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# Mol cracks down on 120,000 residency violators in Kuwait

Driving licenses of most dependents to be revoked • MoH recruiting Indian doctors

## MPs up pressure on info minister

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MPs yesterday stepped up pressure against Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri ahead of his grilling that may be debated tomorrow. At the same time, the minister demanded explanation of certain points included in the grilling, which require additional details. The grilling is on top of the agenda tomorrow, but the minister has the right to demand the postponement of the grilling for two weeks. On the Assembly's agenda is another grilling against Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, filed by MPs Mohammad Hayef and Mohammad Al-Mutair over charges of squandering public funds and unfair appointments.

Jabri's grilling was submitted by MPs Riyadh Al-Adasani, Adel Al-Damkhi and Mohammad Al-Dallal, who accused the minister of promoting irregularities at the information ministry, the agricultural authority and the sports authority, all of which fall under the minister's purview. Dallal said yesterday that the minister did not take any actions over violations at the agricultural authority. He said violations in the distribution of agricultural land plots have increased under the minister, and that's why the grilling is "not random and we are aware of what the minister has been doing".

MP Abdulwahab Al-Babtain described the agricultural violations as the straw that broke the camel's back, adding that he has documents that the public funds protection committee does not have. He said he has supplied all the information he has to MP Adasani, claiming the agricultural plots were used to appease someone.

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By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: An informed source said an estimated 120,000 expats of both genders are in violation of the residency law in Kuwait. These include those who had valid residencies earlier and those who came to Kuwait on visit or work visas and violated the law. The source said security efforts are in progress to curb their numbers through inspection campaigns and other measures.

The source said the deportation department will not accept violators with expired article 18 residencies until three months have elapsed since their violations were entered in the interior ministry's computer systems. As for article 20 residency holders (domestic helpers), the department will accept them days after they are reported missing, with the possibility that the sponsor can correct the helper's situation. The source said the deportation department has deported 600 violators, including 18 women, in the past few days. He said the deportation department's capacity is a maximum of 800 people of both genders.

In another concern, all traffic departments in Kuwait's six governorates are no longer authorized to

renew driving licenses of holders of dependent visas (article 22), especially those issued after 2014. All such licenses should be sent to the interior ministry's assistant undersecretary for traffic affairs, whose office will make sure that they were obtained according to the rules, which includes that the husband of the license holder meets all conditions, most importantly to be a general manager, assistant general manager, advisor or work in exempted professions that allows spouses to get a license. The source said all article 22 licenses issued with exemptions will be revoked by the assistant undersecretary's office.

Meanwhile, Health Ministry Assistant Undersecretary for Technical Affairs Dr Abdelrahman Al-Mutairi said Indian doctors are being recruited to work in specialized ministry hospitals and health centers in the fields of internal medicine, ICU, gynecology, pediatric orthopedics, pediatric surgery and tumors, liver surgery, blood vessels, glands, organ transplant, premature births, intervention radiology and primary care. He said ads were published in Indian newspapers with regards to the ministry's need for doctors in the said specialties, adding applications can be made online.

## News in brief

### UAE deposits \$250m in Sudan bank

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates announced yesterday it would deposit \$250 million in Sudan's central bank as part of a support package for the country following the overthrow of longtime leader Omar Al-Bashir. The government-owned Abu Dhabi Fund for Development signed an agreement with the Sudanese central bank "confirming the deposit", the UAE's official WAM news agency said. Last week, Saudi Arabia and the UAE announced three billion dollars in financial aid for Sudan. The deposit for the central bank was aimed at shoring up the Sudanese pound. —AFP

### NYT apologizes for cartoon

WASHINGTON: The New York Times on Saturday apologized for publishing an anti-Semitic cartoon in its international print edition featuring Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and US President Donald Trump. The cartoon, which appeared in Thursday's newspaper, depicted Netanyahu as a guide dog wearing a Star of David collar and leading a blind Trump - who was wearing a kippah, or a Jewish skullcap. In an apology published on Twitter by the Times's opinion section - which will also appear in print today - the newspaper said the drawing "included anti-Semitic tropes". —AFP

### Chile footprint 'oldest' in Americas

SANTIAGO: Scientists in Chile say they have found a footprint dating from at least 15,600 years ago, making it the earliest such sign of man's presence in the Americas. The footprint was found at the Pilauco excavation in 2011 next to a house in the city of Osorno (820 km south of Santiago), where scientists have been digging since 2007. It took years for paleontologist Karen Moreno and geologist Mario Pino to reliably confirm that the print was human. Pino said the footprint appears to be that of a barefoot man weighing about 70 kg and of the species Hominipies Modernus, a relative of Homo Sapiens. —AFP

## Sri Lanka bans face coverings

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena yesterday announced a ban on face covering, a week after Islamist militants carried out coordinated suicide bombings that killed 253 people. Sirisena said he was using emergency powers to ban any form of face covering in public. The restriction will take effect from today, his office said in a statement. "The ban is to ensure national security... No one should obscure their faces to make identification difficult," the statement said.

It came days after local Islamic clerics urged Muslim

## Iran could shut Hormuz; drone films US ships

TEHRAN: Iran's top general warned yesterday Tehran could close the strategic Strait of Hormuz shipping route if it faces more "hostility", news agency ISNA said, as the US tightens up sanctions. "We are not after closing the Strait of Hormuz but if the hostility of enemies increase, we will be able to do so," armed forces chief of staff Mohammad Bagheri told semi-official ISNA. "Also if our oil does not go through the strait, other countries' oil will certainly not cross the strait, too," he added.

The statement came after Washington said last Monday it would start imposing sanctions on countries such as India, China and Turkey that buy Iranian oil. Eight countries were initially given six-month reprieves after the United States reimposed sanctions on Iran in November, following President Donald Trump's decision to withdraw from a 2015 nuclear accord. Iranian officials have repeatedly warned the Islamic republic could shut down the strait, a vital shipping lane for international oil supplies, should it find its national interests or security threatened.

"We believe Iran will continue to sell its oil ... (and) use the Strait of Hormuz. But if the United States takes the crazy measure of trying to prevent us from doing that, then it should be prepared for the consequences," foreign minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said on Wednesday.

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In this file photo taken on Feb 25, 2015, a member of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards chants slogans after attacking a naval vessel during a military drill in the Strait of Hormuz. — AFP

## For one Palestinian, Trump peace efforts are not hair-raising

BEITUNIA: In a time of intense Palestinian anger toward US President Donald Trump, at least one Palestinian-American remains optimistic that the US leader can offer hope. Farouk Shami, a beauty industry mogul who said he has known Trump for nearly two decades, says the US president uses his products to sculpt his iconic hair. He says the "great man" genuinely wants to achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal, despite a series of measures which have caused Palestinian fury.

"I believe that he is committed to peace in the Middle East, and especially in Palestine. There is a commitment," Shami, who lives near Houston, Texas, told AFP during a visit back to the occupied West Bank, where he was born. "I am still hopeful that one day we will have peace, even while Trump is in position." The multimillionaire 76-year-old moved to the United States in 1965 and eventually set up Farouk Systems, which offers a range of high-end hair products.

He says he became friends with the future US pres-



BEITUNIA: Farouk Shami, a Palestinian-American beauty industry mogul, is pictured at his institute for hairdressers on April 25, 2019. — AFP

ident when sponsoring the then-Trump-owned Miss USA and Miss Universe pageants. He eventually featured on Trump's Celebrity Apprentice reality show. "We are still friends, although I don't agree with his political views concerning Palestine and concerning Jerusalem," Farouk, wearing a suit and cowboy boots with a dragon on them, said at his newly opened institute for hairdressers in the Palestinian town of Beitunia. The White House did not respond to a request for comment.

Continued on Page 24

Kamal Jayanathdhi, the officer in charge at Kalmunai police station on the east coast, confirmed the three men had died along with a child that appears in the video, and that the undated clip in which they discuss martyrdom, had been shot in the same house where the gun battle took place. Two people who were inside the house, a woman and a seven-year-old girl believed to be relatives of the men, survived, he said, while a woman was killed in crossfire on a nearby street.

Niyaz Sharif, the brother-in-law of Zahran Hashim, the suspected ringleader of the wave of Easter Sunday bombings, told Reuters the video showed Zahran's two brothers and father. On Sunday police in the eastern town of Kattankudy raided a mosque founded by Zahran which doubled up as the headquarters of his group, the National Thawheedh Jamaath (NTJ). —Agencies

## Mystery of 'Salvator Mundi', the world's most costly painting

PARIS: Later this year, the Louvre in Paris will host an exhibition of masterpieces by the Italian painter Leonardo da Vinci to mark his death 500 years ago in France. But the work that in recent months has been the intense focus of scrutiny by the media and da Vinci specialists, may not be on show. In 2017, "Salvator Mundi" was sold at auction by Christie's as a work by da Vinci for a record \$450 million. But it has not been displayed in public since, triggering doubts about its ownership, its whereabouts and its authenticity.

The painting, a portrait of Jesus (PBUH), was to go on display at the Louvre Abu Dhabi in September last year. But its unveiling was postponed by the museum without any explanation. The Louvre Abu Dhabi has kept tight-lipped about the identity of the buyer, saying only that the emirate's Department of Culture and Tourism had "acquired" it.

And the mystery has further deepened ahead of a visit by Italian President Sergio Mattarella who will join France's President Emmanuel Macron on Thursday on a trip to the Loire Valley to mark the anniversary of da Vinci's death there in 1519, at the age of 67.

Continued on Page 24



NEW YORK: In this file photo taken on Oct 10, 2017, Christie's employees unveil Leonardo da Vinci's "Salvator Mundi". — AFP





# Amir set to attend Salam Palace museum's inauguration ceremony today

## Amir, Crown Prince meet martyred Lance Corporal's daughter

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is set to inaugurate the Salam Palace museum during a ceremony to be held today at 10:00 am. In other news, His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness then received Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. His Highness also received His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

His Highness then received Chairman of the

Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Youssef Al-Mutawaa. His Highness then received Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who was escorting Antonio Vitorino, Director General of the UN's International Organization for Migration (IOM). Furthermore, His Highness received Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, accompanied by Salem Al-Wawan and the daughter of martyred Lance Corporal Khaled

Nasser Al-Wawan.

Also yesterday, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker Ghanem, His Highness the PM Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Justice Youssef Al-Mutawaa, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah and Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. Moreover, His Highness the Crown Prince received Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. In addition, His Highness the Crown Prince received Salem Al-Wawan and the daughter of mar-

tyred Lance Corporal Khaled Nasser Al-Wawan.

Separately, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of congratulations to Chairperson of the Social Work Society (SWS) Sheikh Bibi Nasser Al-Sabah, on having been granted the title of Goodwill Ambassador by the IOM in appreciation for her humanitarian and social contributions. In the cable, His Highness the Amir hailed this title and wished her more successes in serving the homeland. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to Sheikh Bibi. — KUNA

## Speaker, Foreign Minister meet IOM chief

KUWAIT: Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem met yesterday the visiting Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Antonio Vitorino. The meeting discussed a number of files of common interest, especially issues related to the situation of refugees in Arab countries, according to Al-Dustour news network. MP Khalaf Al-Enezi, MP Askar Al-Enezi and Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Minister Plenipotentiary Nasser Al-Hain attended the meeting.

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met with Vitorino, who is visiting Kuwait to participate in a ceremony marking the 25th anniversary of the



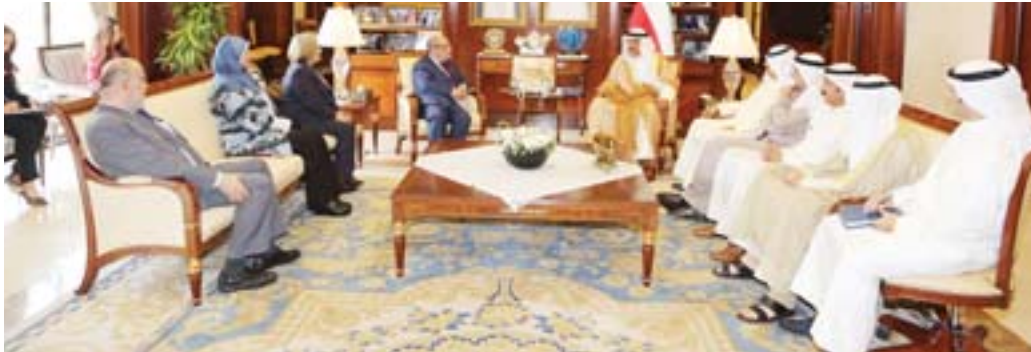
National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem meets with Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Antonio Vitorino.

humanitarian partnership between Kuwait and IOM held by the organization's mission in Kuwait. Vitorino expressed high appreciation for Kuwait's efforts to support the organization's activities.

Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah, Assistant Foreign Minister for the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister, Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for Deputy Foreign Minister's office Ambassador Ayham Al-Omar, Acting

Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hain and Foreign Ministry Senior Officials also attended the meeting.

In other news, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled met yesterday with Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adnan bin Ahmad Al-Ansari. During the meeting, Dr Adnan handed a written message to Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled from Oman's Minister of Foreign Affairs Yusuf bin Alawi bin Abdullah. A number of Foreign Ministry officials attended the meeting. — KUNA



Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Director General of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) Antonio Vitorino.



Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Oman's Ambassador to Kuwait Dr Adnan bin Ahmad Al-Ansari.



## Local

# Rain expected to continue until Wednesday: Meteorologist

## Temperatures to rise in Ramadan; 'hot, dusty' Eid predicted



KUWAIT: Vehicles drive along a number of highways in Kuwait during rainy weather which hit the country yesterday. — KUNA photos

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait experienced rain showers yesterday, and rainy weather is expected to continue until Wednesday, according to a veteran local meteorologist, who noted that fluctuations in weather conditions happen due to the 'Sarayat' season. Dr Saleh Al-Ujairi advised the public to be cautious as the sarayat might bring some 'heavy rains'. He said the minimum temperature is expected to be 15 degrees Celsius and the maximum 35 degrees. The weather will be subjected to a high degree of variability during Ramadan, which is set to start next week, and

temperatures are expected rise gradually, Ujairi said. Meanwhile, he noted that the weather during Eid Al-Fitr is expected to be dusty with strong winds and high temperatures. The sarayat season, which begins in mid-April and lasts until the end of May, is an annual weather phenomenon characterized by weather volatility and sudden changes, including unexpected thunder and sandstorms.

### Lack of experience

Separately, a recent government report blamed 'lack of experience' of public works ministry and Public Authority for Roads and Transportation officials, for partial responsi-

bility behind flashfloods that hit Kuwait following last November's heavy rains. The report prepared by the State Audi Bureau with regards to a study of the financial, technical and legal aspects related to roads and sewer maintenance as well as pumping stations following the rain crisis, revealed that the advisor of the contract was behind the Mangaf tunnel flooding, which had repeated three times in the past few years, adding that the ministry did not move until after the 2018 rains. The report also explained that topographic maps as well as plans by Kuwait Municipality, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research and Kuwait University all confirm the Mangaf tunnel is located in the

path of streams and in a low-lying area.

### Lack of accuracy

Furthermore, the report revealed lack of accuracy when estimating the amounts of contract items before presenting it, resulting in reducing its items by 24.4 percent when executed, indicating that the total amount of the contract reached KD 27.6 million, while the executed works according to payment certificates were KD 20.9 million only, which means there is a KD 6.7 million discrepancy without issuance of any changing orders for amending, reducing or canceling any part of the project components.

## 23% prevalence of diabetes in Kuwait: Doctor

By Abdullatif Sharaa

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Diabetes Society (KDS) organized an awareness day on the occasion of the upcoming month of Ramadan at The Avenues Mall. The event included blood sugar and blood pressure tests and nutrition and medical advice. Doctors were at hand and answered the public's questions, particularly those with diabetes.

KDS president, endocrinologist and head of the endocrine fellowship in Kuwait Dr Walid Al-Dhahi said diabetes is a chronic disease that remains with the patient all their life and requires improvement in lifestyle, besides complying with instructions and taking medicines as prescribed on time. He said statistics and studies show the prevalence of diabetes in Kuwait is 23 percent and this raises a red flag. He said 95 percent of cases are of type 2 diabetes, adding the disease may be accompanied by obesity, high cholesterol levels and blood pressure. Dhahi said nearly 148 million Muslims are living with the disease, adding fasting improves diabetes and most diabetics can fast except in certain cases, such as:

- Those who suffered hypoglycemia repeatedly dur-



KUWAIT: Participants pose for a group photo.

ing the three month preceding Ramadan.

- Those who suffer from other chronic problems such as heart, eye, nerve and liver diseases.
- Those treated with multiple injections during the day.
- Type 1 diabetes patients.
- Pregnant women with diabetes.

Dhahi said 78 percent of type 2 diabetics fast half of the month of Ramadan, while 43 percent of type 1 patients also fast half of the month, adding that it is highly important to see the doctor before Ramadan to make sure whether the patient can fast or not.



BRUSSELS: Children learning Arabic at the Free University of Brussels participate in the ceremony. — KUNA

their efforts." "We are very pleased and grateful for the contribution of Kuwait for this. We want to increase the number of pupils but we need more support for this," he said, noting that they have printed the first text books for the Arabic language program, prepared by the teachers.

In the meantime, Ambassador Budaiwi said that this is the continuation of the embassy's efforts and support to the Arabic language program by the VUB for the third time. The program is really useful for Arab immigrants and the Arab community here in Brussels and in Belgium, he pointed out. "It is a wonderful program and in line with all the efforts that Kuwait is

doing in support for humanitarian, educational and cultural fields," he said. "We will try to continue supporting the program through many ways and means," he added. Sami Azar, the coordinator of the project, said that the program started in October 2016 with 164 children and today has 300 pupils aged between six and 15. "We have a long waiting list for children who would like to join the Arabic course, which are held thrice weekly in four centers in Brussels," he noted. Every center has five classrooms with 15 children, he added. "Kuwait's donation last year was a great help for us. Big thanks for the Kuwaiti donation and we need such donations to continue," he stressed. — KUNA



JEDDAH: A group photo of participants of the 64th meeting of the executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Justice Ministers. — KUNA

for all efforts exerted by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to fight terrorism and apply justice to terrorist cells.

Afasi argued that the scourge of terrorist is closely related to the discourse of hatred, intimidation and provocation against certain individuals or groups. In this context, the Kuwaiti minister pointed out an Arab

draft legislation to prevent the discourse of hatred. The 64th meeting of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Justice Ministers kicked off in Jeddah yesterday, in the presence of the justice ministers of Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, Libya, Lebanon, Sudan and Tunisia. — KUNA

## Former official offers to pay back millions in exchange for release

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The criminal court adjourned a case in which a number of former interior ministry officials face embezzlement charges until May 12, while refusing to release the suspects. During a court session yesterday for the case publicly known as the 'interior ministry hospitality scandal', a former senior ministry official offered to pay KD 10 million, which is the amount he is accused of embezzling, to be released until the case is decided. His offer was denied, however. The public prosecution also presented its case. Deputy Director of the Financial Prosecution Humoud Al-Shami said the suspects are bringing out the dark side of the case and this similar to Archimedes' trick, because the embezzled amount is much larger than the offered amount.

### Missing boys found

Two Kuwaiti young men who were reported missing recently were found in good condition yesterday. A security source said Kuwaiti youths Adnan Al-Kharafi and Fahd Al-Alyan are being returned home after procedures are completed, adding that concerned authorities in Kuwait are coordinating with their counterparts in Iran to bring them back. The source had said earlier that a search was on for the two missing men after the father of one of them said his son and friend did not return from a fishing trip.

### Waiting for approval

A senior Public Authority for Manpower official said that a memorandum of understanding signed (MoU) between Kuwait and Egypt to complete the automated link to bring in Egyptian workers is awaiting the council of ministers' approval to go into effect. Meanwhile, Deputy Director for the Manpower and Financial Sector Affairs Sultan Al-Shaalani said the new labor services building will open soon in Ahmadi governorate. Furthermore, Shaaalani denied any problem in differentiation between employees, based on which vacant supervisory jobs are made permanent. He said the authority is completing the differentiation from all aspects between its employees, while complying with laws, decisions and circulars issued by the diwan. About the total number of authority employees after completing the merger with the Manpower and Government Restructuring Program, he said they number 2,772 employees of both genders. He said as for supervisory jobs, there are 31 managers, 81 supervisors and 248 heads of departments. He said by attaching the domestic help department to the authority from the interior ministry, the number of supervisors became 83 with 253 heads of departments.

### No price increase

Head of Kuwait Farmers Union Abdullah Al-Dammak assured consumers that most agricultural products will not see price increases before Ramadan. He said stability of prices increases as production increases, besides achieving food security year round, adding that the union stands by any legitimate demands by farmers and works on fulfilling them in cooperation and coordination with concerned government authorities. He said the heaps of tomatoes seen on social media on the side of a Wafra road were not fit for consumption and no one accepted to deal with them. Dammak said crops are witnessing their best production periods in Abdaly, Wafra and Sulaibiya farms. He said the price of a 7-kg grade one tomato box is 300 fils in auctions, while grade two is sold for 150-200 fils, while grade three is not dealt with because its quality cannot be guaranteed. He said the increase in crop production is due to an increase in green cover in the north and south of the country, especially since the number of greenhouses has reached 60,000, while it was 15,000 in 2016.

### Insurance companies suspended

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry issued six decisions in which it suspended six insurance companies for three months or until the violations are removed, whichever comes first. The decisions said in the second item of each that policies already issued by the companies remain valid. The third item says the companies will continue making compensation payments and other dues.

## Belgian university honors Kuwait for supporting Arabic language program

**BRUSSELS:** The Free University of Brussels (VUB), has honored Kuwait for its support to its Arabic language program at a graduation ceremony held Saturday evening. Vice Rector for International Relations at the VUB, Professor Romain Meeusen, addressing the large gathering of students and their parents for the ceremony, thanked and expressed his appreciation to Kuwait for its support. "We are very grateful for the donation we received from the embassy of Kuwait last year," he said, adding that "we need the continuation of the support." Meanwhile, Kuwait's Ambassador to Belgium, the European Union and NATO, Jassem Al-Budaiwi in his speech expressed appreciation to the VUB for organizing the Arabic language program, thanking the teachers and parents of the students for their enthusiasm for Arabic. Professor Meeusen said this is a voluntary program for Arabic language for Syrian refugees and they also have teachers "whom we want to pay for

## Kuwait re-elected deputy chief of Arab justice ministers' office

**JEDDAH:** Kuwaiti Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi was yesterday re-elected deputy chairman of the Executive Bureau of the Council of Arab Justice Ministers. This came during the 64th meeting of the office held in the Saudi city of Jeddah. Addressing the meeting, the Kuwaiti minister said it is necessary for Arab countries to keep on legal and judicial cooperation especially following recent "heinous terrorist" incidents in New Zealand and Sri Lanka. He reiterated Kuwait's support



# NBK reveals annual social program for the holy month of Ramadan

Fast-breaking banquets, iftar meals' distribution, and hospital visits



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) revealed its annual 'Doing Good Deeds' program during the holy month of Ramadan. For more than 26 years, the program comprises a series of activities and events aimed at encouraging community engagement and solidarity and charity in Kuwait.

