release of a flattering movie about Modi until after voting finishes. Days later it ordered a clampdown on NaMo TV, a channel showing 24-hour programs on Modi rallies, speeches, and even rap songs and dance routines devoted to the leader. The Election Commission said NaMo TV had to submit all of its content for approval. The Hindu nationalist Modi, 68, is seeking a tough re-election after storming to power in 2014. He often uses his humble upbringing as a tea-seller's son to strike a chord with millions of poor voters. The election commission - often accused of being ineffective - has been flooded with complaints since campaigning started in March. Last week, the Supreme Court told it to act tough on complaints of poll violations by political leaders. — AFP

## India chief justice denies unwanted 'sexual advances'

**MUMBAI:** The chief justice of India's Supreme Court, Ranjan Gogoi yesterday denied allegations that he made unwanted sexual advances towards a junior court assistant who worked in an office at his home and that she was subsequently victimized. "This is unbelievable," Gogoi, India's most powerful judge, told a special hearing of the court he called yesterday so that the allegations could be addressed. "I should not stoop low even in denying it."

Gogoi said the events showed that India's judiciary was under "serious threat" and was being destabilized by a larger conspiracy, without elaborating. "There is some bigger force behind the woman," he said. The allegations, dating from October, were carried in full by a number of major

Indian online publications yesterday. The 35-year-old woman, whose identity has not been publicly disclosed, wrote a letter to all 22 of the Supreme Court judges along with an affidavit detailing her allegations on Friday.

Those included a series of allegations that the woman and her family were victimized by a series of related actions by the authorities, including the termination of her employment, and the suspension of her husband and his brother, who worked in the Delhi police force. She also says another brother of her husband's had his Supreme Court job terminated and she also faced a "false and frivolous" bribery complaint, leading to her arrest and subsequent bail.

"Me and my family's victimization is a consequence of my not agreeing to the sexual advances made by the Chief Justice of India, Justice Rangan Gogoi," she said in the letter to the judges. Justice Arun Mishra, who joined Gogoi on the bench for the special hearing, said the allegations were "wild and baseless". The court asked the media to show restraint in covering the case to avoid undermining the reputation and independence of the judiciary, though it decided not to issue a gag order. — Reuters

## Indonesia 'smooth polls' a beacon in sea of strongmen

**JAKARTA:** Indonesia pulled off a complex yet peaceful election across its vast - and ethnically diverse - island territory this week, cementing its place as a democratic beacon in a sea of authoritarian governments, analysts say. But the world's biggest Muslim-majority nation still faces a spike in militant Islam and myriad other challenges. On Wednesday, the sprawling Southeast Asian archipelago saw as many as 190 million voters cast ballots to elect a new president, parliamentarians and local legislators, in a one-day contest with a record 245,000 candidates.

Preliminary results appeared to hand a second term to President Joko Widodo, but he held off declaring victory pending official results next month. However, his rival ex-general Prabowo Subianto - who has strong ties to the Suharto dictatorship that collapsed in 1998 - insisted he won, and vowed to challenge the results. He did the same, unsuccessfully, after losing to Widodo in 2014 and there is little to suggest Subianto will win this latest fight.

Despite the lingering uncertainty, Indonesia's democratic feat still stands in stark contrast to strongman governments in the Philippines and Cambodia, authoritarian Vietnam and Laos, Myanmar's stumbling post-junta steps and a chaotic election in Thailand, its first since a 2014 coup. "In a region that is not inclined towards democracy, where authoritarianism is on the rise, Indonesia's democracy really has weight - even if it is turning more conservative," said Christine Cabasset at the Bangkok-based Research Institute on Contemporary Southeast Asia.

**'Slow erosion'**  
In a nod to voter participation, one reputable pollster recorded 82 percent turnout in this week's polls, the highest since 2004 legislative elections, local media reported. "People are voting and making a difference. Indonesians have embraced their own electoral power, especially younger voters," said Bridget Welsh, a Southeast Asia expert at John Cabot University in Rome. "This

bodes well for greater demands for better governance," she added. Still, Welsh was sharply critical of Widodo's rights records, and there are doubts about whether the 57-year-old will use his political capital to safeguard two decades of democratic progress that some fear is being undermined. "My prediction over the next five years is that we will continue to see a slow erosion of democratic quality," said Marcus Mietzner, an associate professor at the Australian National University. "(But) not a full push into authoritarianism," he added.

Widodo himself has been accused of creeping authoritarianism following arrests of opposition campaigners under a controversial electronic defamation law, while a decree during his tenure allowed Jakarta to ban mass organizations. Others have raised concerns about the renewed influence of the military, which is eyeing more civilian government positions in the country of 260 million - home to hundreds of ethnic groups and languages. Indonesia's reputation for religious tolerance has also been tested by increasingly vocal hardline Islamists, who were emboldened after their calls to prosecute Jakarta's Christian governor for blasphemy saw him jailed in 2017. — AFP



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## Washington Watch

## Why I'm glad Netanyahu won

By Dr James J Zogby

I'm glad Benjamin Netanyahu won reelection. Since I realize that saying this won't sit well with many folks, let me explain: As the election developed, it became clear that Benny Gantz, the leader of the opposition "Blue and White" coalition, for a number of reasons, had come to be seen as the darling of the liberal set - especially here in the US.

Some, for example, were justifiably upset by Netanyahu's gross corruption or unnerved by his authoritarian actions designed to intimidate the press, silence non-governmental organizations, and strip the courts of their power. Others were optimistic that should Gantz win, Israel's image would improve in the US and there would be the possibility of a "reset" in the US-Israel relationship. One publication described a Gantz victory as creating "a fresh slate and an opportunity to re-energize support for Israel."

Driving this support for Gantz was the concern of liberal Democrats who have been troubled by recent polls showing a significant erosion of support for Israel among core Democratic constituents - especially millennial and minority voters - including American Jewish millennials. This growing alienation from Israel has in part been due to both Netanyahu's repressive policies and his close relationship with Donald Trump.

There could be no doubt that Trump had been excessive in his support for his Israeli partner: canceling the Iran Deal; moving the US Embassy to Jerusalem; the "gift" of the Golan Heights; cutting all US aid to the Palestinians; and remaining silent in the face of settlement expansion and Netanyahu's declared intent to apply Israeli sovereignty to West Bank settlements. This virtual Trump/Netanyahu marriage most certainly had a role to play in the embrace of Gantz by many liberals.

Because American liberals have embraced the mantra of a "two-state solution" and see Netanyahu's aggressive settlement construction and his pledge to "annex" the settlements as obstacles to that goal, they also fretted that a Netanyahu victory might spell the end of their idea of two states - one "Jewish and democratic" and one for the Palestinians. At the same time, American Jews had an additional frustration with Netanyahu as a result of his accommodation of the illiberal policies of Israel's ultra-Orthodox religious community on issues of marriage, conversion, and women's rights.

It was in this context, that Gantz became the "great hope." I, however, never believed that he was. In the first place, on the issue that mattered most to the future of peace - the treatment of Palestinians in the occupied territories - there was little that separated Netanyahu from Gantz. In fact, Gantz' opening campaign advertisement featured Gaza in rubble (Gantz had been in charge of the most brutal and devastating of the Gaza wars), boasting the he had reduced parts of Gaza "back to the Stone Age."

And right before the election, an American Jewish publication reported on a Gantz speech laying out his "seven pillars" for peace with the Palestinians: "he said his priority was to ensure a Zionist 'end state' - Jewish and Democratic - and not a binational state, while keeping the Jordan Valley, a united Jerusalem, and modifying the 1967 lines...I don't want to rule the Palestinians."

In addition to these goals, he added keeping the settlements and maintaining security control west of the Jordan River. In other words, Gantz might have been a "fresh face", but, on the central issue of dealing with Palestinians and the occupied territories, he was no different than the prime minister he was seeking to replace.

In addition to the positions he espoused, I felt that it was important to look at the composition of the governing coalition Gantz would have assembled had he emerged victorious. While the press routinely referred to Gantz as the "center-left" candidate, in reality, only a small fraction of his potential partners could be seen as "left." In fact, most of his eventual partners were quite comfortable with Gantz's "seven pillars".

And because Israeli politics have moved so far to the right, even if he had won the opportunity to form a government, Gantz never could have assembled a coalition of 61 Knesset Members without adding the parties representing the Palestinian citizens of Israel - something that, early on, Gantz had said he would never do.

This avoidance of Arabs was in response to the negative anti-Arab campaign waged by Netanyahu. Recognizing that Gantz couldn't have formed a government without Arab support or acquiescence, Netanyahu advanced the slogan that the voters' choice was "Bibi (Netanyahu's nickname) or Tibi" (referring to Ahmed Tibi, the leader of one of the Arab parties). Instead of pushing back against this patently racist Arab-baiting, Gantz made a pledge not to consult with the Arab parties in the Knesset or include them in his government.

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

All articles appearing on this page are the personal opinion of the writers. Kuwait Times takes no responsibility for views expressed therein.



US President Donald Trump waves upon arrival at Palm Beach International airport in Florida on April 18, 2019. — AFP

## How Mueller's decision helped save Trump

The US Attorney General decided that President Donald Trump did not obstruct a probe into whether his campaign colluded with Russia, but some legal experts said prosecutors laid out a wealth of evidence to the contrary and that they intended to leave that determination to Congress. Special Counsel Robert Mueller's report revealed new details about Trump's attempts to impede his investigation on Thursday. They included how the president tried to fire Mueller and limit his investigation, kept details of a June 2016 meeting between senior campaign officials and a Russian under wraps, and possibly dangled a pardon to a former adviser.

Democrats said on Thursday the report contained disturbing evidence of wrongdoing by Trump that could fuel congressional investigations. Some legal experts echoed that view. They said the evidence should have given prosecutors a strong basis for bringing an obstruction case against Trump, but Mueller demurred because a long-standing Department of Justice policy against indicting a sitting president. Jens Ohlin, a law professor at Cornell University, said the evidence laid out by the Mueller report was "really exhaustive in terms of the number of incidents and how severe they are."

In his report, Mueller focused on a series of actions, including Trump's conduct toward law enforcement officials and witnesses. At one point, Mueller says the Congress has powers to check a president. At least half a dozen legal experts said the special counsel intended Congress to take up the matter. "There is a

wink, and a nod, and another wink to Congress that I have a lot of evidence and now the ball is in your court," said Jessica Levinson, a professor at Loyola Law School in Los Angeles.

House Democrats took that view as well. In a joint statement, the House chairs said "the Special Counsel undoubtedly anticipated" the Congress must assess the evidence. But Republican Congressman Doug Collins disputed that Mueller intended for Congress to decide on the view. "The report doesn't say Congress should investigate obstruction now. It says Congress can make laws about obstruction," Collins tweeted.

Trump's legal team called the report "a total victory" for the president. "If they thought they had an obstruction case they would have made it. They did not," said Jay Sekulow, a lawyer for Trump, in an interview. It is unclear whether the Democrats will push on Congressional censure. And even if the House votes to impeach, it is highly unlikely the Republican controlled Senate would convict Trump.

Attorney General William Barr, a Trump appointee, defended the president in a press conference Thursday by saying there was insufficient evidence to bring an obstruction case against Trump. In an earlier letter to lawmakers, Barr said the case was also undermined by Mueller's finding that the Trump campaign did not conspire with Russians to interfere in the election.

## Watergate-era opinion

Under US law, it is a crime to attempt "to influence,

obstruct or impede the due administration of justice." To prove obstruction, prosecutors must show an individual acted with a "corrupt" or improper motive - a specific intent to impede an investigation. Obstruction of justice is often coupled with some underlying wrongful act that is being covered up, legal experts said. With a sitting president, the issue takes on additional complications. A Justice Department policy dating back to the Watergate scandal in the early 1970s advises against indicting a sitting president. The US Constitution is silent on the question. In his report, Mueller said he "accepted" the department's legal opinion and was unable to come to a conclusion about whether there was enough evidence to charge Trump with obstruction.

## Question of motive

The president's actions and intent "presents difficult issues that prevent us from conclusively determining that no criminal conduct occurred," Mueller wrote. But Mueller added that his report "also does not exonerate" Trump of the crime. In reaching his decision not to charge Trump, Barr said the president had been "frustrated and angered" by a belief that the probe was undermining his presidency.

Despite this, Trump did not deprive Mueller of documents and witnesses needed to complete the investigation, Barr said. "Apart from whether the acts were obstructive, this evidence of non-corrupt motives weighs heavily against any allegation that the president had a corrupt intent to obstruct the investigation," he said. — Reuters

## Mueller report leaves Dems in a quandary

Democrats clamored for the speedy release of US Special Counsel Robert Mueller's findings of his probe into whether President Donald Trump's 2016 campaign colluded with Russia. Now they finally have them, and they are confronted with a choice - stay on the attack or move on. Progressives in the party used the report to renew their calls for action, but there was little immediate consensus on how to move forward.

Billionaire Tom Steyer, who has pumped millions of dollars of his own money into a campaign calling for Trump's removal from office, told Reuters that lawmakers in the Democratic-led House of Representatives should begin the process of impeaching Trump, a Republican, based on the evidence amassed by Mueller.

Mueller found no evidence of collusion between members of Trump's campaign and Russians, despite numerous contacts, but he amassed a wealth of evidence he said showed the president had sought to impede or control the FBI investigation. He stopped short of concluding that Trump had committed a crime but noted that the US Congress had the power to address that issue.

Democratic strategists said Democrats in the House, spurred on by progressives in the chamber, would continue their congressional investigations into Trump, but that Democratic presidential candidates, who hope to appeal to moderates and independents next year, are likely to take a less aggressive approach. "I don't think Bob Mueller's report is going to make a difference in Lordstown," said Robin Winston, a former chairman of the Indiana Democratic Party, referring to the auto plant in Ohio that auto giant General Motors shuttered last month.

Winston said economic concerns were far more pressing on voters' minds than the Russia probe and that breathless coverage of the nearly two-year-old probe had left voters "fatigued". Opinion polls show that the US public has also largely made up its mind about the probe before the report's release on Thursday. A Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted last month after Mueller's con-

clusions were first made public showed that about half of the country still believed Trump worked with Russia to influence the 2016 election. More than half said they believe Trump tried to block the probe.

Democrats in the House signaled their efforts to investigate Trump's actions would continue. It is unclear, however, what their efforts will yield. Any attempt to force Trump from office would likely be thwarted by the Republican-controlled Senate. The prospect of impeaching Trump has largely been downplayed by Democrats since House Speaker Nancy Pelosi argued it would be counter-productive. But Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a popular progressive Democratic lawmaker, raised the prospect again on Thursday in a tweet. "Many know I take no pleasure in discussions of impeachment. I didn't campaign on it, & rarely discuss it unprompted," she said on Twitter. "But the report squarely puts this on our doorstep."

## On the kitchen table

Those bidding for the 2020 Democratic nomination took a more cautious path on Thursday. While many called for Mueller to testify before Congress, there was no mention of the "I word." "It is clear that Donald Trump wanted nothing more than to shut down the Mueller investigation," US Senator Bernie Sanders, a Democratic candidate, said in a statement. "While we have more detail from today's report than before, Congress must continue its investigation into Trump's conduct and any foreign attempts to influence our election."

Democratic candidates are conscious that their voters are more interested in their positions on healthcare, the economy, immigration and climate change than whether or not Trump conspired with Russia or obstructed justice. Indeed, in a two-day swing through Iowa this week, Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana did not hear a question on the topic. That has been similar to the experience of other candidates who have campaigning in early voting states. Buttigieg's campaign said it has not been a subject on voters' minds.

Former US congressman Beto O'Rourke may have summed up the field's collective view most succinctly while campaigning last month. "I think the American people are going to have a chance to decide this at the ballot box in November 2020, and perhaps that's the best way for us to resolve these outstanding questions," he said. — Reuters

## Will Benetton use Alitalia to fly in from cold?

Italian transport group Atlantia could join a rescue of loss-making flag carrier Alitalia to try to win favor with the government and secure the future of its own domestic business following a deadly bridge collapse last year, sources said. Atlantia, controlled by the Benetton family, faces the loss of its entire national motorway concession in a bitter dispute with the government, which erupted after last year's disaster on its toll network killed 43 people.

The government blamed Atlantia for the tragedy, saying it had failed to adequately maintain the ageing bridge, and vowed to revoke the concession, worth 58 percent of group revenue. However, sources familiar with the matter said Atlantia could mend relations with the government by joining a rescue of Alitalia, which Rome is desperate to save, and possibly be rewarded with a reprieve on its motorway concession.

Atlantia has publicly scoffed at the idea, but sources say it stands ready if Rome signals a quid pro quo is possible. The government has not given such a signal but a political source says it may do if it sees Atlantia as key to saving Alitalia. Atlantia, which also runs Alitalia's main airport hub in Rome, has denied it is in talks to join a rescue consortium, saying its hands are already full with complex business challenges, including the fate of its motorway concession.

However, a source familiar with the flag-carrier's thinking said Alitalia expected Atlantia to sign up to a rescue as early as this month. The source did not elaborate. Another potential investor in the rescue bid, state-owned rail group Ferrovie dello Stato, which has had initial talks with Atlantia, also believes the Benetton-controlled group could yet be tempted to join, said a source familiar with those talks. "Atlantia's door is not closed ... it is now up to the government to take the lead in the talks," said a second source familiar with Alitalia's thinking.

Alitalia, put into special administration in 2017 after workers rejected a previous rescue plan, needs to find investors ready to inject fresh funds by the end of April, in advance of an end-June repayment deadline for a state bridging loan of €900 million. That loan, however, may be rolled over,

daily Il Sole 24 Ore said. The government, formed by the right-wing League party and the anti-establishment 5-Star Movement, is keen to save the airline because it wants to avoid mass layoffs at Alitalia, which has around 11,600 employees.

However, political sources said it was still unclear whether the ruling coalition, especially the 5-Star party, would be ready to make such a peace with Atlantia. The party was the most critical of Atlantia after the bridge collapse. "For 5-Star even the hypothesis of freezing the procedure for revoking the concession is not politically sustainable," said a senior 5-Star source.

## Clock ticking

Ferrovie and Delta Air Lines are looking to invest in Alitalia but they still need to find other investors to stump up another €400 million for a rescue worth a total of around 1 billion euros, sources close to the talks said. Ferrovie and its adviser, investment bank Mediobanca, have discreetly sounded out Atlantia after being turned down by a string of other companies. Atlantia has been burnt by Alitalia once before, having lost €190 million when it participated in a rescue in 2008. "We have many open fronts, we can't afford to open a further, particularly complex one," Atlantia CEO Giovanni Castellucci said on Thursday, speaking to shareholders.

In addition to the bridge disaster, Castellucci said he was also dealing with the government over its lengthy approvals process which was blocking 4.9 billion euros in group projects. Some financial analysts say a quid pro quo would make sense. "We reckon a possible agreement over Alitalia would be positive for Atlantia, because it would lead to a rapprochement with the government," broker Equita said in a note this week.

For now, Ferrovie is ready to take a 30 percent stake in Alitalia, Delta Air Lines would invest 100 million euros for a stake of 10-15 percent and another 15 percent would probably go to the Italian treasury, sources familiar with the matter say. But there is still a question mark over who would take the remaining 40-45 percent of the carrier. British budget airline easyJet walked away from talks with Ferrovie last month, state-controlled defense group Leonardo and postal operator Poste Italiane said they were not interested in the deal. If Ferrovie and Delta cannot find co-investors, Rome would face its least favoured option: a takeover by German carrier Lufthansa which has said it would only rescue Alitalia if the government were first to carry out major job cuts. — Reuters



## Business

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Construction Week 2019

MUMBAI: Indian passengers wait by the Jet Airways ticketing counter at Chhatrapati Shivaji International Airport in Mumbai. — AFP

# SpiceJet offers to hire some Jet staff

## Lenders led by SBI hopeful of successful bidding process amid staff desertions

**MUMBAI:** India's SpiceJet Ltd said it will prioritize hiring employees of Jet Airways Ltd who are losing their jobs after the crisis-hit Indian airline halted all flight operations indefinitely this week.

"We have already provided jobs to more than 100 pilots, more than 200 cabin crew and more than 200 technical and airport staff," said Ajay Singh, chairman and managing director of SpiceJet. "We will do more." Hundreds of Jet Airways employees protested in Delhi and Mumbai on Thursday to push its management for answers about their future after the airline shut down all flight operations on Wednesday having failed to secure new funding from its lenders.

Jet Airways has lost many employees as the crisis unfolded. About 400 pilots have moved to other airlines,

leaving Jet with about 1,300 pilots, a senior Jet pilot told Reuters. About 40 engineers have also left, a senior engineer said. Lenders, led by State Bank Of India, say they are hopeful of a successful bidding process for Jet. The carrier is saddled with about \$1.2 billion in debt.

Low cost carrier SpiceJet, which pledged to add 27 planes over the next two weeks to help to fill in the slots left vacant by Jet's grounding, said that it is making all possible efforts to minimize passenger inconvenience. The government plans to form a committee to temporarily allocate takeoff and landing slots left vacant by the grounding of Jet's flights, a senior official said on Thursday. Local airlines including InterGlobe Aviation Ltd and state-run Air India are likely to benefit.

Air India on Thursday offered special fares to passen-

gers stranded in international routes due to Jet's grounding.

The Indian government plans to form a committee to temporarily allocate takeoff and landing slots left vacant by the grounding of Jet Airways flights, a senior official said, a day after the indebted carrier was forced to stop operations.

The vacant slots will be allocated to other airlines, said Pradeep Singh Kharola, India's aviation secretary, at a press conference in New Delhi. At least 280 slots were vacant in Mumbai and 160 in Delhi, he said, after Jet Airways - once India's largest private carrier - ended all operations failing to secure further loans from lenders.

Airlines are in touch with lenders to lease grounded Jet Airways planes, which are likely to be taken up by local airlines including state-run Air India, which is also in talks with lenders, Kharola said.

A bidding process is underway for a stake of up to 75 percent in Jet Airways, which is saddled with roughly \$1.2 billion of bank debt. Kharola said there is "keen interest" from bidders. Top bosses of airlines have assured they will keep fares at reasonable levels, he added. Jet Airways shares plunged more than 32 percent on Thursday, hours after the Indian carrier's final flight landed following a decision to ground its entire fleet.