Abdelmohsin Al-Rushaid, NBK Public Relations Executive Manager said "NBK will ramp up its charitable activities during the Holy month, as part of its commitment towards serving the society. NBK hopes to encourage a greater sense of community and charity during Ramadan and encourages its customers and staff to participate by 'doing good deeds' all month long." "It is a well-root-

ed tradition that has been carried out by NBK each year in its efforts to continuously have an active role in the Kuwait society. NBK believes in the power of doing good," added Rushaid.

#### Ramadan tent and tours

NBK Ramadan Social Program includes more than 9,000 fast-breaking banquets that will be held in a special tent near the Scientific Center. NBK will also distribute iftar meals via special convoys that will tour round the most crowded areas in the country.

#### Volunteers

NBK staff volunteers have already finalized all necessary arrangements for

Ramadan tent to receive fasting people on the eve of first day of Ramadan. NBK staff volunteers will manage and supervise the fast-breaking banquets.

#### Hospitals and crowded areas

Dates and water will be offered to fasters driving at the iftar time. Also NBK will be distributing iftar banquets daily at a special center the bank constructed last year at Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh. The NBK Ramadan Social Program will also include several visits by volunteers to NBK Children's Hospital and other social institutions to celebrate giagian.

#### Naif Palace

For the fourth year in a row, 7,500

iftar banquets will also be distributed at Naif Palace in addition to sponsoring Kuwait TV's annual Live Ramadan Show at the palace and distribute prizes for fasters there.

#### Social visits

The NBK Ramadan Social Program will also include several visits by NBK's Public Relations Team and NBK staff volunteers to hospitals and institutions.

#### Social Media Activities

NBK Ramadan Social Program will also include daily awareness videos and health tips through the official social media channels of NBK on Facebook and Twitter and Instagram.



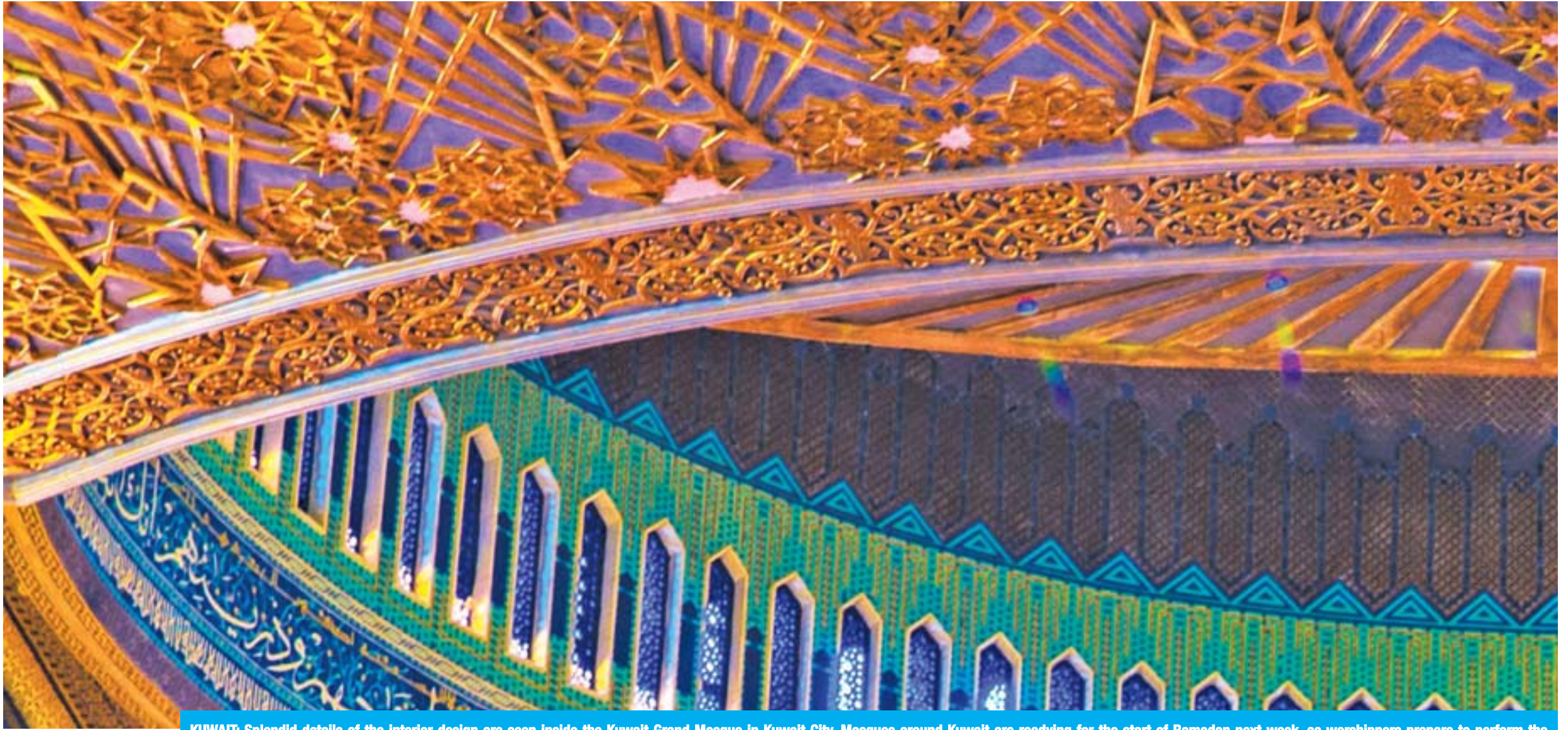
Abdelmohsin Al-Rushaid





## Local

## Photo of the Day



**KUWAIT:** Splendid details of the interior design are seen inside the Kuwait Grand Mosque in Kuwait City. Mosques around Kuwait are readying for the start of Ramadan next week, as worshippers prepare to perform the 'Taraweeh' and 'Qiyam' prayers throughout the holy month. — Photo by Mohammad Al-Hadhoud (KUNA)

# Zain sponsors 'Memoirs of a Sailor' national musical epic

Company committed to supporting artistic projects that reflect values of Kuwaiti heritage

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its sponsorship of the second production of the national musical epic 'Memoirs of a Sailor' organized by Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center (JACC) at the National Theater. The musical, which comes as part of JACC's second cultural season 'Bridging Cultures,' runs from 24 April - 2 May.

Zain participated in the press conference held at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center to announce the launch of the second production of the musical 'Memoirs of a Sailor.' The conference witnessed the presence of JACC General Manager Faisal Khajah, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, director Tama Matheson, novelist Saud Al-Sanuosi, and sponsors' representatives.

During the press conference, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti said: "Zain's sponsorship of this grand national project comes in line with our commitment in being an active partner of the various creative projects that aim at enriching national unity, especially the ones that reflect the beautiful values of our Kuwaiti heritage, history, and traditions. Zain's support comes to affirm its social responsibility and its role as a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector in imprinting a positive impact within the social fabric of the community."

Khashti added: "Zain is keen on supporting and encouraging initiatives and projects that contribute to the country's cultural and touristic scenes. We will spare no efforts in offering our support to any entity that possess innovative and creative ideas that serve

the community and progress national economy, especially those that aim at enriching Kuwait's culture and traditions as per the highest international standards like this national musical."

The national musical epic 'Memoirs of a Sailor,' organized by Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Center, aims at reimagining the original TV musical 'Memoirs of a Sailor' 40 years after its debut in 1979 by Kuwait Television. The original musical - which is considered one of the most prominent national productions in Kuwaiti art's history - was written by poet Mohammed Al-Fayez, composed by musician Ghannam Al-Daikan, performed by great Kuwaiti performers Abdulaziz Al-Mufarraj and Sanaa Al-Kharraz, and directed by Mohammed Al-Sanuosi. The musical told the story of a Kuwaiti sailor's life and the hardships he faced while pearl-diving before the discovery of oil in Kuwait.

The second production of this musical national epic will feature many artistic, theatrical, and technical innovations that will present it in a stunning manner. The musical will feature a return of great Kuwaiti performer Abdulaziz Al-Mufarraj, as well as Zahra Al-Kharji and a number of young performers. The project's creative team features director Tama Matheson, novelist Saud Al-Sanuosi, creative director Leo Warner, assistant director Rosetta Debattista, traditional arts designer Masouma Al-Bloushi, choreographer Janis Aduino, and costume designer Rajaa Al-Bader. In addition, the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Center Orchestra - the first Kuwaiti orchestra - will perform during the musical, featuring 84 talented performers led by Dr Mohammed Baqer.



**KUWAIT:** Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti (second from right) attends the press conference.

## Jordan's liberal theater honors Kuwaiti actress

**AMMAN:** The International Festival of Liberal Theater acclaimed on Saturday Suad Abdullah, a Kuwaiti actress, as a guest of honor of the event which kicked off earlier in the day. The honoring comes in recognition of Saud's role in reviving the Arab theater. Jordanian Prime Minister's representative and culture minister Mohammad

Abu Rumman delivered the plaque to the Kuwaiti artist, in the presence of Kuwait's Ambassador to Jordan Aziz Al-Daihani.

Speaking in a statement, Suad lauded the festival, which mirrors varied culture of many Arab and foreign theatric artists. Meanwhile, Daihani said honoring Suad is a tribute to the State of Kuwait, which is a pioneering country in the field of culture and art, thanks to the official interest in this sector. He praised the festival, saying Jordan brings together the Arabs and all people all over the world that are interested in this event.

Some other artists were also honored in the festival, which includes eight performances from some countries. The festival, which runs until May 8, features several performances from the Arab region and beyond, including Kuwait's 'Raya and Sakina.' — KUNA

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US reels from deadly synagogue attack on final day of Passover

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## Modi ‘free cooking gas’ leaves a bitter taste for Indians

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COLOMBO: Mourners light candles during a vigil in memory of the victims in Colombo yesterday a week after a series of bomb blasts targeting churches and luxury hotels on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka. — AFP

# Sri Lanka Catholics afraid but unbowed

## Catholic leadership suspends all public services, fearing new attacks

**COLOMBO:** Church bells tolled mournfully at Colombo’s devastated St Anthony’s Shrine yesterday, as scores of Christians wept but defiantly prayed and lit candles for the victims of the horrific Easter bombings. The bells rang out at 8:45 am, the moment a jihadist suicide bomber detonated his device inside the 18th-century church on Easter Sunday, one of six attacks on churches and luxury hotels that left 253 dead.

The bomber destroyed part of the shrine’s roof and scarred its walls with shrapnel, damaging the clock tower whose hands were still stuck at 8:45 – a grim reminder of the destruction. The island’s Roman Catholic leadership has suspended all public services, fearing new attacks. But yesterday morning, as Sri Lanka’s Christians sought to come to terms with the tragedy, scores of Catholics held a heavily guarded

vigil outside the Colombo church.

From teenagers to elderly men and women, to parents carrying their children in their arms, the crowd gradually swelled, as worshippers came out on to the streets to mourn. As they prayed and wept – some in silence, others loudly sobbing – some fingered rosary beads, while others sang hymns and lit candles, placing them inside metal boxes as a makeshift memorial to the victims. Keuslaus Stanislaus said he had travelled to St Anthony’s because he “wanted to participate in a mass in some way”. “We wanted to participate because we haven’t been able to worship all week,” the 30-year-old told AFP.

### ‘Insult to humanity’

For those living near the church, the bombing felt like a personal onslaught. “I come to this church every

Sunday. It feels like my second home. It’s like people blasted my own home,” said Dharshika Fernando, struggling to hold back tears. “We don’t know when the church will open again but we want it back soon,” the 19-year-old told AFP. About an hour after the vigil began, worshippers fell silent as the parish priest walked out to the entrance of the church and held up a statue of St Anthony. The crowd raised their hands in prayer before resuming their solemn hymns. President Maithripala Sirisena also lit candles at the church site, where a major clean-up operation is now under way.

Navy forces have been deployed to repair the damaged building, remove bloodstains from its ceiling and wash away the overpowering stench of death that still lingered a week after the bombing. Vice Admiral Piyal de Silva, commander of the Sri Lankan Navy, told reporters he hoped to quickly finish the reconstruction.

“I hope within one month or so we will do it,” he said. At the tightly-guarded Roman Catholic Archbishop’s residence in Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith condemned the attacks in a private mass that was broadcast live on the country’s television channels.

With President Sirisena, Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe and opposition leader Mahinda Rajapakse in the small congregation, the cardinal appealed for peace and unity in the multi-ethnic island of 21 million people. “In the name of God we cannot destroy any person,” he said. “What happened last Sunday is a great tragedy, an insult to humanity,” the cardinal said, urging followers to show kindness to others as a sign of respect for all the victims. The authorities have blamed the attacks on a local Islamist group affiliated to the Islamic State, which has claimed responsibility. — AFP

## Tears and troops on the streets as Sri Lanka mourns

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka’s churches remained shut yesterday forcing Christians to say prayers of grief in private over the Easter suicide attacks that the country’s Roman Catholic leader called “an insult to humanity”. Fearing a repeat of the Easter Sunday bombings of churches and hotels in which 253 people died, the Archbishop of Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith, held a private mass after cancelling all public services. Amidst heavy security imposed across the country, a vigil was also held outside St Anthony’s Shrine in Colombo at 8:45 am, the moment the bomber struck the church, killing dozens of worshippers.

“Today during this mass we are paying attention to last Sunday’s tragedy and we try to understand it,” the cardinal said at his official residence, where President Maithripala Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe were among the small congregation. “We pray that in this country there will be peace and co-existence and understanding each other without division,” he said. “What happened last Sunday is a great tragedy, an insult to humanity,” he added.

### Stuck in time

At exactly 8:45 am, the singing of hymns by scores of people outside St. Anthony’s church stopped and the bells tolled. The hands on the tower clock are still fixed at the time of the blast. “I come to this church every Sunday, it feels like my second home,” said Dharshika Fernando, 19, fighting back tears. “It feels like people blasted my own home.”

Thousands of Sri Lankan troops



COLOMBO: Soldiers on a motorbike patrol in Colombo yesterday a week after a series of bomb blasts targeting churches and luxury hotels on Easter Sunday in Sri Lanka. — AFP

remained on the streets, guarding churches and mosques for the symbolic day. Security forces also carried out new arrests, a day after at least 15 people were killed in a raid on a jihadist hideout where suicide bombers blew themselves up. Police said they arrested two top suspects in connection with the Easter bombings in central Nawalapitiya on Saturday night, taking the total number in detention to more than 100.

Authorities say they are seeking about 140 Islamic State influenced radicals in all. The latest two, Mohamed Saadik Abdul Haq and Mohamed Saahid Abdul Haq, were on a list of six “most wanted” radicals issued on Thursday. They were wanted for the December 26 desecration of Buddha statues at the central town of Mawanella, the act that first brought to prominence the National Thowheeth Jama’ath (NTJ) group, which has been blamed for the Easter bombings.

### Schools stay closed

The previous night, three men set off explosives killing themselves, three women and six children after a showdown with security forces near the eastern town of Kalmunai. Police said three other suspected suicide bombers were shot dead by security forces outside the hideout. A civilian was also killed in crossfire.

The Islamic State group, which claimed responsibility for the Easter bombings, said the three men who blew themselves up at Kalmunai were members of the militant group. Kalmunai is in the same region as the hometown of the jihadist Zahran Hashim, who founded the NTJ group. Police said the widow of Hashim and their child were wounded in the Kalmunai raid. “The woman and her four-year-old daughter are now being treated at a government hospital,” police spokesman Ruwan Gunasekera told AFP. — AFP

## Elite US Navy SEAL facing war crimes charges for killings

**LOS ANGELES:** Stabbing a teenage prisoner to death, picking off a young girl and an old man with a sniper rifle and firing a heavy machinegun into a residential area: these are some of the charges facing an elite US Navy SEAL on trial for war crimes while deployed in Iraq. Special Operations Chief Edward Gallagher, a decorated 39-year-old veteran of combat missions in Iraq and Afghanistan, is still a hero in the eyes of many Americans and the rightwing Fox News channel and his case may even become a factor in next year’s presidential elections.

Around 40 Republican members of Congress have written an open letter demanding Gallagher—who denies the charges against him—he set free until he stands trial. One has even called on President Donald Trump to step in and have the case dismissed. Trump has weighed in on the case on Twitter, saying that he had intervened to ensure that Gallagher—who was nominated for the Silver Star for his service—will soon be moved to less restrictive confinement while he awaits his day in court.” Trump said the move was made “in honor of his past service to our Country.”

Gallagher, a platoon commander of SEAL Team 7, will face a military tribunal at a Navy base in San Diego on May 28. He was arrested last September and has been held at the base ever since. He was arrested after men under his command in the elite Navy unit were so horrified by his actions that they complained to their superiors, but were warned that their accusations could damage their careers, according to reports in The Navy Times and The New York Times this week. Gallagher now faces charges of premeditated murder, attempted murder and obstruction of justice.

He could be sentenced to life in prison if found guilty. The crimes he stands accused of were committed in 2017 during a deployment in the northern Iraqi city of Mosul. US special forces were fighting alongside Iraqi troops to take back parts of the town from Islamic State group fighters. His lawyer did not respond to an AFP request for comment.

### ‘Propaganda manna from heaven’

According to testimony at a preliminary hearing last November, members of Gallagher’s Alpha platoon were so disturbed by his behavior that they tampered with his sniper rifle to make it less accurate, and would fire warning shots to make civilians flee before he could open fire on them. “They said they spent more time protecting civilians than they did fighting ISIS,” Special Agent Joe Wapinski of the Naval Criminal Investigative Service told the military court.

Their chief allegedly boasted about the number of people he had killed, including women, according to The New York Times. In May 2017, Iraqi troops captured a wounded teenage Islamic State fighter who appeared to be around 15 years old. Two members of the SEAL team said that as a medic was treating the fighter’s wounds, Gallagher stepped up without a word and stabbed the prisoner in the neck and side several times.

He then posed for a photo holding up the teenager’s head in one hand and the knife in the other, the two SEALs said. He went on to stand over the youth’s body and perform a reenlistment ceremony while another member of the team held up a US flag, they said. According to the charge sheet, soldiers from his unit tried on several occasions to alert their superiors about the alleged war crimes, but without success. Seven of them said they were told they could face retaliation if they went public with the case, but finally managed to bring their concerns to a higher-ranking officer. Gallagher’s commanding officer, Lieutenant Jacob Portier, reportedly posed in the photo with the dead teenager and is himself facing charges for failing to report the crimes and for destroying evidence. — AFP



International

# Russian ‘siege’ chokes Syria camp in shadow of US base

## Over 7,000 civilians leave as hunger and poverty grow

**AMMAN:** It was only when his children began to starve that Abdullah al-Amour decided time had come to leave the sanctuary of Rukban camp with his family to face an uncertain fate back under Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad. The cattle trader from Palmyra fled to Rukban on the Syrian border with Jordan and Iraq more than three years ago after his home was destroyed in Russian air strikes targeting areas that were held at the time by Islamic State. Conditions at Rukban are tough, but it offers one big advantage to the 36,000 people sheltering there: protection from Russian air strikes and pro-Assad forces thanks to its location near a US base.

But in recent weeks life in the camp has gone from bad to near impossible. Food shortages have got a lot worse as a result of a siege by government and Russian forces that want to see Rukban dismantled and US forces out of Syria, according to people living in the camp and diplomats. “Today you eat. Tomorrow there is nothing to eat,” said Amour, 46, speaking to Reuters by phone from the camp. Amour says his son Hamza, three, has become frail from being fed sugared water instead of powdered milk. Gravel and dirt are being added to dough to make flour supplies go further.

“No one is leaving out of their own will. I can no longer sleep with my children hungry,” he said. Local sources say Russian and Syrian government forces have choked off supplies to Rukban since mid-February, blocking access for smugglers who used to bribe their way through army checkpoints, and firing on some vehicles. On Thursday, Washington urged Damascus and Moscow to allow international aid deliveries to Rukban and stop blocking commercial routes into the camp to “avert further suffering”.

As shortages have hit, a steady stream of people have crossed out of Rukban into government territory. OCHA, the UN humanitarian agency, said around 7,000 had left in the last month or so. Some were in shelters in Homs city where some of the men were settling their status with the authorities, and others had gone to their areas

of origin in Homs governorate. Relatives say the Homs city shelters amount to internment centres for many of the men.

### Power struggle

Rukban camp is at the heart of a struggle between Russia and the United States for control of southeastern Syria and with it a land route to Iraq and Assad's major regional ally, Iran. Russia, whose military has helped Assad claw back control of much of Syria, views Rukban as a US pretext for maintaining its “illegal occupation in the south” and as a last pocket of anti-Assad rebels in southern Syria who must be wiped out.

The camp's evacuation seems unlikely to lead the United States to abandon its nearby garrison at Tanf and the surrounding “deconfliction zone” that envelops Rukban: Tanf is seen as useful to US aims of countering Iran. But Russia is still determined to see Rukban gone. This would represent a gain for Moscow in

Syria as its military advances have ground to a halt in other parts of the country, and would assert its influence over a US-controlled area.

Moscow and Damascus have accused Washington of holding the people of Rukban hostage and Russia has even compared its conditions to the concentration camps of the second world war.

The United States has said it is not preventing anyone from leaving Rukban, while calling for a process of “safe, voluntary and dignified departures” from the camp. The Russian defense ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

With routes to the camp controlled by Damascus, Rukban has rarely received UN aid deliveries. Following a delivery in November, the United States said it recognized Russia had played a role in persuading Damascus to authorize it. The last time a UN aid convoy reached Rukban was early February. Many at Rukban fear returning to Assad's Syria, saying they could be detained or forced to join the army. This concern is widely held



HAMA: Syrian children who fled the western countryside of Hama are pictured in a makeshift camp in Sher Maghar in the Hama province not far from positions of Turkish troops. — AFP

among refugees, who are unconvinced by Russian assurances they face no threat.