Jet's stock fell more than 32 percent to 162.15 rupees on the Bombay Stock Exchange Thursday. It was worth more than four times that a year ago.

The lenders that control the airline said Thursday they were focusing on finding a buyer for Jet, which was until recently India's second-biggest carrier by market share. — Agencies

## Venezuela skirts US sanctions by funneling oil sales via Russia

**MEXICO CITY:** President Nicolas Maduro is funneling cashflow from Venezuelan oil sales through Russian state energy giant Rosneft as he seeks to evade US sanctions designed to oust him from power, according to sources and documents reviewed by Reuters. The sales are the latest sign of the growing dependence of Venezuela's cash-strapped government on Russia as the United States tightens a financial noose around Maduro, who it describes as a dictator.

With its economy reeling from years of recession and a sharp decline in oil production, Venezuela was already struggling to finance imports and government spending before Washington imposed tough restrictions on state oil

company PDVSA in January. Oil accounts for more than 90 percent of exports from the OPEC nation and the lion's share of government revenues. Maduro has accused US President Donald Trump of waging economic war against Venezuela. Since January, Maduro's administration has been in talks with allies in Moscow about ways to circumvent a ban on clients paying PDVSA in dollars, the sources said. Russia has publicly said the US sanctions are illegal and it would work with Venezuela to weather them.

Under the scheme uncovered by Reuters, Venezuelan state oil company PDVSA has started passing invoices from its oil sales to Rosneft. The Russian energy giant pays PDVSA immediately at a discount to the sale price - avoiding the usual 30-to-90 day timeframe for completing oil transactions - and collects the full amount later from the buyer, according to the documents and sources. "PDVSA is delivering its accounts receivable to Rosneft," said a source at the Venezuelan state firm with knowledge of the deals, who spoke on condition of anonymity for fear of retaliation.

Major energy companies such as India's Reliance Industries Ltd - PDVSA's largest cash-paying client - have been asked to participate in the scheme by paying Rosneft for Venezuelan oil, the documents show. Rosneft, which has heavily invested in Venezuela under President Vladimir Putin, did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Venezuela's oil ministry, its information ministry, which handles media for the government, and PDVSA did not respond to questions. Asked about the transactions, a spokesperson for Reliance said it had made payments to Russia and Chinese companies for Venezuelan oil. The spokesperson said the payments were deducted from money owed by Venezuela to those countries, but did not provide further details.

"We are in active dialogue with the US Department of State on our dealings on Venezuelan oil to remain compliant with US sanctions," the spokesperson said. — Reuters

## US homebuilding near two-year low; permits extend decline

**WASHINGTON:** US homebuilding dropped to a near two-year low in March, pulled down by persistent weakness in the single-family unit segment, suggesting the housing market continued to struggle despite falling mortgage rates.

The second straight monthly decline in homebuilding reported by the Commerce Department on Friday probably reflected in part massive flooding in the Midwest, with housing starts in the region plunging to levels last seen in early 2015.

The weak report bucked a recent tide of upbeat data, including retail sales, trade and construction spending, that indicated the economy regained speed late in the first quarter after appearing to stumble at the turn of the year.

"Waiting for construction activity to pick up after a sharp drop in mortgage rates is like waiting for Godot," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MFG in New York. "It is hard to know what is ailing the home construction industry."

Housing starts fell 0.3 percent to a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 1.139 million units last month, the lowest level since May 2017. Data for February was revised down to show homebuilding tumbling to a pace of 1.142 million units instead of the previously reported 1.162 million-unit rate.

Housing starts in the Midwest, which was devastated by floods during the month, dropped 17.6 percent. Homebuilding also fell in the Northeast and South, but surged in the West.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast housing starts increasing to a pace of 1.230 million units in March. The dollar was trading lower against a basket of currencies. US stock and bond markets were closed for the Good Friday holiday.

A sharp pickup in home construction appears unlikely. Building permits fell 1.7 percent to a rate of 1.269 million units in March, the lowest in five months. It was the third

straight monthly decrease in permits. The prolonged weakness in homebuilding is likely the result of land and labor shortages, as well as expensive building materials. A survey on Tuesday showed that though builders reported strong demand for new homes, they continued to highlight "affordability concerns stemming from a chronic shortage of construction workers and buildable lots."

These factors are constraining builders' ability to construct homes in the lower price segment of the market, which continues to experience a shortage of homes for sale. The housing market hit a soft patch last year, with investment in homebuilding contracting 0.3 percent, the weakest performance since 2010.

### Fundamentals improving

Despite the weakness in homebuilding, the fundamentals for the housing market are improving. The 30-year fixed mortgage rate has dropped from a peak of about 4.94 percent in November to around 4.12 percent, according to data from mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac. Wage growth is also strengthening.

Declining mortgage rates follow a recent decision by the Federal Reserve to suspend its three-year monetary policy tightening campaign. While housing continues to be soft, the other segments of the economy have rebounded from earlier weakness. Retail sales surged in March and trade, inventory and construction spending data have also been bullish, leading economists to upgrade their gross domestic product growth estimates for the first quarter.

Growth forecasts for the January-March quarter have been raised to as high as a 2.9 percent annualized rate. They were at one point as low as a 0.3 percent rate following a batch of weak economic reports at the turn of the year. The economy grew at a 2.2 percent pace in the fourth quarter.

"The March (housing starts) numbers show better economic conditions still are not bearing fruit for builders as the market turns toward the spring home shopping season," said Matthew Speakman, economic analyst at Zillow. Single-family homebuilding, which accounts for the largest share of the housing market, dropped 0.4 percent to a rate of 785,000 units in March, the lowest level since September 2016.

Permits to build single-family homes dropped 1.1 percent to a rate of 808,000 units in March, the lowest since August 2017. It was the fourth straight monthly decrease in single-family permits. — Reuters



Russia has publicly said the US sanctions are illegal and it would work with Venezuela to weather them. — Reuters



## Business

## NBK ECONOMIC REPORT

# Oil prices rally to above \$70; Kuwait non-oil growth hits 2%

## Consumer spending returns to growth; inflation picks up

**KUWAIT:** Concerns over global economic growth have persisted over the past month with global bond yields falling amid expectations of a shift towards looser monetary policy and the IMF again downgrading its forecasts for global economic growth. However, news on the Kuwaiti economy has been slightly more encouraging and largely supports our view that domestic growth - while unspectacular at the end of 2018 according to latest data - should hold up fairly well over the year ahead. Among other factors, OPEC supply cuts have pushed oil prices above \$70 once again, reinforcing the improvement in the budget position and providing space for fiscal expansion this year. Meanwhile, credit growth has climbed to a more than two-year high, consumer spending growth has moved further into positive territory and the stock market made large gains in March on strong foreign inflows.

### Oil prices break through the \$70 mark

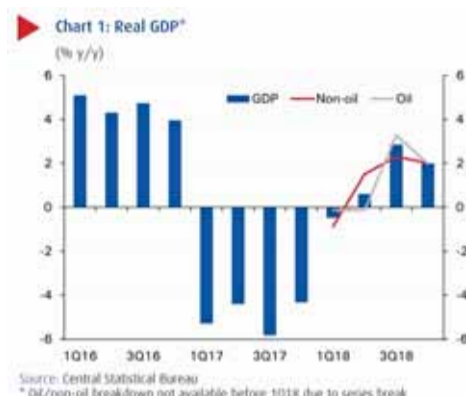
The price of Kuwait Export Crude traded in a narrow range of \$65-68/bbl through March, ending the month up 3% at \$67 but then breaking through the \$70/bbl mark in early April for the first time in five months. Oil prices continue to be supported by decent if easing demand growth, but supply weakness, including in sanctions-hit Venezuela and Iran and the decision by Saudi Arabia to reduce output by more than double the cut agreed by OPEC+ in December are the main drivers behind the pick-up in oil prices. Kuwait's crude oil output was unchanged at 2.71 million b/d in March, down 100,000 b/d from its September baseline and representing a compliance rate of 118 percent on targeted cuts of 85,000 b/d.

### GDP growth moderated to 2%

Preliminary official data for 4Q18 show that economic growth moderated at the end of last year against a backdrop of plateauing oil output, slow project implementation and falls in both oil prices and global stock markets that may have hit confidence and business spending. Overall growth slowed to 2.0 percent y/y in 4Q18, down from 2.9 percent in Q3 (upwardly revised from 1.8 percent). The slowdown was driven largely by a deceleration in the oil sector, where growth was 2.0 percent versus 3.3 percent in Q3 which had been boosted by a relaxation of earlier OPEC production cuts. Non-oil growth, which now includes the oil refining sector, eased to 2.0 percent from 2.3 percent in Q3.

### Oil/non-oil breakdown not available before 1Q18 due to series break

Although this quarterly data set points to overall and non-oil growth of 1.2 percent for 2018 as a whole, these figures may be revised when more comprehensive annual data are released in coming months. For now therefore, we have left our (slightly stronger) estimates of growth last



year unchanged, and still expect non-oil growth of 2-3 percent per year in 2019 and 2020.

### Budget surplus now looks plausible

Public finance data for the first 11 months (until February) of FY2018/19 reveal a budget surplus (before transfers to the Reserve Fund for Future Generations) of KD3.6 billion, up slightly from KD3.3 billion year-to-date in January. Revenues rose KD1.4 billion to KD18.4 billion, helped by higher oil prices with KEC averaging \$64 versus \$58 in January. More notable was spending, which rose by a surprisingly small KD1.1 billion - much less than in recent months - to KD14.8 billion. There was weakness in both current and capital spending.

These figures mean that spending on a year-to-date basis is now down 5 percent y/y compared to a planned 8 percent increase in the full-year budget. Although outlays typically surge in March, the final month of the fiscal year, it now looks plausible that full-year spending could come in at around the same level as FY17/18. Given reasonable revenue assumptions, this would imply a full-year surplus of around KD1.3 billion, or 3 percent of GDP. This would be the first budget surplus in four years.

### Real estate sales rise

Real estate sales were relatively solid in February at KD284 million, up 16 percent from January. The rise came entirely from a surge in commercial sector sales to KD100 million due to a near four-fold increase in average transaction size; the number of commercial transactions actually dropped 30 percent m/m. Residential sales were broadly steady at a decent KD110 million, while investment sector sales eased to KD 74 million having spiked higher in some earlier months. Prices were mostly stable on a monthly basis, with the exception of the apartment sector which saw a 4.6 percent m/m decline. Rising supply of new apartments may be applying downward pressure on prices. Despite this, market activity is healthy and according to the CPI (see

Table 3: Quarterly economic data

(KD billion, unless otherwise indicated)	4Q14	4Q15	4Q16	4Q17	1Q18	2Q18	3Q18	4Q18
GDP growth (% y/y)	-2.7	1.7	4.0	-4.3	-0.5	0.6	2.9	2.0
Oil*	-4.0	0.9	2.2	-5.8	-0.1	-0.1	3.3	2.0
Non-oil*	-0.3	0.3	2.7	1.6	-0.9	1.5	2.3	2.0
Point-of-sale card spending Growth (% y/y)	1.9	2.1	2.3	2.6	2.7	3.0	3.0	2.9
Current account balance	2.4	-0.1	0.6	1.2	1.9	2.7	2.2	...
Exports	6.0	3.6	4.1	4.7	5.7	6.2	6.0	...
Imports	2.0	2.1	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.4	2.5	...

Source: Central Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Finance, Central Bank of Kuwait, NBK estimates \* Series break due to classification changes, growth rates in the oil and non-oil sectors before 1Q18 are not comparable with those thereafter.

below) housing rents have been stable for 11 months suggesting that market conditions are relatively good.

### Consumer spending returns to growth in February

According to the NBK consumer spending index, growth in consumer spending rose from 0.2 percent y/y in February to a five-month high of 1.2 percent in March. The pickup was supported by a rebound in spending on durable goods, which helped offset a sharper decline in non-durables and softer growth in service purchases. Growth in consumer spending has shown signs of improvement in 1Q19 in tandem with low inflation and healthier employment growth, as well as stronger consumer lending.

### Inflation picks up

Consumer price inflation increased to 0.6 percent y/y in February from 0.4 percent in January, while our measure of core inflation (which excludes food and housing) also rose, to 2.0 percent from 1.7 percent in January. The pickup in inflation came primarily from a rise in food inflation to 0.4 percent y/y from 0.0 percent in January, but also from the clothing, communication and recreation components. The increases in food and clothing inflation, however, were generated by base effects following large price rises a year earlier: prices in these segments actually fell month-on-month. Meanwhile, housing inflation (mostly rents) was steady at -1.2 percent y/y reflecting an only gradual recovery in the property market - though this component tends to move only at the end of each quarter.

Overall, although we still expect inflation to pick up this year as some of last year's downward pressures on food and (eventually) housing moderate, the soft start to 2019 leaves our previous forecast looking slightly on the high side.

We now forecast inflation to average 1.5 percent for 2019 as a whole, down from 2.0 percent before and up from a sixteen-year low of 0.6 percent in 2018. Core inflation is forecast to remain more or less unchanged from last year at 2 percent, contained by moderate economic

growth, a strong dinar and the absence of implementation of VAT or fresh subsidy cuts.

### Credit growth accelerates in February

Credit growth rose to a more than two-year high of 5.3 percent y/y in February from 5.0 percent in January, supported by an increase in lending to both businesses and households. Business loans grew 6.2 percent y/y up from 6.0 percent in January, driven mainly by an improvement in lending to the real estate, trade and construction sectors. Household credit was boosted by a rise in housing lending (5.9 percent y/y), as well as an increase in consumer loans of 3.9 percent, its highest growth in over four years, likely benefiting from the central bank's recent loosening of lending restrictions. Meanwhile, total deposit growth decelerated to 2.3 percent from 4.2 percent in January, due to a large decline in government deposits. The M2 money supply measure increased 4.7 percent.

### Equity market surges

Bursa Kuwait was the best performing GCC market in March, driven by a combination of FTSE stock re-weighting which boosted foreign inflows, but also weakness in other markets including Qatar (overvaluation selloff) and Dubai (property market woes). The All-Share index surged 7.4 percent m/m versus a 3.5 percent gain in the MSCI-GCC. The rally pushed market capitalization to a high of KD32 billion, the highest since January 2011. Market liquidity was strong, at an average daily turnover of 174 million shares, up 39 percent m/m and more than double the average daily turnover of 2018. Foreign net inflows totaled a record KD141 million in March, possibly the highest in the history of the market. Strong price gains in March were driven mostly by the banking, healthcare and consumer goods sectors, which rose 10 percent, 9 percent, and 8 percent m/m respectively. Year-to date, Bursa Kuwait is up by 10.6 percent, trailing behind the Saudi Tadawul which is up 12.7 percent.

## North American trade deal to boost US economy

**WASHINGTON:** The new North American free trade pact would modestly boost the US economy, especially auto parts production, but may curb vehicle assembly and limit consumer choice in cars, a hotly anticipated analysis from the US International Trade Commission showed.

The ITC report is a crucial step in the push for Congress to consider ratification of the US-Mexico-Canada Agreement, which was signed by President Donald Trump and the leaders of the other two countries last year to replace the 25-year-old North American Free Trade Agreement.

The report estimates that annual US real gross domestic product would increase by 0.35 percent, or \$68.5 billion, on an annual basis compared to a NAFTA baseline, and would add 176,000 US jobs, while raising US exports.

The ITC's estimates are for year six of the trade deal, once it is fully implemented.

The trade deal's success or failure in Congress could be determined by how it is expected to affect the US auto industry, a sector that steadily drained jobs to Mexico

under NAFTA. The USMCA deal contains much tighter regional content rules, requiring that 75 percent of a vehicle's value be sourced in North America versus 62.5 percent currently, and 40-45 percent produced in high-wage areas, namely the United States and Canada. Auto industry employment would rise by 30,000 jobs for parts and engine production, but US vehicle assembly would decline. US vehicle prices would rise up to 1.6 percent, causing consumption to fall by 140,000 units per year, or about 1.25 percent of 2017 sales, the report said.

The report overall was more positive than initially anticipated by economists, who said the traditional economic models used by the ITC to measure previous trade deals would result in minimal gains for the United States. White House economic adviser Kevin Hassett told Reuters that he was pleasantly surprised by the results, which used different modeling methods that he called "accurate and well done." "Their estimate is a lot closer to what we think USMCA will do than I expected," Hassett in a telephone interview. "This is very strong argument for passing the USMCA."

### Concerns not alleviated

But some key Democrats were not swayed from their demands for improvements to the enforcement of new labor standards before they consider USMCA. Democrats control the US House of Representatives. Representative Earl Blumenauer, chairman of the House Ways and Means trade subcommittee, said that he had already believed the trade deal needed changes before it could be considered



by the House. "Nothing in this report alleviates those concerns," he said. Senator Ron Wyden, the top Democrat on the Senate Finance Committee said, "The administration shouldn't squander the opportunity to lock in real, enforceable labor standards in Mexico."

The ITC report said Mexican union wages would rise by 17.2 percent if the labor provisions agreed in the USMCA are enforced. Even so, Mexican factory wages would remain far below those in the United States.

Republican Senator Chuck Grassley, chairman of the Senate Finance Committee, praised the report for highlighting benefits beyond tariff reductions. "Many of the significant improvements in USMCA are reducing non-tariff barriers and implementing rules and fair practices

that will help US workers, jobs and businesses tremendously over the coming years," Grassley said in an emailed statement.

### Dueling analyses

The US Trade Representative's office had prepared a separate analysis of the USMCA's automotive benefits that industry officials had described as a rosier alternative view of USMCA aimed at limiting any potential damage from the ITC report.

USTR estimated that the trade deal would create 76,000 automotive sector jobs within five years as automakers invest some \$34 billion in new plants to comply with the regional content rules. The total includes about \$15 billion in projects already announced. USTR officials said their analysis was based on plans disclosed by automakers to the trade agency for compliance with the new agreement's tighter rules of origin.

"They have verbally committed to us that they intend to comply with the rules," a senior USTR official said. "And they have told us that this is not going to have significant upward pressure on vehicle prices." But the ITC report said some automakers may decide not to offer vehicles that would be too expensive to bring into compliance with the deal, reducing consumer choice in the US auto market.

The trade group representing Detroit automakers Ford, GM and Fiat Chrysler said it viewed the USTR analysis as more accurate than the ITC's. — Reuters

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	305.200
Euro	344.110
Sterling Pound	402.710
Canadian dollar	229.730
Turkish lira	54.990
Swiss Franc	307.200
US Dollar Buying	297.800

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.740
Indian Rupees	4.400
Pakistani Rupees	2.199
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.742
Nepali Rupees	2.742
Singapore Dollar	225.990
Hongkong Dollar	38.881
Bangladesh Taka	3.606
Philippine Peso	5.862
Thai Baht	9.592
Malaysian ringgit	78.056

#### GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.441
Qatari Riyal	83.881
Omani Riyal	793.242
Bahraini Dinar	810.950
UAE Dirham	83.149

#### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.700
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.594
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.226
Tunisian Dinar	105.240
Jordanian Dinar	431.200
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.204
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.434

### DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.840
Canadian Dollar	228.350
Sterling Pound	95.450
Euro	344.725
Swiss Frank	307.490
Bahrain Dinar	810.685
UAE Dirhams	83.400
Qatari Riyals	84.640
Saudi Riyals	82.185
Jordanian Dinar	431.245
Egyptian Pound	17.628
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.744
Indian Rupees	4.412
Pakistani Rupees	2.160
Bangladesh Taka	3.618
Philippines Peso	5.851
Cyprus pound	18.135
Japanese Yen	3.725
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.758
Malaysian Ringgit	75.435
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.805

Thai Bhat	10.550
Turkish Lira	54.575
Singapore dollars	225.511

### BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.389960	0.403860
Czech Korune	0.005328	0.014628
Danish Krone	0.041829	0.046829
Euro	0.336081	0.349751
Georgian Lari	0.132239	0.132239
Hungarian	0.001149	0.001339
Norwegian Krone	0.031795	0.036995
Romanian Leu	0.065353	0.082203
Russian ruble	0.004790	0.004790
Slovakia	0.009120	0.019120
Slovenia	0.028740	0.033740
Swiss Franc	0.294395	0.305395
<b>Australasia</b>		
Australian Dollar	0.210228	0.222228
New Zealand Dollar	0.198085	0.207585
<b>America</b>		
Canadian Dollar	0.222572	0.231572
US Dollars	0.300750	0.306050
US Dollars Mint	0.301250	0.306050
<b>Asia</b>		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003028	0.003829

Chinese Yuan	0.043963	0.047463
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037094	0.039844
Indian Rupee	0.003833	0.004605
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002648	0.002828
Korean Won	0.000258	0.000273
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070547	0.076547
Nepalese Rupee	0.002682	0.003022
Pakistan Rupee	0.001510	0.002280
Philippine Peso	0.005853	0.006153
Singapore Dollar	0.219847	0.229847
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001401	0.001981
Taiwan	0.010175	0.010355
Thai Baht	0.009226	0.009776
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

<b>Arab</b>		
Bahraini Dinar	0.794050	0.810550
Egyptian Pound	0.017754	0.020354
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.425068	0.434068
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021240	0.045240
Omani Riyal	0.785500	0.791180
Qatar Riyal	0.079445	0.084385
Saudi Riyal	0.080207	0.081507
Syrian Pound	0.001293	0.001513
Tunisian Dinar	0.096893	0.104893
Turkish Lira	0.046173	0.057673
UAE Dirhams	0.081575	0.083275
Yemeni Riyal	0.000991	0.001071



Business



KUWAIT: Ahmadi Governor, Chairman of Burgan Bank - Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chief Executive Officer of Burgan Bank - Kuwait Raed Al-Haqhaq, Naser Alqaisi, Chief Retail Banking Officer, as well as senior managers and officials from the Ahmadi Governorate and Burgan Bank attend the opening ceremony of the bank's Fahaheel branch at Al-Kout Mall.



# Burgan Bank relocates Fahaheel branch to famed Al-Kout Mall

## Ahmadi governor among dignitaries attends ceremony

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently relocated its Fahaheel branch into one of Kuwait's largest shopping and entertainment destinations - Al-Kout Mall. Opened under the patronage of the Ahmadi Governor, Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, the new branch is conveniently placed to accommodate customers residing in Fahaheel and surrounding areas including the mall's many shoppers with easier access to their financial requirements.

The opening ceremony was attended by the Ahmadi Governor, Chairman of Burgan Bank - Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chief Executive Officer of Burgan Bank - Kuwait

Raed Al-Haqhaq, Naser Alqaisi, Chief Retail Banking Officer, as well as senior managers and officials from the Ahmadi Governorate and Burgan Bank.

Ensuring optimal comfort and seamless integration of the existing accounts, customers can continue to enjoy a range of financial transactions, services, and products in the new location. Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khalid Al-Sabah, Ahmadi Governor said, "In keeping with the latest developments in Kuwait's dynamic banking sector, the expansion of all of the new openings of both local and international bank branches demonstrates its

ambition to stay abreast of the latest developments. The new Burgan Bank branch will now further strengthen the financial and banking system for our citizens in the Ahmadi district - We thank the Burgan Bank Chairman and employees for their support in completing the branch successfully."

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank said, "The new branch in the Ahmadi district reflects the growing demand for our products and services and solidifies our position as a dynamic Kuwaiti bank. Geared towards progress, our branch network strategy

aims at enhancing and evolving customers' financial experiences through the help of our strong banking credentials. I would like to congratulate the Ahmadi Governor on his decision for choosing Burgan Bank as financial partner that would facilitate the needs of his district's residents."

Committed to facilitating all of Kuwait's citizens with a comprehensive suite of banking offerings throughout the country, Burgan Bank maintains a strong network of 29 branches across Kuwait and 186 branches across the Middle East, North Africa, and Turkey.

## KIB nabs 'GCC Best CSR Business Model' award

KUWAIT: In recognition of the ongoing efforts of its board of directors, executive management and staff, Kuwait International Bank (KIB) was recently awarded the first-ever 'GCC Best CSR Business Model' by World Finance; a leading, global financial magazine based in London, specializing in finance and banking, whose GCC Awards have continued to recognize leading financial and investment institutions in the GCC.

KIB received this award based on a comprehensive due diligence made by the World Finance Awards Committee to ensure that the Bank has met all key criteria based on readers' votes. The Committee selected KIB as a winner as a result of key criteria, namely: its sustainable business practices, employee



Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah

development, and its remarkable, dynamic community engagement.

On this occasion, Chairman of KIB, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, commented: "We are extremely honored to have received this inaugural award, which is a clear testament to our leadership and excellence in the local and regional GCC banking sector. Our strong strategy and business insight reaffirmed our leading role in the local economic landscape, which reflected positively on our new strategic objectives that we had adopted

last year. Of course, this trickles down to our social mission, as we strengthened our customer-focus and our role as a partner in every aspect of people's lives."

Accordingly, KIB has developed a comprehensive, leading social responsibility program to leave a positive impact on the whole community, which reflected on the Bank's strong standing and its relationship with its surroundings. In 2018, KIB actively sought to cover a range of social concerns and issues, underscoring its integral role as a national financial institution. Accordingly, the Bank has committed itself to investing in various social responsibility initiatives, which fall under four main pillars of its social responsibility program, namely: promoting financial and banking literacy, social impact, community development, and youth empowerment.

World Finance magazine recognizes industry leaders through the WF GCC Awards. The magazine also spearheads a number of internationally-recognized award programs. As a leading global financial magazine, it is an essential reading for corporate and private investors, serving as an international benchmark across various fields and areas.

## Malaysia revives massive China backed project

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia will revive a \$34 billion Chinese-backed transport and property development that was abandoned in 2017, the prime minister said Friday, adding the project would contribute to Beijing's global infrastructure drive.

The announcement came after the countries agreed this month to resume work on a previously suspended railway project in Malaysia, and is the latest sign of improving ties after a rocky period.

The 140-billion ringgit (\$34 billion) Bandar Malaysia development in Kuala Lumpur is expected to attract financial institutions and companies, and will be an interchange for a number of rail lines, said a statement from Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad's office.

There were some changes to the original plan, including 10,000 units of affordable housing, and a "People's Park", it said. The



Ties between Malaysia and China had been strained since new PM Mahathir suspended a series of Chinese-financed projects — AFP

project was originally launched in 2011 under the government of ex-leader Najib Razak, but was abandoned in 2017 during his administration due to a dispute about payments.

Najib lost power at historic elections last year, and has since been slapped with dozens of charges over his alleged role in looting

state fund IMDB.

The Bandar Malaysia project was initially backed by the scandal-hit state fund, but a major stake was later sold to a joint venture between a Malaysian firm and state-owned company China Railway Engineering Corp.

It will resume with the same contractors, who own a 60 percent stake while the government owns the rest.

Bandar Malaysia and the revived rail link, which will run from Malaysia's east to west coast, "should be viewed within the larger context of fostering and cementing long-term bilateral relations between Malaysia and China," the statement said.

The projects will "be a significant contribution to the Belt and Road Initiative which Malaysia expects to be able to tap on," it added. Mahathir is due to join other world leaders at a summit focused on Beijing's Belt and Road infrastructure drive in China next week. The \$1 trillion program includes maritime, rail and road projects in Asia, Africa and Europe. Ties had been strained between the two countries since Najib, a close Beijing ally, lost power, and Mahathir suspended a series of Chinese-financed projects amid concerns the terms were unfair to Malaysia. — AFP

## Ghosh to be indicted on fresh charge

TOKYO: Tokyo prosecutors will indict former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn on a new charge on Monday when his detention period over suspected financial misconduct expires, local media reported Friday.

The 65-year-old is being questioned in a Tokyo detention center over allegations he siphoned off millions of dollars from his former company Nissan to a dealership in the Middle East for his own ends.

Ghosh strenuously denies the allegations and insists they have been cooked up in a "plot" by Nissan executives wary of plans to bring the Japanese car giant closer to its French partner Renault.

On Friday, public broadcaster NHK cited unnamed sources as saying that Tokyo prosecutors will indict the former auto tycoon as early as Monday on suspicion that he had used the money from Nissan for his personal investments into 30 companies.

Kyodo News said the prosecutors decided to indict Ghosn on April 22.

NHK reported that about 3 billion yen (\$26.8 million) transferred to an American firm named Shogun Investments, run by Ghosn's son, had been spent on investments in at least 30 companies.

Tokyo prosecutors are also considering questioning Ghosn's son, according to NHK. Ghosn had already spent 108 days in custody over three other charges of alleged financial malpractice-accused of two counts of deferring part of his salary and concealing this from shareholders and another charge of seeking to shift personal losses to the company.

He has already won bail once over the first three charges. — Reuters



TOKYO: Journalists (right) look on as lawyers for former Nissan chief Carlos Ghosn play a video message recorded by Ghosn before his most recent rearrest, during a press conference at the Foreign Correspondents' Club of Japan in Tokyo. — AFP

## IMF approves \$118.2m rapid credit for Mozambique

WASHINGTON: The International Monetary Fund board on Friday approved an \$118.2 million credit that will be rushed out for cyclone-devastated Mozambique to help with the recovery efforts.

The zero-interest, 10-year loan will help shore up the country's budget amid the reconstruction efforts after the massive damage caused last month by Cyclone Idai, the IMF said in a statement. The storm cut a path of destruction through Malawi, Mozambique and Zimbabwe on the night of March 14-15, causing damage worth \$2 billion, according to the World Bank.

In Mozambique alone, more than 600 people died among the 1.85 million affected while over 340 died in

Zimbabwe. "Emergency assistance and reconstruction costs are estimated to be enormous, making this storm the worst and costliest natural disaster to ever strike the country," said Tao Zhang, deputy managing director of the Washington-based lender.

In addition to the loss of life, he said the country suffered "substantial damage to physical infrastructure and productive capacity."

The IMF's Rapid Credit facility (RCF) gets funds to the country quickly, and will allow the government to reallocate priorities to focus on emergency assistance to the poorest and for reconstruction.

The aid also can "play a catalytic role in securing grants from donors and the international community," he said, since "the bulk of emergency assistance and reconstruction needs will have to be covered by the international community mostly in the form of grants." However, the official stressed that as the government continues its efforts to shore up its finances, including through debt relief from private creditors, "it will be critical to increase the economy's resilience and preparedness to natural disasters and climate change." — AFP

## Sudanese pound strengthens on black market

KHARTOUM: The Sudanese pound strengthened sharply on the black market on Thursday, two traders and a businessman said, as imports dwindled amid the political chaos that led to the overthrow last week of president Omar Al-Bashir. The pound firmed to 53 pounds to the dollar on the black market from 74 pounds just before the military ousted and detained Bashir, who ruled with an iron hand for 30 years before unrest erupted over deteriorating conditions in the country.

The military announced Bashir's removal on

April 11 after months of protests sparked by food and cash shortages, and set up a transitional military council to run the country for up to two years until free elections. "The advent of the new government caused some confusion in the commercial field," the businessman said. "We are waiting to know the government's new economic policies so that we can engage in operations and import again."

One businessman said the pound may have strengthened due to expectations of aid from the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

Both countries have pledged support for Sudan since the military took over. Saudi Arabia said it would provide wheat, fuel and medicine, among the country's main imports and drains on scarce foreign currency. The rise of the pound also comes following moves by the ruling Transitional Military Council to curb systemic corruption and financial mismanagement, according to state media.

In initial steps on Thursday, the TMC

ordered the central bank to review financial transfers since April 1 and to seize "suspect" funds, the state news agency SUNA said.

It also ordered a suspension in transfers of share ownership until further notice and any large or suspect transfers of shares or companies to be reported to state authorities.

In a further move, the TMC decreed that all state entities disclose financial holdings within 72 hours and warned that officials who failed to comply could be fined and face up to 10 years in prison, SUNA said. The official exchange rate has been set at 47.5 Sudanese pounds to the dollar since October. The black market rate was 65 pounds on Tuesday, three traders in central Khartoum said.

Sudan has been expanding its money supply to finance a budget deficit, causing inflation to soar and the currency to plunge against other currencies. The protesters blame years of mismanagement under Bashir and US sanctions for the crisis. — Reuters



## Business

# BTC participates in Kuwait Construction Week 2019

Booth displays equipment from Wacker Neuson, Toyota Forklift and skid loaders from Bobcat



**KUWAIT:** Bahrah Trading Company (BTC), a subsidiary of Al-Sayer Holding participated in "Kuwait Construction Week" Exhibition which was recently held in Hall 6 of Kuwait International Fair Grounds. The participation featured compaction and concrete equipment from Wacker Neuson, Toyota Forklift and skid loaders from Bobcat at the exclusive BTC display stand and attracted very good response from the public.

Construction Week is Kuwait's largest building and construction event and is one of the most important event in GCC for manufacturers, distributors and service providers to increase their presence and meet with key decision makers in the region's building and construction sectors.

The event was inaugurated by Khalid Al-Khazzi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Public Works of the State of Kuwait, was attended by members from BTC including Hamza Melakandy General Manager, Moothedath Gangadharan Biju Manager Heavy Equipment Sales.

According to Melakandy Hamza "Reputation for professional and reliable service, providing comprehensive

after-sales technical support as our commitment to customers, which has positioned BTC as one of the leading players in the market".

Bahrah, an affiliate of Al-Sayer Group Holding established in 1965 and since then have evolved into a major source of supply, serving a wide spectrum of clients in construction, oil and industrial sectors in Kuwait.

Complete Range of Product Solutions from BTC:

- Trucks and Buses
- Heavy earthmoving equipment for the construction industry including Excavators, Loaders, Rollers etc.,
- Industrial and Utility equipment including Generators, Compressors, Light towers, Light Compactors, Site Dumpers, Club Cars etc.,
- Material handling equipment - Forklifts and Cranes
- Special vehicles for firefighting, civil defense, disaster management and accident emergency rescue tools.

The above range is represented by world-Leading brands including Hino Trucks, Toyota Forklifts, BT material handling, Ashok Leyland Buses, Daewoo Buses, Bobcat, Doosan, Sakai, Astra etc.



## Material wealth: Handcrafting the cabin of INFINITI QX50

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, brings to light the philosophies that served as the inspiration for Infiniti's design approach of the QX50's interior. Whether creating, embroidering a silk obi sash, or even designing the cabin of a new car, Japanese handcraft is subject to two unique approaches to design: 'mitate'.

'Mitate' relates to the practice of curating and bringing together the best possible selection of materials. This is the process by which artists and artisans carefully consider a range of different materials to work with. In turn, 'shitate' is the execution, the well-made, the desire to bring out the very best qualities of the chosen combination of materials. By tailoring, shaping and composing them in certain ways, craftspeople can create something greater than the sum of their parts.

The interplay between these traditional Japanese philosophies inspired INFINITI to adopt a new approach when creating the cabin of the new QX50. The interior a handmade feel and articulates a sense of human artistry throughout, with a fine attention to detail, which extends to the choice of materials and how they are used. The result is a truly luxurious cabin, both in terms of its material quality and its design execution.

The materials chosen for the production car are the result of a design process that started as early as 2015. Black saddle leather, famed for its robustness, created the structure and shapes of the center console and parts of the dashboard, while softer, passive surfaces were trimmed in white matte and Nubuck leather. For instance, the speakers inside the door were housed behind stiff black saddle leather, with slashes in the material creating a bold alternative to more normal speaker covers. The range



of materials lent itself to the creation of a dramatic two-tone black-and-white interior, contrasted with tan edge - the natural hue of the leather - where black met white.

The design process for QX Sport Inspiration formed the basis for a new way of creating interiors.

Fast-forward to the development of the QX50 production car, and INFINITI's designers - based at the company's design headquarters in Atsugi, Japan - adopted the idea of 'mitate' early in the design process. Instead of drawing on an existing portfolio of tried and tested materials, the car's designers sourced dozens of samples of different wood, leather, metal and thread.

Yet, while the process of selecting each of these materials may be rooted in tradition, INFINITI's designers had one distinctly modern aim as they created this thoughtfully curated cabin: that of authenticity. For decades, wood has been a mainstay of almost every luxury car brought to market. A traditional hallmark of cabin design to provide the perception of quality, the very character of the wood is, nevertheless, often erod-

ed in the production process. Carved, sanded, dyed and glossed, the over-treatment of these materials often creates an over-indulgent, inauthentic appearance - to the point where a knotted, grained sliver of wood loses all character.

The QX50 diverges from this approach. The cabin is trimmed in genuine, matte-finish, open-pore maple, treated in such a way as to retain its natural characteristics.

Authenticity also plays a role in the use of genuine leather throughout the QX50's cabin. The majority of new cars today feature dashboards trimmed in advanced plastics - soft to the touch, certainly, and designed to offer a similar appearance and texture to leather. Yet they flatter to deceive. INFINITI therefore used a new manufacturing technique to wrap and sew the QX50's leather-bound dashboard, and other surfaces throughout the interior. By adopting this technique, INFINITI's designers have been able to finish the cabin in a carefully-curated selection of supple, indulgent leathers - and to a greater extent than any other premium SUV.

## Huawei P30 Pro awarded TIPA World Award for 2019

**KUWAIT:** Huawei Consumer Business Group (BG) announced the TIPA General Assembly has recognized the Huawei P30 Pro as one of the Best Products of 2019, awarding the device the honor of "Best Photo Smartphone." For the third year in a row, this prestigious title has been awarded to a Huawei P Series flagship, proving Huawei's dedication to constantly improving quality, performance and design to change the world of mobile photography.

Changzhu Li, Vice President of Handset Business for Huawei Consumer BG, said, "Camera experience has always been the focus of Huawei's strategy for the Huawei P Series. We would like to thank TIPA once again for honoring our latest flagship P30 Pro. Equipped with the Leica Quad Camera, the Huawei P30 Pro rewrites the rules of photography with a host of innovations-including the revolutionary RYYB color

filter array and extreme 5x optical zoom-improving photography experience at a fundamental level. Advances such as these give consumers more freedom to use Huawei devices to record the most exciting moments in life as they happen.

Representatives from photo and imaging publications from around the world confirmed the Huawei P30 Pro stands out from the competition following a rigorous course of nominations, testing and comparisons. The flagship's Leica Quad Camera System, sporting a versatile 40MP Huawei SuperSpectrum Sensor and 20MP ultra-wide camera, alongside a stabilized SuperZoom Lens leveraging proprietary optics design, provides clarity and zoom never before seen on a mobile phone. The all-new fourth Huawei Time of Flight (ToF) Camera captures depth for better bokeh effects. Working in tandem, this array produces photos with incredible detail and beautiful dynamic range in any lighting situation.

The official citation of the P30 Pro from the TIPA General Assembly commented: "Incredible Low Light Performance and Focal Length Options. The P30 Pro is dubbed a "quad camera" with numerous imaging options. The primary camera has a 1/1.7 40MP sensor that yields 10MP images. The optical stabilized lens has a 27mm (equivalent) focal length and maximum f/1.6 aperture, plus there is a 20MP 16mm (equivalent) super-wide option, a stabilized 5X (125mm

equivalent) periscope style telephoto lens with folded optics, and a fourth PDAF "time of flight" AF sensor. The P30 Pro can cover an incredible focal length range thanks to a "super-resolution" algorithm that combines several RAW images into one high-res image that is then cropped to produce a 50X zoom effect. Low-light capability is equally impressive, with a top ISO of 409,600 that can capture exposures in near darkness, which is claimed to be 40% more light sensitive than a standard RGB sensor, delivering the best low-light performance of any smartphone camera to date."

Thomas Gerwens, TIPA Chairman, commented: "Huawei together with Leica is pushing the limits of smart photography again with the introduction of the new P30 Pro and enables users to shoot photos and videos in fantastic quality."

With the Huawei P30 Pro, Huawei has once again proven itself to be the benchmark for smartphone photography. Providing the best low-light performance of any smartphone camera to date, as well as class-leading zoom capabilities, this handset was awarded the highest score in the history of DxOMark-the industry standard for camera and lens image quality measurements and ratings. The impressive 112-point score highlights the significance of Huawei's dedication to research and design, especially in providing an ultimate experience for smartphone photography.

## Warba Bank announces 5 winners of Al-Sunbula draw

**KUWAIT:** Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, held its weekly Sunbula draw number 15. The draw announced the 5 lucky winners in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and bank officials.

The bank proudly announced the lucky five winners of the KD 1,000 prize: Eid Fhaid Faleh Al-Azmi, Mubarak Faleh Al-Dousari, Mishal Abdullah Fahad Fahad, Khaled Helail Sanat Al-Harbi and Fahdah Mohammad Faleh Al-Shelahi.

Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million.

Warba Bank will continue its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each. What's new in 2019 are the "Mega Draws" which will be held every quarter to reveal five winners, the 1st winner will get KD 100,000! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest Land Cruiser VXR. Furthermore, the final Mega draw held in January 2020 will feature 2 more Land Cruiser VXRs!

## Germany rules out new debt to boost slowing economy

**BERLIN:** Finance Minister Olaf Scholz ruled out taking on new debt to stimulate Germany's slowing economy and blamed anaemic growth this year on external factors like unresolved trade disputes and the risk of Britain leaving the European Union without a deal.

In an interview with the BBC aired on Friday, the Social Democrat finance minister also dismissed fears that Europe's largest economy could plunge into a recession after the government halved its 2019 growth forecast to 0.5 percent. Chancellor Angela Merkel's right-left coalition government is facing calls from EU partners and the International Monetary Fund to boost investment, while a conservative lawmaker has demanded a stimulus package to jump-start the economy.

"We just have softer growth, which is far away from a recession," said Scholz. "And if you are really a globalized economy, if you are a big exporter and importer all the developments in the world economy will have an impact on the development of your country. And we know that there is a slowing of the world economy. And we know where this comes from. It is mostly political reasons."

He added that trade disputes between the United States and both China and the EU, as well as Brexit uncertainties, were the main causes of the slowdown in Germany and not structural problems like weak investment. — Reuters



What's On



# International Women's Group celebrates African Cultural Day

The International Women's Group organized a colorful and fun-filled "African Cultural Day" event on Tuesday, 16 April 2019, at Al-Jawhara Ballroom in the Crowne Plaza Hotel Farwaniya. Rima Al-Khaldi, wife of the Ambassador of the State of Palestine in Kuwait and Vice President of the Group, opened with a speech on behalf of the Group's President, Clethe Gubler, and then welcomed the Honorary President Sheikh Anwar Al-Sabah who then welcomed the Ambassadors, the IWG members and all guests. Tareq Al-Qoni, Ambassador of Egypt to Kuwait and the President of the African Union, was also present and gave an enticing speech that grabbed everyone's attention.

Part of the celebrations included a video of the famous singer Miriam Makiba, a South African Grammy Award singer and human rights activist carrying the title of African mother. President Mandela said she endured the pain of being in exile for 31 years and yet her music gives us a deep sense of hope.

The continent of Africa is the second largest continent and is full of great wonders such as the sands of the race of the youth in Morocco and a natural garden of the sand in Mauritania; a volcanic group in Tanzania and a Mount Table in South Africa. There are also the Victoria Falls in Zambia, the Great Mosque of Mali, the Pyramids of Giza and, of course, the Great Nile River. Moreover,

the continent includes the Coral Island of Seychelles, Lake Turkana in Guinea, Massive Basins in Botswana, the Maltese Rock in Madagascar, the Archaeological Churches of Eritrea and the Kingdom of Great Rocks of Zambia.

The steak restaurant brought in an African band that performed live and created an exciting atmosphere with their drumbeats. To add to the experience, a coffee house offered true Kenyan coffee beans to all guests.

Throughout the ballroom, there were images on display that show different cultural backgrounds and heritages. A table with different instruments and African items was generously presented by Burkina Faso. There

was a corner for the African turbans, also called the Arab Tijan, and another for African face paints and a lovely forest.

The IWG Board and members bid farewell to Mrs Hazel Bona, wife of the Ambassador of South Africa, on the occasion of their departure and the end of their duties in the State of Kuwait. She said that the time spent in Kuwait was one of the most important stages that she would not forget and thanked the State of Kuwait and its distinguished people for their generosity. IWG members and guests ended the lovely morning with great raffle prizes and an authentic taste of African cuisine.