Over the years, the camp has taken on some features of permanence including houses built of mud bricks, schools and markets. Ibrahim al-Nasser ran a grocery at Rukban until he was forced to close it for lack of goods. Speaking to Reuters as he was about to leave Rukban, he said he no longer cared about his own fate and only wanted to save his children from starving. “People are gripped with fear of being arrested,” said Nasser. “But I am forced to leave even if I might face death or prison so that my children live,” he said.

### Green buses

Abu Ahmad al Dirbas Khalidi, the head of an opposition-run civil council in the camp, said dwindling food supplies gave people at Rukban no choice but to leave. “The regime and the Russians have succeeded in their siege, and with hunger and poverty people are leaving,”

he said. The camp's only bakery stopped production this month. A bag of flour - if available - now costs 40,000 Syrian pounds (\$70) - eight times its price in government territory. Reports in Syrian state-run media have shown people leaving Rukban on green buses like those used to evacuate civilians and rebel fighters from other parts of Syria recaptured from insurgents, such as eastern Aleppo and eastern Ghouta.

In an interview with the state news agency SANA, one man leaving Rukban accused militant groups “led by America of putting us under pressure, denying us food and water, just so that we join them”. But sources in Rukban said men leaving had been detained for weeks at internment camps in Homs before being jailed, released or drafted into the army. Mahmoud al-Humeili, a camp official, said he had received reports that two dozen men had been arrested. Shukri Shihab, a relief worker in the camp, said: “Death in the camp is better than dying behind prison bars.” —Reuters

## Algerian protesters keep up pressure after resignations, arrests

**ALGIERS:** Algerian protesters have vowed to keep up the pressure on the regime left behind by Abdelaziz Bouteflika, staging a tenth consecutive weekly mass rally after a string of people close to the toppled president were sacked or arrested over alleged graft. “We want this system to leave and all the thieves to be judged,” said Zohra, a 55-year-old teacher who travelled some 350 kilometers (220 miles) to attend the Algiers demonstration site with her 25-year-old son, Mohamed.

Hundreds of demonstrators gathered Friday outside the capital's emblematic post office headquarters, shouting: “You looted the country, thieves!” El Watan newspaper, echoing social media calls for further protests to topple the entire “system”, led with the headline: “No half-revolution!” The latest demonstrations followed the sackings of a string of senior regime officials and the detention of top businessmen including the country's richest man, Issad Rebrab, over suspected corruption.

Authorities apparently intent on clearing away two decades of cronyism following Bouteflika's ouster also reopened an investigation into an ex-energy minister close to the former president, state media reported



ALGIERS: Algerians gather during an anti-government demonstration in the capital Algiers. — AFP

Wednesday. And earlier in the week, the head of the vast state oil firm Sonatrach, Abdelmoumen Ould Kaddour, was also fired and replaced on the orders of interim president Abdelkader Bensalah. Four brothers from the influential Kouninef family, close to Bouteflika's brother Said, were also arrested Sunday over alleged non-compliance with state contracts, according to state media.

### ‘Mafia and fraudsters’

But protesters have yet to win one of their key demands: the departure of Bensalah himself, a member of Bouteflika's inner circle throughout his 20 years in power. They are also demanding the ouster of another key ally of the toppled leader: Nouredine Bedoui, who remains prime minister in what protesters call “a government of shame”. The interim

administration has pledged to hold presidential elections on July 4, but demonstrators reject any such vote overseen by Bouteflika-era officials. Protester Samir said he was against the poll. “How mafia and fraudsters can hold honest elections? We'll march until they understand,” he said.

The arrests come after army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah called on prosecutors to “accelerate the pace” of corruption probes into those with ties to Bouteflika's inner circle. The army has also insisted that the presidential vote take place within the timeframe set by the constitution. Some observers see the army's pressure for prosecutions against allegedly corrupt individuals as an implicit offer of a deal to protesters: punishment of key figures or in exchange for a softening of demands, especially over the presidential poll. —AFP



COTONOU: A giant election banner promoting the Republican Party (BR) is seen at the Toyota Cica Crossroad in Cotonou. — AFP

do their duty by voting for the candidate of their choice.” That choice, however, is limited.

### ‘Shocked’

Election watchdogs ruled last month that only the two parties allied to Talon - the Republicans and Progressive Union-met toughened conditions of admissibility under new electoral laws. Their decision effectively barred the entire political opposition from fielding candidates. People say they are “stunned” and “shocked” by the situation, but blanket bans on demonstrations ahead of voting has kept people off the streets. Even after

two ex-presidents, Nicephorus Soglo and Thomas Boni Yayi, urged people to take to the streets to protest, there was little response.

“The wave of arbitrary arrests of political activists and journalists, and the crackdown on peaceful protests, have reached an alarming level,” Amnesty International researcher Francois Patuel said, speaking ahead of the polls. Before 1991, Benin struggled under decades of authoritarian rule. The transition to democracy brought a flowering of political competition - five years ago, voters could chose from 20 parties for the 83 seats in parliament. —AFP

## Mozambique families count cyclone cost

**MACOMIA:** Soaking mattresses, bent corrugated iron sheets, some wooden chairs and two slender chickens are about all that Assane Maulana and his wife Maria Mendosa were able salvage from the wreckage of their wood and mud home. They laid out all their possessions neatly around a murky puddle, as their five children looked on quietly, and the chickens pecked for food in thick clumps of mud.

Mendosa, 37, cooked cassava paste on a small wood fire and her husband picked through the devastation wrought by Cyclone Kenneth on Nacate, a village of a few hundred people in Mozambique's far north. “We were inside the room, and the roof started to fly, and then the house fell apart because it was a mud house,” said Maulana, 62. “Now we are sleeping under the palm trees. I don't have a job, and I have five children... Everything is gone in my agricultural plot, there's just a little bit of cassava left.”

“Tonight we're going to eat some maize and beans. We don't have much food,” added his wife. Clothes and sheets dried on a palm tree nearby. Mendosa said the cyclone was “too bad” for their children Pizere, Naturesa, Ancha, Ida and Luigi. Before the storm which ravaged Mozambique, southern Tanzania and Comoros from Tuesday, Nacate was a neat village on the road between Pemba and Macomia. It had a school, a towering cellular mast, a modest corner shop and a tea room.

### ‘Maybe we're going to die’

While the concrete classrooms and reinforced steel tower survived, the tea room was destroyed. A crumpled yellow satellite dish lay in front of the Impala Salao da Cha tea house and inside the roofless structure, a muddy green plastic wineglass lay on its side. “The wind and the rain broke my shop,” said Impala's owner Andrane Bacar, 45, whose shorts were decorated with cartoon cockerels.

“I'm not going to build anything else because I had two houses and this shop. Everything is destroyed. I don't have the means to rebuild. I'll just try to rebuild one home, and I cannot even do this.” Another business nearby, the corner shop, had also lost its roof in the storm which has claimed at least five lives since it made landfall. But shopkeeper Jamal Amisse had worked round the clock to repair the damage and prepare the store to reopen.

“Here in the village, as you see, 300 houses have been destroyed. Everything,” said Amisse, 37, as four teenage boys played football in the road near the fallen village sign. “There is nothing to do so maybe we're going to die because we won't get any help. We are black and poor, we don't have anything.” In Macomia, just 10 kilometers (six miles) north of Nacate along a potholed road peppered with fallen trees, generators whirled as technicians battled to reconnect the town's 90,000 people.

Builders worked by the headlights of their lorry to reconstruct the destroyed BCI bank where the entire facade had been ripped off exposing cash machines and office furniture. The workmen told AFP that nothing had been stolen and that the cash had been quickly removed following the branch's destruction by Kenneth. — AFP

## Tanzania albinos say they fear for lives after exhumation

**NAIROBI:** Tanzanian albinos said yesterday they were living in fear of their lives after the remains of an albino were exhumed in what they said was a “bestial” and “barbaric” act. The Tanzanian Albino Society called on President John Magufuli to “intervene personally and denounce this bestial act and provide financial support for programs aimed at eradicating this barbarism against albinos.” In Tanzania and other sub-Saharan African countries, albinos' body parts are sought after for witchcraft practices because they are believed to enhance luck and wealth.

The remains of Aman Anywelwisye Kalyembe, an albino buried in 2015 in the Rungwe district of the Mbeya region in the south of the country, were exhumed

and moved by unidentified individuals during the night of April 23 and 24, the society said. The incident was “fuelling fear among albinos and their families,” it said in a statement. It attributed such actions to “superstitious beliefs at a time when we are preparing for (general) elections in 2020.”

Tanzania's human rights campaigners say that the number of attacks against albinos is in sharp decline, but their graves are increasingly being desecrated instead and their remains exhumed. A number of such incidents have been reported in different areas of the country since 2016. Albinism is a genetic condition that results in little or no production of the pigment melanin, which determines the colour of the skin, hair and eyes. —AFP



International

# US reels from deadly synagogue attack on final day of Passover

## Gunman wrote a hate-filled manifesto

**POWAY:** A teenage gunman who wrote a hate-filled manifesto opened fire at a synagogue in California on Saturday, killing one person and injuring three others including the rabbi as worshippers marked the final day of Passover, authorities said. The shooting in the town of Poway, north of San Diego, came exactly six months after a white supremacist killed 11 people at Pittsburgh's Tree of Life synagogue - the deadliest attack on the Jewish community in US history. San Diego County Sheriff Bill Gore said those wounded included the rabbi - who had injuries to both index fingers - as well as a female minor and 34-year-old man who were injured by shrapnel. A 60-year-old woman died from her wounds.

Gore identified the suspect, who was arrested after fleeing the scene, as 19-year-old John Earnest and said he had no prior arrest record. He said Earnest burst into the Chabad of Poway synagogue - where there were around 100 people - shortly after 11:20 am local time and opened fire with an assault weapon that appears to have malfunctioned, preventing him from inflicting more harm. Gore said an off-duty border patrol agent who was at the synagogue at the time of the shooting opened fire on the gunman as he was fleeing, striking his car but missing the suspect.

The man was eventually apprehended by a San Diego police officer who had been monitoring dispatch radio and raced to the scene, San Diego police chief David Nisleit said. "He clearly saw the suspect's vehicle, the suspect jumped out with his hands up and was immediately taken into custody by the San Diego police department," Nisleit said. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu condemned the "atrocious" incident, calling it "an attack at the heart of the Jewish people". Two Israelis - an eight-year-old girl and her 31-year-old uncle - were wounded in the attack, an Israeli foreign ministry spokesman said, adding that their condition was "good".

### Hate-filled manifesto

Gore said authorities were examining Earnest's social media activity and establishing the authenticity of an anti-Semitic open letter he apparently published on a far-right

message board hours before the attack. "We have copies of his social media posts and his open letter and we'll be reviewing those to determine the legitimacy of it and how it plays into the investigation," he said.

The manifesto, seen by AFP, is similar to one posted on the same message board by Brenton Tarrant, a white supremacist who was behind the March 15 mosque attacks in Christchurch, New Zealand, that left 50 people dead. The hate-filled letter lauds Tarrant's actions and that of the Pittsburgh shooter and claims responsibility for a fire at a mosque in California a week after the Christchurch shootings. Following the attack, a vigil was set to take place Saturday evening at the Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church in San Diego.

Meanwhile, Los Angeles officials said that they were boosting patrols around synagogues and other places of worship in light of the attack. Speaking at a rally in Wisconsin, President Donald Trump denounced the shooting as a "hate crime" and offered his support to the victims. "Tonight, America's heart is with the victims of the horrific synagogue shooting in California," he said. "Our entire nation mourns the loss of life, prays for the wounded and stands in solidarity with the Jewish community. We forcefully condemn the evil of anti-Semitism and hate which must be defeated."

California's Governor Gavin Newsom also denounced the tragedy. "While we continue to learn more about what transpired, we can't ignore the circumstances around this horrific incident," he said. "No one should have to fear going to their place of worship, and no one should be targeted for practicing the tenets of their faith." And German Foreign Minister Heiko Maas also expressed solidarity with the victims: "On the last day of the Passover celebration, another violent anti-Semitic act shocks us. The attack on the Chabad of Poway Synagogue in San Diego impacts us all."

### 'Flames of hatred'

Minoo Anvari told the local CNN affiliate that her husband was inside the synagogue during the shooting. "Just one message from all of us from our congregation that we



**CALIFORNIA:** Mourners participate in a candle light vigil for the victims of the Chabad of Poway Synagogue shooting at the Rancho Bernardo Community Presbyterian Church in Poway, California. — AFP

are standing together," she said. "We are strong. You can't break us. We are all together." The Simon Wiesenthal Center in Los Angeles said in a statement that the shooting was "a horrific reminder that the flames of hatred still burn strong among some."

"An attack, on any house of worship, from churches in Sri Lanka and France to synagogues in Jerusalem or Pittsburgh to mosques in Christchurch, are an assault on

human dignity and our rights as people of faith to pray to God," it added. Saturday's shooting comes amid a rise in hate crimes in the United States, the majority targeting those of Jewish faith. Last year, the Anti-Defamation League, which combats anti-Semitism and discrimination, reported a 57 percent leap in the number of anti-Semitic incidents in 2017, the sharpest yearly spike since the 1970s. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Iran suspect 'shot dead'

**TEHRAN:** A man accused of murdering a cleric in western Iran was killed in a shootout with police yesterday, the semi-official news agency ISNA reported. Behrouz Hajilouyi, a "thug with a criminal record," allegedly shot Mostafa Ghasemi twice using a Kalashnikov rifle in front of the seminary where the Shiite cleric worked in Hamedan province on Saturday, ISNA said. Hajilouyi confessed to the crime in a now-deleted post on his Instagram account, the Fars news agency reported. Authorities are yet to put forward a motive for the killing. "The murderer of the 46-year old cleric was trapped on (Hamedan) city's outskirts and shot dead in a fire-fight," the city's police chief Bakhshali Karmani told ISNA. Two police officers were injured by Hajilouyi in the 20-minute shootout, he added. Hajilouyi's Instagram account shows photos of him posing with pistols, shotguns and automatic rifles. — AFP

#### Orthodox marks 'Holy Fire'

**JERUSALEM:** Huge crowds of pilgrims on Saturday marked the "Holy Fire" ceremony at Christianity's holiest site in Jerusalem's Old City on the eve of Orthodox Easter. Some 10,000 believers holding candles squeezed into the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, police spokesman Micky Rosenfeld said. Thousands more crammed the square outside and surrounding streets to receive the flame, representing the resurrection of Christ, which passed from candle to candle and will be taken back to Orthodox churches worldwide. The ceremony at the church - built on the site where according to Christian tradition Jesus was crucified, buried and resurrected - is the holiest event for Orthodox Christianity. The Church of the Holy Sepulchre and the rest of the Old City lies in east Jerusalem, occupied and later annexed by Israel following the Six-Day War in 1967. — AFP

#### Avalanche kills 4 Germans

**GENEVA:** Four German hikers have been killed by an avalanche in the Swiss Alps, police in the southern canton of Valais said yesterday. The accident took place on Friday in the village of Fieschertal, but bad weather prevented rescue services from finding the victim's bodies before Saturday, police said. All equipped with search beacons, and an investigation into their deaths has been opened, they added. — AFP

#### 4 die as crane collapses

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Four people were killed and four others were injured when a crane collapsed Saturday afternoon in the northwestern US city of Seattle, the fire department said. In a statement, the fire department said the crane "fell from the roof of a building" and hit six vehicles below, near the southern shore of Lake Union, which lies in the center of the city. It said three men and one woman were killed - two of whom were operators in the crane, while the others were in different cars. Of the four people injured, a 27-year-old man, a 25-year-old woman and a four-month-old baby girl were taken to hospital with non-life threatening injuries, the department said. The Seattle Times reported the crane was used as part of construction work to build a new Google campus in the city, a fast-growing tech hub famously home to e-commerce giant Amazon. — AFP

## Despite US diversity, 70-something white men rule 2020 race

**WASHINGTON:** Democrats seeking to reclaim the White House are calling for generational change. It may be time for a woman, they say, or a minority figure. But for all the talk of breaking new presidential ground, the opposition party's top candidates to become the new boss look about the same as the current boss: white, male and pretty old.

President Donald Trump is a 72-year-old billionaire, and for many he epitomizes the white male privilege that Democrats often decry. But the top two candidates leading the race to replace him are pale, male and stale too. Former vice president Joe Biden, who jumped into the race Thursday, is 76 and has spent the bulk of his life in national politics, while Senator Bernie Sanders, 77, has been in Congress since 1991.

The two men's dominance in the 2020 Democratic field is at odds with last year's midterms, when record numbers of women and minorities were elected to the most diverse US Congress ever. The presidential race itself is historically diverse: six female candidates, three African Americans, a Hispanic former cabinet member, an Asian-American, a Hindu congresswoman, and a gay military-veteran mayor. Nine contenders are under 50.

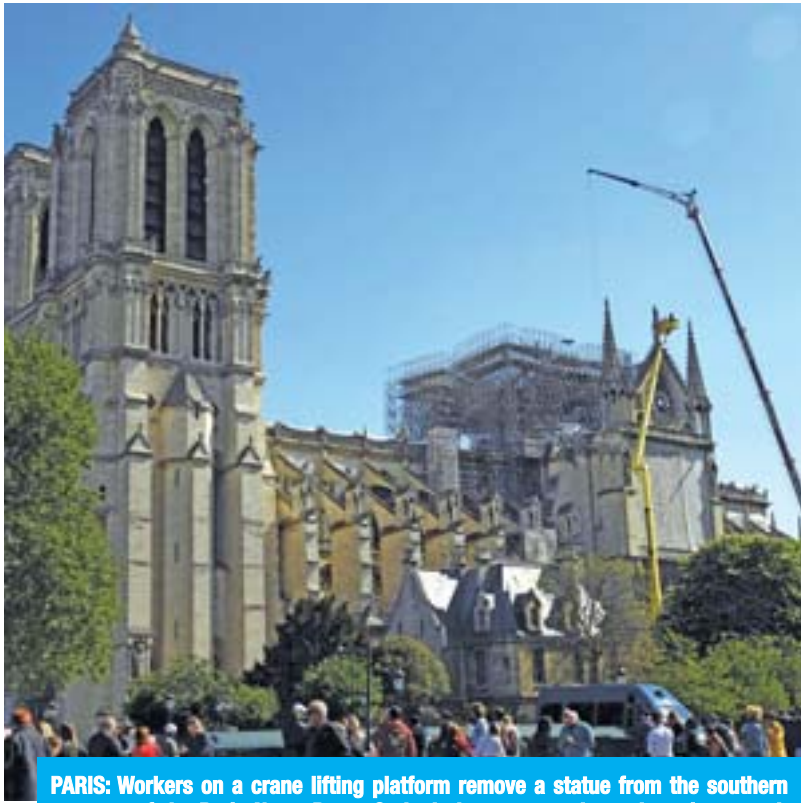
The 2020 campaign "calls for a new generation of leadership," candidate Pete Buttigieg, the Indiana mayor who at 37 is less than half Biden's age, said recently. And yet it is the two septuagenarians who currently dominate the nominations landscape, with Biden at 29 percent and Sanders at 23 percent in the latest RealClearPolitics polling average. No one else is in double digits. The White

## Police warn Notre-Dame neighbors over lead risk

**PARIS:** Neighbors of the fire-stricken Notre-Dame Cathedral should use wet wipes to clean surfaces at home or the office where lead-laden dust from the blaze may have settled, Paris police advised Saturday. Tests have shown that the devastating April 15 fire released particles of the toxic metal which had been present in the frame of the church and its now-leveled spire, it said in a statement. Investigators found lead in areas near the church, "very localized", and "notably on premises that may have been standing open at the time of the fire, and where dust had settled."

The threat was limited, the police noted, as lead poisoning usually builds up over years of exposure. There have been no reports of acute lead poisoning since the inferno that destroyed the roof of the 850-year-old landmark. "With regard to homes or private premises, it is recommended that residents in the immediate vicinity of the Notre Dame proceed to clean their home or premises and their furniture and other items, using wet wipes to eliminate any dust," the statement said.

Public areas that may pose a lead exposure risk, such as the gardens



**PARIS:** Workers on a crane lifting platform remove a statue from the southern transept of the Paris Notre-Dame Cathedral as passers by and tourists watch after the landmark was badly damaged by a huge fire. — AFP

around the cathedral, have been closed and will not be reopened until lead levels are back to normal, the police added. Last week, French environmental campaigners Robin des Bois said about 300 tons of lead from the cathedral's roof and steeple had melted in the blaze, which officials said had reached 800 degrees Celsius (1,470F) at its peak.

"The cathedral has been reduced

to the state of toxic waste," the association said in a statement, urging authorities to detoxify the tons of rubble, ash and wastewater produced in the disaster.

Airparif, which monitors air quality in Paris, said pollution levels did not exceed normal levels the day after the fire. Nearly two weeks later, a police cordon is still keeping members of the public well away from the site. — AFP



**Former US vice president Joe Biden**

Dittmar said she is not confident that Sanders and Biden, unlike O'Rourke, "have gotten to that point in which they realize... the limitations they have as older white men in being able to understand the challenges of women and communities of color." Those limits came into sharp relief this past week. Biden faced awkward questions about refusing to directly apologize to women who said they were made uncomfortable by his touching and the affectionate gestures he lavished on them.

Sanders was booed by black women at a conference when he conveyed a 56-year-old anecdote about marching with civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr when asked how he would combat racism and advocate for people of color. Such gestures by the frontrunners are "not enough," Dittmar said. Both Sanders and Biden have built campaign teams that reflect America's diversity. But they will need to speak "in a more detailed way about how you're going to best empathize with the experiences of women and communities of color in a way that goes beyond a tag line, or one thing you did" in the past, Dittmar added. — AFP

## Campaigners gear up for EU vote in shadow of Brexit

**LONDON:** With Brexit passions running high, campaigners are hitting Britain's streets and taking to social media ahead of European elections. Political parties old and new are gearing up for what has been described as a "zombie" election that was never meant to be held until Britain delayed its scheduled departure from the European Union. The vote could now become a poll on Brexit - three years on from a referendum in which 52 percent voted to leave the bloc.

"I see it as a soft referendum," said Isis Queresma-Cabral, 44, a French citizen in Britain for 19 years and a pro-EU election activist. "(It's) an opportunity for us European citizens who felt hurt by the first referendum to voice that," she said. Brexiters are similarly minded, with social worker Richard Harris, 37, joining anti-EU firebrand Nigel Farage's new Brexit Party. At its April 12 campaign launch, he predicted "the biggest slap in the face for the party political system that we've had in generations."