## Celebrate Easter at the exceptional Symphony Style Kuwait

Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel invites you to celebrate a joyful Brunch at Cucina restaurant, in which you can enjoy a vibrant range of international delicacies. You shall find thoughtful attention to detail on the remarkable day of Easter as you complement your celebration with the tastes of ouzi, fresh salmon, shrimps and the traditional fattah. There will be far more dishes to choose from that will add up to a remarkable celebration.

Indulge in our Easter dessert station highlights featuring Cheese Cake, apricot tart, chocolate fudge Cake, and a wide selection of Arabic sweets. No matter the size or preference of your family feast, rest assured that our professional culinary team at Cucina restaurant will only present you unforgettable Easter feast.

Easter is an inspiring day that calls for an exceptional celebration that is best celebrated at The Exceptional.



## Grand Hyper Money Rain; first draw took place at Al-Rai store

Grand Hyper Kuwait first mega draw of Money Rain lucky draw was done by Tijari representative Abdul Azeez Al-Athar on 15th April at their Al Rai store.

Mini mol (Coupon No 90310) and Jaleel (Coupon No 014567) are the first mega winners for prize money of \$2222 each. Apart from that, 50 winners with prize money US dollars \$222 each were also announced. The second Mega Lucky draw will take place on April 29th at Grand Hyper Farwaniya store. All customers who purchase from any Grand Hyper branches for 5 KD and above are eligible for this lucky draw. Total prize money is \$150,000 which will be allotted to 459 winners. Money Rain lucky draw is taking place across all Grand Hyfers in Kuwait between April 29 to August 20, 2019.

## Naal Al-Noukhitha wins best play award at Bahrain festival

The 'Naal Al-Noukhitha' play of Awal theater for director Jamal Al-Ghailan won the Arab Authority for Theater's best theater play award. The award was given at the conclusion of the Bahrain theater festival, which took place on April 14th at the Bahrain Cultural Hall. Yaboub Yousuf is the playwright of 'Naal Al-Noukhitha', which deals with a popular story about the Noukhitha's footwear that was stolen in front of a mosque, then events follow progressively afterwards. The officiating committee headed by Abdelghani Dawood, and members Dr Nirmeen Al-Houti and Dr Mohamad Sief gave a detailed explanation of its work mechanism, its comments and recommendations.



## Joyalukkas announces 'Gold Fortune' on Akshaya Tritiya

Akshaya Tritiya, the auspicious festival of prosperity is here and the world's favorite jeweler has announced their promotion for the auspicious occasion. Some of the all new Joyalukkas Akshaya Tritiya 2019 was unveiled by Bollywood icon Kajol Devgan in India. Continuing the tradition of giving its patrons an opportunity to own their favorite jewelry and bring home prosperity, Joyalukkas has announced 'Gold Fortune' Offer to celebrate Akshaya Tritiya. Under 'Gold Fortune', patrons will be rewarded with free Gold Coins on purchase of Gold, Polki, Pearl and Diamond jewelry. The exclusive collection features a wide range of traditional and contemporary jewelry and is available across all Joyalukkas outlets around the world.

During the unveiling of the Akshaya Tritiya Collection, Joy Alukkas, Chairman and MD, Joyalukkas Group shared his excitement, "Akshaya Tritiya is a very special day for us, as it gives us the opportunity to serve our patrons with good luck and fortune. Our exclusive Akshaya Tritiya collection signifies unparalleled craftsmanship and unique designs with the continued trust of Joyalukkas. I welcome our patrons to bring home happiness and prosperity by taking advantage of our Gold Fortune Offer, and I wish them a Happy Akshaya Tritiya."

Bollywood star and Joyalukkas Brand Ambassador, Kajol Devgan, said, "I got the privilege of unveiling some of the auspicious Akshaya Tritiya collection at Joyalukkas and it was an absolute delight to see the exclusive designs first hand, at one glimpse, I felt like wanting to wear them all. I also take this opportunity to wish everyone happiness and prosperity on the auspicious occasion of Akshaya Tritiya."

During the Gold Fortune Offer period, customers will be rewarded with a free 1 GM 22k Gold Coin on purchase of Diamond, Polki and Pearl jewelry. On the Akshaya Tritiya day i.e. 7th May 2019, customers will enjoy a free 0.200 GM 22k Gold Coin on purchase on Gold Jewelry. Jewelry lovers can also avail the Joyalukkas pre-booking advantage to book for their favorite jewelry and beat the festive rush.

Akshaya Tritiya is an age-old tradition and is considered an auspicious day to invest, buy gold and initiate new ventures. Buying Gold on Akshaya Tritiya is believed to bring good luck, fortune and prosperity.



## ACK participates in 2019 Privilege Expo

ACK participated in the Privileges Expo for teachers supported by the Kuwait Teachers Society and the Ministry of Education. The three-day event took place from April 11th to the 13th at the Kuwait International Fairgrounds at Mishref.

ACK participated to show support for teachers, and to highlight its role in the educational sector in Kuwait by showing teachers and their students the programs the college has to offer, along with the benefits offered to educators working for ACK.

The Expo brought together over 50 companies, with three to four leading companies from each sector, providing teachers and their families with special privileges during the event, with over 100,000 teachers in the country, teachers are considered a strategic target for all leading companies in Kuwait.

The event included a ceremony for honoring the teachers with highest contribution to the profession. It also featured a number of activities for guests such a 3D games, instant registration for draws and the launch of a year-long loyalty program covering over 100 outlets offering teachers special privileges. ACK would like to thank the organizers of the Expo for their efforts in making the event possible, and to also thank the teachers of Kuwait for helping shape the future of their students.



Grade ten student from Jaber Al-Ali Secondary school for boys Ahmed Abdul Mon'em Al-Jabri was recently awarded for winning the first place in a competition organized by the school's English Department in English grammar and writing. Notably, Ahmed was the only student to get a full mark in the first term's final English test. Congratulations Ahmed, and keep up the good work.



Health

# Rastafarians fear being left out as Jamaica looks to cash in on cannabis

## Government wants to tap into a global market

**KINGSTON:** R as Iyah V describes himself as confrontational, especially with the police. Well known in Jamaica for his outspoken support of the marijuana industry, the Rastafarian - who sports a long, white beard and dreadlocks - has had various run-ins with the law over the years. Authorities have long persecuted Rastafari, he said, including their sacramental use of marijuana, which Jamaica decriminalized for personal use in 2015.

"I have no intention of letting my rights be trampled on by the state," he added. Now, he is hopeful that a government program due to launch this month could lead to stronger rights for Rastafarians and help indigenous cannabis farmers benefit from the exploding global market. The Alternative Development Program (ADP) focuses on transitioning small, "traditional" cannabis farmers from illicit trade to Jamaica's nascent formal industry.

It will provide land to cannabis farmers and subsidize the costs for the infrastructure they need to meet government licensing standards, said Floyd Green, state minister for industry, commerce and agriculture. The aim is to encourage farmers to become licensed suppliers so they can sell the plant for research and development, as well as supply medical marijuana companies in Jamaica and Canada. At the same time, the program will address long-

standing issues of land ownership that have held back many indigenous farmers from joining the legal market.

The government said it wants to bring all of Jamaica's cannabis farmers into the formal industry as it tries to tap into a global market that it estimates will be worth \$50 billion within the next decade. "We recognize that we have had traditional growers, and different parts of our societies have viewed the plant in different ways," said Green. "It is very important for us to move the illegal activity to a legalized trade," he said.

### Big business

According to the US State Department, Jamaican farmers cultivate 15,000 hectares (37,000 acres) of cannabis every year. Since decriminalizing marijuana - also called ganja, herb or weed - in 2015, Jamaica now allows citizens to grow up to five cannabis plants, while the possession of two ounces or less has been downgraded to a petty offence.

And the government has been granting licences to farmers who want to grow cannabis for medical, therapeutic or scientific purposes. The new policies also for the first time recognize the rights of Rastafarians to grow and consume marijuana as part of their faith. Rastafarians, who make up less than two percent of

Jamaica's population of 2.9 million, have faced over 150 years of persecution, said Janani Niaah, a professor at the University of the West Indies in Kingston who studies the Rastafari community.

While the new laws theoretically give Rastafarians more leniency, allowing them to possess and grow more than the general public, in practice they still face obstacles to participating in the legitimate marijuana trade, said Niaah. He pointed out that applying for a grower's licence costs \$300 for an individual, which is more than many Rastafarians can afford.

For a business, the initial cost is \$500. Depending on the type of licence acquired, the annual fee can be up to \$10,000. "They (the government) are not giving Rastafarians a link directly to the industry," said Niaah. "Unless you are a big businessman, you can't compete."

He said the government is capitalizing on cannabis while imposing impossible requirements on small farmers who have helped put Jamaican marijuana on the global map. And he sees the new program as just another tool for exploiting the country's small cannabis farmers: "The ADP is a grossly inadequate afterthought to an objectionable and exclusive economic design." Instead, Niaah would like to see the government fully legalize cannabis and support a national industry built specifically to benefit indigenous farmers.

### Land ownership

Another group that struggles to access the now-formalized marijuana industry is the Maroons. Maroons were Africans who escaped slavery and mixed with indigenous populations to form independent settlements. The vestiges of the Maroons' post-emancipation flight and the marginalization of Rastafarians mean much of the cannabis farming in Jamaica happens on land without a title, according to lawyer Grace Lindo. Lindo, who specializes in intellectual property and has an interest in the patenting of marijuana strains, sees the ADP as a chance to start untangling the complicated relationship between Jamaicans and their land.

"A significant amount of land is unregistered in Jamaica and the ganja laws recognize that people may be using family land for which there is no title," she said. If the government helps indigenous farmers get titles to their land, "then Rastafarians will be further along in the application process" for cannabis licences, she added. Green, the state minister of agriculture and industry, said the difficulty of establishing land ownership is one reason the ADP still has not launched two years after it was first announced. He agreed that proper titling of land is an essential part of the program. — Reuters

CLINIC

PAGE





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CLINIC

PAGE





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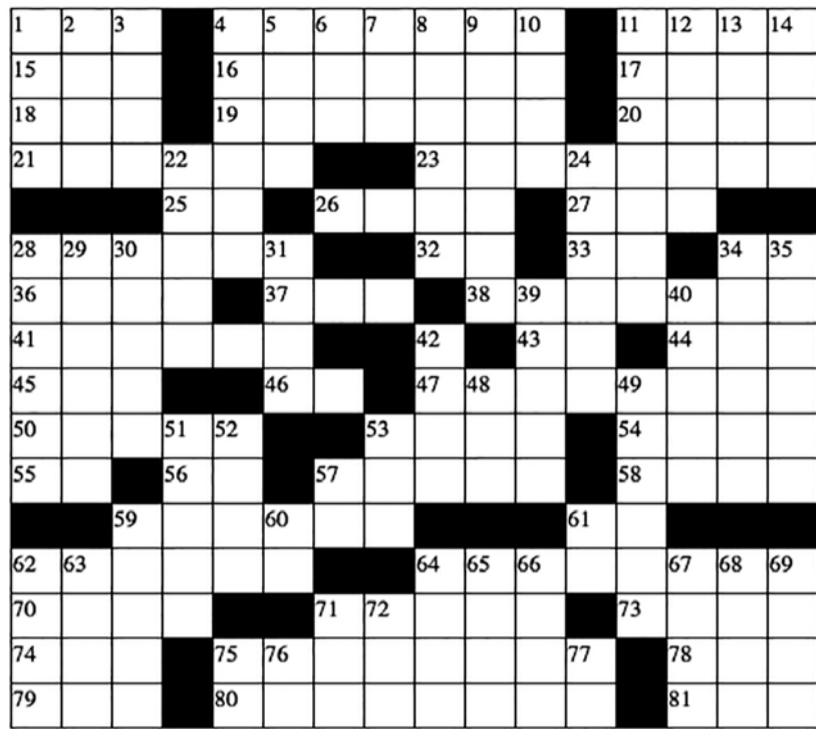
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2188



ACROSS

- 1. Inquire about.
4. State of uncertainty or perplexity especially as requiring a choice between equally unfavorable options.
11. In bed.
15. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
16. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
17. A collection of facts from which conclusions may be drawn.
18. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
19. A solicitation for money or food (especially in the street by an apparently penniless person).
20. An appreciable consequence (especially a lessening).
21. A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
23. A small family of tunicates in the class Thaliacea.
25. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
26. A software system that facilitates the creation and maintenance and use of an electronic database.
27. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
28. Characterized by variety.
32. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
33. Being ten more than one hundred forty.
36. Assist or encourage, usually in some wrongdoing.
37. A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
38. A short aria.
41. A hard ferromagnetic silver-white bivalent or trivalent metallic element.
43. An associate degree in nursing.
44. A graphical record of electrical activity of the brain.
45. A unit of surface area equal to 100 square meters.
46. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
47. Marked by poverty; befitting a beggar.
50. A sharp hooked claw especially on a bird of prey.
54. (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
55. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).
56. Unknown god.
58. A former communist country in eastern Europe and northern Asia.
62. Fig tree of India noted for great size and longevity.
70. Being three more than fifty.
73. The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
74. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
78. One of the most common of the five major classes of immunoglobulins.
79. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
80. Any plant of the genus Caragana having even-pinnate leaves and mostly yellow flowers followed by seeds in a linear pod.
81. An informal term for a father.

DOWN

- 1. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
2. Singing jazz.
3. God of love and erotic desire.
4. Corrupt morally or by intemperance or sensuality.
5. A large genus of dicotyledonous trees and shrubs of the family Aquifoliaceae that have small flowers and berries (including hollies).
6. A human limb.
7. Animal reproductive body consisting of an ovum or embryo together with nutritive and protective envelopes.
8. An unwholesome atmosphere.
9. Small bitter fruit of the marasca cherry tree from whose juice maraschino liqueur is made.
10. Any group or radical of the form RCO- where R is an organic group.
11. Capable of being added or added to.
12. English monk and scholar (672-735).
13. An inactive volcano in Sicily.
14. The specified day of the month.
22. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
24. (music) The speed at which a composition is to be played.
29. (anatomy) Opposite to or away from the mouth.
30. Used by northerners of Confederate soldiers.
31. Evergreen tree of eastern Asia and Philippines having large leathery leaves and small green-white flowers in compact cymes.
34. Spider monkeys.
35. Relating to or characteristic of Hungary.
39. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
40. (medicine) A grossly malformed and usually nonviable fetus.
42. Very dark black.
48. A doctor's degree in education.
49. Affected by ague.
51. Similar to the giraffe but smaller with much shorter neck and stripe on the legs.
52. (Babylonian) God of wisdom and agriculture and patron of scribes and schools.
53. The cry made by sheep.
57. A metric unit of volume equal to one thousandth of a liter.
59. Tropical American trees with palmately compound leaves and showy bell-shaped flowers.
60. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
61. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
63. A republic consisting of 26 of 32 counties comprising the island of Ireland.
64. Open-heart surgery in which the rib cage is opened and a section of a blood vessel is grafted from the aorta to the coronary artery to bypass the blocked section of the coronary artery and improve the blood supply to the heart.
65. Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
66. United States educator who introduced reforms that significantly altered the system of public education (1796-1859).
67. Being the one previously mentioned or spoken of.
68. Any tree or shrub of the genus Inga having pinnate leaves and showy usually white flowers.
69. (Babylonian) God of storms and wind.
71. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring in the air.
72. A nucleic acid consisting of large molecules shaped like a double helix.
75. A white trivalent metallic element.
76. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
77. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.

Friday's Solution

Grid for Friday's Solution crossword puzzle with letters filled in.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

The part of this day you love is that you're remembering old work habits and ideas that may have a chance of working for you now when you're on the job.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You're seeking stability, substance and practicality in your life and you're trying to go about it in a spiritual manner.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You want romance and the thrill of the chase. You feel as if you're not in control in every other part of your life but you can control who you decide you want in your life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Romance is at the top of your list especially when it involves the lover of your dreams. You want it to be all about your partner, making him or her the point of your life at this moment.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Watch a movie or do something more interesting today. Just make it fun whatever you do. You may want to visit a local library and read to the children.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Yep, you're in the mood for love. If you don't have that special someone in your home now, you're looking for them just as you were yesterday.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Bringing unity to your life is part and parcel of your thoughts today. Simplification is another avenue you're traveling down in life but you're also looking for love the same as you were yesterday.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You want more in life right now but you want it to be substantial too. That means if you were a building contractor, you'd want your building to last longer than your life time.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You really need to stop and smell the roses. Taking time to be thankful for what you've achieved in home, family, love and the job is nothing short of a miracle.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This cycle that is coming into your life now emphasizes more, value and the recognition of that value is part of everything at which you look.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Value in everything you do means a lot to you now. It pushes you to be better in every aspect of your life. This is a good trait to cultivate.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

The finer things in life is the cycle now saturating your thoughts. You need security and you crave all the things that make others say, "Wow."

Wordsearch Puzzle

Comedy Movies 3 - Word Search

Word search grid for Comedy Movies 3.

- ANALYZE THIS
ANNIE HALL
ANTZ
ARTHUR
BILLY MADISON
DATE NIGHT
DUCK SOUP
ELECTION
HOT SHOTS JUNO
LIFE OF BRIAN
MALLRATS
MEATBALLS
OFFICE SPACE
REAL GENIUS
ROXANNE
RUSHMORE
SLAP SHOT
SLEEPER
SPACEBALLS
TOOTSIE
TWINS
UNCLE BUCK

Friday's Solution

Comedy Movies 2 - Solution

Word search grid for Comedy Movies 2 with solution.

- BABE
BEETLEJUICE
BEING THERE
BOB ROBERTS
BOWFINGER
BULL DURHAM
BULWORTH
CLUELESS
FLETCH
FORREST GUMP
GHOSTBUSTERS
HAPPY GILMORE
LOCAL HERO
OH GOD
PARENTHOOD
RATATOUILLE
RUSH HOUR
SABRINA
SHREK
SLACKER
STIR CRAZY
THE NAKED GUN
TWINS

Daily Sudoku

Daily Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers.

Friday's Solution

Sudoku solution grid for Friday's solution.



# Lifestyle

SUNDAY, APRIL 21, 2019



Gardeners work inside the Royal Greenhouses of Laeken castle during a press preview in Brussels. — AFP

## In Notre-Dame's shadow, a 'village' faces uncertain future

Days after the catastrophic fire at Paris's Notre-Dame, around 30 business owners on Thursday gathered at a cafe in the shadow of the burned cathedral. The owners of restaurants and souvenir stores, flower stalls and gourmet food markets in an area known to residents simply as the "village", they have all been forced to close since Monday's devastating fire at the UNESCO World Heritage landmark.

Few at the gathering Thursday morning in the Quasimodo cafe—named after the hunchback in Victor Hugo's celebrated novel set at the cathedral-seemed optimistic about the chances of re-opening in the near future. Police are letting only residents and business owners onto the River Seine island known as the Ile de la Cite where the cathedral stands, choking off the tourist traffic that is their lifeblood.

"We usually have lots of tourists, more than 500 a day, but now there's nobody," said Virginie Aranda, who has a stall at the flower market on the Ile de la Cite. "We haven't even been able to come and water our plants." She and others at the meeting say the extended security perimeter set up while inspections are carried out at Notre-Dame could cost them dearly.

"We've already had a tough winter because of the 'yellow vests, and now we have this," said Betty Toulhier, another flower vendor, referring to the protests that have shaken central Paris since November. "We're at risk of losing everything," said Toulhier, who has held a stand at the flower market since 1971.

But Patrice Le Jeune, president of the Notre-Dame business alliance, said that based on his meetings with city officials, the island's picturesque streets could remain closed for weeks, maybe months. "They're not going to take any risks," he tells the group. Aides to Ariel Weil, the mayor of the Fourth Arrondissement, which includes Notre-Dame, said he was not immediately available for comment.

### One coffee

For many Parisians, the winding streets in the shadow of Notre-Dame are full of nothing but cheap tourist stands and overpriced restaurants claiming to be among the oldest in the city. It's an image that riles many residents and business owners, some of whom have lived and worked on the Ile de la Cite for decades. "People forget that there's a church, but there's also a village that surrounds it. The cathedral is our church, our children were baptized there," said one mother, asking not to be identified by name.

"It's a village," agreed Michel Mathieu, whose grandmother opened a store on the Rue d'Arcole in 1921. That store is still open, offering the souvenirs you won't find from the roving trinket sellers, as is another right down the street owned by his brother. And another by Mathieu's daughter. Like other businesses, they are hoping insurance policies will cover the lost revenue and merchandise—the dead flowers, the food going bad in restaurant refrigerators.

But so far officials have not declared the site a disaster zone, meaning insurance won't kick in, and shop owners can't file for state aid for the forced unemployment of their workers. "There are jobs at stake," said Esther Butel, who runs a restaurant with three employees on the Quai des Fleurs. "I opened today but this morning all I sold was one coffee. I'm not going to make it with one client paying 2.50 euros," she told AFP.

Le Jeune said he would meet soon with the tourism chief in Mayor Anne Hidalgo's cabinet, to push for a freeze on social charges like payroll taxes and VAT for the affected businesses. But such help, if it comes, might be too late for some. "We opened just four weeks ago," said Francois Monville, who chose the Notre-Dame neighborhood for his food shop upon returning to France with his wife after 15 years abroad. "The idea was to create something for visitors, but for Parisians as well, to reconcile tourists and locals," he said. But with rent, wages and loan payments, "we can't hold out like this for long." — AFP

## On American hard drives, a precise 3-D model of Notre-Dame

At Vassar College in the United States, a university team gathered the week before the devastating fire at Notre-Dame cathedral in Paris to plan an ambitious project: inventorying about a terabyte of 3-D modeling data of the famed Gothic masterpiece. The precious data is the work of Andrew Tallon, a Francophile American art professor who loved medieval architecture and was passionate about Gothic cathedrals. He died in November.

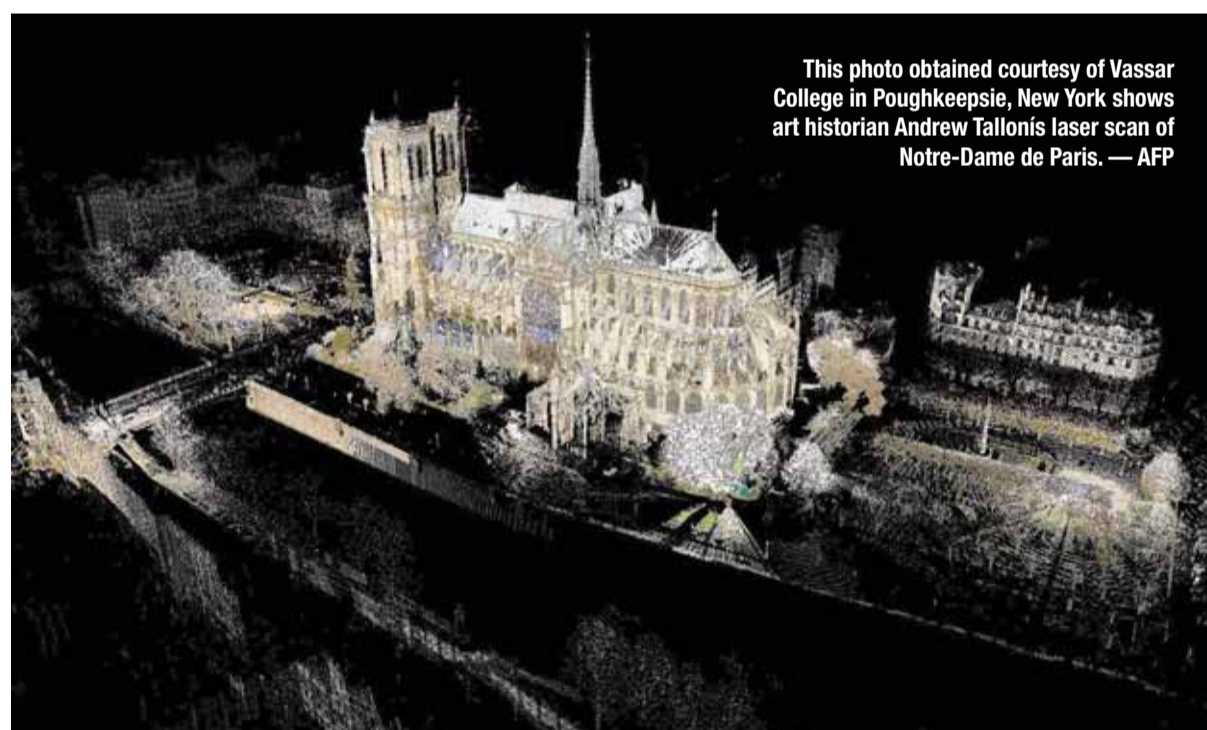
His technique was nothing new, but his application of the tools was innovative. In 2011 and 2012, funded by a foundation, Tallon used a laser device to accurately measure the interior and exterior of the cathedral, which was ravaged by flames this week. He placed the device in about 50 places to measure the distance between each wall and pillar, recess, statue or other form—and to record all the imperfections intrinsic to any centuries-old monument.

The result is over a billion points in the "point cloud." The final computer-generated images reconstruct the cathedral down to the smallest detail, including its tiny defects, with a precision of about five millimeters. These images, for example, confirmed how the west side of the cathedral was a "total mess... a train wreck," Tallon told National Geographic in 2015, pointing to the misalignment of the interior columns.

He wanted to get "into the mind of the builders," said his former student Lindsay Cook, a Francophile like Tallon who is now a visiting assistant professor of art at Vassar. "He was interested in using laserscan data to find moments like small ruptures in the construction, places where things were not exactly straight or in plumb, where you could see the hand of an individual architect at work, and in that case the hand of individual masons," Cook told AFP.

### A fitting memorial

From these measurements were born the images published in a book in 2013 and shown in an exhibition at Notre-Dame in 2014. But the bulk of the data remains untapped in the form of 1s and 0s on some hard drives. Several French firms have also digitally mapped Notre-Dame bit by bit—not for historical research but for conser-



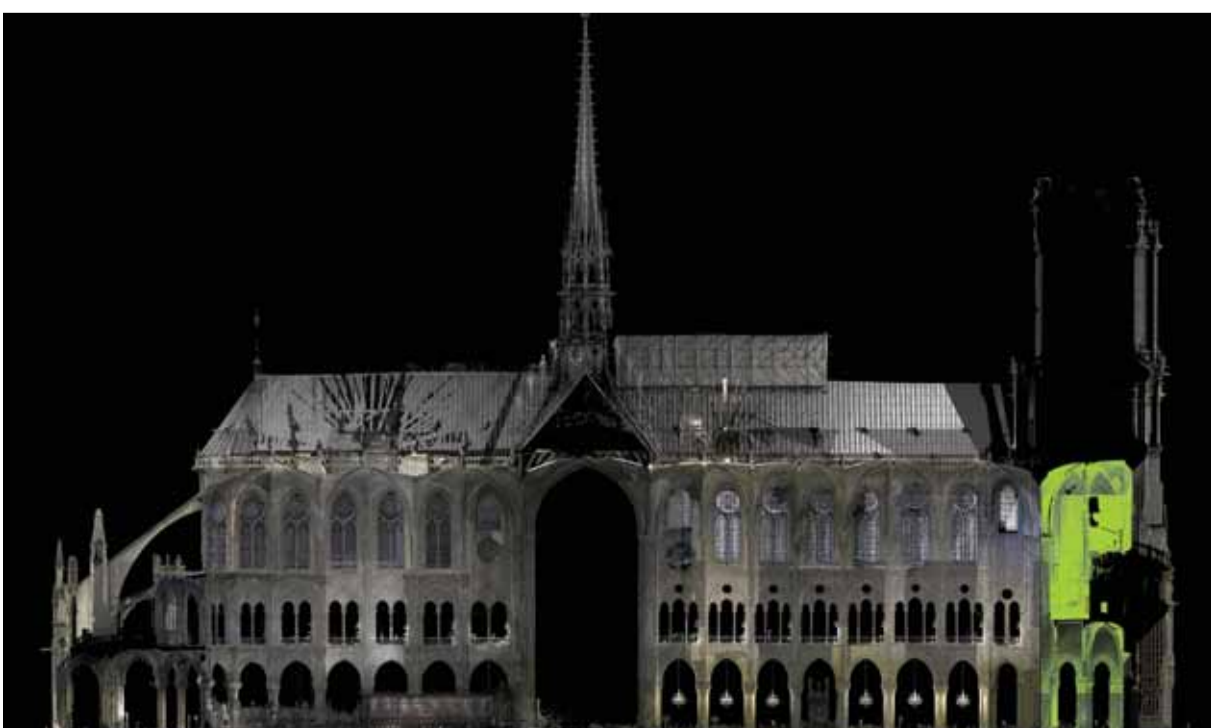
This photo obtained courtesy of Vassar College in Poughkeepsie, New York shows art historian Andrew Tallon's laser scan of Notre-Dame de Paris. — AFP

vation purposes. Art Graphique et Patrimoine, which assisted Tallon in his work, says that over 25 years, they have collected 30-50 billion data points, notably of the destroyed 19th century spire and the ravaged roof.

Tallon "has a complete model, but it is not exhaustive," Gael Hamon, the CEO of Art Graphique et Patrimoine, told AFP. His firm is now trying to piece the data "puzzle" together. Notre-Dame can probably be reconstructed without this data, but laser modeling brings precision to the photographs and drawings held by architects in France. This is particularly useful for elements such as roofing and the spire, which were more difficult to measure physically.

The modeling will help restorers to identically recreate the part of the vault that has collapsed inside. "If eventually the authorities wish to use this, then of course it would be shared with them," said Cook. The data is currently on external hard drives at Vassar, with copies at Columbia University, where academics collaborated with Tallon as part of the "Mapping Gothic" project. If architects ask for the data, it would have to be delivered in person, as it is too large to be transmitted over the internet.

If Tallon's "scholarly work can somehow inform those who will be taking on the daunting task of restoring a cathedral to its former glory, it will be a fitting memorial for a very wonderful scholar who devoted so much to Notre-Dame," said Vassar dean Jon Chenette. On other hard drives, historians will also find, if they wish one day, another inheritance from Tallon: laser modeling of the cathedrals of Beauvais, Chartres, Canterbury and even the Basilica of Saint-Denis.—AFP



Art historian Andrew Tallon





In this file photo Puerto Rican singer Ozuna performs during the 19th Annual Latin Grammy Awards in Las Vegas, Nevada. — AFP photos



In this file photo Mexican singer Alfredo Gonzalez plays accordion with the band Los Tucanes de Tijuana on stage at Coachella Music Festival in Indio, California.



In this file photo Puerto Rican singer Bad Bunny performs on stage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California.

## Latin pop has US grooving more and more in Spanish

Just two years after the litting mega-hit "Despacito" captivated the globe, Latin stars are cementing their place in the US mainstream, moving beyond scoring a one-off smash to headline festivals and permeate the charts. An unprecedented number of Spanish-language acts are performing at this year's Coachella festival, where a second weekend of shows begins Friday—a sure-fire sign of their mounting influence in a country where 41 million people claim Spanish as their mother tongue.

They are not just guests of top-billed acts or appearing on lesser stages—stars like reggaeton revolutionary J Balvin and Puerto Rican trap artist Bad Bunny are winning key time slots on their own. And they are singing in Spanish, eschewing the "crossover" label often slapped on their A-list predecessors like Ricky Martin, Shakira and Gloria Estefan. Bad Bunny—the 25-year-old face of Latin trap, a genre that fuses reggaeton with elements of hip hop from the US south—lit up Coachella's top stage during week one and is set to perform again Sunday. "I'm very proud of what I represent, of the Latino community that has come far speaking the language they speak," he said in Spanish to the throng gathered to see him.

### Streaming influence

Colombia's J Balvin brought his unique version of reggaeton—a massively popular Puerto Rican-born amalgam of Caribbean beats and hip-hop influences—to the California festival's main stage, the genre's first ever full showcase there. "It took 15 years for reggaeton to get to Coachella. We are here!" the boundary-pusher shouted to launch his history-making performance, as the crowd vibed and waved flags representing countries from throughout Latin America.

In another landmark moment, the 33-year-old Balvin will in August headline Chicago's Lollapalooza festival, becoming the first Spanish-language act to nab one of the coveted spots. Many experts attribute the US Latin music industry's rapid growth to a parallel streaming explosion. According to the Recording Industry Association of America, Latin music saw its second consecutive year of double-digit growth stateside in 2018, jumping 18 percent from the year prior to rake in \$413 million.

Paid subscription platforms like Spotify's premium service meanwhile saw nearly 50 percent growth in revenues. The trends are feeding off each other, according to RIAA chief operations officer Michele Ballantyne: "Any conversation about the Latin music market starts with one word: streaming." "Latin music's transformation from a physical-based business to a streaming-driven one is even faster than the overall US music market's turnaround," she said.

Indeed, YouTube said last December that in 2018, eight out of its top 10 most-viewed music videos worldwide belonged to Latino artists. Afro-Latino star Ozuna appearing in four of them. The Dominican-Puerto Rican recently vowed to continue performing in his native Spanish, telling Billboard that "all the time, it's 'English, English, English.'" "If I have the opportunity of having so many followers, and helping to take Latino artists and culture to the mainstream, I'm not going to selfishly throw it away because I learned English and can 'cross over.'"

### Music a common language

The Latin music boom in the United States is noteworthy particularly in light of Donald Trump's hardline stance on the country's southern border, with the US president insisting the nation has been overrun by migrants. For Coachella attendee Andrea Castillo, the growing stateside presence of Spanish-speaking acts symbolizes that Latin culture has become more and more ingrained in US society. "Our generation is fighting for what we want, and that includes music," Castillo told AFP as Chilean



singer Mon Laferte shimmied through her primetime set.

Laferte went on after Los Tucanes de Tijuana—one of Mexico's most famous narco-ballad bands—got the crowd swaying to its accordion-heavy anthems. "When they went on, I got so happy, like, 'Where are all my Mexicans!' said the 25-year-old Castillo, who is from San Diego. "It was honestly pretty emotional." For balladeer Laferte, 35, the invitation to play on Coachella's top stage shows that "language is not something that's separating us anymore."

Speaking in Spanish to AFP, she called music a "common language that makes distances smaller." Laferte said the waves of negativity against Latinos—some of which can be traced back to Trump statements about immigrants—actually "generates a bigger opposition." "There are many people who... embrace us, and are very kind, and want to speak our language," she said.—AFP

In this file photo Spanish singer Rosalia and Colombian singer J Balvin perform on stage at the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival in Indio, California.



In this file photo Chilean singer Mon Laferte performs on stage at Coachella Music Festival in Indio, California.

"Where are all my Mexicans!"

K-pop phenomenon BTS first Korean act to top UK chart

K-pop sensation BTS scored another record on Friday, becoming the first Korean act to top Britain's album chart. The floppy-haired seven-piece's latest album "Map of the soul: Persona" went straight in at number one, days after their single "Boy With Luv" broke the YouTube record for the most

views in 24 hours with 74.6 million hits. The track is also the band's first ever British Top 15 single, charting at number 13 on Friday.

The band, known for their boyish good looks and meticulously choreographed dance moves, will play two sold out nights at London's iconic Wembley Stadium, on June 1 and 2. Earlier this year the septet, whose name is short for Bangtan Sonyeondan, which translates as Bulletproof Boy Scouts, became the first K-pop band to top the US album charts. Some 800,000 tourists were believed to have chosen South Korea as their destination last year because of BTS—more than seven percent of the total visitors to the country.—AFP

Rapper Kodak Black arrested in New York on drug, weapons charges

Rapper Kodak Black was released from custody by the New York State Police on Thursday after being arrested on drug and gun charges while coming across the Canada-US border near Niagara Falls, police said. Black, 21, was stopped on Wednesday evening by US Customs and Border Protection agents at the Lewiston-Queenston International Bridge headed back into the United States from Canada, the New York State Police said in a release.

Black's real name is Bill Kapri, and he is a resident of Miramar, Florida. Black, who was driving a Cadillac Escalade, and three other Florida men following in a Porsche were arrested on drug and weapons charges. Black was charged with second-degree criminal possession of a weapon, a Glock 9mm pistol, and unlawful possession of marijuana, police said.

The other three men face similar charges from weapons and drugs found in the Porsche. A representative for Black was not immediately available to talk to Reuters on Thursday evening. Black was released on Thursday afternoon from the Niagara County Jail on \$20,000 bail, multiple media accounts have reported,

including CNN. Video footage from local media outlets showed Black leaving the jail holding a fan-like spread of cash over his face.

CNN reported that he had been scheduled to perform at the House of Blues in Boston on Wednesday night and his lack of appearance angered waiting fans. TMZ reported that Black's show at the Foxwoods Resort Casino in Mashantucket, Connecticut, scheduled for Thursday night was also canceled. The rapper and songwriter, signed to Atlantic Records, has become one of the biggest artists of hip-hop. He is known for his hit singles "Zeze", "Roll in Peace", "Tunnel Vision", and "No Flockin".

Black has had a number of run-ins with the law over the last few years, mostly over weapons and drug charges, multiple media accounts say. He recently angered some fans by expressing a romantic interest in the girlfriend of late rapper Nipsey Hussle, who was shot to death outside a clothing store he owned in Los Angeles last month.—Reuters



Member of the hip-hop group Cypress Hill Senen Sen Dog Reyes, Lawrence DJ Muggs Mugerud, Eric Bobo Correa and Louis B-Real Freese are honored with star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos

Latin hip-hop group Cypress Hill unveil 'Walk of Fame' star

The Latin American hip-hop group Cypress Hill on Thursday unveiled a star on Hollywood's "Walk of Fame" in Los Angeles, the city where they formed more than three decades ago. "It's totally surreal," Lawrence Mugerud, aka DJ Muggs, told AFP. "We walked here as kids, we looked at the stars. We never thought we'd have one. "We represent hip-hop, Latinos, music, dreams. It's wonderful to celebrate with the family," he added, 30 years after the formation of the first Latin American group to have a record go platinum in the US, or sell more than one million copies.

"Before music I was in a gang, and there are not many ways out as you know—either prison or the graveyard,"

said Mugerud, with bandmate Louis Freese, aka B-Real, at his side. "My brothers saw something in me and put on the path to music and we formed Cypress Hill." The band's name was inspired by a neighborhood street where the members grew up. They sold more than three million copies of their second album, "Black Sunday" in 1993, while their latest album, "Elephants on Acid", was released in September last year.—AFP



Cypress Hill's just unveiled Hollywood Walk of Fame Star is pictured during a ceremony in Hollywood, California.





A picture shows the ancient basilica which dates back to the 5th century in Qalb Lozeh village in northwestern Syria. — AFP photos

## In war-torn Syria, an ancestor of Notre-Dame still stands

An arched entrance flanked by two towers, elaborate carvings and a broad-aisled nave: a 5th century limestone church in northwestern Syria is the architectural forerunner of France's famed Notre-Dame cathedral. Hemmed by the village of Qalb Lozeh (Arabic for Heart of the Almond), the cathedral which goes by the same name is widely hailed as Syria's finest example of Byzantine-era architecture. And it is believed to have been the source of inspiration for Romanesque and Gothic cathedrals in Europe, including the Paris landmark Notre-Dame.

"It is the earliest known example of the twin tower facade flanking a highly elaborate arched entrance, the precursor to what became known as the Romanesque style," says Middle East cultural expert Diana Darke. Romanesque architecture evolved into the Gothic style that defines Notre-Dame, she tells AFP. The layout of the church in northwestern Syria has many similarities with Notre-Dame, she says. "The specific similarities between Notre-Dame and Qalb Lozeh are first and foremost, the twin tower design flanking the elaborate arched portal," says Darke.

Inside Qalb Lozeh, "the similarities are in the pillars dividing the church into three broad aisles—the nave and side-aisles—a deliberate echoing of the Holy Trinity, with three sweeping arches resting on broad capitals to spread and distribute the weight which carried the clerestory windows and the original wooden roof over the nave," she adds.

The abandoned church is within a cluster of 40 so-called "Ancient Villages of Northern Syria" which UNESCO has included on its World Heritage List since 2011. Two years later as fighting ravaged Syria and its cul-



tural heritage the villages were placed on UNESCO's list of endangered sites. UNESCO says the villages including Qalb Lozeh—home to pagan temples and ancient churches—illustrate "the transition from the ancient pagan world of the Roman Empire to Byzantine Christianity".

### Crusaders export design

Qalb Lozeh was built by Syrian Christians whose wealth was based on wine and olive oil production, says Darke. The church was frequented by pilgrims and is thought to have been a key stop on the way to the nearby basilica of Saint Simeon the Stylite. "Merchants, pilgrims and monks moved constantly between this area and Europe over the

centuries," she says. "So it's not surprising that the design ideas found their way gradually back to Europe, even before the crusaders of the 12th century," she adds.

Syrian historian Fayez Kawsara said that crusaders brought Qalb Lozeh's architectural style to Europe in the 12th century. "Anyone who delves deep in the study of Gothic art and especially Gothic churches will find that this architectural style travelled to Europe (from Syria)" he says, pointing to the cathedral's soaring arches, its detailed sculpting and its squared towers. "The biggest proof of this is... Notre-Dame cathedral," adds Kawsara. Qalb Lozeh—which is much smaller in size than the Paris landmark, lies in the jihadist-held region of Idlib.

Children used the abandoned church as a playground and graffiti has been scrawled on the outside and inside walls of the cathedral. Caretakers who guarded the church quickly left after Syria's conflict erupted in 2011. Since then it has fallen into neglect, says villager Issam Ibrahim. "It was not being protected and as village residents, we took it upon ourselves to protect the site," he says. Wissam Mohammad, another resident, said the church holds important significance for the local community. "It is not just a pile of old stones. It is a symbol of Syria's culture," says Mohammad.—AFP



## Tourists follow 'Game of Thrones' trail in N Ireland

Wielding a replica broadsword, Indian tourist Akshay Mannur duels with friends—re-enacting scenes from "Game of Thrones" on the Northern Ireland pilgrimage trail for devotees of the blockbuster fantasy TV show. Since the blood and guts series began its rise to prominence in 2011, fans have started to flock to the coastal caves and ruined castles of the British province where much of the HBO television production was shot. "Every new step is like something new, it's more than my expectations," 23-year-old student Mannur marveled. "It's a beautiful country—Northern Ireland is just amazing."

### Multinational tour buses

Tourism Northern Ireland estimates the magical show—in its final season—drew 120,000 visitors to the province in 2016, generating £30 million. One in six visitors now comes to Northern Ireland to visit shooting locations, according to their estimates. Along the largely coastal trail, a short drive outside the capital of Belfast, that popularity is clear to see. A steady hum of buses and coaches are marshalled in and out of parking lots on strict schedules, and sleepy village shops throng with tourists. "The last week, I think on Saturday past, we had a bus with 24 nationalities on it," said tour guide Patrick Rogan at the mouth of the Cushendun Caves, the site of a pivotal plot point in the series. "We had people from Patagonia, from New Zealand, from Japan, from Russia, from South Korea and Europe, so I think that tells its own story." Since 2012 his employer—the "Stones and Thrones" tour—has offered daily outings out of Belfast, manned mainly by guides who have acted as extras on the show.

Today they run at least two full buses a day, he said, competing with at least four other companies offering a similar service. Other more bespoke tour services offer immersive experiences—axe-throwing, archery, and photo opportunities with a pair of wolves that starred in the epic series.

### The dark history

A popular comparison holds that "Game of Thrones" is to Northern Ireland tourism what "Lord of the Rings" has been

to New Zealand. But Northern Ireland's very recent bloody past during the so-called "Troubles"—when 3,500 were killed in 30 years of sectarian strife—makes the boom particularly welcome. "The dark history that was here is coming out," said Irish actor Liam Cunningham, a stalwart character in the series now feted as the most expensive to ever be filmed for the small screen. "The place is blooming, and for us to have this show here and be part of that transition is joyful."



People walk along the Dark Hedges tree tunnel, which was featured in the TV series Game of Thrones, near Ballymonee in County Antrim, Northern Ireland. — AFP photos

### This still has longevity

Cunningham was speaking at the opening of a touring exhibition of costume and scenery pieces in Belfast, the same week as the new season of the series premiered. Ranked displays of dragon skulls, intricately crafted weapons and interactive exhibits are preceded by a gallery of landscape prints, depicting the countryside shooting locations. A caption on one image reads "Views to die horribly for", whilst another reads "Sun, sea and savagery", referring to the show's reputation for bloodily killing off major characters.