### 'Intriguing contest'

The May 23 vote looms with Britain in a deep political crisis over its stalled departure from the European Union after nearly half a century of membership. Prime Minister Theresa May was forced to ask EU leaders for a second delay this month that could run until October 31 amid continued opposition from MPs to her divorce deal. She had previously said it would be "unacceptable" to ask Britons to participate in the poll but has been left with little choice. The government continues to claim hope it could be scrapped if talks with the main opposition Labor Party break the Brexit deadlock. But few are expecting that in the coming weeks, leaving a febrile atmosphere for European elections that have recently favored anti-establishment forces in Britain. "We have ourselves a phenomenally intriguing contest," wrote Patrick English, a lecturer at the University of Exeter. — AFP



International

# Modi ‘free cooking gas’ leaves a bitter taste for some Indians

## Program beset by allegations of corruption and misuse

**NAUBATPUR:** Reena Devi says her life changed when she got a cooking gas connection under a billion-dollar program championed by India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi, meaning she no longer has to cook with wood or coal and breathe in smelly, toxic fumes. But the program to connect millions of homes to gas, empower women and cut pollution - designed as a key vote-winning policy for Modi - has been beset by allegations of corruption and misuse.

Devi says she had to pay 3,000 rupees (\$43) for the “free” kit - the equivalent of a month’s wages for most people in her village Nisarpura, in India’s poorest state, Bihar. “I pleaded with the officials that this is supposed to be free but they gave me two options: Pay and take the kit or forget it,” Devi said, rolling out bread to be cooked on the stove.

Critics say the program has been marred by bribes and corruption and that the poor households targeted by the scheme cannot afford to pay for gas refills, pushing those who have received new stoves back to traditional fuels. But the prime minister, seeking a second term in India’s marathon national election, has touted the cooking gas scheme a success as he campaigns around the country. Batting away criticism, Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) government says more than 70 million poor households across India now have gas stoves.

### Unfinished meal

Modi launched his “Ujjwala Yojana” (“bright scheme”) in May 2016, and is aiming to connect 80 million rural households to gas by 2022. Household pollution is a serious health hazard in India, with a World Health Organization (WHO) report saying that smoke

inhaled by women from unclean fuel is a major cause of cancer, heart disease and strokes. In a bid to move India towards clean energy, the scheme offers recipients a loan of 1,600 rupees (\$23) that covers the cost of the stove, connection pipes, regulator and a gas canister. The loan is supposed to be paid back through the purchase of subsidized gas refills.

In Nisarpura, Jamintra Devi applied for a connection but local officials would not give it unless she paid a bribe. “We come back from work at midnight or 1:00am and then we have to cook on wood,” said Devi, who is not related to Reena. Some recipients say their kits have effectively been repossessed. Shahjahan Khatoon, from an impoverished neighborhood of the state capital, Patna, enrolled in the scheme in January 2018. Two months later, officials distributing gas canisters came to her home looking for money.

She had already paid them 700 rupees (\$10) to get the connection, but they demanded 4,000 rupees more — far beyond her means. “I told them that I don’t have money. They removed the gas cylinder and stove and left,” Khatoon told AFP. “I was in the middle of cooking lunch and they didn’t even let me finish the meal.” A senior member of Modi’s ruling party also drew online ridicule this month after posting a video of himself with a family in eastern India — which showed the family burning firewood under a traditional earth stove.

### Hot air

The government set aside 80 billion rupees (\$1.14 billion) when the scheme was launched to fund the gas connections which it said would “empower” women, and have since extended that to 120 billion rupees. The red gas canisters are emblazoned with the slogan



**PATNA:** Indian liquid petroleum gas (LPG) vendors carry gas cylinders at a distribution centre in Patna. Reena Devi says her life changed when she got a cooking gas connection under a program championed by India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi. — AFP

“respecting the dignity of women”, and only women can qualify for the project.

In Bihar state alone, eight million people have received cooking gas connections, but a study by the Indian non-profit Research Institute for Compassionate Economics this month said 36 percent of households in four of India’s largest states, including Bihar, still use traditional fuel. Despite sometimes patchy success, the WHO last year praised the scheme, saying that in two years it had helped 37 million women living below the

poverty line to move to clean energy.

But the pressure of fluctuating gas prices could force many poor Indians back towards using wood, coal or cow dung instead. Sanjay Kumar, a gas canister distributor in Patna, has around 5,000 customers who have gas connections from Modi’s program. But at least half stop buying refills and return to traditional fuel if prices rise even slightly, he said. “Our country is still poor. Families in rural India still can’t afford refills when the rates are high.” — AFP

## Thousands take to Hong Kong streets to protest new extradition laws

**HONG KONG:** Tens of thousands of people marched on Hong Kong’s parliament yesterday to demand the scrapping of proposed extradition rules that would allow people to be sent to mainland China for trial - a move which some fear puts the city’s core freedoms at risk. Opponents of the proposal fear further erosion of rights and legal protections in the free-wheeling financial hub - freedoms which were guaranteed under the city’s handover from British colonial rule to Chinese sovereignty in 1997.

Ranks of marchers snaked peacefully for more than three hours through the shopping and business districts of Causeway Bay and Wanchai, with thousands staying on into the evening outside the Legislative Council and government headquarters. Police said 22,800 people marched at the peak of the procession, but organisers estimated 130,000 turned out - making it one of the largest street protests in the city for several years.

Observers said the turnout dwarfed an earlier protest against the plan last month. Veteran activist and former legislator Leung Kwok-hung said the government’s move risked removing Hong Kongers’ “freedom from fear”. “Hong Kong people and visitors passing by Hong Kong will lose their right not to be extradited into mainland China,” he said. “They would need to face an unjust legal system on the mainland.”

Some younger marchers said they were worried about travelling to the mainland after the move, which comes just as the government encourages young people to deepen ties with the mainland and promotes Hong Kong’s links with southern China. Law clerk Edward Wen, 45, said the difference in human rights



**HONG KONG:** An activist waves a British Union Jack flag during a protest in Hong Kong yesterday against a controversial move by the government to allow extraditions to the Chinese mainland. — AFP

standards between Hong Kong and the mainland was too great to bridge. “You will be screwed as long as they put up a crime on your behalf,” he said. The marchers’ chanted demands for Hong Kong Chief Executive Carrie Lam to step down echoed through the high-rise streets, with some protesters saying she had “betrayed” Hong Kong.

Some sported yellow umbrellas - the symbol of the Occupy pro-democracy movement that paralyzed parts of Hong Kong for 11 weeks in 2014. The proposed changes have sparked an unusually broad chorus of concern from international business elites to lawyers and rights’ groups and even some pro-establishment figures. Chris Patten, the last British governor of Hong Kong who handed the city back to Chinese rule in 1997, on Saturday described the move as “an assault on Hong Kong’s values, stability and security”, government-funded broadcaster RTHK reported.

## Over 270 died from overwork-related illnesses in Indonesia

**JAKARTA:** Ten days after Indonesia held the world’s biggest single-day elections, more than 270 election staff have died, mostly of fatigue-related illnesses caused by long hours of work counting millions of ballot papers by hand, an official said yesterday. The April 17 elections were the first time the country of 260 million people combined the presidential vote with national and regional parliamentary ones, with an aim to cut costs. Voting was largely peaceful and was estimated to have drawn 80 percent of the total 193 million voters, who each had to punch

up to five ballot papers in over 800,000 polling stations.

But conducting the eight-hour vote in a country that stretches more than 5,000 km (3,000 miles) from its western to eastern tips proven to be both a Herculean logistical feat and deadly for officials, who had to count ballot papers by hand. As of Saturday night, 272 election officials had died, mostly from overwork-related illnesses, while 1,878 others had fallen ill, said Arief Priyo Susanto, spokesman of the General Elections Commission (KPU).

The Health Ministry issued a circular letter on April 23 urging health facilities to give utmost care for sick election staff, while the Finance Ministry is working on compensation for families of the deceased, Susanto added. The KPU has come under fire due to the rising death toll. “The KPU is not prudent in managing the workload of staff,” said Ahmad Muzani, deputy chairman of the campaign of opposition presidential candidate Prabowo Subianto, reported by news website Kompas.com. —Reuters



**JAKARTA:** Residents stay on the second floor of their house amid floodwaters in Jakarta after several areas were affected by heavy rainfall. —AFP

## Xi asks for ‘fair and friendly’ treatment for Chinese

**BEIJING:** China’s President Xi Jinping on Friday called for a “fair and friendly” environment for Chinese companies and citizens overseas, as pushback against its tech giants rises and academics find their visas cancelled. Beijing and Washington have been locked in a bruising trade war - which negotiators have been working to resolve - but there has also been a growing strategic rivalry between the world’s two largest economies.

“China’s measures to expand opening up are independent choices,” Xi told a gathering of 37 world leaders at a summit for his signature Belt and Road Initiative. “We also hope that all countries in the world will create a good investment environment, treat Chinese enterprises, international students and scholars equally, and provide a fair and friendly environment,” he said.

An increasing number of Western countries have moved to block Huawei and its state-backed competitor ZTE from building next-generation 5G networks over fears Beijing could spy on communications and gain access to critical infrastructure. The United States has also started to bar some Chinese academics from the country if they are suspected of having links to Chinese intelligence agencies, the New York Times reported. It added that thirty Chinese scholars have had their visas cancelled or put under review in the past year. — AFP

### News in brief

#### Maoists kill Indian constables

**NEW DELHI:** Maoist rebels opened fire on Indian police late Saturday, killing two constables and wounding a villager, the police said. They were attacked while riding a motorcycle in the Bijapur district of Chhattisgarh state, the Press Trust of India said, citing a police deputy inspector. One constable and an assistant constable died at the scene and the villager, shot in the chest, was taken by local residents for treatment, he said. A roadside bomb attack on a political convoy in early April killed five people in Chhattisgarh, two days before voting began in India’s national election which runs until May 19. The blast killed a state assembly lawmaker from Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s Bharatiya Janata Party, his driver and three state bodyguards. Rebels often call for a boycott of elections as part of their campaign against the Indian state. — AFP

#### 10 dead in India bus plunge

**NEW DELHI:** At least 10 people were killed when a bus plunged into a gorge in India’s Himalayan mountain region on Saturday, police said. The bus was travelling from Dalhousie, in Himachal Pradesh state, to Pathankot in neighboring Punjab when it fell into the 60-meter (200-foot) gorge, the Press Trust of India (PTI) reported, citing officials. In addition to the dead there were several injuries. PTI quoted Monica Bhutunguru, a police superintendent in Chamba, as saying. Darkness was hampering rescue efforts in the far-north region, she said. The crash follows the death of six children and their driver in January when their bus also went off the road in the Himalayas. Careless driving and bad, narrow and winding roads in the region cause frequent accidents, with vehicles often slipping into deep gorges. —AFP

#### Victim of a serial killer

**NICOSIA:** Police in Cyprus found human remains yesterday in an ongoing investigation into a suspected serial killer thought to have gone on a killing spree that claimed seven female victims and went undetected for almost three years. Police say the suspect, a career officer in the Cypriot army, has confessed to killing five women and the six- and eight-year-old daughters of two of his victims. He connected with the women on an online dating site. Four bodies have so far been found, after a female body in a state of decomposition was found yesterday in a suitcase retrieved from a highly toxic lake close to an abandoned mine west of the capital Nicosia, police sources said. “After great and persistent effort and many difficulties a travel case was pulled from the lake, containing the body of a woman, and a block of cement,” said Neofytos Shailos, head of Nicosia Criminal Investigation Department. —Reuters

#### Rohingya extremists jailed

**DHAKA:** A Bangladesh court yesterday sentenced three Rohingya extremists of a now defunct militant group to 10 years in jail for possessing bomb-making materials, a prosecutor said. The trio were arrested in 2014 in Dhaka with materials to be used for making improvised explosive devices (IEDs), said Salahuddin Howlader, a prosecutor at the Metropolitan Special Tribunal in the capital. They were found guilty and sentenced immediately under the country’s explosives laws, the prosecutor said, adding one of them was sentenced in absentia as he was on the run. “They were involved with several international militant outfits including the RSO,” he told AFP, referring to the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation, a small militant group that was active in Myanmar’s northern Rakhine state in the 1980s and 1990s. — AFP



## Analysis

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## Fly me to the moon: Germany eyes slice of lucrative space market

Facing tough competition from China, the United States and even tiny Luxembourg, Germany is racing to draft new laws and attract private investment to secure a slice of an emerging space market that could be worth \$1 trillion a year by the 2040s. The drive to give Germany a bigger role in space comes as European, Asian and U.S. companies stake out ground in an evolving segment that promises contracts for everything from exploration to mining of outer-space resources. Firms likely to benefit from any future spending rise in Germany include Airbus, which co-owns the maker of Europe's Ariane space rockets, and Bremen-based OHB.

The new legislation would limit financial and legal liabilities of private companies should accidents happen in orbit, set standards for space operations and offer incentives for new projects, the German economy ministry told Reuters. The ministry's aerospace and space commissioner, Thomas Jarzombek, could submit the laws to parliament later this year. The move comes as companies and trade groups press for German authorities to establish a regulatory framework for the lucrative new market to encourage private investment.

"We are sounding the alarm that Germany and Europe are falling behind in space vis-a-vis China and the United States," Dirk Hoke, defense and space chief at Franco-German-led aerospace group Airbus, told Reuters. "We're at a critical juncture to ensure we stay in the top league." Germany is Europe's economic powerhouse and the world's fourth-largest economy. However it had just the world's seventh-largest national space budget in 2018, an estimated \$1.1 billion, just over half the amount generated by fifth-placed France, according to preliminary data from Paris-based research firm Euroconsult.

The figure, which excludes contributions to pan-European programs, is dwarfed by the United States - by far the largest spender on space at almost \$40 billion. Ironically, American space ambitions could offer a lifeline. Hoke said a new lunar Gateway program backed by US space agency NASA offered a chance for Germany and others in Europe to stake a claim to a key role in the market. "In my view, it is hugely important that we participate as equal partners so that we are primed to develop and build technologies for such a gateway," he said.

The program involves designing and developing a small spaceship that will orbit the Moon and serve as a temporary home for astronauts and as a base for work on the moon's surface and, later, missions to Mars. NASA had aimed to finish the Gateway by 2026, but Washington is now aiming to put humans back on the Moon by 2024, which could lead to an accelerated schedule.

Even before then, Germany is facing a brain-drain as companies worldwide ponder how to extract minerals from asteroids and water from the moon within a decade. Some companies are already considering moving to Luxembourg, which has taken a lead in Europe by enacting laws to limit liabilities and ease restrictions on mining operations. It has also set up a \$100-million (\$112 million) investment fund for projects.

"It's a global market. We have our customers and we will keep them, even if we have to run the company from somewhere else," said Walter Ballheimer, CEO of German Orbital Systems, a Berlin-based start-up that builds small satellites. "Germany was overtaken a long time ago," he said. "But it's not too late. If they are courageous enough and adopt a clear space policy ... then we can still have a piece of the cake that we should have as a leading export nation." Two other heads of small German space companies told Reuters they were considering leaving the country.

### 'Lean' space law

But Germany is not standing still. Space commissioner Jarzombek is working with trade groups, companies and other experts to draft the space laws, and plans to submit it them parliament sometime after September. "We are aiming for a lean basic law that is open to the future," said a spokeswoman for Jarzombek and the economy ministry. "A national space law should focus above all on incentives and make it possible for the German space industry to play a bigger role in global developments."

Berlin is also pressing the United Nations to set standards for mining of the Moon, asteroids and other objects in space. The United States passed a law in 2015 that encouraged private companies to undertake mining work beyond Earth, and gives its firms the right to claim resources they may one day be able to extract from celestial bodies.

Jarzombek helped secure a \$269-million increase in planned funding for the European Space Agency (ESA) in 2020-2023. But Germany's total space funding, which includes ESA and national programmes, is not expected to rise in that period. — Reuters

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



Soldiers patrol along a street in a neighborhood yesterday near the site of a gun battle between Sri Lankan security forces and suicide bombers in the eastern town of Kalmunal.

## How 'laidback' Lanka became a soft target

A week ago, Sri Lankan tourist guide Ricky Costa was preparing for a typically easy Sunday ferrying backpackers between Colombo's tea shops and beach bars in his canary-yellow rickshaw. Then the blasts began. The coordinated suicide bombings by Islamist militants at hotels and churches killed more than 250 people and sent shockwaves through an Indian Ocean island state that had enjoyed relative peace since a civil war ended a decade ago.

How such a sophisticated operation could have been carried out in a country where violence by Islamist militants drawn from the Muslim minority was not high on the list of concerns has left Sri Lankans and foreign intelligence agencies stumped. President Maithripala Sirisena has announced a total overhaul of the security establishment, blaming them for failing to communicate several warnings they had about potential attacks, including one from India hours before the first bomb.

However, interviews with more than a dozen people with direct knowledge of the Sri Lankan government and security apparatus, including military sources, senior diplomats and intelligence agents, suggest deeper failings that created an ideal environment for extremists looking for a soft target. Since Buddhist-majority Sri Lanka won a 26-year conflict against mostly Hindu ethnic Tamil separatists, a well-resourced military has failed to adapt to shifting security threats, the sources said.

"The government was asleep. The military was asleep. They've been asleep for a long time," said Costa, perching on his rickshaw as a suspicious policeman peered inside. Costa's analysis is a simplification, but some experts agree that a lack of preparedness was a significant factor that led to a little-known Islamist group being able to orchestrate the deadliest attack of its kind in South Asia's history. Sirisena and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe have both apologized for any lapses that might have contributed to the attacks. Wickremesinghe said the government and security forces take "collective responsibility".

### Long-term decline

There are no official figures on the size of Sri Lanka's armed forces but experts estimate there are around 150,000 active military personnel and 80,000 police officers, both substantial forces for a country of just 22 million.

## Oil industry under pressure to respond to climate change

The oil industry, under mounting pressure from environmental activists to react more quickly to counter climate change, has begun to adapt its strategy but is struggling to convince critics it is doing enough. Last week activists, responding to a call from the Extinction Rebellion group, laid siege to Shell's London headquarters whose windows were smashed. Several days later hundreds of activists blocked several symbolic sites in France, including the headquarters of oil giant Total.

"They are mastodons whose business model is based on fossil fuels and which don't want to shift one iota because up until now they've made money that way," said Cecile Marchand, who heads up climate activities of the French branch of the Friends of the Earth network of environmental protection groups. "The activities of these multinationals are not at all regulated today, and they should be if we are to be serious about the idea of limiting global warming to 1.5 degrees" Celsius, she added, referring to the goal laid out in the 2015 Paris climate deal.

The pressure isn't only coming from environmental activists. "Investment funds are now requiring oil and gas companies to explain how climate change might affect a company's value," said David Elmes, a professor at Warwick Business School. "This is driving some companies to be much more

transparent about the emissions they cause and their plans to reduce them," he added.

### Oil to gas

The big actors in the sector - BP, Chevron, ExxonMobil, Saudi Aramco, Shell, Total and others - have banded together in the Oil and Gas Climate Initiative (OGCI), which has a billion-dollar war chest to fund initiatives to reduce climate change emissions. The companies are trying to limit their methane emissions, which escape when fossil fuels are taken out of the ground and transported. Along with agriculture, the energy industry remains a key source of methane, which causes more warming than carbon dioxide.

Other energy giants are trying to counterbalance their carbon footprint, like the Italian group ENI, which has promised to plant vast forests. CEO Claudio Descalzi has said "our objective is to achieve net zero emissions in our upstream business by 2030" via emission reductions and offsets. The industry has also taken on board a strategic shift towards using more natural gas - which has a lighter carbon footprint than oil - as well as producing electricity via renewables like wind and solar. Shell recently surprised observers by declaring its ambition to become the world's top electricity producer by 2030.

### 'Evidence' lacking

But some environmental groups point to the fact that energy companies are still pouring most of their investments into pumping out more fossil fuels. "These companies want to continue exploiting fossil fuels as long as possible," said Marchand. "For them, climate change doesn't matter." While the spectacular plunge in oil prices in 2014 led to a drastic cut in investment in exploration and development by energy firms, such spending is on the rise again. — AFP

emerging over the last five years went unheeded, civil society groups and Western diplomats say.

Hashim Mohamed Zahran, the alleged ringleader of the Easter Sunday blasts, had been flagged to security officials as a threat. "We had concerns and we raised them. They were not properly considered," said Hilmy Ahamed, vice president of the Muslim Council of Sri Lanka, a civil society group.

### 'Tragic complacency'

Zahran, a man in his early 30s who had been preaching an increasingly militant brand of Islam, was one of two attackers who died after detonating their explosives in the luxury Shangri-La hotel, intelligence officials say. Ahamed said that in February he warned a contact in the intelligence services of the threat posed by Zahran. He received a text message response. "Thank you. Noted," it said. "There was an overall environment of complacency. That is the tragedy," Ahamed said.

The top civil servant in Sri Lanka's defense ministry, Defence Secretary Hemasiri Fernando, resigned on Thursday, taking responsibility for the attacks after Sirisena pinned the blame on the security services. Many Sri Lankans believe a deep rift between Sirisena and Prime Minister Wickremesinghe has also undermined national security. Sirisena fired Wickremesinghe last year, after months of tension, only to be forced to reinstate him under pressure from the Supreme Court.

Since then their relationship has deteriorated further to the point where their factions actively try to undermine each other, including not sharing security information, defense sources say. "Inefficiency, mediocrity, and infighting within the government contributed to last week's attack," said Iqbal Athas, a defense analyst, adding that vital intelligence-gathering resources had been diverted in recent years to spy on political rivals rather than to monitor extremists.

Presidential aide Shiral Lakshilaka said Sirisena and Wickremesinghe's feuding had come to an end. "The past is past," Lakshilaka said in response to a question about the impact the rift had on security. "Whatever the setbacks, both have shed their differences and are working towards eradicating this menace and bring all the underground activities to a standstill." — Reuters

## China's quest for clean, limitless energy heats up

A ground-breaking fusion reactor built by Chinese scientists is under-scoring Beijing's determination to be at the core of clean energy technology, as it eyes a fully-functioning plant by 2050. Sometimes called an "artificial sun" for the sheer heat and power it produces, the doughnut-shaped Experimental Advanced Superconducting Tokamak (EAST) that juts out on a spit of land into a lake in eastern Anhui province, has notched up a succession of firsts.

Most recently in November, it became the first facility in the world to generate 100 million degrees Celsius, six times as hot as the sun's core. Such mindboggling temperatures are crucial to achieving sustainable nuclear fusion reactions, which promise an inexhaustible energy source. EAST's main reactor stands within a concrete structure, with pipes and cables spread outward like spokes that connect to a jumble of sensors and other equipment encircling the core. A red Chinese flag stands on top of the reactor.