They are testament to the canny local tourist board, making efforts to cement the link between their territory and the series. "I think our association with such a global success helps to transform the image of Northern Ireland across the globe," said John McGrillen, chief executive of Tourism Northern Ireland. "In many ways that gives you PR that you just simply couldn't buy." With the final season of "Game of Thrones" under way, the fever pitch devotion to the series may be about to end.

But with spin-off projects in the pipeline and a studio tour development due to open in Northern Ireland next year, the province still hopes for tourism revenues. "We think this still has longevity," said McGrillen.—AFP

## Beauty industry to witness massive increase of \$32.2bn by 2025

### Boutiqaat signs agreement with Huda Beauty

With a booming retail market and a taste for the latest fashion trends, Kuwaiti based brands are making their mark in the global fashion scene. The country's high spending power and taste for luxury goods has fueled entrepreneurs to establish local brands that cater to the high demand witnessed by both Kuwait and the region. In Kuwait's latest fashion news, Boutiqaat, an online beauty platform offering over 700 international, local and exclusive brands, signed an agreement to become the exclusive distributor of Huda Beauty products in the region.

The e-commerce platform has developed a reputation of signing exclusive partnerships with some of the region's most powerful celebrities and influencers. With its vision of becoming the go to one-stop beauty hub, Boutiqaat offers the trendiest selections in make-up and beauty products. By joining forces with Huda Beauty, Boutiqaat will now offer one of the world's fastest-growing beauty brands launched by the infamous beauty blogger and businesswoman, Huda Kattan. Since it was established in 2013, Huda Beauty has been expanding rapidly on a regional and international scale and has also become the top beauty Instagram account with over 26 million followers.

When asked about the exclusive agreement, Abdulwahab Al-Essa, co-founder of Boutiqaat, said, "At the core of our business model, we are keen to offer our customers with the latest fashion trends in exclusive and mainstream cosmetics in the region. Our goal is to develop an innovative platform offering the latest beauty brands while providing influencers with an e-commerce platform to offer their followers with their exclusive product lines."

Co-founder Al-Essa continued to say that the beauty hub has been progressively developing its

platform to meet and exceed customer demand, now offering a variety of over 25,000 products from all over the globe with delivery across the GCC. The platform also offers customers a full-fledged user experience with the option to catch up on the latest make-up tutorials, as well as provide an access point to connect customers with their favorite brands and celebrities through social media.

When asked about the platform's strategic direction, Al-Essa added, "Our goal is to only offer the latest in beauty and fashion products but also to provide our customers with an unrivaled user experience by anticipating their wants and needs when it comes to the cosmetics industry. This requires keeping our customers updated with the latest new, providing valuable research backed by a passionate team who is highly dedicated in providing access to the latest fashion trends, tips and expert advice. Our team at Boutiqaat has been successful in anticipating the need of our current customer base and will continue progressively to develop our platform while adding new beauty products as we continue to grow."

The beauty industry is expected to witness a massive increase through the support of social media and digital platforms. The expected increase is estimated to be around \$32.2 billion by 2025. In terms of the Middle East, the market has seen growth at a rapid pace in comparison to other regions around the world within the beauty and cosmetics industry. The retail sector is witnessing higher levels of consumer demands for beauty and personal care products and are contributing towards developing the market.



## Prada woos China with Shanghai catwalk in Milan fashion week

Italian fashion giant Prada said Thursday its upcoming men's collection will hit the catwalk in Shanghai rather than Milan, in a nod to the importance of China for the luxury world. The Men's Spring/Summer 2020 collection will be held in the coastal metropolis on June 6, during Milan fashion week, to mark the 40th anniversary of the twinning of the cities. Prada said in a statement. "China has always occupied a prominent place in

Prada's imagination; in particular, the city of Shanghai and its rich cultural life," Miuccia Prada was quoted as saying. "The attitude and identity of Shanghai, its dynamic fusions of past and present, old and new, are sources of constant exchange and interest," she added. Prada, Italy's biggest luxury group in terms of turnover, said it wanted to develop its presence in China through "new and original experiences". A

third of all luxury goods worldwide are purchased by Chinese consumers. Prada's fashion rivals Dolce & Gabbana are reeling from a boycott in China after a calamitous advertising campaign featuring a Chinese woman struggling to eat spaghetti and pizza with chopsticks that was decried as racist.—AFP



Models present creations by Pakistani designer Neelo Allawala on the second day of the "Hum Showcase" Fashion Week in Karachi. — AFP photos



## 'Hum Showcase' Fashion Week



Models present creations by Pakistani fashion brand Umer and Imrana on the second day of the "Hum Showcase" Fashion Week in Karachi.



Models present creations by Pakistani designer Mona Imran on the second day of the "Hum Showcase" Fashion Week in Karachi.





# Classifieds

Sunday, April 21, 2019

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## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 10 - 35 km/h .

**BY NIGHT:** Fair with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 38 km/h and some scattered clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 20/04/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	32 °C	24 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	32 °C	18 °C		
ABDALY	33 °C	19 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	32 °C	22 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	31 °C	22 °C		
SALMIYAH	29 °C	24 °C		
AHMADI	29 °C	23 °C		
NUWAISIB	29 °C	21 °C		
WAFRA	32 °C	17 °C		
SALMY	30 °C	18 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	04/21	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	31 °C	18 °C	NW-NE	12 - 32 km/h
Monday	04/22	Relatively hot with a chance for rising dust	30 °C	15 °C	NE-VRB	20 - 50 km/h
Tuesday	04/23	Relatively hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	29 °C	16 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h
Wednesday	04/24	Relatively hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	30 °C	17 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:54
Sunrise	05:17
Zuhr	11:47
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:17
Isha	19:38

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	33 °C
MIN. Temp.	22 °C
MAX. RH	80 %
MIN. RH	20 %
MAX. Wind	N 39 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

## Hospitals

Sabah Hospital	24812000
Amiri Hospital	22450005
Maternity Hospital	24843100
Mubarak Al-Kabir Hospital	25312700
Chest Hospital	24849400
Farwaniya Hospital	24892010
Adan Hospital	23940620
Ibn Sina Hospital	24840300
Al-Razi Hospital	24846000
Physiotherapy Hospital	24874330/9

## Clinics

Kaizen center	25716707
Rawda	22517733
Adaliya	22517144
Khaldiya	24848075
Kaifan	24849807
Shamiya	24848913
Shuwaikh	24814507
Abdullah Salem	22549134
Nuzha	22526804
Industrial Shuwaikh	24814764
Qadsiya	22515088
Dasmah	22532265
Bneid Al-Gar	22531908
Shaab	22518752
Qibla	22459381
Ayoun Al-Qibla	22451082
Mirqab	22456536
Sharq	22465401
Salmiya	25746401

## EMERGENCY

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Automated enquiry about the Civil ID CARD is  
**1889988**

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9



## Flight Schedule

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page ([www.kuwait-airport.com.kw](http://www.kuwait-airport.com.kw))

## DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 21/4/2019					Departure Flights on Sunday 21/4/2019				
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time		Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	KAC 774	Riyadh	13:35			
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	JZR 212	Jeddah	13:45	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	QTR 1078	Doha	14:10	JZR	713	Sohag
KAC	102	London	00:50	FDB 5059	Dubai	14:15	MSR	615	Bahrain
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	GFA 221	Colombo	14:35	BBC	044	Dhaka
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	KAC 364	Amman	14:40	FDB	072	Dubai
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	KAC 562	Madinah	14:40	JZR	409	Delhi
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC 792	Jeddah	14:45	IGO	1758	Kochi
JZR	710	Luxor	01:05	SVA 500	Riyadh	14:45	KAC	677	Dubai
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	JZR 222	Mumbai	14:45	THY	773	Istanbul
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC 304	Jeddah	14:55	DLH	625	Doha
PGT	840	Istanbul	01:50	KAC 618	Baku	15:00	KAC	417	Manila
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	JZR 602	New York	15:00	KAC	363	Colombo
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC 118	Muscat	15:00	JZR	111	Doha
JZR	724	Alexandria	02:05	KAC 692	Tehran	15:00	JZR	707	Luxor
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	02:15	KAC 516	Jeddah	15:05	THY	765	Istanbul
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KNE 529	Abu Dhabi	15:15	PGT	859	Istanbul
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	ETD 303	Muscat	15:20	KKK	1269	Istanbul
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	OMA 645	Sharjah	15:35	ETH	621	Addis Ababa
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	ABY 127	Dubai	15:45	KLM	446	Amsterdam
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	UAE 857	Cairo	15:50	UAE	854	Dubai
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC 546	Sohag	16:00	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	FEG 341	Dubai	16:10	OMA	644	Muscat
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	FDB 051	Doha	16:15	QTR	1087	Doha
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	QTR 1072	Beirut	16:15	MSR	613	Cairo
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	KAC 502	Doha	17:05	PGT	861	Istanbul
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR 116	Riyadh	17:10	LMU	511	Cairo
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	SVA 510	Luxor	17:15	IGO	1752	Chennai
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	JZR 710	Bahrain	17:30	QTR	1077	Doha
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	GFA 215	Shiraz	17:35	KAC	303	Mumbai
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	IRA 665	Jeddah	17:35	KAC	103	London
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	JZR 214	Bahrain	18:00	JZR	715D	Sohag
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	JZR 104	Doha	18:10	THY	771	Istanbul
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	QTR 1080	Istanbul	18:20	GFA	212	Bahrain
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	JZR 302	Cairo	18:30	RJA	649	Amman
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	MSR 620	Asyut	18:45	JZR	211	Jeddah
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	JZR 704	Amman	19:05	BAW	156	London
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	RJA 640	Bahrain	19:05	KAC	171	Frankfurt
BAW	157	London	06:10	GFA 217	Dubai	19:05	KAC	165	Rome
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:20	KAC	501	Beirut
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	KAC 156	Istanbul	19:25	KAC	545	Cairo
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	RBG 555	Alexandria	19:40	KAC	561	Amman
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	KAC 616	Bahrain	19:40	QTR	8512	Doha
QTR	8511	Doha	07:00	KAC 776	Riyadh	19:45	IGO	1756	CNN
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC 166	Rome	20:00	KAC	613	Bahrain
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	KAC 104	London	20:00	KAC	161	Geneva
UAE	855	Dubai	07:35	FDB 057	Dubai	20:05	UAE	856	Dubai
IGO	1755	CNN	08:00	OMA 647	Muscat	20:05	KAC	117	New York
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:10	KAC	791	Madinah
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	MEA 402	Beirut	20:15	KAC	787	Jeddah
JZR	708	Luxor	08:45	KAC 542	Cairo	20:35	JZR	601	Baku
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	QTR 1088	Doha	20:40	KAC	691	Muscat
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KLM 445	Amsterdam	21:00	ABY	126	Sharjah
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC 172	Frankfurt	21:00	KAC	741	Dammam
FDB	5055	Dubai	09:20	ETD 307	Abu Dhabi	21:10	KAC	773	Riyadh
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	UAE 859	Dubai	21:15	JZR	301	Istanbul
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ALK 229	Colombo	21:15	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	THY 764	Istanbul	21:30	OMA	642	Muscat
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC 676	Dubai	21:45	KAC	101	London
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	GFA 219	Bahrain	21:50	FDB	5056	Dubai
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC 622	Doha	21:50	KAC	515	Tehran
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC 564	Amman	21:55	QTR	1071	Doha
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KAC 162	Geneva	22:00	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad
JZR	716D	Sohag	12:10	QTR 1082	Doha	22:05	KAC	155	Istanbul
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	ETD 309	Abu Dhabi	22:15	KAC	617	Doha
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	KAC 786	Jeddah	22:20	SVA	513	Riyadh
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	AIC 981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25	JZR	709	Luxor
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	JZR 128	Dubai	22:50	GFA	214	Bahrain
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	MSC 405	Sohag	23:15	MEA	405	Beirut
KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	MSR 614	Cairo	23:30	SYR	342	Damascus
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	FDB 071	Dubai	23:35	JZR	213	Jeddah



# Sudan probing Bashir after large sums of cash found at his home

**KHARTOUM:** Sudan's public prosecutor has begun investigating ousted President Omar Al-Bashir on charges of money laundering and possession of large sums of foreign currency without legal grounds, a judicial source said yesterday. The source said that military intelligence had searched Bashir's home and found suitcases loaded with more than \$351,000 and six million euros, as well as five million Sudanese pounds.

"The chief public prosecutor... ordered the (former) president detained and quickly questioned in preparation to put him on trial," a judicial source told Reuters. "The public prosecution will question the former president in Kobar prison," the source added. Bashir has not been questioned yet, said the source. Two of his brothers were also detained on allegations of corruption, the source said. Relatives could not be immediately reached yesterday for comment about the investigation.

Bashir, who is also being sought by the International Criminal Court (ICC) over allegations of genocide in the country's western Darfur region, was ousted on April 11 by the military following months of protests against his rule and had been held at a presidential residence. Bashir's family said this week that the former president had been moved to the high-security Kobar prison in Khartoum.

Hassan Bashir, a professor of political science at the University of Neelain, said the measures against Bashir are intended as a message to other figures associated with his rule that they are not above the law. "The trial is a step that the military council wants to take to satisfy the protesters by presenting Bashir for trial," he said.

Bashir survived several armed rebellions, economic crises, and attempts by the West to turn him into a pariah during his 30-year rule before he was toppled in a military coup. At a sit-in outside Sudan's Ministry of Defense that began on April 6, protesters stood besides posters of Bashir that called on the ICC to put him on trial. The Sudanese Professionals' Association, leading the protests, has called for holding Bashir and members of his administration to account, a purge of corruption and cronyism and easing an economic crisis that worsened during Bashir's last years in power.

On Wednesday, Sudan's transitional military council ordered the central bank to review financial transfers since April 1 and to seize "suspect" funds, according to state news agency SUNA. The council also ordered the "suspension of the transfer of ownership of any shares until further notice and for any large or suspect transfers of shares or companies to be reported" to authorities. — Reuters



**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese protesters flash victory signs during a rally outside the army headquarters yesterday. — AFP

## News in brief

### Coalition destroys drone cave

**RIYADH:** The Saudi-led coalition launched an air raid yesterday on a cave in the Yemeni capital Sanaa, used by Houthi rebels to stockpile drones, a spokesman said. The cave near the presidential palace in Houthi-held Sanaa contained drones to be used in "terrorist operations", Colonel Turki Al-Maliki said. Earlier this month, the coalition said that Saudi air defenses intercepted two drones launched by Houthi rebels from Yemen that targeted Khamis Mushait, home to a major airbase in the southwest of the kingdom. And in January the Houthis launched a drone attack on Yemen's largest airbase, Al-Anad, north of the southern port of Aden, during a military parade. — AFP

### Turkey arrests two Emiratis

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey has arrested two men suspected of spying for the United Arab Emirates and is probing whether they are tied to Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder. Anadolu state news agency said on Friday. The two were formally detained by Turkish authorities on Friday as part of an investigation by Istanbul prosecutors into alleged spying by the Gulf state, Anadolu reported. The pro-government Turkish newspaper, Yeni Safak, reported that the two suspects were arrested on Monday in a joint operation by Turkish police and the MIT intelligence service. The pair, both UAE citizens, had been in contact with an individual who was under surveillance in the Khashoggi case, the paper reported. — AFP

## Militants kill more fighters across Syria

**BEIRUT:** Militants have killed more than 60 Syrian regime fighters in 48 hours, a monitor said yesterday, in some of the deadliest attacks on pro-Damascus forces in recent weeks. Kurdish-led forces in March announced the defeat of the Islamic State group's "caliphate" in eastern Syria, but the militants have retained hideouts there and in other parts of the country as well as the ability to carry out deadly assaults. Since Thursday, IS militants have killed 35 pro-Damascus fighters in regime-held parts of central and eastern Syria, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said it was "the highest death toll among regime forces since the caliphate was declared defeated" in the eastern village of Baghouz last month. Regime fighters also came under attack on another front of Syria's grinding eight-year war, the Britain-based monitor added. Yesterday, militants linked to Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate attacked loyalists outside the northwestern region of Idlib, killing 26 pro-Assad fighters, it said.

It was the latest death tally in a civil war that has killed more than 370,000 people since starting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. President Bashar Al-Assad has managed to claw back around 60 percent of the country with Russian military backing since 2015, but several regions remain beyond the regime's control. These include a large swathe of northeastern Syria held by Kurdish-led forces who have been fighting IS with the support of a US-led coalition, as well as the region of Idlib held by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

Regime forces in theory control the vast desert that stretches from the capital Damascus to the Iraqi border, but IS is still present there. Since Thursday they have



**DAMASCUS:** Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad receives Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov yesterday. — AFP

killed 27 troops and allied militiamen, including four Syrian army officers, in the desert east of Homs province, the Observatory said. IS claimed the attacks. The Observatory also said IS fighters killed another eight soldiers and militiamen in the eastern province of Deir Ezzor on Thursday night. That attack targeted a desert village south of the city of Mayadeen on the Euphrates River, upstream from Baghouz.

IS swept across a large swathe of Syria and Iraq in 2014, declaring a cross-border "caliphate" in territory that was once roughly the size of the United Kingdom. But after various military operations in both countries, IS lost the last shred of its proto-state on the eastern banks of the Euphrates last month. The US-led coalition has however repeatedly warned that the battle against the militants is not over.

In the northwestern Idlib region, Assad's forces face Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

Idlib was to be protected from a massive regime military offensive by a deal inked in September by government ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey. But the accord has unwound as HTS took full control of the region in January, and the area has come under increasing bombardment. A planned buffer zone around the region was never fully implemented as militants refused to withdraw from it.

Yesterday's attack by an HTS affiliate on the western edges of Aleppo city killed 21 loyalists while an ambush by HTS-linked militants took the lives of five more pro-regime fighters in the northeast of Latakia province. On Friday, Assad urged progress on removing "obstacles" to the stalled Idlib deal ahead of talks to be attended by Russia, fellow ally Iran, and Turkey next week in Kazakhstan. And yesterday, he met Russian Deputy Prime Minister Yuri Borisov in Damascus for talks, including on ways to overcome obstacles resulting from international sanctions imposed on Syria, the presidency said. — AFP

## Trump seethes over report; poll...

Continued from Page 1

Although Mueller stated he was following Justice Department policy in not charging Trump with the crime of obstruction of justice, he laid out 10 instances where the president took steps in that direction. As a result, Mueller said he could "not exonerate" him. That statement was taken by Democrats as an invitation to pursue the president in Congress, while even a top Republican, Senator Mitt Romney, broke from party lines to say he was "sickened" by the report's findings.

At minimum, the almost 450-page report - including scenes of a White House filled with lying, swearing and barely disguised panic - is deeply embarrassing for a president elected on a mission to clear Washington's "swamp". Adding to its weight is the fact that the material is based largely on sworn testimony by Trump insiders, rather than rival politicians.

Whether the Mueller report has any immediate effect on the US political scene ahead of the 2020 elections, however, is uncertain. With Republicans controlling the Senate, Democrats would have little chance of removing Trump through impeachment. For now, Warren is an outlier, with other senior Democrats shying away from the "I" word. And Trump, who throughout the two-year investigation has claimed to be victim of a "witch hunt", is using the latest uproar to cement his "us-against-them" appeal among a loyal right-wing support base.

At his Palm Beach resort, Trump played golf with veteran right-wing radio talk show host Rush Limbaugh, the White House said. He was also photographed by The Daily Mail in his limousine reading what appeared to be the front page of The Wall Street Journal, with coverage

## Kuwait backs 'stable, secure and unified'...

Continued from Page 1

"The stability of Iraq is necessary for the stability of the region," read the concluding statement. Participating nations also rejected "interference" in Iraq's internal affairs, although most have deep political and economic interests in the country.

Attendees did not announce any diplomatic break-

throughs, despite the summit's symbolic success in bringing together rival countries around a single table. Baghdad has sought to market itself as a neutral meeting place for the Middle East's competing forces. Iraqi premier Adel Abdel Mahdi recently visited both Riyadh and Tehran.

Saudi Arabia and Iran severed diplomatic ties with one another in 2016 and are locked in proxy wars across the region. Turkey and Iran have backed opposing sides in Syria's conflict, which since 2011 has isolated Damascus diplomatically. As part of its new regional role, Baghdad has sought to restore Syria's membership of the Arab League. — Agencies

Another powerful Democrat with subpoena power, House Intelligence Committee chairman Adam Schiff, tore into Trump, saying his campaign's Russia contacts were at a minimum unethical and that Congress should now determine whether his obstruction attempts amounted to a crime. "As I said some time ago, whether these acts are criminal or not... they are unquestionably dishonest, unethical, immoral, and unpatriotic, and should be condemned by every American," Schiff said.

According to the Reuters/Ipsos poll of 1,005 adults conducted Thursday afternoon to Friday morning, 37 percent of people approve of Trump's performance in office - down from 40 percent in a similar poll conducted on April 15, which matches the lowest level of the year. The poll has a credibility interval, a measure of precision, of 4 percentage points. — Agencies

prompting a legal battle that could even go up to the Supreme Court. In its first reaction, the Justice Department called Nadler's subpoena "premature and unnecessary." White House spokesman Hogan Gidley slammed Nadler for "political grandstanding".

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## Egyptians vote in referendum to...

Continued from Page 1

The three-day referendum bucks the trend of North Africa's renewed uprisings, in which mass pro-democracy protests this month swept away veteran presidents in Algeria and Sudan. Sisi himself was among the first to vote when polls opened, casting his ballot in the upmarket Cairo suburb of Heliopolis. In Shubra, a working-class neighborhood of the capital, dozens of voters, mostly women carrying their children, queued outside a polling station in the local high school.

In Cairo, troops and police were deployed in numbers although the interior ministry declined to give any nationwide figures. Egypt is still battling a hardened Islamic insurgency based in the Sinai Peninsula that has seen attacks in Cairo and other cities. Sisi has argued that he needs longer to complete the job of restoring security and stability after the turmoil that followed the overthrow of veteran autocrat Hosni Mubarak in the Arab Spring of 2011.