"We are hoping to expand international cooperation through this device (EAST) and make Chinese contributions to mankind's future use of nuclear fusion," said Song Yuntao, a top official involved in the project, on a recent tour of the facility. China is also aiming to build a separate fusion reactor that could begin generating commercially viable fusion power by mid-century, he added. Some six billion yuan (\$890 million) has been promised for the

ambitious project. EAST is part of the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) project, which seeks to prove the feasibility of fusion power. Funded and run by the European Union, India, Japan, China, Russia, South Korea, and the United States, the multi-billion-dollar project's centerpiece will be a giant cylindrical fusion device, called a tokamak. Now under construction in Provence in southern France, it will incorporate parts developed at the EAST and other sites, and draw on their research findings.

### Unlimited power, mega budgets

Fusion is considered the Holy Grail of energy and is what powers our sun. It merges atomic nuclei to create massive amounts of energy - the opposite of the fission process used in atomic weapons and nuclear power plants, which splits them into fragments. Unlike fission, fusion emits no greenhouse gases and carries less risk of accidents or the theft of atomic material. But sustaining the high temperatures and other unstable conditions necessary is both extremely difficult and prohibitively expensive - the total cost of ITER is estimated at \$20 billion (\$22.5 billion).

Wu Songtao, a top Chinese engineer with ITER, conceded that China's technical capabilities on fusion still lag behind more developed countries, and that US and Japanese tokamaks have achieved more valuable overall results. But the Anhui test reactor underlines China's fast-improving scientific advancement and its commitment to achieve yet more. China's capabilities "have developed rapidly in the past 20 years, especially after catching the ITER express train," Wu said. In an interview with state-run Xinhua news agency in 2017, ITER's Director-General Bernard Bigot lauded China's government as "highly motivated" on fusion. — AFP



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12 Gulf Air and Oman Air strengthen and expand codeshare agreement



13 US oil sanctions take effect on Venezuela as crisis intensifies



14 Zain announces platinum sponsorship of ENCON2



# KFH achieved positive performance for the fifth consecutive year: Al-Roshood

## Q1 2019 earnings webcast says operating profits reflect success of KFH strategy

**KUWAIT:** Acting Group CEO, AbdulWahab Al-Roshood said that KFH achieved a net profit of KD 51.6 million for the first quarter of 2019 for KFH shareholders compared to KD 44 million for the same period last year with an increase of 17.4 percent.

He added during the first quarter 2019 - KFH Earnings Webcast, that the total finance Income for the first quarter of the year reached KD 228.4 million with a growth of 9.5 percent compared to the same period last year. Total Operating Income for the first quarter of the year reached KD 196.8 million with a growth of 4.1 percent. The net operating income reached KD 118.1 million an increase of 7.1 percent compared to the same period last year.

The earnings per share for the first quarter of 2019 reached 7.50 fils, compared to 6.39 fils for the same period last year with an increase of 17.4 percent.

The financing portfolio stabilized at KD 9.36 billion, Total Assets reached KD 18.38 billion with an increase of KD 612.4 million or 3.4 percent compared to the end of last year. Depositors Accounts reached KD 12.299 billion an increase of KD 518.6 million or 4.4 percent compared to the end of last year.

Al-Roshood continued: “KFH has achieved positive performance for the fifth consecutive year. Resulting from the core business, the operating profits reflected by the success of KFH’s strategy set by the Board of Directors and skillfully followed up by the executive management. The profits came in line with KFH’s plans and programs, economic developments and market movements. The results confirm KFH’s feasible decisions to focus on its core business, exit of non-strategic investments, and deepen its global professional banking practices along with high commitment to regulations.”

He added that to expand the customer base, KFH opened Al-Qairawan Branch, its 62nd branch in Kuwait, while the branches dedicated for ladies increased to 45 branches. The benefits of the products, the banking accounts, have been increased. KFH launched unprecedented campaign for Al-Rabeh account that offers a total of 54kg in gold to 23 clients over one year. KFH continued to provide value-added awards through “Hesabi” account and enhanced the services and rewards of bank cards by launching the largest campaigns and awards in the banking sector. These improvements have increased card usages, promoting the e-payment methods, facilitating the fund transfer and raising retail sales.

### Sukuk issuances

With regards to KFH’s sukuk issuances, he said that the bank through KFH Capital, has recently succeeded in arranging two issuances worth of \$1.6 billion Sukuk for First Abu Dhabi Bank (FAB) and Dubai Islamic Bank (DIB), with a group of regional and international banks. This step confirms KFH Group’s pioneering role in the Sukuk market and establishes Sukuk as a vital source of finance for governments, companies and major development projects. The extensive experience of KFH Group in the Sukuk issuance has positioned it as a trustworthy and highly recognized organization by major corporates and governments globally.

KFH is continuing with its priority of attracting the outstanding young national human resources elements and provide them with opportunities for the successful development of their professional capabilities and skills. KFH is presenting the best example in this national field affirming its continuous pursuit of supporting and strengthening the national manpower. KFH recently organized the largest Kuwaiti youth recruitment event where it hired 80 young Kuwaitis out of a total of 150 job applications.

KFH’s ongoing prudential strategy boosted by its growth opportunities and its substantial market share requirements such national calibers in charge to become the consecutive generation to shoulder the responsibility in supporting the country’s development process.

Regarding the potential Acquisition and Merger with AUB Bahrain, he said: “we have disclosed to the regulatory authorities and the market the latest developments in this regard, and there are no further updates at this time. All these disclosures were published through the official website of Kuwait Boursa and any new development will be updated as and when it comes available.”

### Profit growth

Group’s Chief Financial Officer at KFH Shadi Zahran said: “The Group has achieved net profit after tax (NPAT) attributable to shareholders for the period ended 31st March 2019 of KD 51.6 million higher by 17.4 percent compared to Q1 2018 of KD 44 million. It is worth to highlight that the profit before tax for the first quarter 2019 at KD 78.1 million was significantly higher than same period last year “by 33.7 percent” and that due to one off tax charge recorded in Malaysia at KD 11 million in Q1 2019. The recent change in the tax law in Malaysia impacted the deferred tax asset and took that impact in full in Q1 2019.”



AbdulWahab Al-Roshood



Shadi Zahran



Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem

He added: “Total Operating income at KD 196.8 million increased by KD 7.7 million or 4.1 percent (as compared to same period last year) the increase is mainly from Investment Income by KD 14.2 million, Net gain from foreign currencies by KD 2.3 million and Fees and Commission Income by KD 0.8 million.”

The increase in investment income is attributable to early closure of divestments compared to last year which increases the contribution of investment income to total operating income to reach 13 percent vs. 6 percent last year while keep the other non-financing income contribution at 21.9 percent compared to 20.9 percent last year.

With regards to total Financing Income, it has increased by 9.5 percent from KD 208.6 million to KD 228.4 million however due to increase in COF which started to reflect in the second half of 2018 the NFI decreased 7.3 percent as compared to Q1-18. However, improved by 4.7 percent as compared to last quarter in 2018.

Zahran continued: “Total Operating Expenses at KD 78.7 million has marginally decreased by KD (0.1) million or (0.1) percent. Group efforts towards cost optimization and rationalization has resulted in the containment of costs despite expansion of Banking Business and inflationary conditions seen in some jurisdictions where the group operates.”

He added: “Net Operating income at KD 118.1 million increased by KD 7.8 million or 7.1 percent compared to March 2018 and cost to income ratio remained stable at 39.98 percent as compared to the full year 2018 and lower than same period last year first quarter 2018 which was at 41.67 percent.”

Thus, displaying an improved efficiency in total operating income and optimized total operating expenses. Furthermore, at KFH-Kuwait, C/I ratio remains at 33.5 percent which is below both the local Islamic Banks average of 40.8 percent and local conventional Banks average of 35.2 percent (calculated from published financials for 2018). Average Profit Earning Assets is up by 5.4 percent compared to March 2018, maintaining the growth momentum of yielding assets for the past two years.

Zahran said: “Group NFM at 3.04 percent shows a 14bps decrease over 2018 of average 3.18 percent and marginally higher than Q4 2018. Group average yield improved in line with increase in local and international profit rates. However, as mentioned earlier the COF is higher as compared to Q118 on account of KFH increased profitability.”

He added that total group provisions and impairment charge reduced to reach KD 40 million or 15.9 percent, the reduction is mainly from the decrease in the investments and others impairment charge from KD 31.9 million to KD 17.6 million on account of conservative impairment charges recorded last year for certain properties in GCC.

He indicated that operating Profit from banking activities

is at 90.0 percent of total Operating income of the Group in Q1-19. However, if we were to remove the one-offs from non-core income and tax charge, the ratio would improve to 94 percent in line with overall Group Strategy focusing on banking operations.

Total Assets at KD 18.4 billion increased by KD1.0 billion or 5.8 percent over 12 months period (Mar-19 vs. Mar-18) despite TL devaluation. Similarly, on Deposits. Financing receivables at KD 9.4 billion remains at the same level of the year end. Growth without TRL devaluation is KD 0.7 billion or 7.7 percent as compared to March 2018 and 0.6 percent as compared to December 2018. Growth in financing receivables contributed from Kuwait and international banking entities and from both retail and corporate businesses.

He continued: “On the other side of the balance sheet we’ve achieved an outstanding growth in deposits during the first quarter of KD 518.6 million or 4.4 percent with high contribution from international banking operations reflecting the results of investments made in digitalization and depositors confidence in KFH group. Additionally, the favorable funding mix continues to show stickiness in CASA deposits which forms 45.2 percent of total group deposits as at the end of Q1 2019.”

Customer deposits as a percentage of total deposits at 79.6 percent remains at the same level of healthy funding mix and shows robust liquidity. It is worth to mention that KFH Kuwait dominates the market in saving accounts at 42.3 percent (as per CBK latest published reports, Feb-19).

Looking at the performance ratios in the last slide looking at the key performance ratios, the group has improved in all aspects as compared to last year same period

- **ROAE moved from 9.77 percent to 11.26 percent**
- **ROAA from 1.2 percent to 1.38 percent**
- **C/I from 41.67 percent to 39.98 percent, and**
- **EPS from 6.4 fils to 7.5 fils for Q119**

Zahran explained: “Additionally, the NPL ratio (as per CBK calculation) stood at 1.88 percent in Mar-19 compared to 2.77 percent in Mar-18 and 1.99 in December 2018 and the significant improvement in cost of risk is actual reflection to the cost improvement, recoveries, and write-offs while maintaining very healthy coverage. With regards to coverage ratio (provision) for Group is 199 percent in Mar-19 (2018: 191 percent) and coverage ratio (provision + collateral) for Group stood at 258 percent in Mar-19 as compared to the same level (2018: 247 percent).

### High growth rates

Group Chief Strategy Officer at KFH, Fahad Al-Mukhaizeem said: “The operating environment in Kuwait

witnessed a remarkable improvement with high growth rates and high oil prices. Kuwait GDP growth is expected to exceed 4 percent in 2019 compared to 2.3 percent in 2018 with a limited inflation rate of less than 1 percent. The real estate market witnessed a noticeable stability during the first quarter this year, recording a trade growth rate by 4 percent. Boursa Kuwait trade value recorded unprecedented levels KD 1.9 Billion driven by capital inflows following Boursa Kuwait’s upgrade of on the FTSE Emerging Markets Index.”

He added: “Fitch Ratings recently affirmed Kuwait’s sovereign rating at AA. Standard & Poor’s credit rating for Kuwait also stands at AA with Stable Outlook. As part of its strategy to support the development efforts, KFH continuously participates in financing major plans and infrastructure projects. In this regard, the bank funds several development projects in different sectors in Kuwait and outside. Also, KFH pays attention to supporting and developing the youth SMEs, opening new job areas, diversifying investment opportunities and attracting young people to the private sector as they represent important part of developing the national economy.”

Al-Mukhaizeem continued: “KFH won Kuwait’s Best Bank for Asia 2019 award from Asiamoney, a publication of the International Euromoney Group which confirm KFH’s leadership and success in the Asian market also KFH won Best Trade Finance Provider in Kuwait 2019. This is another testimony to the quality of KFH products and services that strengthen its position as a world leading Islamic financial institution. Currently we have more than 500 branches in Kuwait and around the world.”

KFH’s has successfully launched digital transformation initiatives to suit the needs of key operational sectors to develop and manage their business efficiently as well as maximize its leadership and market share, in accordance with the best quality standards.

He said that KFH has continued its efforts in Banking Technology in Q1 by implementing a Robotic Process Automation program an Artificial Intelligence Technology that streamlined its internal processes for customer financing transactions, thus increasing efficiency and reducing the processing time. Also, KFH implemented SKIPLINO which is an electronic queuing/booking system to improve the branch visit experience. Available now also at KFH.com, and soon via KFH Online, this service makes the banking services more accessible for customers at their own convenient time in addition to finding the least busy branches at the time. Meanwhile, KFH started operating an instant cross-border remittance service using RippleNet technology. It also upgraded its automotive platform kfh.com/auto to encompass vehicles, marine equipment and motorcycles.

### Q&As

Shadi Zahran answered a question about the AUB-merger and acquisition: “With regards to merger and acquisition, everything is disclosed in the market, as well as to the regulators and we don’t have any other updates. Once we have updates it will be disclosed in the market.”

Shadi Zahran answered a question on KFH-Turkey performance saying: “Turkey is still contributing the same level to the group... their performance is improving as well... the cost of risk we would witness some increase and that’s in line with the market, however, we’re still maintaining our position the 2nd lowest NPL in the market.” The first Quarter 2019 - KFH Earnings Webcast concluded. It witnessed the participation of attendees from different investment companies, financial analysts, financial institutions, media representatives and others.

## Fresh SAS woe as strike grounds 110,000 travellers

**COPENHAGEN:** A further 110,000 air passengers faced being left grounded after Scandinavian carrier SAS yesterday cancelled 1,213 flights as pilot strike action spiralled.

Pilots demanding better pay and conditions walked off the job in Sweden, Denmark and Norway on Friday and the disruption is now expected to hit some 280,000 travellers overall. SAS had initially predicted that 170,000 passengers would be affected by the end of yesterday, but now says a further 667 today flights and 546 more due tomorrow will be annulled. The stoppage by 1,409 pilots is affecting domestic, European and

long-haul flights. The Swedish Air Line Pilots Association, which initiated the strike, said Friday that months of talks had failed to find a solution to pilots’ “deteriorating work conditions, unpredictable work schedules and job insecurity”.

But the Swedish Confederation of Transport Enterprises insists it cannot accept a demand for a 13-percent wage increase, given their “already high average wage of 93,000 kronor (8,766 euros, \$9,769) a month”. The pilots’ association say most work schedules, not wages, are their main gripe as many SAS pilots have to work at variable times and days and sometimes have to work several weekends in a row.

SAS has implemented repeated savings programs in recent years to improve its profitability, after almost going bankrupt in 2012. In the first quarter of 2019, the airline widened its losses, impacted by negative exchange effects and high fuel prices.

It posted a net loss of 469 million kronor, compared to 249 million a year earlier. Although the carrier fore-

cast a full-year profit Danish bank Sydbank on Friday predicted the strike would cost SAS 60 to 80 million kronor (\$6 million to \$8 million) per day. — AFP

Time	Flight	Gate	Destination	
12:05	SK4546		Alta	Cancelled
12:05	SK213		Kristiansund	Cancelled
12:35	OY1840	F13	Edinburgh	Cancelled
12:40	SK868		Stockholm	Boarding
12:40	SK342		Trondheim	Cancelled
12:55	SK263		Bergen	Cancelled
13:00	SK1320		Alound	Cancelled
13:00	OY1994	D7	Bilund	Cancelled
13:00	FR1502	E12	Vilnius	Gate closed
13:00	AC9150	D5	Frankfurt	Boarding
13:00	SU2175	F15	Moskva/Sharm	Gate closing

**OSLO:** A time schedule shows several cancelled flights during a strike of Scandinavian Airlines' (SAS) pilots to contest wages and working hours at the Gardmoen Airport in Oslo. — AFP



Business

# Gulf Air and Oman Air strengthen and expand codeshare agreement

## The agreement to include international destinations

**MANAMA:** Gulf Air, the Kingdom of Bahrain's national carrier, and Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, has expanded their existing codeshare agreement allowing passengers to benefit from the outstanding products and services offered by the two airlines. This will extend travel opportunities to fly beyond Muscat and Bahrain effective from the upcoming summer schedule.

Gulf Air will place its 'GF' code on Oman Air flights from Muscat to Salalah and Khasab in Oman, Nairobi in Kenya, Zanzibar in Tanzania, Goa and Lucknow in India, Kathmandu in Nepal and Jakarta in Indonesia. On the other hand, the extended codeshare agreement will see Oman Air place its 'WY' code on Gulf Air flights from Bahrain to Tbilisi in Georgia, Baku in Azerbaijan, Gassim in Saudi Arabia and Beirut in Lebanon.

Commenting on the codeshare extension, Gulf Air's Chief Executive Officer Kresimir Kucko said: "Gulf Air and Oman Air has been long-time partners and now we are celebrating many years of close partnership with an extension to what is already one of our strongest

codeshare collaborations. The existing codeshare on the Bahrain-Muscat route has been receiving good feedback over the years allowing passengers to choose from a variety of frequencies every day. Now Gulf Air passengers can explore more destinations beyond Muscat as they fly on Oman Air to different destinations in Oman, Africa, India and the Far East".

Abdulaziz Al-Raisi, Chief Executive Officer of Oman Air commented: "Oman Air is very happy with the extension of this codeshare agreement with Gulf Air, which is a strategic and important partner for Oman Air. Through this code share, Oman Air offers its guests the opportunity to extend their travel from Bahrain to Tbilisi, Baku, Gassim and Beirut. The Gulf Air guests in return can travel to Oman Air's destinations of Salalah, Khasab, Nairobi, Zanzibar, Goa, Lucknow, Kathmandu and Jakarta. We are sure the guests will find the award-winning services of Oman Air and the legacy services of Gulf Air a truly rewarding experience."

Gulf Air is a major international carrier serving 49

cities in 26 countries. Gulf Air currently serves all its destinations with a combination of wide and narrow body fleet of 36 aircraft including its flagship the Boeing 787-9 Dreamliner and the latest Airbus 320neo. The airline connects Bahrain to the world, serving as a powerful driver for the economy and supporting the Kingdom's on-going economic growth.

Oman Air currently serves up to 55 destinations worldwide. The carrier operates direct international flights from Muscat to GCC region as well as Middle East & Africa region. In addition, Oman Air flies to many destinations in the Indian Sub-Continent, China, Far and South East Asia and Europe and has codeshare agreements with a number of airline partners offering guests better connectivity and increased choice. Oman Air's fleet consists 54 aircraft, that includes Airbus A330s, 787 Dreamliner, Boeing 737s and Embraer. Oman Air's commitment to quality, comfort and a seamless passenger experience has resulted in many international awards that the airline has won consistently over the past few years.



### NBK Money Markets Report

## Dollar rallies as US economy strengthens; oil rebounds

**KUWAIT:** The US dollar rallied last week as the US economy proved to be more resilient than its major counterparts. Strong corporate earnings and robust internal demand is helping dispel expectations of a major slowdown in 2019. It appears that the global economy is now running at two different speeds. While the US economy is seen as outperforming on a relative basis, weakness outside of the US remains more profound.

With higher yields on offer in the US and the US economy continuing its relative outperformance, the US dollar has been able to shake off the recent dovish shift in Fed policy. The Fed has signaled that there is now a higher hurdle for them to deliver further rate hikes given inflation remains "subdued" and the policy rate is now seen as already around neutral. Next week's PCE inflation report is expected to reveal whether inflation has moved further below the Fed's goal. However, the Fed would have to become more concerned over a sharper growth slowdown and inflation undershoot to consider a rate cut in the near term.

Furthermore, recent dovish policy announcements outside of the US have reinforced the appeal of the US dollar. The ECB ruled out a rate hike until next year, the BOC dropped the reference to future rate hikes and the BOJ has clarified its commitment to maintain low rates to at least 2020.

### USD GDP

Cold weather and the government shutdown earlier in the year rose concerns that the economy was set to slow down for the first quarter. However, gross domestic product actually increased at a 3.2 percent annualized rate in the quarter, up from 2.2 percent in the fourth quarter of 2018. While the data supports the notion that the United States is on a firmer economic footing than other leading economies, there were some signs of weakness. Consumer spending slowed to around half the pace recorded in the last quarter and business investment slowed from 2.7 percent from 5.4 percent. Those decreases however, may be attributed to the government shutdown and the effect of Trump's tax cut wearing off.

### EU sensitive to exports

The eurozone economy has proven particularly sensitive to softening external demand. It has resulted in economic growth falling back towards below



averages which has heightened concern amongst policymakers at the ECB. The latest leading business surveys have revealed little signs so far that external demand is beginning to improve in the near-term. The eurozone manufacturing PMI increased marginally by 0.3 point to 47.8 in April although it remains in contraction territory. A similar picture was also painted by the latest German IFO survey. The expectations component has risen modestly in recent months to 95.2 in April from a low of 94.0 in February. However, the IFO Institute warned that sentiment amongst manufacturers has deteriorated "markedly". The German government has recently lowered their growth forecast for this year to just 0.5 percent.

Still, the ECB remained somewhat optimistic that growth is beginning to stabilize and will begin to pick up modestly later this year. However, the latest threat to their outlook is posed by the potential imposition of auto tariffs from US President Donald Trump. A US Commerce Department report, investigating whether the dominance of foreign automakers constitutes a threat to US national security, has been sitting on US President Donald Trump's desk for months now. Trump currently has until 17 May to react to the report with tariffs. Trump's decision has the potential to provide another negative shock to an already weak exporting eurozone economy.

### Bank of Japan

The Bank of Japan put a time frame on its forward guidance for the first time saying that it would keep interest rates at super-low levels for at least one more year, confirming its commitment to ultra-loose policy. Previously, the BOJ was not clear on how long it would maintain very low rates, saying only that it would be "for an extended period of time."

In its monetary policy meeting, the BOJ maintained its short-term rate target at minus 0.1 percent and its long-term yields around 0 percent. It also reiterated it will keep buying assets such as government bonds and exchange-traded equity funds. Governor Haruhiko Kuroda also said rates could be kept ultra-low even longer, as weaker global demand and Sino-US trade tensions were taking a toll on the export-reliant economy. "Global economic uncertainties have drawn attention, so we wanted to clarify that we will keep rates low for a very long time," he said.

The BOJ's dovish message puts it in line with the Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, which have been forced to pause efforts to scale back crisis-mode policies due to heightening uncertainty over the global economic outlook.