Out on the streets, Sisi's supporters waved flags bearing their campaign motto: "Do the Right" thing, as they pressed passers-by to turn out and vote "Yes". The Egyptian leader won his first term as president in 2014, a year after he led the army in overthrowing elected Islamist president Mohamed Morsi following mass protests against his single turbulent year in power. Standing virtually unopposed after the disqualification or withdrawal of all realistic challengers, he was re-elected in March 2018 with more than 97 percent.

Both elections drew heavy criticism from human rights groups as they were accompanied by swingeing crackdowns on dissent - both Islamist and secular.

Human Rights Watch also took issue with the referendum on extending Sisi's rule, saying the "constitutional amendments" would "entrench repression". In a statement Saturday, the New York-based watchdog criticized the "grossly unfree, rights-abusive environment" of the vote.

For the past few weeks, Egypt's streets have been awash with banners and billboards urging citizens to vote for Sisi, while popular folk singers have exhorted voters to go to the polls. Pro-Sisi campaign volunteers handed out boxed meals at four different polling stations in Cairo to voters after they had cast their ballots, AFP reporters said. A parliamentarian greeted voters and volunteers gave out vouchers for the meals in the Shubra district. In Manyal, a DJ blared loud patriotic songs extolling the virtues of Egypt under Sisi's leadership, including a new song by iconic Lebanese diva Nancy Ajram dedicated to Egypt and called "Ragel ibn Ragel" (What a fine man).

But not everyone is upbeat about the changes. Sporting casual attire, a voter in his mid-30s told AFP in Cairo: "We are all staff in the same company and we were instructed by management to go vote. 'I want to say 'No'... on extending the presidential terms and the amendments related to the judiciary," he said declining to give his name for fear of repercussions. He pointed to his bosses nearby who were making sure employees were voting. "Even if I say 'No', they (the authorities) are still going to do what they want in the end," he added despondently.

Earlier in the week, parliament overwhelmingly endorsed the constitutional changes, which also include the creation of a second parliamentary chamber and a quota ensuring at least 25 percent of lawmakers are women. Think tank the Soufan Center said the main effect of the referendum would be to "solidify Sisi's grip on the Egyptian political regime" in a country that "has become even more autocratic than it was under Mubarak". — AFP



Sports

# Hernandez stuns Hader as Dodgers extend winning streak to six games

## Blackmon homer in 12th lifts Rockies past Phillies

**MILWAUKEE:** Enrique Hernandez hit a three-run home run with two outs in the eighth inning and the visiting Los Angeles Dodgers extended their winning streak to six games with a 5-3 victory Friday over the Milwaukee Brewers. Hernandez connected on an 0-2 pitch against Brewers All-Star closer Josh Hader (0-1) to break a 2-2 tie and score A.J. Pollock and David Freese, both of whom walked. It was Hernandez's fifth home run of the season. Christian Yelich hit a home run for the second consecutive game and for the sixth time in five games as the Brewers lost their third consecutive game overall and their third consecutive against the Dodgers since Sunday. Milwaukee's Eric Thames hit his third home run in the eighth. Pedro Baez (1-1) recorded two outs in the seventh inning to pick up the victory. Kenley Jansen pitched a scoreless ninth inning for his seventh save and his third in three days.

### YANKEES 6, ROYALS 2

CC Sabathia allowed an unearned run in five innings and Brett Gardner hit a two-run homer as New York beat Kansas City at Yankee Stadium. After throwing 62 pitches in his return from cardiac surgery and a knee injury in his season debut Saturday against the Chicago White Sox, Sabathia (1-0) was stretched out further this time and delivered an 86-pitch outing. He worked around four walks and held the Royals to three hits while getting five strikeouts for his 247th career win. Gardner provided the Yankees with a 2-1 lead when he blasted 2-0 fastball from Kansas City starter Jakob Junis (1-2) over the right-center field fence in the third. Mike Tauchman also homered in the fifth as the Yankees won for the third time in four games despite committing three errors.

### ROCKIES 4, PHILLIES 3 (12 INNINGS)

Charlie Blackmon hit a two-run homer with two outs in the bottom of the 12th inning as Colorado rallied to beat Philadelphia in Denver. Bryce Harper had five hits and Rhys Hoskins and Maikel Franco had three hits apiece for the Phillies, who saw two players leave with injuries—Andrew McCutchen was hurt on a swing in the second inning and shortstop Scott Kingery suffered a right hamstring injury running to first in his third at-bat. The Phillies took a 3-2 lead on Harper's RBI double in the top of the 12th off Chad Bettis (1-2) but Colorado came back against Juan Nicasio (0-1). Tony Wolters drew a one-out walk and after Raimel Tapia popped out, Blackmon hit a 1-2 fastball into the Philadelphia bullpen to end it.

### ASTROS 7, RANGERS 2

Justin Verlander worked seven strong innings and was backed by an offense that produced seven extra-base hits as Houston claimed the opener of its three-game series with Texas at Globe Life Park in Arlington. Verlander (3-0) gave up his first hit with two outs in the fourth inning and carried a shutout into the sixth. He surrendered a leadoff home run to Rangers second baseman Danny Santana in that frame but recovered to complete his outing with flair, getting three successive called strikes against Texas center fielder Delino DeShields. The Astros got off to a rousing start against Rangers left-hander Drew Smyly (0-2), with George Springer (double), Jose Altuve (home run) and Alex Bregman (home run) reach-

ing in succession to open the game. When Altuve added an RBI single in the second, Houston led 4-0 and cruised from there.

### CUBS 5, DIAMONDBACKS 1

Kyle Hendricks pitched seven scoreless innings and struck out 11 as Chicago snapped visiting Arizona's four-game winning streak on a cold, blustery Friday afternoon. Hendricks (1-3) gave up three hits and walked two. Steve Cishek pitched the eighth to run the Cubs' scoreless innings streak to 31 before the Diamondbacks rallied off Brad Brach in the ninth. Arizona starter Merrill Kelly (1-2) worked around two walks in a 33-pitch first inning and was almost out of a no-out, bases-loaded jam in the second when Kris Bryant hit what normally would have been a lazy fly behind second base. But the wind took over and second baseman Wilmer Flores stumbled while chasing the ball, which fell into shallow right field for a two-run double.

### PIRATES 4, GIANTS 1

Right-hander Jordan Lyles pitched six four-hit, scoreless innings before leaving because of a hand injury, and Pittsburgh earned a fourth consecutive win, beating visiting San Francisco. Lyles (2-0), Pittsburgh's fifth starter and part of a rotation that led the National League entering the night with a collective 2.09 ERA, struck out six and walked one. He lowered his ERA to 0.53. Lyles left after an inning-ending double-play comebacker by Joe Panik in the sixth grazed his pitching hand as he instinctively ducked and raised his hands. He was being evaluated for a concussion. The Pirates also lost center fielder Starling Marte and shortstop Erik Gonzalez when they collided while chasing a fly ball in the eighth. Giants starter Madison Bumgarner (1-3) gave up four first-inning runs before settling down to go another five innings. He allowed six hits and one walk while striking out seven.

### MARLINS 3, NATIONALS 2

Miami ended its 24-inning scoreless streak early in the game and went on to defeat Washington at Marlins Park, ending a four-game losing streak and winning for just the third time in its last 16 contests. Left-hander Caleb Smith (2-0) earned the victory, giving up one run on five hits without walking a batter while striking out eight in six innings. He has 29 strikeouts in 23 innings this year.

Washington's Anibal Sanchez—who made his major league debut with the Marlins in 2006 and had a no-hitter in six-plus seasons with the franchise—took the loss to fall to 0-2. He allowed five hits, four walks and three runs in 5 1/3 innings. He also struck out six.

### METS 5, CARDINALS 4

Wilson Ramos and J.D. Davis had back-to-back RBI hits in the first inning for visiting New York, which never trailed but needed to survive a late comeback by St. Louis to end a two-game losing streak. The Cardinals have lost three of four. St. Louis starter Adam Wainwright (1-2) retired the first two batters of the game before giving up a double to Robinson Cano, who had a season-high three hits. Michael Conforto walked, after which Ramos singled home Cano before Davis doubled to score



**MILWAUKEE:** Max Muncy #13 of the Los Angeles Dodgers turns a double play past Yasmani Grandal #10 of the Milwaukee Brewers in the sixth inning at Miller Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

Conforto. Seth Lugo (1-0), the first of five Mets relievers, earned the win despite allowing two runs in two innings. Edwin Diaz allowed a pair of baserunners before retiring Molina on a lineout to close out his seventh save. The two runs Lugo gave up came off the bat of pinch hitter Lane Thomas, who hit a two-run homer in his first big league plate appearance.

### REDS 3, PADRES 2 (11 INNINGS)

Derek Dietrich hit a two-run homer off Craig Stammen with one out in the 11th inning to lead Cincinnati past host San Diego and hand the Padres their fifth straight loss after an 11-5 start to the season. The Reds scored a second straight win following four consecutive defeats. Right-handed reliever Jared Hughes (2-0) pitched one scoreless inning for the win, and Michael Lorenzen recorded his first save. Stammen (2-1) took the loss after yielding two runs (one earned) in two innings. Dietrich's homer followed a pitching duel between starters Anthony DeSclafani of Cincinnati and Matt Strahm of San Diego, each of whom gave up a solo home run and only two hits.

### RED SOX 6, RAYS 4

Mookie Betts and Mitch Moreland hit back-to-back home runs to break an eighth-inning tie as Boston beat Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg, Fla. Betts, critical of himself earlier this week for his poor play to begin the season, went deep to dead center to lead off the eighth for a 5-4 lead, and Moreland followed with a blast to right-center as Boston snapped a three-game losing streak, with Brandon Workman (1-1) getting the win in relief. The Rays lost for just the third time in their past 11 games. Diego Castillo (0-2), who served up both eighth-inning homers

to the only two batters he faced, took the loss.

### WHITE SOX 7, TIGERS 3

Yoan Moncada homered, scored twice and drove in two runs, Carlos Rodon pitched six strong innings, and Chicago topped host Detroit. Moncada hit his sixth homer this season, a solo shot in the first inning. Leury Garcia and Jose Abreu also drove in two runs apiece, while Ryan Cordell scored twice. Rodon (3-2) held the Tigers to one run on three hits, walking three and striking out six. Tigers starter Jordan Zimmermann (0-3) allowed five runs on six hits in 6 1/3 innings. He struck out four and walked four against the White Sox, who were without shortstop Tim Anderson and manager Rick Renteria as they served one-game league suspensions for their conduct during a benches-clearing incident against Kansas City on Wednesday.

### MARINERS 5, ANGELS 3

Tim Beckham and Omar Narvaez hit back-to-back solo homers in the ninth inning to lift Seattle over host Los Angeles for the second straight night. As they did on Thursday, the Mariners broke a tie in the ninth off Angels reliever Cody Allen (0-2) and spoiled a late-game comeback by Los Angeles. The Angels rallied from a 10-2 deficit in the seventh inning of the series opener on Thursday, tied the score in the eighth, but lost 11-10. Mike Trout hit a two-run homer off Mariners starter Marco Gonzales in the eighth on Friday to tie the score at 3-3, ending Gonzales' bid to become the first 5-0 pitcher in the majors. Zac Rosscup (2-0) got the final two outs of the eighth, and Roenis Elias pitched the ninth for his fourth save. — Reuters

## Gulf Bank wins KBA football cup

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank has been crowned champions of the Kuwait Banking Association Football Cup following a competitive match against Boubyan Bank. Organized under the patronage of the President of the Kuwait Banking Association, the final match was held at Al-Arabi Stadium, Mansouriya. The thrilling conclusion to the season saw Gulf Bank defeat Boubyan Bank 3-0.

Following the tournament, The Kuwait

Banking Association presented the members of the Gulf Bank's football team with medals, acknowledging their efforts and congratulating their success. Kuwait Banking Club also honoured the tournament's top players, naming Ahmed Ghloom the 'best goalkeeper of the tournament', and Waleed Al-Shimmiri 'player of the tournament'. Commenting on the win, Ahmad Al Amir,



Assistant General Manager for External Communications, Gulf Bank, said: "on behalf of Gulf Bank I would like to congratulate the team for their commitment and success. The bank encourages all employees to take part in fun activities, and the Kuwait Banking Association Football Cup provides the perfect opportunity for the Gulf Bank family to come together and celebrate the team spirit that we have seen throughout the tournament."

Gulf Bank is committed to supporting the members of its football team and encourages all employees to take part in sporting activities, cultivating team spirit while leading active and healthy lives.

## Waratahs win first game without Folau

**SYDNEY:** NSW Waratahs rallied from behind yesterday to win their first match since Israel Folau was stood down over anti-gay comments, as the Otago Highlanders snapped a five-match losing streak to beat the Auckland Blues.

The deeply religious Folau, Super Rugby's all-time leading try scorer, is facing the sack over his controversial social media posts, with an upcoming tribunal to decide his fate. It was a major distraction for his team in the lead up to their clash in Sydney with the Melbourne Rebels, but they put it aside to snatch a 23-20 victory, with Bernard Foley scoring a try and kicking five goals.

"We just wanted to get out on the field and play tonight. I couldn't be happier," said Waratahs skipper Michael Hooper, who made his 100th appearance for the side. "Some ill discipline gave them a leg up in the first half, but we knew if we stuck to our game plan and sharpened up our penalties we would have a good shot."

In Folau's absence, Kurtley Beale moved into his fullback position and took several high balls with ease, with Karmichael Hunt and Adam Ashley-Cooper in the centres. Quade Cooper put the Rebels in front with a penalty before Ashley-Cooper got the first five-pointer, breaking through the defence for his first Super Rugby try since 2015.

Billy Meakes grabbed his fourth try of the season for the Rebels to put them back in the lead and they extended their advantage just before the break with Reece Hodge finding a gap in the defence to dot down. Hodge then boot-ed a penalty to send them into half-time with a 20-7 lead.

But two Foley penalties pulled the Tahs back to within seven points in the

second stanza and he then picked up a lineout overthrow to sprint from almost in his own half for a touchdown.

He converted his own try to draw them level at 20-20 and another penalty gave them the lead and ultimately the win to move them within three points of the Rebels at the top of the Australian conference.

In Dunedin, an acrobatic Shannon Frizell sparked a Highlanders revival as they rallied to beat the Blues 24-12. It was all Blues for most of the first half before Frizell put the Highlanders on the board by diving over a ruck to score. From there they took control to lift themselves off the bottom of the New Zealand conference.

The Blues remain in third place, behind the Canterbury Crusaders and Wellington Hurricanes, but have not won an away match in New Zealand since round two of the 2013 season.

"Our defence did a good job because they've got x-factor right across their team and we managed to work hard for each other and shut that down," said Highlanders' skipper Ben Smith who described the win as "awesome".

Pre-match interest had focused on rival fly-halves Josh Ioane and Otere Black now Damian McKenzie is out of World Cup reckoning. But neither provided any obvious answers for the All Blacks selectors, although Ioane had a 100 percent kicking record with three out of three.

Veteran Blues centre Ma'a Nonu blasted through the Highlanders' defence to put Tom Robinson over for the opening try in the 22nd minute. But fortunes were reversed in the run up to half-time when momentum shifted to the Highlanders who were rewarded with Frizell's dive over a ruck to score. Ioane's conversion put them two points ahead.

Their domination continued in the second half and their scrum was able to bully the Blues all-All Black front row to earn a penalty try. Matt Faddes extended the lead to 21-5 with a runaway try from an intercept on half-way and Ioane added more points with a penalty before the Blues got a consolation try. — AFP



Gulf Bank team with the trophy



Gulf Bank team with management



## Sports

# Smith replaces Rahane as Rajasthan captain in IPL

## Ton-up Kohli hails Moeen for crucial IPL win

**JAIPUR:** Struggling Indian Premier League side Rajasthan Royals yesterday named Steve Smith as their new captain despite the Australian being barred from leading the national team over a ball-tampering scandal.

Smith, who along with compatriot David Warner missed the 2018 IPL because of the scandal, will replace India's Ajinkya Rahane.

"Ajinkya has done a terrific job over the last year and a half," Smith said after winning the toss in his first game as leader against Mumbai Indians in Jaipur.

"The owners thought there should be a change in the leadership, and he'll be part of the leadership group as well," Smith added. The former Australia captain has made his way back into the national team for the upcoming World Cup but cannot take on formal leadership responsibilities for another year.

Smith and Warner's one-year cheating ban ended March 28 and the two have launched into the IPL campaign as they seek to restore their reputations.

Smith has scored 186 runs in seven IPL games, including a 73 not out. The 2008 champions are seventh in the eight-team table with just two wins.

The team management are gambling on Smith boosting confidence to get the side to the play-offs.

"Steve is one of the most innovative and successful captains in the world, in all formats of the game," said Rajasthan's head of cricket Zubin Bharucha.

"We are confident he can lead the Royals to success." The duo's suspension did not include club games, but IPL's governing council decided not to allow Smith and Warner to compete in last year's tournament to avoid controversy.

The pair were banned for cheating in a South Africa-Australia Test in March last year along with teammate Cameron Bancroft, who was banned for nine-months.

Earlier, Virat Kohli scored his first IPL century of the

year, then paid tribute yesterday to Royal Challengers Bangalore teammate Moeen Ali for setting up a crucial second win of the season.

"Moeen changed the game completely and that allowed me to play my game," said the India captain, who completed his 100 on the penultimate ball of the Bangalore innings against Kolkata Knight Riders.

While Kohli's 58-ball century anchored the Bangalore innings on Friday, England allrounder Moeen blitzed the Kolkata spinners, making 66 off 28 balls including six sixes and five fours.

With Bangalore needing to up the run rate, Moeen hit the second ball he faced off left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav into the long-on stands for six.

In the 16th over, he hit Kuldeep—who he will have to face in the World Cup in June—for three sixes and two fours. Kuldeep then dismissed his rival with the last ball of the over.

Bangalore were suffering with veteran South African star AB de Villiers rested because of illness but through Kohli and Moeen made an impressive 213-4 off their 20 overs.

No team has ever successfully chased a target this big at Kolkata's Eden Gardens, and the Knight Riders got to only 203-5.

Nitish Rana made an unbeaten 85 while Andre Russell hit two fours and nine sixes in a 25-ball 65 before being run out off the penultimate ball.

"It was important to bat along when AB is not here," said Kohli, whose team remain bottom of the table with just two wins.

"AB was disappointed for not making it for the game tonight and I told him that I'll give him a hug if we win," he added.

Moeen let Kohli know in advance that he was going to set off some T20 fireworks.

"Moeen said 'I am going to go now' and I asked him



**MUMBAI:** File photo shows Rajasthan Royals bowler Jofra Archer (C) celebrates with captain Ajinkya Rahane (L) and Steven Smith after taking the wicket of Mumbai Indians captain Rohit Sharma during the 2019 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Mumbai Indians and Rajasthan Royals in Mumbai on April 13, 2019. — AFP

to go for it. He targeted the small boundaries and changed the game in those few overs."

Kohli also praised veteran South African pace bowler Dale Steyn who has joined the team this week to replace injured Australian Nathan Coulter-Nile.

The 35-year-old Steyn took the crucial wickets of Kolkata opener Chris Lynn and then number three

Shubman Gill to hobble the home side's response.

"Steyn getting those crucial wickets was important for us. I think picking up wickets in the powerplay is crucial as it sets the tone for the rest of the innings," said Kohli.

His team remain bottom of the table and face a struggle to reach the playoffs. — AFP

## India fines cricketers for 'sexist' remarks

**NEW DELHI:** India's cricket board yesterday fined players Hardik Pandya and Lokesh Rahul \$29,000 each for making sexist remarks on a TV chat show that saw them ordered home from a tour of Australia.

Pandya "must make amends" for boasting about his sexual conquests during the celebrity show in which he appeared with Rahul, said an ombudsman who investigated the case. But with both heading for the World Cup in England and Wales which starts May 30, the inquiry said the fine should close the controversy.

The Board of Control for Cricket in India said the money from the fines will be given to 10 widows of paramilitary constables killed in action and to a fund for the blind created by the sporting body. Star all-rounder Pandya, 25, and opening batsman Rahul, 27, missed several internationals because of a suspension imposed when they were sent home.

But after making public apologies, both have returned to the national team and are playing in the Indian Premier League. They have spoken in recent interviews about how they were forced to stay home, as criticism raged.

"I have no hesitation in observing that the remarks made by the player, even by his own admissions, did offend sensitivities, which should have been avoided," said the ombudsman, D.K. Jain.

"In our country, the game of cricket is often treated as a religion, revered, and the cricketers are idolised," Jain said in a warning to Pandya and Rahul to improve their behaviour. — AFP

## Irving puts Celtics on verge of sweep

**INDIANAPOLIS:** Kyrie Irving had a hand in 11 of Boston's final 16 points Friday night as the Celtics withstood a late charge by the Indiana Pacers to record a 104-96 win at Indianapolis and go up 3-0 in an Eastern Conference first-round playoff matchup. The Pacers, playing at home for the first time in the series, got within 88-87 with 6:05, but that's when Irving took over. He had two hoops, assisted on 3- and 2-point baskets by Al Horford and made two free throws down the stretch, helping the Celtics pull away. He finished with 19 points and 10 assists. Jaylen Brown had 23 points to lead the Celtics, who held the Pacers under 100 points for the third consecutive game. Tyreke Evans led seven Pacers in double figures with 19 points off the bench.

### THUNDER 120, TRAIL BLAZERS 108

Russell Westbrook scored 33 points as Oklahoma City beat visiting Portland to take a two-games-to-one lead in a Western Conference first-round playoff series. After vowing to play better following the Thunder's Game 2 loss, Westbrook shot 11 of 22 from the floor while adding 11 assists and five rebounds. He also made 4 of 6 3-point attempts after sinking just 1 of 10 long-range attempts over the first two games. Portland's Damian Lillard had a quiet first half, scoring only four points on 2-of-6 shooting. However, Lillard dominated in Portland's 43-point third quarter, scoring 25 points to make a game of it. Lillard, who finished with a team-high 32 points, shot 8 of 11 from the floor in the third. But he did not score in the fourth until less than two minutes remained and the Thunder were ahead by 12.