### Oil supply shortage

The Trump administration has eliminated waivers which have allowed Japan, India and China to import Iranian oil despite the US sanctions on Iran. US secretary of state Mike Pompeo announced Washington's decision is "intended to bring Iran's oil exports to zero, denying the regime its principal source of revenue". Pompeo also stated the US is working with Saudi Arabia and the UAE to ensure there was "sufficient supply in the markets" to compensate for the loss of Iranian imports. Oil prices rose to their highest in 6 months above \$75 after the news over concerns of potential supply constraints.

### Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30435  
The USDKWD opened at 0.30435 yesterday morning.

## Al-Tijari announces weekly winners of Al-Najma account

**KUWAIT:** Commercial Bank conducted the weekly draw on Al-Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

### The results of the draw were as follows:

1. Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Gharaballi Abdulwahab Al-Gharaballi
2. The "Salary & Cash on Top" Campaign weekly winner - the prize KD 1,000 and was for the share Mona Abbas Al-Dashti

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes.

As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for availing its benefits, the Bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 & above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000. As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift.

The retirees with pension KD 1,000 and above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private & public sector as well as the retirees. Further, the campaign provides customers with the opportunity to get additional benefits and take advantage of the advanced and unrivalled services and products the Bank provides to its customers to meet their needs and expectations.

## EXCHANGE RATES

### AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

#### EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	305.000
Euro	345.110
Sterling Pound	398.480
Canadian dollar	229.240
Turkish Lira	52.630
Swiss Franc	303.630
US Dollar Buying	303.800

#### ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.729
Indian Rupees	4.379
Pakistani Rupees	2.187
Srilankan Rupees	1.743
Nepali Rupees	2.737
Singapore Dollar	225.760
Hongkong Dollar	38.875
Bangladesh Taka	3.603
Philippine Peso	5.893
Thai Baht	9.616
Malaysian ringgit	78.005

#### GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.388
Qatari Riyal	83.826
Omani Riyal	792.723
Bahraini Dinar	810.420
UAE Dirham	83.095

#### ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20.850
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17.726
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.225
Tunisian Dinar	105.170
Jordanian Dinar	430.670
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2.033
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.344

### 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 WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.388018	0.402918
Czech Korune	0.005256	0.014566
Danish Krone	0.041597	0.046597
Euro	0.333695	0.347395
Georgian Lari	0.132435	0.132435
Hungarian Lari	0.001341	
Norwegian Krone	0.031208	0.036408
Romanian Leu	0.065474	0.082324
Russian ruble	0.004733	0.004733
Slovakia	0.009141	0.019141
Swedish Krona	0.028177	0.033177
Swiss Franc	0.293361	0.304361
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.207048	0.219048
New Zealand Dollar	0.197625	0.207125
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.221755	0.230755
US Dollars	0.301200	0.306500
US Dollars Mint	0.301700	0.306500
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003033	0.003834

Chinese Yuan	0.043895	0.047395
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037152	0.039902
Indian Rupee	0.003840	0.004612
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002654	0.002834
Korean Won	0.000252	0.000257
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070293	0.076293
Nepalese Rupee	0.002687	0.003027
Pakistan Rupee	0.001514	0.002284
Philippine Peso	0.005823	0.006123
Singapore Dollar	0.219069	0.229069
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001404	0.001984
Taiwan	0.010191	0.010371
Thai Baht	0.009225	0.009775
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.795243	0.811743
Egyptian Pound	0.017782	0.020382
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.425704	0.434704
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021290	0.045290
Omani Riyal	0.786669	0.792349
Qatar Riyal	0.079568	0.084508
Saudi Riyal	0.080327	0.081627
Syrian Pound	0.001296	0.001515
Tunisian Dinar	0.097044	0.106044
Turkish Lira	0.045608	0.057108
UAE Dirhams	0.081697	0.083397
Yemeni Riyal	0.000993	0.001073



## Business

# CMA launches third phase of market development project

## Boursa Kuwait has introduced new investment instruments



By Faten Omar

**KUWAIT:** The Capital Markets Authority held a press conference yesterday to launch the first part of the third phase of the market development project. Muthanna Al-Saleh, Head of the Markets Sector at CMA, presented the changes that were launched in the first part of the third phase and their objectives. He explained the activation of short selling, lending and borrowing shares will be applied later after further testing.

He said these changes, which are being implemented as

part of the market development project, have received global acclaim. "The phase will include the complete use of stock lending and borrowing (SLB) and applying short sale conditional on the application of borrowing shares, along with improving off-market trade, introducing an after-hours trading session and improving the investment fund trading platform," Saleh added.

Boursa Kuwait has launched new investment instruments, including the real estate fund trading platform (REITs). The financial instruments include a swap service, and a buy offer service that allows anyone to buy at least



— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat

5 percent and no more than 30 percent of the shares of any listed company. The stock exchange will adjust its trading mechanism to 10 percent, up or down, instead of 5 percent. The stock will stop trading for two minutes at a high or a 10 percent drop. The bourse will also launch a trading session after closing for 5 minutes, and stock prices cannot exceed or fall below the closing price.

Phase III is an additional step in the market development project, which completed Phase I in May 2017 and Phase II in April 2018. The most important results of the previous phases were the upgrading of Kuwait to the rank

of emerging markets by the world's top rating institutions such as FTSE Russell and S&P Dow Jones, as well as placing Kuwait on the watch list for promotion by MSCI.

It should also be noted that the changes of this phase were implemented after conducting a series of extensive tests with all participating parties in order to ensure the ability of their automated systems to accommodate all the variables related to this stage. The list of participating parties includes the Capital Markets Authority, Boursa Kuwait, Kuwait Clearing Company and other investment companies.

## US oil sanctions take effect on Venezuela as crisis intensifies

**WASHINGTON:** US sanctions came into effect yesterday to block Venezuela's economic lifeline of oil exports, in what Washington hopes will be a major blow in its fledgling campaign to topple leftist President Nicolas Maduro.

As of 12:01 am Washington time (0401 GMT), the United States will take action against anyone who deals with state-owned Petroleos de Venezuela, or PDVSA, or any entity in which the company holds at least a 50 percent stake. It is among a volley of steps by President Donald Trump's administration to oust Maduro and install opposition leader Juan Guaido, who is recognized by more than 50 countries, including most in Latin America.

Just Friday, the Trump administration said it would block any US assets of Foreign Minister Jorge Arreaza, confirming it has no desire to negotiate with Maduro, a socialist firebrand who presides over a crumbling economy but has withstood three months of intense pressure. Until the crisis, Venezuela exported 500,000 barrels a day to the United States, its largest customer, with PDVSA omnipresent, if not highly visible, through ownership of the Citgo refining and gas station chain.

The United States has already moved to put Citgo under the control of Guaido, who appointed his own board. Even though sanctions legally came into force Sunday, "the reality is that the oil trade between the United States and Venezuela has been absolutely limited and fallen sharply," said Mariano de Alba, a Washington-based international law expert from Venezuela. But the sanctions will still have an effect, with Washington vowing to enforce them against any foreign company with interactions in the United States-including the US financial system, which dominates the globe. As of yesterday, "there is no doubt that the sanctions are in force and that any company assumes bigger risks than they did before this date," de Alba said.

### Searching for customers

Energy-hungry India was the third-biggest buyer of



WASHINGTON, DC: Jacqueline Luqman of the Black Alliance for Peace speaks during a rally outside the Venezuelan Embassy in Washington, DC on Saturday. — AFP

Venezuelan oil in 2017 after the United States and China and until recently had been a major source of cash. But Indian companies have backed off in the face of US sanctions, making China and Russia the crucial economic and political backers of Maduro-whose re-election last year was widely criticized for irregularities.

The sanctions take effect just as global oil markets are trending higher after the United States similarly demanded that all countries, notably India and China, stop buying oil from Iran. Oil is the blood of Venezuela's crippled economy, accounting for 96 percent of exports. The country nonetheless is facing a major economic crisis, with projections that inflation could soar to a mind-boggling 10 million percent this year.

Some 2.7 million Venezuelans have fled since 2015 faced with shortage of basic goods and medicine, according to UN figures. One immediate problem for Venezuela is not its exports but its imports. It used to rely on 120,000 barrels of light crude each day from the United States to blend with its heavier oil. It will need to turn to other suppliers to sell its own crude, increasing production costs.

US-based consultancy Rapidan Energy Group says PDVSA's production could temporarily fall by 200,000 barrels a day. It would be a stunning further reduction for PDVSA which pumped 3.2 million a day in 2008, a figure that had nosedived to just 840,000 in March.

The United States has wasted no opportunity to blame Maduro and his late predecessor Hugo Chavez for Venezuela's economic woes-with Trump also trying to link their socialism to his Democratic foes at home. Elliott Abrams, the US envoy leading the effort to oust Maduro, promised that "tens of billions of dollars" will flow into Venezuela to rebuild its economy. "That recovery can only start when there is a fully inclusive government that represents all Venezuelans," Abrams said Thursday. But a study by two prominent left-leaning US economists, Mark Weisbrot and Jeffrey Sachs, warned that the growing sanctions will "vastly" harm ordinary Venezuelans. The study, released by the Center for Economic and Policy Research, found that Venezuela recorded more than 40,000 additional deaths between 2017 and 2018 as they blamed sanctions for shortages of food and medicine. — AFP

## Fed to hold fire despite White House call for rate cut

**WASHINGTON:** The Federal Reserve is poised to hold its fire this week, leaving benchmark US interest rates untouched as central bankers await firm indications of where the world's largest economy is headed. But as policymakers gather for their third meeting of the year tomorrow, President Donald Trump is still hammering the Fed, demanding they lower interest rates. He also made plans to fill Fed vacancies with political loyalists to help get his way. Top White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow said Friday the surprisingly strong growth in the first quarter of the year could "open the door to a target rate reduction in the months ahead"—though he hastened to add that he respected the Fed's independence.

In addition, inflation "is coming in way below their own benchmark," he told CNBC, referring to the central bank's two percent target, while its most-watched measure has remained stubbornly slow, coming in at 1.3 percent in the first quarter of the year.

Fed Chairman Jerome Powell has steadfastly defended the central bank's independence, and made it clear officials will base their decisions on economic data. After four increases in the benchmark lending rate in 2018, the Fed has signaled clearly it would not raise rates this year. And given the strength of recent data reports, a rate cut could seem counterintuitive.

But some economists still think the next move will be a cut. The minutes from last month's policy meeting show members of the rate-setting Federal Open Market Committee believed their policy stance could "shift in either direction," at least raising the possibility of a rate cut at some point.

Futures markets appear convinced the FOMC will feel compelled to lower rates at least once in the next nine months, and as of Friday odds were at 20 percent it will cut as soon as June.

In recent media interviews, Richard Clarida, the Fed's vice chairman, and Charles Evans, president of the Chicago Federal Reserve Bank, acknowledged rate cuts could become necessary.

### 'Hmm... I don't know'

But with Wall Street hovering at record levels unemployment below four percent and job creation holding steady, economists say that for the moment the central bank is sticking with the pause announced in December. Ian Shepherdson of Pantheon Macroeconomics said Friday the blockbuster first-quarter GDP could put rate hikes "back on the agenda" if it continues through the year.

But other economists said the 3.2 percent growth recorded in the January-March period hid worrisome signs of weakness, such as falling imports, weak consumption, rising inventories and poor business investment. Diane Swonk, chief economist at Grant Thornton, told AFP the GDP estimate was "a lousy three percent" that masked warning signs in its details and came amid perpetually soft inflation.

In March, a closely watched measure of consumer inflation hit its slowest pace in 13 months. And the Fed's preferred gauge, the "core" Personal Consumption Expenditures price index, has not exceeded the Fed's two percent target in seven years.

"The reality is that once inflation started to recede, even though the economy's stronger, something's wrong," Swonk said. Though unemployment is low and wages have begun to rise, she said, price pressures simply have not responded, leaving the Fed with little impetus to push its target interest rate range any higher.

"They'd like to stay optimistic that their next move would be up but there are enough people sitting on the sidelines saying, 'Hmm... I don't know.' That keeps the Fed firmly on the sidelines," she said.

"Their cautious optimism is the way to play it right now." — AFP

## WALL STREET WEEK AHEAD

## Good news from China could boost materials shares

**NEW YORK:** Even as the lift from optimism over prospects for US-China trade detente shows signs of wearing off for the wider US stock market, upbeat sentiment around China's economy could bolster shares of materials companies.

Shares of S&P 500 industrial and technology companies, which were buffeted by last year's tit-for-tat tariffs as well as slowing global demand, have been very responsive to progress in US-China trade relations and a strengthening Chinese economy. This year, those sectors have outpaced the ascent in the S&P 500, which reached a record closing high on Tuesday. Materials stocks have not been as sensitive, however, even though they also stand to benefit as a stronger Chinese economy lifts global consumption and industrial output. As China has taken measures to stimulate its economy, its economic data have turned more upbeat. That in turn could aid global growth, which has flagged as a result of China's cooldown.

"What we're seeing is China spending more on stimulus: fiscal stimulus and monetary stimulus," said Kristina Hooper, chief global market strategist at Invesco in New York. "That's likely to be a positive for materials." The People's Bank of China has cut banks' reserve requirement ratio five times over the past year and is widely expected to ease policy further to spur lending and reduce borrowing costs. The stimulus appears to have boosted Chinese economic data, with factory activity growing in March for the first time in four months.

Yet so far in 2019, the S&P 500 materials index has underperformed the S&P 500 at large, rising just 11.9 percent compared with 16.7 percent for the benchmark index. Moreover, it is among the biggest decliners in the period since the S&P's previous record closing level on Sept. 20. The materials index has fallen 7 percent over those seven months, versus a 5.2 percent gain for technology and a 3 percent loss for industrials. Only the energy index has dropped more over that period.

A trade agreement could serve as a catalyst for a lift in materials shares as a drag on China's economy is lifted, some market strategists say. Some commodity prices, including those for copper and oil, have ascended this year as the prospects for the global economy have somewhat brightened.

"It all goes back to the global growth outlook," said Andrea DiCenso, portfolio manager for alpha strategies at Loomis Sayles in Boston. "With the front run in hard data, we're beginning to see a pretty significant rally." Additionally, a trade agreement is expected to include commitments from China to purchase higher quantities of US products such as soybeans, which could benefit companies that make agricultural chemicals, including DowDuPont Inc and CF Industries Holdings Inc.

CF Industries is scheduled to report quarterly results after the bell on Wednesday, and DowDuPont is scheduled to report before the market open on Thursday.

To be sure, even with a trade agreement, some materials companies could face price pressures. Shares of Freeport-McMoRan Inc fell 10.1 percent on Thursday after the copper mining company posted a lower-than-expected profit as its production slipped and its costs rose.

A rollback of tariffs on Chinese imports, particularly aluminum and steel, would likely prompt a fall in some commodity prices, which could hurt prospects for certain materials companies, said Gene Goldman, chief investment



NEW YORK, NY: Traders and financial professionals work on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) at the opening bell in New York City. — AFP

officer at Cetera Investment Management in El Segundo, California.

Even so, those drawbacks may be outweighed by the support for the global demand fostered by a US-China trade agreement. "You could see a number of companies with lowered expectations bring them back up as they talk favorably about the impact that a trade deal would have on them," said Tim Ghiskey, chief investment strategist at Inverness Counsel in New York. — Reuters



## Business

# Zain platinum sponsor of ENCON2

## Event comes under patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense

**KUWAIT:** Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its platinum sponsorship of the 2nd Consulting Services for Development Plan Forum (ENCON2) entitled "Role of the Private Sector in Execution and Automated Integration among Related Agencies to Boost Productivity and Combat Corruption". The event, to be held at Sheraton Kuwait Hotel from 30 April - 2 May, comes under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Zain's support to this forum comes as part of the company being a main contributing partner in elevating the efficiency of the execution of the Kuwait National Development Plan (New Kuwait) that stems from His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's conceptualized vision of a new Kuwait by 2035. The company is keen on reflecting its key role as a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector, which is considered a strategic partner in the country's developmental goals and one of its main pillars.

ENCON2 will feature the presence of many entities from both the public and private sectors, which will add a great value to the forum's program on multiple levels.



NoofEXPO organizes the event in collaboration with the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses, with a participation from the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Central Agency for Public Tenders, Central Agency for Information Technology, and Kuwait Municipality, the Apparatus for Developing Silk City (Al-Sabbiya) and Boubyan Island, Kuwait Direct

Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), Kuwait Fire Service Directorate, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Environment Public Authority, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health, Kuwait University, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC).

The forum will also feature the presence of several supervisory bodies, including the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait, Department for Legal Advice and Legislation, Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), the Financial Supervisory Commission, and the Government Performance Follow-Up Agency. Zain affirmed its commitment in being present at the various projects and activities that contribute to pushing the national economy wheel and achieving the various developmental objectives of the country, further reflecting its role as a leading national private sector company that engages with planning initiatives that achieve Kuwait's prosperity on all levels.

The 2nd Consulting Services for Development Plan Forum (ENCON2) mainly aims at boosting the efficiency by which the phases of Kuwait's 2035 Development Plan are executed. It also aims at ensuring that projects are executed accurately according to specifications and within their budgets. Shortening the documentary cycle and sig-

nificantly limiting variation orders to boost transparency and combat corruption are also among the main topics of the event. In addition, the forum will focus on increasing the level of cooperation and coordination among all agencies mandated with the delivery of consulting services.

As a first step, ENCON2 will discuss the requirements for developing a healthy administrative and technological environment among the executive and supervisory government agencies to automate the issuance of approvals and permissions related to consulting services. The target is the development of a web portal to be the unified gateway for issuing all approvals and permissions related to deliver consulting services for government and private sector projects in general, and especially for projects of the Development Plan.

ENCON2 will also discuss the best approach to implement Kuwait's government vision of empowering the private consulting sector to assume the roles of approvals and permissions issuance and execution of projects of the Development Plan, and the best approach to empower the government agencies to carry out an accompanying effective supervisory role only. This conforms to Kuwait's strategy of mandating the private sector with a more significant economic role.

## Microsoft brings BETT to Middle East and Africa for 4th year running

**ABU DAHBI:** Microsoft yesterday reinforced its commitment to the regional education sector by bringing the world-renowned education-technology conference BETT to the Middle East and Africa (MEA) for the fourth consecutive year.

BETT MEA 2019 will continue tomorrow at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, under the patronage of Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Vice Chairman of the Abu Dhabi Executive Council. The theme this year is "Building a Successful Change Culture to Meet the Evolving Needs of 21st-Century Citizens". The conference features two days of collaboration and debate between educators and technologists as they seek to find novel ways of providing students with future-ready skillsets.

"At Microsoft, our goal is to empower young people to become successful, capable, and active contributors to the development and prosperity of societies", said Harb Bou-Harb, Education Director for Microsoft Middle East & Africa. "Our work in the field of Education is part of our ongoing efforts to skill up young people and help them achieve more - as innovators, business leaders, entrepreneurs and job creators. Bett speaks directly to this effort and is steadily rising to succeed in becoming a 360-degree integrated plat-



form that gathers all key players in the education industry. We are truly inspired by seeing and listening to educators and education leaders who are pushing the limits of our thoughts and innovations to reshape the world of tomorrow."

In March this year, Microsoft teamed up with The Economist Intelligence Unit on a study conducted among more than 750 education professionals across 15 countries. The survey revealed that 80 percent of educators believe positive emotions are critical for academic success, while 70 percent say emotional wellbeing has grown more important for K-12 students in recent years, with the vast majority insisting that it also helps in developing foundational literacies and in developing communication skills.

### Microsoft showcase

At the BETT EXPO, Microsoft showcased a range of technologies being applied in the classroom by innovative educators. An example of that is the Minecraft: Education Edition which offers more than 500 free lesson plans and 30 tutorials to help educators teach subjects such as Chemistry and Computer Programming in more intuitive forms. It is



designed to promote creativity, collaboration and problem-solving in an immersive environment, where students are limited only by their imaginations.

Microsoft also demonstrated its free, interactive Hacking STEM Lessons, which empower educators to build affordable, project-based activities to visualize data across STEM curriculums. The Microsoft showcase also focused heavily on accessibility in Office 365, which has been designed to meet the needs of people around the globe with different abilities, allowing everyone to create, communicate, and collaborate on any device.

### Teachers academy

During BETT MEA 2019, Microsoft is also running customized learning sessions for teachers, known as the Microsoft Teachers Academy, concentrating on

Microsoft Teams, Minecraft: Education Edition, Hacking STEM and LinkedIn Learning. Specially designed use-case-based lessons will show teachers how to leverage these technologies in classrooms, to drive better learning outcomes.

One million new Windows 10 devices are being used by K-12 and higher-education students each month. And, as part of its ongoing mission to support educational institutions and improve learning outcomes, Microsoft has donated \$1.4 billion in software and services to more than 95,000 schools and non-profits around the world. The company also made its recently acquired video-centric education tool Flipgrid free to all educators, to help promote social, interactive learning strategies. Flipgrid continues to attract educators, with a new one joining the platform every 55 seconds.

## A phone that sees the unseen and has a solid endurance

**KUWAIT:** The smartphone market is packed with a wide range of phones to choose from, but you may spend days or even months researching the right phone for you. If you are keen on a device that combines both an exceptional camera and a solid performance including a long-lasting battery, then look no further: the Huawei P30 Pro is the one for you. Packed with innovative camera technologies, enough power and fast recharging capabilities, Huawei's latest smartphone creates the perfect balance between power and efficiency.

### Snap images day and night

The Huawei P30 Pro has a Leica Quad camera setup on the back that cater to all your photography and videography needs. Firstly, the 40MP main camera with the SuperSpectrum Sensor that lets more light into the sensors, allowing for that amazing shot even if the restaurant lighting is not that helpful, or you want to show the world pictures of your night out. Secondly we have the 20MP Ultra-Wide angle lens that ensures more friends can fit in one frame, making sure no one is left out. We then have the 8MP telephoto lens with SuperZoom that lets you take a closer look at your favorite artist performing at a concert, or even look at the fine details of what they are wearing on stage. Finally the Huawei Time of Flight (ToF) camera will ensure that all your pictures have a rich bokeh effect, standing out from all the other portrait shots on social media.

### Bring everything closer with SuperZoom

Nothing is too far thanks to Huawei's new SuperZoom lens. Capable of zooming at 5x optical zoom, 10x hybrid zoom and an astonishing 50x digital zoom, you can get



up close with what is happening on the stage or ramp, even if you are sitting far away in the back rows. Thanks to added Optical and AI assisted image stabilization, the images and videos will also maintain its clarity and detail, making sure you don't miss out on anything, even when you want to take a close-up of the moon.

### Shoot videos in the dark

Sometimes a photo taken during a night out simply won't do justice to the moment, but at the same time taking a video in the dark has always been a challenge. Not for the Huawei P30 Pro. Simply take out your phone and hit record, then watch the Huawei P30 Pro do the magic, recording your amazing night with bright colors and sharp details. Be it a night at a dimly lit restaurant or a live concert at night, no light is no problem for the Huawei P30 Pro.

### A lot of power under the stylish body

The Huawei P30 Pro does not shy away from packing in powerful hardware, but still manages to look good while doing it. Housing the Kirin 980, Huawei's fastest chipset yet, using the Huawei P30 Pro is easily one of the most powerful phones you can get. While the chipset helps you get a much smoother experience, the

improved GPU Turbo 3.0 will further enhance graphics and remove lag, for a gaming experience like no other.

You don't have to worry about storage either, as the Huawei P30 Pro comes with 256/512GB storage options to keep all your memories safe, while the 8GB RAM ensures everything runs smoothly.

### A battery that lasts longer

Life is full of great memories and if you can't whip out your phone to record these memories because the battery is drained out, then consider it as an opportunity wasted. The Huawei P30 Pro will ensure this doesn't happen to you, thanks to its massive 4,200mAh battery which can stand strong for more than a day of intensive use. In the situation where the battery starts depleting, you can get back on your feet in no time thanks to the Huawei 40W SuperCharge, bringing your phone back up to 70 percent in just 30 minutes.

It also supports 15W wireless charging and Wireless Reverse Charge, which will allow you to charge other devices such as wearables or even your friend's phone, by just placing it on your Huawei P30 Pro, provided it supports the Qi Wireless Charging Standard. The Huawei P30 Pro is now available at all major retail outlets and Huawei stores.

## 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 16. 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 5 winners of the KD 1000 prize: Dr Mohammad Adel Mustafa Al-Mutawa, Hadi Fadhel Talmes Alajmi, Faisal Mohammad Farhan Obaid, Naser Faleh Shanar Al-Subaiei and Abrar Affat Mohammad Al-Enezi.

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 1 Million Kuwaiti Dinars. 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!

As for the chances for winning, each customer is eligible to enter the draw against each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. Nevertheless, Sunbula Fixed Deposit investors also get chances in the Sunbula draws along with high expected returns that reach up to 3.5 percent distributed either monthly or at maturity upon the customer's preference.

## Burgan Bank announces winners of Yawmi draw

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

### The lucky winners are:

1. Husain Hamad Husain Alhelal
2. Mohammed Saeed Aldawaisan
3. Fawzi Khaleel Sayed Al-Qallaf

## Infiniti Al-Babtain: Infiniti QX50's luxury is irresistible



**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, encourages its customers to explore the features of the best in class, mid-size premium SUV segment.

The all new QX50 has been created to fully meet the needs of today's premium car buyers and to deliver on their desire to own the latest masterpiece of technology. The QX50 introduces what is possibly the most innovative internal combustion engine on the market at this time. Considered by many industry observers the holy grail of internal combustion engines, the company's engineers succeeded in bringing a world's first to the market for INFINITI: variable compression technology. The VC-Turbo engine delivers the strong and convincing performance of a V6 and the fuel economy of a 4-cylinder engine - transforming on demand and based on the input of the drivers. Instantly adapting to their needs, the VC-Turbo lets them harness the exhilarating performance of 268 hp and 380 nm at 4,400 rpm of torque.

The QX50 appeals to buyers who require the unique combination of interior space, power, efficiency, hand-crafted quality, and modern design, along with effortless on-road performance.

Developed on an entirely new platform, the QX50 features the sophisticated and assuring INFINITI Intelligent All-Wheel Drive. Drive Assist technologies react instantaneously to critical driving situations, supporting the drivers with a range of empowering 'co-pilot' features, and enabling them to always be in total control.

The aerodynamically efficient exterior remains true to that of the QX50 Concept and QX Sport Inspiration, bringing a fresh interpretation of INFINITI's distinctive 'Powerful Elegance' design language to the SUV segment. Combining a confident SUV stance with intelligent packaging, and deep character lines with INFINITI signature design cues, the appearance of the QX50 highlights the influence of human artistry in the design process to emphasize the car's premium quality.

The unrivalled interior space, artistic application of high quality materials, and advanced craftsmanship make the cabin as welcoming and comfortable as it is flexible. Driver-centric, yet passenger-minded, the QX50 offers a package of technologies to enhance the driving experience, while a calm, connected, and relaxing cabin features an asymmetric layout - designed to meet different needs of the driver and the passengers.



### 4. Saba Taleb Akbar Hussain

### 5. Abdullateef Abdulmohsen Al-Nafisi

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

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



What's On

# Ooredoo screens exclusive premiere of Avengers Endgame at VOX Kuwait



Ooredoo Kuwait screened the exclusive premiere screening of the popular movie Avengers Endgame in collaboration with VOX Kuwait. Ooredoo customers, guests, and employees attended the screening for free. Free passes were rewarded for those who won social media competitions. Winning customers and staff enjoyed the premiere of Avengers Endgame before it was premiered in Kuwait and the region.

Ooredoo and VOX Kuwait have established a strategic business relationship with a focus on mutual objectives that focus on entertainment. Kuwait has witnessed a substantial growth and increase in demand in Kuwait due to the rising popularity of cinemas. The launch event ran in parallel with Ooredoo's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging.

This was highlighted by Senior Director of Corporate Communications at Ooredoo Kuwait, Mijbil Al-Ayoub who said: "We believe that the

collaboration with VOX Kuwait is significantly important due to the high demand for entertainment in Kuwait that is increasing especially amongst millennials. Thus Ooredoo Kuwait has been proudly partnering with VOX Kuwait which provides customers with the best and most innovative movie experience."

Al-Ayoub further highlighted Ooredoo's ongoing efforts in partnering with reputable entertainment providers such as VOX Cinemas. "Partnering with VOX Kuwait will enhance Ooredoo's efforts in providing customers with the best possible experience," Al-Ayoub concluded. It is worth mentioning that Ooredoo created a number of competitions and invited the winners to the premieres of several movies such as Spider Man: Into the Spider Verse, Us, and The Pet Semetary in collaboration with VOX Cinemas Kuwait. Ooredoo also placed the logo of Avengers Endgame on its external screens at Ooredoo Tower, in the heart of Kuwait City.



## LOYAC signs agreement with Dasman School

In the framework of the joint and fruitful cooperation in enhancing the role of youth and developing their skills, a memorandum of understanding was signed between LOYAC and LOYAC Academy of Performing Arts (LAPA) in cooperation with Dasman Bilingual School in Qibliya school in the presence of LOYAC's Chairman Fare'a Al Saqqaf and the executive head of Dasman School Adel Al-Sane'. The two sides will work to assure the active participation of Dasman School graduates at LOYAC and LAPA's activities in addition to the volunteering programs in the community service.

## Australian meat valued by Middle East consumers

According to recent surveys conducted in the Middle East and other major international markets, consumers of red meat value highly the freshness of the meat, apart from the taste and tenderness of the product. It is therefore not surprising that the average customer's perception of imported meat is that sourcing meat from so far away can affect the freshness and quality of the product. But according to Meat & Livestock Australia (MLA), that's just not right.

In answering a media query on this topic, Nick Meara, the International Business Manager for MLA (MENA) said: "State-of-the art technologies in Australia ensure that Australian Lamb and Beef is packed fresh and chilled to very low temperatures so it can be delivered to supermarkets in the Middle East in just a matter of days, and is still as fresh as the day it was packed." Strict measures are taken at all stages of the supply chain including dispatch, where the Australian Government authenticates the process at every step.

Cartons of meat are loaded into refrigerated containers at very low temperatures, which are then inspected and sealed under the Australian Government supervi-



sion. The container is not reopened until it reaches its destination and the low temperature is controlled and monitored throughout the delivery process, ensuring the consistent freshness of the meat until it reaches shelves in Middle East supermarkets.

An Australian government report affirms, "Australian red meat is now not only accepted but demanded, right through from whole fresh lamb carcasses, from housewives, to supermarkets and hotels in every GCC country, right through to first and business class plates on the

major airlines of that region. Demand will now spread through North Africa. Middle Eastern airlines are going to play a major role in opening up these markets to the Australian farmers."

### Vacuum packed Meat

An important factor to consider in the delivery of meat is how it's packaged during the entire process. Australia employs the latest technology and know-how when it comes to packaging of meat, and one of the commonly used and recommended methods is vacuum packing. This type of packaging involves removal of air and oxygen from the package before sealing it.

Fresh Australian Lamb and Beef is vacuum packed to maintain freshness and quality, prevent bacterial growth and ensure an extended shelf life. This process supports natural aging, and so en route to the consumer, Australian Lamb and Beef wet ages to retain its natural moisture and flavor while further developing its tenderness.

### Australia's long history of safe meat exports

For many decades, Australia has been a trusted supplier of healthy, delicious and Halal Lamb and Beef to the Middle East. MLA stated that the Australian livestock and meat industry is "committed to food safety, integrity, and traceability, and continues to be a world leader in maintaining high safety and health standards." The Australian red meat industry and all levels of government have worked together to develop stringent standards and systems, designed to ensure the integrity and traceability of the product.

These measures include the Livestock Production Assurance (LPA), an on-farm food safety and quality assurance program that assists ranchers in recording and declaring the food safety of their livestock. The National Livestock Identification System (NLIS) consists of electronic ear tags and centrally managed database providing individual identification and traceability from farm to plate, thus giving customers the confidence in knowing where their meat originated from and the entire life cycle of the animal.

Meara also added, "The Middle East market is very important to us and we are committed to providing the region with the highest quality of Australian Lamb and Beef. The demand for a fresh product has increasingly been echoed by customers in the region and Australia is proud to be a leader in the delivery of meat that is fresh



from farm to plate. Our year on year increase in the exports of Australian meat to the region is a testament to the confidence and trust customers have for the quality, freshness and taste of Australian meat"

### Halal to the bone

MLA states that when Muslim customers buy Australian meat, they can be confident that it is not only fresh but also guaranteed Halal. Australia has one of the strictest Halal Programs in the world. The Australian Government Authorized Halal Program (AGAHP) is undertaken in collaboration with the Australian government's department of Agriculture & Water Resources, and Australian Islamic Organizations. Together they enforce the best practices of production standards, which have contributed to the worldwide recognition that Australia's Halal program is amongst the most rigorously enforced Halal systems in the world.

One of the important Halal requirements is that animals are treated properly their entire life and that they have easy access to food and water and are free to roam. Australia, with its natural environment and world's highest animal welfare standards, easily meet these requirements. Additionally, all processing facilities in Australia employ only registered and trained Muslim slaughtermen. All slaughtermen are practicing Muslims and comply with their religious slaughter training based on Shari'a principles.

Master Chef Tarek Ibrahim, the first master chef from the Middle East, in summing up his opinion about Australian Halal meat said, "I have personally been to Australia and seen firsthand the way animals are raised and the Halal process that is being followed. As a Muslim, Halal meat is very important to me and in my 30+ years of experience travelling the world, I can confidently say that the Australian Halal system is second to none."



## Celebrate Ramadan at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa

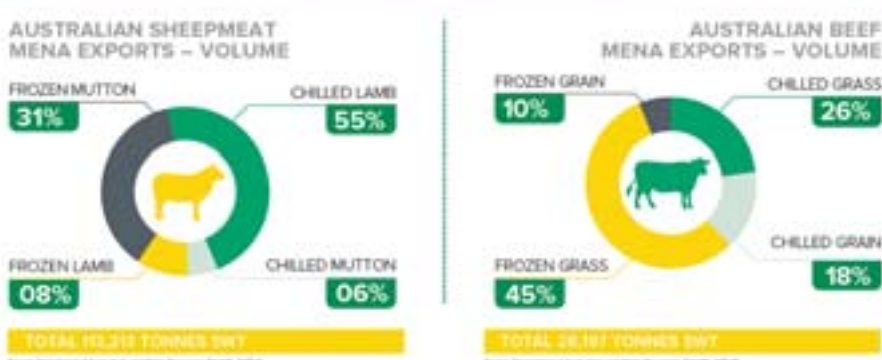
The countdown to the holy month of Ramadan has begun and Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa is delighted to invite all residents and visitors to celebrate this special month with family and friends. Break your fast with our sumptuous buffet featuring a wide variety of Middle Eastern favorites as well as international delicacies. The hotel welcomes guests to share the ceremonial breaking of the fast with loved ones in the relaxed, family-friendly setting of the Ramadan tent at the Garden Cafe and at the largest ballroom in Kuwait, Badriah ballroom.

From sunset, guests can enjoy a plentiful array of Middle Eastern specialties and beverages. The daily culinary Ramadan celebrations at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa are presented in style in the relaxing ambience of the family-friendly Ramadan tent. The Ramadan Tent at Garden Cafe, which can accommodate up to 350 guests, is decorated in warm and inviting colors and features extensive buffet options for this holy month. Guests can enjoy Iftar and Ghabka with a lavish selection of hot and cold mezze, fresh salads, mixed grills, tajine, lamb, pasta and dishes that will melt your heart, paired with Middle Eastern desserts and Arabic-inspired drinks, while enjoying a spectacular Oriental band for live entertainment.

For larger groups wishing for a unique Iftar or Ghabka experience, the lavish Badriah Ballroom provides a luxurious venue which can accommodate up to 700 guests. The buffet presents various interactive cooking stations including falafel, shawarma, grills and more, with a wide selection of refreshing fruit juices and traditional Ramadan beverages. All dessert enthusiasts can indulge in the extensive dessert buffet offering a sweet symphony of Arabic and international desserts perfectly prepared by our professional team while enjoying the live Andalusia tunes of the Tabla and Oud players.

Georges Akar, Director of Sales & Marketing, Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa, said, "Ramadan is different this year at Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa. We invite everyone to celebrate the spirit of Ramadan with family and friends, while relishing a live oriental band with the most authentic dishes to make your holy month full of special moments." The Ramadan tent can accommodate parties for private or corporate Ghabka bookings. Create unforgettable memories by celebrating traditional Ramadan festivities with loved ones at the Jumeirah Messilah Beach Hotel & Spa.

## SNAPSHOT OF MEAT CONSUMPTION MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA



## NOTICE

TIES cordially invites you to our last Tafseer class (Divine Wisdom from the last testament) before Ramadan on April 29 (today), at 7pm in which we will focus on verses 3 and 4 of Surat Al-Hashr (The Gathering). In this class, we learn why Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) expelled the majority of Jews from Medina, where they went, what Abdullah Yusuf Ali's said about

that, and what practical lessons we should learn from that. We will also discuss the evil consequences of rebelling against Allah (SWT) and Prophet Muhammad (pbuh), the gravity of lying against Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), what Abdullah bin Salaam (the most educated Jew in Medina) told Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) before embracing Islam, and how he described the Prophet (PBUH). We will also discuss types of hypocrisy, the characteristics of a hypocrite, and the significance of obeying Allah (SWT) and his messengers.



## Health

# Climate change to blame as bark beetles ravage central Europe's forests

## Forest owners suffer losses, timber prices drop

**PRAGUE:** Hot, dry summers are fanning an unprecedented outbreak of bark beetles that are destroying vast swathes of central Europe's spruce forests which define the region's landscape. Draught brought on by climate change has weakened trees' natural defenses and helped spawn the insects, creating an infestation that has forced landowners to chop down broad patches of forest across the Czech Republic, northern Austria, Bavaria and Slovakia.

While the bark beetle is natural to conifer forests and has a role in their ecosystem, climate change has helped it spread especially through single-variety spruce woods planted over the past two centuries. The Czech Republic has been worst hit. Last year, the beetle infested 18 million cubic meters of spruce, more than 10 times amounts seen in most previous years, according to Agriculture Ministry estimates.

This year, forecasts range from 20 to 30 million cubic meters, out of 480 million cubic meters of spruce timber in total, as the situation is expected to deteriorate across the region, especially given a lack of rainfall so far this spring. "Eighty percent

of Czech spruce forests are at high risk of dying," said Jaromir Blaha, forest expert at Hnutí Duha, an environmental NGO. "Most of our spruce monocultures in lower and mid-laying areas will probably disappear, in years or in a few decades."

Think tank Czech Forest says the area destroyed last year alone was equal to 100,000 soccer fields. Central Europe's spruce forests are a key source of income for the timber industry. The forests also conserve water and help cool down the landscape, capture carbon, prevent flooding and are a popular destination for hikers and mountain bikers. Over half of forests in the Czech Republic are made up of Norwegian spruce that is host to the European spruce bark beetle.

Bark beetles grow to about half a centimeter in length. They mate under the bark, and lay eggs. Larvae make feeding tunnels in the trees, mostly killing them. Young adults fly out and, when weather allows, repeat the process once or twice per season. Upper Austria's minister for agriculture, Max Hieglberger, in a report on forestry in 2018, said the situation was "dramatic" as more than half the felled timber in his

region was damaged, and forest owners were seeing a huge drop in income.

Czech Forest estimates that the outbreak in the Czech Republic caused losses of nearly 20 billion crowns last year from lower timber prices, premature cutting of trees and extra logging and logistical costs. It forecasts damages will exceed 30 billion crowns this year. "Last year, there were three generations (of bark beetle) instead of two across the Czech Republic. From one beetle in the spring, you get as many as thousands of beetles at the end of the season," said Jan Prihoda of Czech Forest.

Forest owners in the Czech Republic are overwhelmed and lack the workers and equipment to cut down affected trees and take away or debark all the timber, which is necessary to slow the infestation. "I am really sad to say... we are not able to stop this outbreak and we will not be able to stop it in the future," Tomas Hlasny from the Czech Life Sciences University, told a conference in Prague this month, launching an international report on the bark beetle outbreak. — Reuters



**MARKVARTICE:** A forest researcher points at a bark beetle near the village of Markvartice, Czech Republic. — Reuters

# CLINIC PAGE



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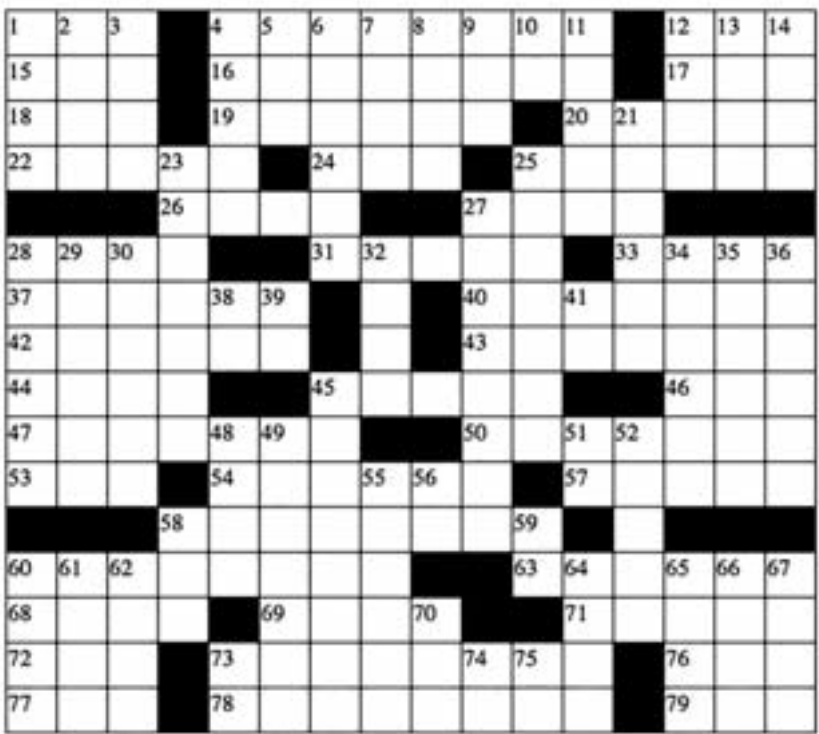
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ACROSS

1. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.  
4. Of or relating to Namibia or its people.  
12. A master's degree in business.  
15. An inflated feeling of pride in your superiority to others.  
16. Thin-shelled freshwater mussels.  
17. A former agency (from 1946 to 1974) that was responsible for research into atomic energy and its peacetime uses in the United States.  
18. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.  
19. United States economist who wrote about conspicuous consumption (1857-1929).  
20. Realistic Norwegian author who wrote plays on social and political themes (1828-1906).  
22. Sluggish tailless Australian arboreal marsupial with gray furry ears and coat.  
24. An emotional response that has been acquired by conditioning.  
26. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.  
28. A native or inhabitant of Turkey.  
31. A formal expression of praise.  
33. Queen of the Olympian gods in ancient Greek mythology.  
37. An agency of the United Nations that promotes education and communication and the arts.  
40. English poet remembered as author of the Canterbury Tales (1340-1400).  
42. Any of several eruptive skin diseases characterized by hard thick lesions grouped together and resembling lichens growing on rocks.  
43. Type genus of the Cariamidae comprising only the crested caracara.  
44. A distinct part that can be specified separately in a group of things that could be enumerated on a list.  
46. An arrangement of objects or people side by side in a line.  
47. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).  
50. Elongate very slender water scorpions.  
53. A sweetened beverage of diluted fruit juice.  
54. Bristlelike process near the tip of the antenna of certain flies.  
57. Offering little or no hope.  
60. Consisting of or resembling mother-of-pearl.  
63. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.  
68. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).  
69. Being three more than fifty.  
71. Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.  
72. A light touch or stroke.  
76. Step on it.  
77. A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.  
78. (Teutonic and Norse mythology) A Valkyrie or a queen in the Nibelungenlied who loved the hero Siegfried.  
79. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.