### RAPTORS 98, MAGIC 93

Pascal Siakam scored a playoff-career-best 30



**INDIANAPOLIS:** Kyrie Irving #11 of the Boston Celtics handles the ball against the Indiana Pacers during Game Three of Round One of the 2019 NBA Playoffs on April 19, 2019 at Bankers Life Fieldhouse in Indianapolis, Indiana. — AFP

points and grabbed 11 rebounds as visiting Toronto won in Orlando to take a 2-1 lead in their first-round Eastern Conference playoff series. Kawhi Leonard added 16 points and 10 rebounds for the Raptors while Danny Green scored 13 points and

Kyle Lowry had 12 points and 10 assists. Nikola Vucevic scored 22 points and grabbed 14 rebounds for the Magic. Terrence Ross added 24 points, Jonathan Isaac scored 14, and Aaron Gordon had 10. — Reuters

## Matthews steers Leafs to win over Bruins

**LOS ANGELES:** Auston Matthews and Kasper Kapanen scored third period goals as the Toronto Maple Leafs held on to beat the Boston Bruins 2-1 for a 3-2 lead in their first round playoff series. Matthews, of the US, broke a scoreless tie in the third and Toronto goaltender Frederik Andersen made 28 saves including several late when Boston had pulled their goalie for an extra attacker.

David Krejci scored the Bruins' only goal with the Boston net empty but they couldn't get the second one to tie it up. "This was his best 200 foot game of the playoffs," Leafs coach Mike Babcock said of Matthews. "He was outstanding."

The Maple Leafs can get their first NHL playoff series win in 15 years and advance to face the Columbus Blue Jackets in the next round with a victory in game six Sunday in Toronto.

With the teams locked in a scoreless tie after two periods, Toronto's Jake Muzzin found himself alone at the blue line, skated to the left circle and passed to Matthews, who notched his fourth goal of the playoffs from the right faceoff circle at 11:33.

The play was reviewed for goaltender interference after video showed Leafs' Zach Hyman bumping into Boston netminder Tuukka Rask just before the puck went into the net. The goal was upheld and Toronto's 1-0 lead stood.

"I had so many taken back that I got one back tonight," Matthews said of the fortunate call in the Leafs' favour. Krejci scored at 19:16, but Toronto killed the final 44 seconds for the win. — AFP

## Kiprop insists on innocence despite doping ban

**PARIS:** Kenya's former Olympic and world 1500m champion Asbel Kiprop has vowed to fight on to clear his name after being handed a four-year suspension yesterday for using the banned blood-booster EPO. The 29-year-old failed an out of competition test in November 2017 and was provisionally suspended in 2018.

Yesterday, the Athletics Integrity Unit (AIU) upheld that ban, concluding that the case had been "convincingly made out" despite an "a la carte menu of reasons why the charges should be dismissed" from Kiprop's representative.

After the verdict, Kiprop continued to maintain his innocence. "The decision is not only a blow to me, but it is not good for the sport of athletics," Kiprop told AFP. "I have been insisting that I did not dope," he said. "I will continue to maintain my innocence, even if this decision now means I will

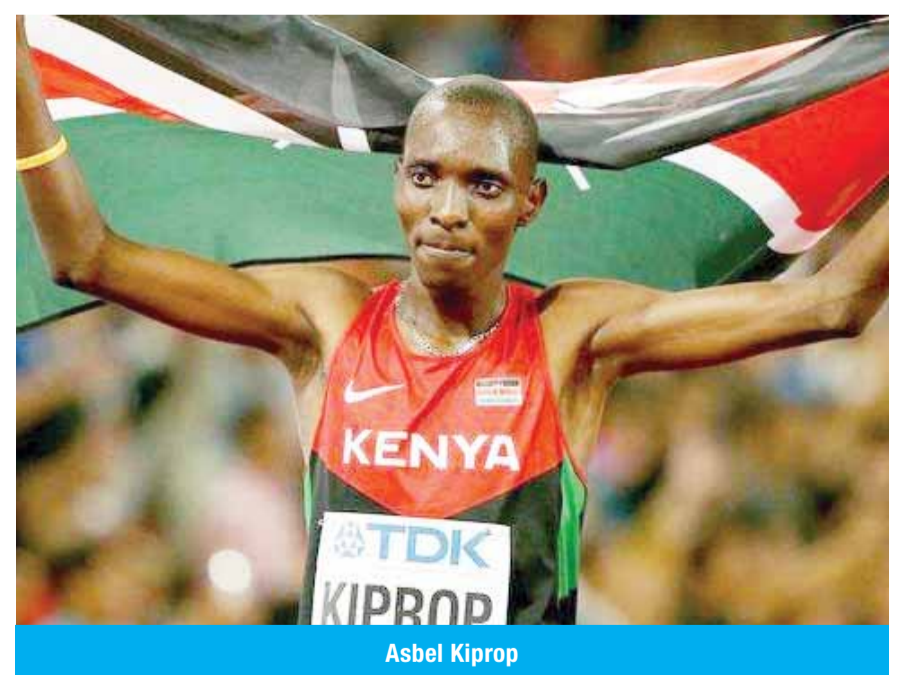
not be eligible to run again for the next four years.

"It's sad that the world will believe that I am guilty of taking the performance-enhancing drugs and yet I have been at the forefront of fighting doping in the sport." The AIU said in its statement that Kiprop had "at various times and various formats...proposed a number of possible explanations" for the positive test.

It went on to state that at the hearing his representative, Katwa Kigen, presented an "a la carte menu of reasons why the charges should be dismissed." Among these, the AIU said, were that the "EPO was naturally produced due to intense exercise at altitude," that it was produced by medication, that the test, or the analysis, was badly conducted or that the sample was spiked.

His ban is backdated to last February. The AIU statement added that while Kigen presented his arguments with "tenacity and charm" the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) representative Ross Wenzel had argued that "none of the various reasons proposed...when subject to strict scrutiny had any plausibility."

The three-man panel agreed. It concluded that high altitude could not explain the presence of EPO in the test and that Kiprop had produced no evi-



Asbel Kiprop

dence to support the other possible explanations.

Kiprop accepts the long ban virtually puts an end to a long and illustrious athletic career, but he can still appeal to the Court of Arbitration for Sport. He originally came second in the 1500m final at the 2008 Beijing Olympics but was upgraded when Rashid Ramzi tested positive for a performance-enhancing drug and was

stripped of the gold medal.

A total of 138 Kenyan athletes have tested positive in anti-doping campaigns since 2004. In 2016, Kenya were placed on the list of countries under IAAF surveillance. And it was only after the adoption of a new anti-doping law just before the Rio 2016 Olympics that the country was removed from the list of "non-compliant" WADA nations. — AFP



Sports

# Social media boycott as footballers in England say 'enough' over racism

'We are using our voice to stand against racist abuse'

LONDON: Premier League stars led footballers in England and Wales in a 24-hour social media boycott on Friday in a bid to combat racist abuse online. Watford striker Troy Deeney—who blocked replies to his Instagram account earlier this month after receiving abuse—summed up the anger he and fellow footballers feel, saying: "Enough is enough."

The campaign, which is being coordinated by England's Professional Footballers' Association, urges players to stay off all social media. The universal message across the footballers' Twitter accounts used the hashtag #Enough with the message "MAKE A STAND AGAINST RACISM-A campaign by the PFA".

The PFA said the boycott was the "first step in a longer campaign to tackle racism in football". The boycott is not just aimed at those who use the platforms to air their racist views but also at the social media companies themselves and football authorities.

There have been growing concerns over how football should tackle racism following a number of incidents of abuse both at grounds and on social media. England's black players faced repeated racist chants during their Euro 2020 qualifier in Montenegro last month.

One of those targeted, full-back Danny Rose, said afterwards he could not wait to turn his "back on football". Some like Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp—whose star player Mohamed Salah was the target of Islamophobic abuse by Chelsea fans last week—has said he would have no hesitation in taking his players off the pitch. "If it's the whole stand, then I would do it 100 percent," Klopp said after the Montenegro incidents. "But that's too much power for one or two idiots or three or four idiots. But if the whole stand would do it then it is completely different."

For the moment though the likes of prolific tweeter Raheem Sterling—who has been subject to abuse from Chelsea fans and then in Montenegro this season—and Harry Kane will have to resist the urge to tweet or

post on Instagram.

Liverpool's England defender Trent Alexander-Arnold was among those who posted the PFA message on his Instagram account on Friday morning. "We are making a stand against racist abuse," said a message on his account.

"We recognise that our platforms come with responsibility, and so we are using our voice to stand against racist abuse. "Together, we are calling on social media platforms and footballing bodies to do more!"

Manchester United's central defender Chris Smalling—whose teammate Ashley Young was the victim of racist abuse after a mistake during the Champions League defeat to Barcelona on Tuesday—echoed these sentiments, warning harmful and hate-filled posts can have a debilitating impact on those targeted. "Throughout my career I have developed a thick skin against verbal abuse, justifying it as just 'part of the game' but the time has come for Twitter, Instagram and Facebook to consider regulating their channels, taking responsibility for protecting the mental health of users regardless of age, race, sex or income," Smalling said.

Twitter has defended itself, saying it is "suspending three times more abusive accounts within 24 hours after receiving a report than this time last year". A Facebook spokesperson told Press Association Sport they had made progress in developing tools that users can deploy to moderate and filter content on their pages by hiding or deleting comments.

"We will remove hate speech or credible threats of any kind, and we encourage anyone who sees content they find offensive to report it so we can remove anything that breaks our Community Standards," the spokesperson said.

Instagram too said they would act as soon as anyone reported anything relating to offensive posts. "We encourage anyone who sees content they find offensive to report it in-app and we work quickly to remove anything that breaks our guidelines." — AFP



AJACCIO: Former French national football team player Lilian Thuram speaks about racism to Laetitia high school teenagers on Friday in Ajaccio on the French Mediterranean island of Corsica. — AFP

## Chelsea aims to end Lyon reign in women's Champions League

PARIS: French powerhouse Lyon remain on course to win a fourth consecutive women's Champions League crown as they prepare to take on Chelsea in the semi-finals. The clubs meet in France today before the return leg in England on April 28, with a place in the final in Budapest on May 18 up for grabs. The winner of that tie will take on either Bayern Munich or Barcelona, who go head to head in Germany in the first leg of their last-four clash today.

### LYON V CHELSEA

Chelsea's reward for ousting Paris Saint-Germain in the last round is another trip to France, but getting the better of an all-conquering Lyon side is likely to be another challenge altogether. The English side beat PSG 3-2 on aggregate in the quarter-finals thanks to a dramatic injury-time goal by Norwegian midfielder Maren Mjelde, and are through to the last four for the second season running.

Last year their European dream was ended by German club Wolfsburg, who went on to lose to Lyon in the final in Kiev. Lyon have won the Champions League five times overall and closed on their 13th consecutive French title by hammering rivals PSG 5-0 last weekend before a crowd of 25,907, a record for a women's game in France.

Ballon d'Or winner Ada Hegerberg set Lyon on their way with her 19th league goal of the season. She has also netted four times in the Champions League, but was eclipsed in the quarter-finals by Eugenie Le Sommer, scorer of three goals in Lyon's 6-3 aggregate victory over Wolfsburg.

It all points to a gargantuan task for Chelsea, who are coming off the back of an agonising defeat against Manchester City in the FA Cup semi-finals last weekend and are hoping to keep the tie alive before the return in Kingston upon Thames on April 28.

"Nobody's delusional, Lyon are the best team in Europe, where they should be with a budget four



DECINES-CHARPIEU: File photo shows Paris' French defender Eve Perisset (L) vies for the ball with Lyon's Norwegian forward Ada Hegerberg (R) during the French women D1 football match between Olympique Lyonnais (OL) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) on April 13, 2019 at the Parc Olympique Lyonnais stadium in Decines-Charpieu. — AFP

times bigger than anyone else's," Chelsea manager Emma Hayes told the club's website. "They've got enough trophies under their belt to warrant the position they're in—they're overwhelming favourites, so we are going to have a glorious time."

### BAYERN MUNICH V BARCELONA

Two giants of the men's game, these clubs are relative novices at this level of the women's scene, especially Bayern. Runners-up to Wolfsburg in Germany in the last couple of years, they are second in the table again this season. However, they made it to the last four of the Champions League for the first time after defeating Slavia Prague in the quarters.

Barcelona, meanwhile, made it to this stage in

ahead of their game against relegated Chievo yesterday with Torino seven points adrift of the Champions League places before travelling to Genoa.

Castillejo came off the bench after 66 minutes and had an immediate impact when he headed in a Suso cross three minutes later. Patrick Cutrone had a goal ruled out for offside minutes later but Alves snatched a point for promoted Parma with a free kick that left returning Milan goalkeeper Gianluigi Donnarumma helpless.

Parma move up to 13th place, seven points above the relegation zone with five games left. "It wasn't a great performance," said Milan coach Gennaro Gattuso. "I expected to come here and do more. Parma made the most of that free kick with a wonderful goal. They deserved the point."

Champions Juventus can seal an eighth consecutive Serie A title later, with the Turin giants needing just a point against Fiorentina for their 35th Scudetto. — AFP

2017, only to lose to PSG. Now they are targeting a first final. Engaged in a thrilling battle with Atletico Madrid for the Spanish title, the Catalans are wary of Bayern's threat, however.

"We must not forget that they are a team with a much bigger budget than us and who have the best German players," claimed Barcelona coach Lluís Cortes. Nevertheless, Barcelona boast an impressive array of attacking talent, from England's Toni Duggan to Dutch star Lieke Martens and Spanish international Alexia Putellas.

Bayern will look to Mandy Islacker for inspiration in attack—she scored twice against Slavia in the last round and got the winner for Frankfurt in the 2015 final. — AFP

## Liverpool, Man City dominate PFA Player of the Year nominations

LONDON: Liverpool and Manchester City have dominated the shortlist for the Professional Footballers' Association Player of the Year award, with Virgil Van Dijk and Raheem Sterling the leading contenders for the prize.

Liverpool defender Van Dijk joins team-mate Sadio Mane on the list, while City forward Sterling is included alongside team-mates Sergio Aguero and Bernardo Silva. Chelsea's Eden Hazard completes the nominees for the 2018-19 campaign, with the winner announced

Live		Matches on TV
		(Local Timings)
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Everton v Manchester United	15:30	beIN SPORTS
Cardiff City v Liverpool	18:00	beIN SPORTS HD 2
Arsenal v Crystal Palace	18:00	beIN SPORTS HD 1
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Levante v RCD Espanyol	13:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Getafe CF v Sevilla FC	15:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Real Madrid v Athletic de Bilbao	17:15	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Villarreal CF v CD Leganes	19:30	beIN SPORTS HD 7
Real Betis v Valencia C.F	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 3
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
SC Freiburg v Borussia Dortmund	16:30	beIN SPORTS HD 5
Hertha Berlin v Hannover 96	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 5
FRENCH LEAGUE		
Toulouse FC v LOSC Lille	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6
FC Nantes v Amiens SC	16:00	beIN SPORTS MAX 5 FR
Stade Reims v Saint Etienne	18:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6
Paris Saint-Germain v AS Monaco FC	22:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6

on April 28 at the PFA's awards ceremony in London. Van Dijk, signed from Southampton in January 2018, has been an ever-present rock at the heart of the Premier League's tightest defence this campaign. He has helped Liverpool keep 18 clean sheets and concede only 20 times, while chipping in with three goals.

Senegal international Mane, included ahead of last year's winner Mohamed Salah, has also enjoyed a stellar season for Jurgen Klopp's side, hitting 18 league goals as the Anfield club attempt to end a 29-year wait to be champions.

Sterling, the bookmakers' second favourite for the award behind 27-year-old Van Dijk, has been key for Pep Guardiola's side with 17 goals and nine assists going into the weekend. Sterling and Silva, both 24, are also on the shortlist for the PFA Young Player of the Year award.

They are joined in that category by Liverpool defender Trent Alexander-Arnold, West Ham midfielder Declan Rice, Bournemouth winger David Brooks and Manchester United striker Marcus Rashford. — AFP

## Parma draw stalls AC Milan's Champions League push

MILAN: Bruno Alves grabbed a point for Parma to pile the pressure on AC Milan's Champions League ambitions with a 1-1 draw in Emilia-Romagna yesterday. Samu Castillejo nodded Milan ahead after 69 minutes but Alves pulled the sides level with a curling free-kick three minutes from time.

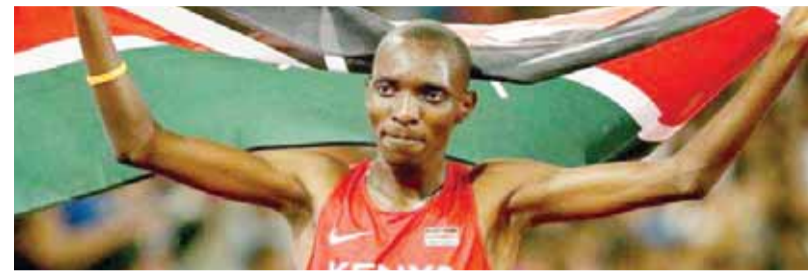
AC Milan remain fourth on 56 points but Roma are two points behind in fifth before they play third-placed Inter Milan at the San Siro later. Atalanta, sixth, can pull level with Milan on points when they travel to second-placed Napoli tomorrow. Lazio are also lurking four points behind



## 25 Hernandez stuns Hader as Dodgers extend winning streak to six games



## 26 Kiprop insists on innocence despite doping ban



## 27 Social media boycott as footballers in England say 'enough' over racism



MANCHESTER: Tottenham Hotspur's Argentinian defender Juan Foyth (L) vies with Manchester City's English midfielder Raheem Sterling during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Tottenham Hotspur at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. —AFP

# Foden fires Man City back top

## Brighton boost survival bid, Leicester at West Ham

LONDON: Phil Foden fired Manchester City back to the top of the Premier League as the young midfielder sealed a vital 1-0 win over Tottenham, while Brighton improved their survival prospects with a goalless draw at Wolves yesterday.

Pep Guardiola's side are one point clear of second-placed Liverpool after Foden's fifth-minute header exacted a measure of revenge for City's Champions League quarter-final exit against Tottenham on Wednesday.

Liverpool can regain pole position if they win at struggling Cardiff on Sunday, but City have won their last 10 league matches to keep the destiny of the title in their own hands because the champions will hold a game in hand on Jurgen Klopp's men.

"It was very important for the race for the Premier League. We know we cannot drop points. It was tight. Tottenham had more chances than the previous two games," Guardiola said.

"We have been playing for the Premier League every three days for 10 months, you can feel the pressure.

"The title is still in our hands. We are fighting until the end."

As well as Foden's crucial contribution in only his second Premier League start, Guardiola was indebted to City goalkeeper Ederson for a series of fine saves as the champions gave a nervous display at the Etihad Stadium.

And the City manager admitted it had been hard for his players to recover from their dramatic Champions League loss to Tottenham, a result that ended their bid to win an unprecedented quadruple.

"We could have lost the Premier League today-after Wednesday it was really tough. As a footballer, I could not have done what my players have done today," Guardiola said.

The only frustration for Guardiola was an injury to Belgium midfielder Kevin De Bruyne, who limped off again just before the break.

De Bruyne, only recently back from a knee problem, is unlikely to play in the midweek derby at Manchester United.

"We will see tomorrow but I think the next game

he will be out," Guardiola said.

"I didn't speak to him, but he put his hands in the hamstring position."

### RODGERS RESCUED

At Molineux, fourth-bottom Brighton moved three points clear of third-bottom Cardiff after a gritty stalemate.

Chris Hughton's men, who have a game in hand on Cardiff, needed a man-of-the-match display from Australian goalkeeper Mat Ryan to avoid a fifth successive defeat.

Gerard Deulofeu's brace lifted Watford to seventh place with a 2-1 victory at relegated Huddersfield.

Deulofeu, the hero of Watford's FA Cup semi-final win over Wolves, put the Hornets ahead with a deft dink into the top corner in the fifth minute at the John Smith's Stadium.

The Spanish winger netted again in the 80th minute after Jonas Lossil saved Abdoulaye Doucoure's effort.

Huddersfield's stoppage-time reply from Karlan

from time.

"I had a couple of shots against Dortmund which were a bit NFL-like, so it was nice to score the winning goal today," Sulele told Sky. At the other end of the table, Stuttgart look doomed to a bottom-three finish after they suffered a humiliating 6-0 thrashing by fellow strugglers Augsburg.

Augsburg obliterated their relegation rivals with a delightful display of attacking football. Goals from Rani Khedira, Andre Hahn and Philipp Max saw them establish a 3-0 lead before the half-hour mark.

Max added another in the second half, and a Marco Richter double completed a disastrous display for Stuttgart. Augsburg's win lifts them ten points clear of

the relegation play-off place, and also confirms survival for Mainz, who beat local rivals Fortuna Duesseldorf 3-1. Jean-Philippe Mateta put Mainz into the lead after just 36 seconds, but Dodi Lukebakio levelled the scores with his second goal in two games. Lukebakio later missed a penalty, and Mainz took advantage of the let-off. They promptly restored the lead through Karim Onisiwo, before Mateta sealed the win a few minutes from time.

Elsewhere, Bayer Leverkusen kept themselves in the race for Europe with a 2-0 win over Nuremberg. Lucas Alario's 61st-minute header just cleared the goalline, before Kevin Volland struck late to decide a nervy game in Leverkusen's favour. — AFP

## Bayern grind out Bremen win to stay ahead of Dortmund

BERLIN: Niklas Sule's late goal saw Bayern Munich break a brave resistance from ten-man Werder Bremen to snatch a crucial 1-0 win and stay ahead of Borussia Dortmund in the Bundesliga title race. Bayern toiled in the searing Bavarian sun against Bremen, eventually

grinding out the victory to go four points clear at the top of the table overnight.

"It would have been nice if we had taken more of our chances, but we deserved to win," Bayern coach Niko Kovac told Sky. The win puts pressure on title rivals Dortmund, who need to win a tough away game in Freiburg today if they are to remain within a point of Bayern.

Bremen held Bayern at bay for much of the game, but suffered a lethal blow just before the hour mark, when Milos Veljkovic was sent off for a second yellow card. Chances came and went for Bayern as the clock ticked down, until Sule finally broke through with a deflected shot from the edge of the area 15 minutes