DOWN

1. An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.  
2. A fee charged for exchanging currencies.  
3. A cord fastened around the neck with an ornamental clasp and worn as a necktie.  
4. Connected with or belonging to or used in a navy.  
5. Used of a single unit or thing.  
6. Large high frilly cap with a full crown.  
7. Not in action or at work.  
8. A white native of Cape Province who is a descendant of Dutch settlers and who speaks Afrikaans.  
9. A hotel providing overnight lodging for travelers.  
10. A highly unstable radioactive element (the heaviest of the halogen series).  
11. Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.  
12. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chad languages.  
13. A short high tone produced as a signal or warning.  
14. An inflammatory disease involving the sebaceous glands of the skin.  
21. A member of a Dravidian people living in Pakistan.  
23. Goddess of fortune.  
25. Of or relating to the Sinhalese languages.  
27. A card game played in casinos in which two or more punters gamble against the banker.  
29. Characterized by unity.  
30. Pull back or move away or backward.  
32. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).  
34. A card game for 2 players.  
35. Marine fishes with a flattened elongated body and a sucking disk on the head for attaching to large fish or moving objects.  
36. A member of a widespread group of Amerindians living in northeastern South America.  
38. A ductile gray metallic element of the lanthanide series.  
39. In operation or operational.  
41. A colorless and odorless inert gas.  
45. The state of being everywhere at once (or seeming to be everywhere at once).  
48. (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.  
49. Relating to or like or divided into areolae.  
51. A soft gray ductile metallic element used in alloys.  
52. An oily colorless liquid obtained by the condensation of two molecules of acetaldehyde.  
55. An extinct ancient language of unknown affinities.  
56. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.  
58. A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.  
59. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.  
61. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.  
62. An important seaport on the Island of Cebu in the Philippines.  
64. A lyric poet.  
65. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).  
66. A sudden short attack.  
67. A notable achievement.  
70. Antibacterial drug (trade name Nydrazid) used to treat tuberculosis.  
73. 16 ounces.  
74. Being one more than one.  
75. Angular distance above the horizon (especially of a celestial object).

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today is all about you. Spirituality is high on your mind now. Perhaps you had a psychic moment in the last few days that make you think about God and what it means to live in this universe. How events came together to create all that's been made so that you can live the life you're living today is paramount to your thoughts. That's a small occupation in your mind where you can imagine the larger picture of your life by acknowledging what you're creating for you now in your life, Aries. Take it easy. Sit and think. Later invite someone you love to just be with you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This is time for you to get ahead like you want. Ambition plus achievement is about all you think of now. Well, you have another thing too, it's your birthday. Enjoy people giving you accolades and celebrating your birthday even though to you it's just another workday. Make the most of the attention you're getting. How often can you make this kind of progress on one day. When you get a chance to talk, tell them what you want to implement. You've got a quick, sharp mind. It shows.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You may find that breakthroughs in your career are opened after all your introspection. Perhaps you get a call today to tell you of something new. You're happier and want friends and family close. It sometimes takes a long time to steer a cruise liner into a turn. That feeling of steering something that large at work has almost tired you out but not quite. There's exhilaration in being with those you love after you've made a mental and work place accomplishment. Enjoy your day in the form of celebration for your acute mind's powers, Gemini. You won them by choosing to be born under this Zodiac Sign.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

If you've never been told you're lucky before you're apt to hear it today. It seems everything you touch is with that Midas special golden touch too. Problems seem to melt away. Someone you respect greatly, such as a grandfather or grandmother, gives good advice. Just being with family is enough to make your heart sing but you're blessed by much more. Dreams conjure up the deepest feelings while you figure out how to make them real. Cancer. Enjoy your day. Get ready for more work to come.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're practical but you're also using psychic ability too. Sitting alone at home was the vacation you took yesterday. Today, you're able to study your past and present using your intuition to see what your future will become. Taking a long look from an emotional and mundane point of view gives you extra information you'd not be able to glean without this special focus and concentration. Plus, you have the luxury of being in the comfort of your home while taking on the responsibility for your life, Leo. This is a great time.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

At least today you're beginning to appreciate your life again. You want more security and you know what it takes to achieve the safe haven for which you're looking. Value in life has you ready to take your ideas and make them into material success by working those concepts and not standing idly by while they're tossed to the side. You know only you can take control and make your life what it's supposed to be. Enjoy your work life, Virgo, even the times others feel a need to correct you. That has value too.

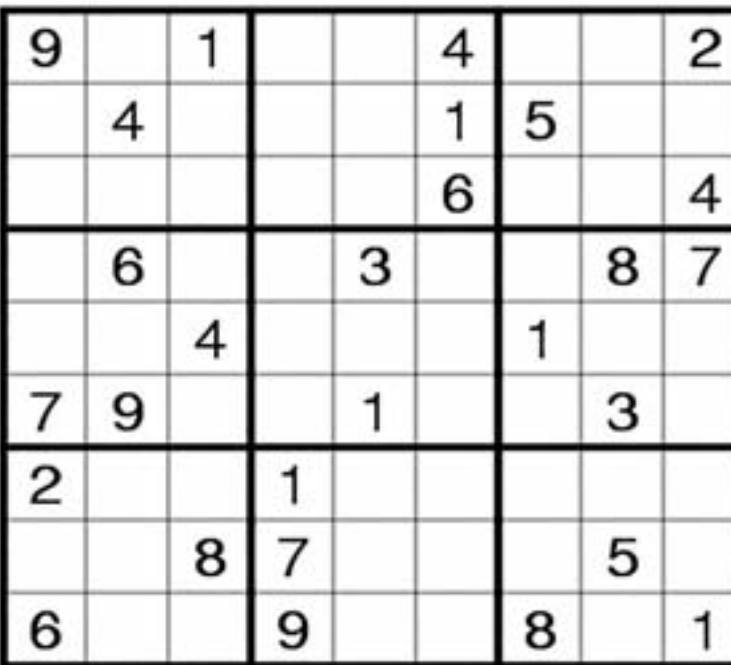
Wordsearch Puzzle

European Countries 1 - Word Search



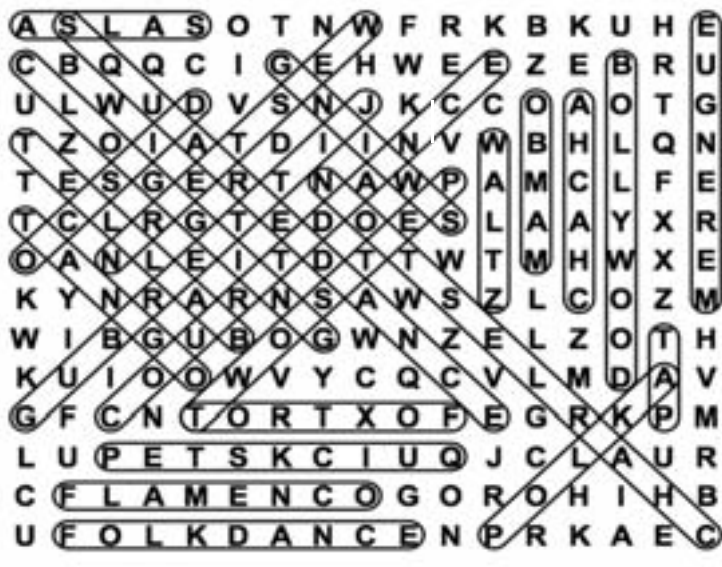
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DENMARK	MALTA	SWEDEN
ESTONIA	MOLDOVA	SWITZERLAND
FRANCE	MONTENEGRO	
GERMANY	NORWAY	
GREECE	PORTUGAL	

Daily Sudoku



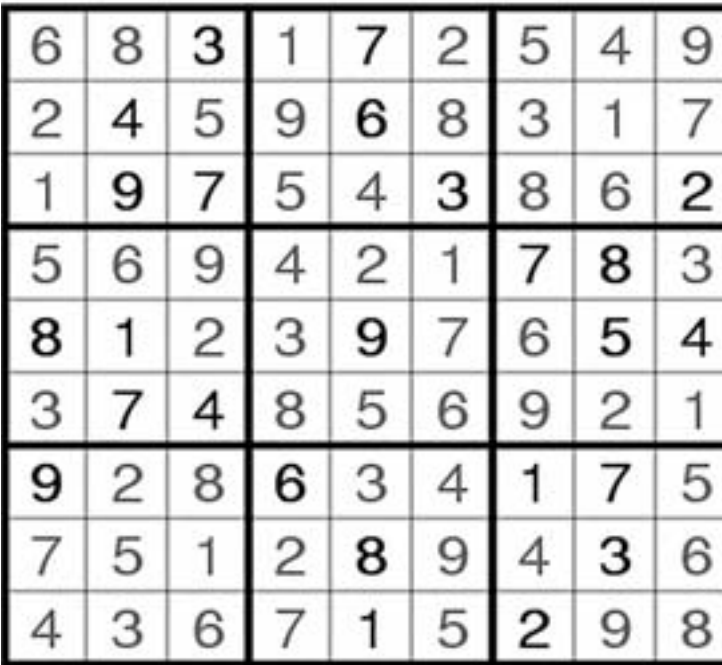
Yesterday's Solution

Dance Styles - Solution



BALLET	FOLK DANCE	SQUARE DANCE
BOLLYWOOD	FOXTROT	SWING
CHA CHA	JITTERBUG	TANGO
CHARLESTON	MAMBO	TAP
CLOGGING	MERENGUE	TWO STEP
COURT DANCE	POLKA	WALTZ
DISCO	QUICKSTEP	WESTERN
FLAMENCO	SALSA	

Yesterday's Solution





# Lifestyle

MONDAY, APRIL 29, 2019



A woman takes a selfie inside a hot air balloon during a hot air balloon festival in the central Vietnamese city of Hue yesterday. — AFP



## Flying high: Vietnam hot air balloon fest woos enthusiasts

Rainbow-coloured hot air balloons ferried giddy visitors over Vietnam's ancient city of Hue yesterday for a festival organizers hope will kickstart a passion for flying in the tourist hotspot. Several balloons—including one shaped as an octopus, another as a heart—offered aerial views of the former capital's sprawling stone citadel, which was once the seat of Vietnam's emperors. It is not a journey for the faint of heart. "When the balloon started to go up, I was buzzing and I could see the full view of Hue," tourist Ha Anh Ngoc told AFP. Hue is one of Vietnam's most popular tourist destinations, attracting some 4.3 million visitors last year.

Most visitors travel by foot or cycle rickshaw to see the city's ancient pagodas, imperial tombs and citadel, which still bears damage from intense fighting during the Vietnam War. Balloon enthusiasts are hoping to change that. "I really hope hot air ballooning will be more popular and closer to Vietnamese people," said Vo Ngoc Ha, one of the organizers of the third annual festival. At \$280 for a 40-minute jaunt into the skies, hot air balloon rides remain out of reach for most.

Some visitors at yesterday's festival opted instead for a tethered ride for about \$6, while others enjoyed the event from the ground, snapping selfies as the balloons soared over the city. Dutch pilot Wout Bakker, who has come to the festival every year since it was first held in 2017, said he has seen a gradual uptick in interest in hot air balloon-



ing which he hopes will grow further. "Vietnam has good potential because more and more tourists are coming and also local people—they have money to take flights, so it is building up," he said. — AFP



Hot air balloons flies over the former capital's stone citadel during a hot air balloon festival in the central Vietnamese city of Hue yesterday. — AFP photos

## Footprint found in Chile is 'oldest' in Americas

Scientists in Chile say they have found a footprint dating from at least 15,600 years ago, making it the earliest such sign of man's presence in the Americas. The footprint was found at the Pilauco excavation in the city of Osorno (820 kilometers, or 500 miles, south of Santiago), where scientists have been digging since 2007. Archeologists from the Austral University of Chile said the

footprint was first spotted in 2011 next to a house. It took years for paleontologist Karen Moreno and geologist Mario Pino to reliably confirm that the print was human. "There are other human footprints in the Americas," Pino told the Osorno newspaper El Austral, "but none has been dated as far back."

He said scientists were able to do so by applying radio-

carbon dating techniques to organic plant material where the print was found. Pino said the footprint appears to be that of a barefoot man weighing about 70 kilograms (155 pounds) and of the species *Hominipies Modernus*, a relative of *Homo Sapiens*. The area in Chile has proven rich in fossils, including evidence of an ancestor of today's elephants and American horses, as well as of more recent

human presence. An earlier footprint found at a site south of Osorno was found to be about 1,000 years more recent. The newer findings were published in the latest edition of the peer-reviewed scientific journal PLOS One. — AFP





An editing table is displayed as part of the Stanley Kubrick exhibition at the Design Museum in Kensington, London. — AFP photos



Original costumes from the film 'Spartacus' (1960), are displayed as part of the Stanley Kubrick exhibition.



Original props from the film 'Full Metal Jacket' (1987).



A Pan American 'bump' hat with the original golden company logo and Discovery flight overall which was worn by Keir Dullea as Dave Bowman in the film '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968), is displayed as part of the Stanley Kubrick exhibition at the Design Museum in Kensington, London.

# Legendary director **Kubrick** honored with London show

Iconic props from "The Shining" and "2001: A Space Odyssey" that detail the single-minded perfectionism of US filmmaker Stanley Kubrick are among the highlights of a new London show dedicated to the late artist. Visitors can discover Kubrick's universe and special relationship with Britain through some 700 objects, film clips and interviews, which are arranged according to the 13 films he made over a 50-year career.

The show coincides with the 20th anniversary of Kubrick's death, and is somewhat of a homecoming for the director, who moved to Britain in the early 1960s, shooting classics "Lolita" (1962), 2001: "The Space Odyssey" (1968), "Dr. Strangelove" (1964) and "Full Metal Jacket" (1987). The exhibition's most famous items include Jack Nicholson's axe from The Shining, the disturbing costumes from "A Clockwork Orange" (1971), the "Born to Kill" helmet worn by character "Joker" in Full Metal Jacket and Tom Cruise's Venetian cape and mask from "Eyes Wide Shut" (1999).

Other exhibits detail his obsessive attention to detail,

including a photograph of the snow-covered hotel in Oregon that would eventually be used for the outside shots of The Shining. Labels stuck on the image include instructions for how the path should appear in the shot, adding "THERE IS NO OTHER WAY TO DO IT, REPEAT NO OTHER WAY."

The 2001: Space Odyssey section includes a model of the 12 metre "hamster wheel" used by astronauts in the film to simulate gravity. The story of the filming of Vietnam war epic Full Metal Jacket forms another part of the show, which will run at London's Design Museum from Friday until September 15.

Items detail how Kubrick recreated Vietnamese city Hue in a deserted gas plant in Beckton, south east London, through dynamiting and importing 200 palm trees from Spain and 100,000 tropical plastic plants from Hong Kong. Others reveal the complicated, and often fractious relationship between Kubrick and his audience and the critics, starting with 1962 classic "Lolita", which details a middle-aged man's obsession with a 12-year-old girl.

"We believe that any such film must have a deleterious effect upon our society (...) and therefore ought not be made," Reverend John Collins wrote in a 1961 letter to Kubrick. The legendary director died on March 7, 1999 in his mansion in Childwickbury, north of London.

In addition to the exhibition, a hunt through the archives of A Clockwork Orange author Anthony Burgess have unearthed a never-before-seen unfinished "sequel" to the 1962 dystopian novel, it emerged Friday. The manuscript was written by the British author, who died in 1993, in response to the moral panic surrounding Kubrick's ultra-violent 1971 adaptation of the novel, which was blamed for copycat crimes. "The Clockwork Condition" describes 1970s society in terms of humans being reduced to cogs in a machine, "no longer much like a natural growth, not humanly organic." — AFP



Lady Lyndon's dress (center) and uniforms worn by French and British soldiers during the seven year's war, original costumes from the film 'Barry Lyndon' (1975), are displayed as part of the Stanley Kubrick exhibition.



A scale model of a Pan American Orion III space plane, made by Stephen Dymsoz with contributions by Karl Tate and from the film '2001: A Space Odyssey' (1968), is displayed as part of the Stanley Kubrick exhibition.



A series of photographs of Alex, a fictional character played by Malcolm McDowell in the film A Clockwork Orange.

## VIOLENCE HALTS RAPPER KAARIS' ICOAST SHOW



French rapper Okou Armand Gnakouri known as Kaaris performs during the Festival of Urban Music of Anoumabo (Femua) in Abidjan yesterday. — AFP photos

A show by French-Ivorian rapper Kaaris in Abidjan ended in violence as fans were injured while rushing towards the stage, AFP reporters said. Kaaris, wearing an orange jersey of the national Ivory Coast football team, was into the fourth song of his set at the Anoumabo festival of urban music (Femua) late on Saturday when fans knocked over security barriers and surged forward. Security guards forced them back with truncheons, while police fired tear gas at a group of especially unruly fans, bringing to a halt the concert attended by almost 10,000 people.

One fan who had come to see his "idol" blamed the crowd surge on police, while

Kaaris returned an hour later to vent his anger and call for calm. Yesterday, the rapper is to take part in an event in Gagnoa, western central Ivory Coast, along with ex-football star Didier Drogba and Salif Traore, also known as "Asalfo" of the group Magic System. "It's going to be hot, I can't wait," Kaaris said. "I was born there. I have a lot of hope in me and I want to share a bit." He declined to comment further to the press however on a high-profile brawl in August with rival rapper Booba at Orly airport south of Paris. "You can ask him when you see him," Kaaris said. — AFP



Riots break out as Ivorian police officers of the Anti-Riot Brigade (BAE) try to contain the crowd during a performance by French rapper Okou Armand Gnakouri known as Kaaris during the Festival of Urban Music of Anoumabo (Femua) in Abidjan.



Ivorian police officers of the Anti-Riot Brigade (BAE) contain the crowd during a performance by French rapper Okou Armand Gnakouri known as Kaaris during the Festival of Urban Music of Anoumabo (Femua) in Abidjan.

## Netflix spared as Academy keeps Oscars rule unchanged

The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences on Tuesday voted to not change its rule for a film's Oscars eligibility, sparing Netflix after months of pressure to exclude the streaming titan. Campaigners including Steven Spielberg—who is set to work with Apple's rival to Netflix—have suggested that the films produced and released by streaming firms should not be eligible for the Oscars, and should instead be classified as TV content. But despite the grumbling about the impact of streaming services on the traditional cinema industry, the Academy's board decided to continue with its current rule: a film "must have a minimum seven-day theatrical run in a Los Angeles County commercial theater, with at least three screenings per day for paid admission."

"Motion pictures released in nontheatrical media on or after the first day of their Los Angeles County theatrical qualifying run remain eligible." Ahead of the board meeting, the Academy had also received a warning from the US Justice

Department that any exclusion may fall foul of anti-trust laws. The battle between traditional cinema and streaming came sharply into focus after Netflix's impressive haul at this year's Academy Awards, including three Oscars for Alfonso Cuarón's "Roma."

Other rivals to Netflix include streaming service Hulu—which has followed Netflix into original shows including "The Handmaid's Tale"—and Amazon, which is also producing high-profile content including "Manchester by the Sea". Many who support the exclusion of streaming content from the Oscars have suggested that streaming at home or on devices does not capture the true experience of cinema, a criticism that appeared to have been acknowledged by the Academy after Tuesday's board meeting.

"We support the theatrical experience as integral to the art of motion pictures, and this weighed heavily in our discussions," Academy President John Bailey said in a statement. "Our rules currently require theatrical exhibition, and also allow for a broad selection of films to be submitted for Oscars consideration. We plan to further study the profound changes occurring in our industry and continue discussions with our members about these issues." Despite the hostility, Netflix has attempted to find space and allies within the Hollywood establishment. It joined the Motion Picture Association of America in January. — AFP





Nasasi Belinda (center), a businesswoman, poses as she is crowned Miss Curvy Uganda during the first edition of Miss Curvy Uganda in Kampala, Uganda.— AFP photos



Nasasi Belinda (center), a businesswoman, reacts with emotions as she is crowned Miss Curvy Uganda during the first edition of Miss Curvy Uganda in Kampala, Uganda.

# Businesswoman wins Uganda's first 'Miss Curvy' beauty contest



A contestant poses on a stage during the first edition of Miss Curvy Uganda in Kampala, Uganda.

Nasasi Belinda, a Ugandan businesswoman, has won the east African country's first-ever "Miss Curvy" beauty pageant, vowing to act as a role model for other women with "plus-size" figures. "I am going to be an inspiration," an overjoyed Belinda said after winning the title in Kampala late Friday, beating 24 other finalists for the grand prize. "Being plus-size is not a problem," she continued. "So be happy about yourself and make sure you don't quit. Just keep going."

The pageant was part of a government campaign to attract tourists to the east African nation. But the campaign caused controversy in February when tourism minister Godfrey Kiwanda suggested Ugandan women's curvaceous beauty was "a product to be marketed along with what we already have as a country ranging from Nature, the language and food, to make it a tourist attraction." Women's rights activists were outraged by the comments and called for the minister to resign. "This is perversion. To think women can be used as sex objects in this age and time is an absurdity and we condemn it," Rita Aciro, executive director of the Uganda Women's Network, told AFP at the time.

Ugandan entrepreneur and activist Primrose Nyonyozi Murungi launched an online petition to stop the campaign, which she said was "totally unacceptable and demeaning to us". "Women in Uganda have been attacked while on the streets. What happens now is that the government is confirming a stereotype that women are sexual objects and can be touched regardless and more so made a product of tourism," she told AFP.

Former opposition leader in parliament, Winnie Kiiza, told AFP the move came "at a time (when) women face fear and stigma in a male-dominated society". Minister Kiwanda sought to play down the controversy on Friday. "I also believe that there is a new wave that is going to come to Uganda, a new confidence that is going to be built among plus-size ladies," he said. — AFP



A contestant poses on a stage during the first edition of Miss Curvy Uganda.



Contestants pose on a stage during the first edition of Miss Curvy Uganda in Kampala, Uganda.



# Sheraton Kuwait once more was awarded 'Kuwait's Leading Hotel 2019' at the WTA 2019

The Sheraton Kuwait, a Luxury Collection Hotel has added to its impressive track record another award as Kuwait's Leading Hotel for the ninth year in a row, this was announced during the Gala Ceremony event at the World Travel Awards for the Middle East 2019 which took place at The Warner Bros World(tm) Abu Dhabi on 25th April 2019 in the presence of the major companies involved in the hotel industry, travel & Tourism, this prestigious award was received by Mazen Mhanna, Executive Assistant Manager of Sheraton Kuwait.

Dubbed as "The Oscars of the Travel Industry" The World Travel Award is the travel industry's leading awards program and the benchmark for excellence in the hospitality business globally. The award giving body has bestowed Sheraton Kuwait numerous awards in the past years; for the 9th time in a row as Kuwait's Leading Hotel which brings more prestige to the hotel.

Since its inception in 1966 as the first five-star hotel in Kuwait and the first hotel outside America, Sheraton Kuwait continues to uphold its consistent

finest standards of hospitality, best quality services and promoting the pathway to presenting the most luxurious of standards throughout the country. These services have been extended bringing it closer to our patrons by branching out where they can shop and experience luxury dining right in the premises of Kuwait's largest shopping mall - the Avenues Mall.

Fahed Abushaar, the Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait stated "We are extremely honored to receive such a prestigious award for the

ninth time, emphasizing on the great efforts of the Executive Management and the entire team who consistently provides the best comfort in the highest standard and continues to provide exceptional services based on attention to details which is the most important criteria to success. In order to maintain its leadership in the industry, the renovation of Sheraton Kuwait will start to begin another chapter of excellence in preserving the authenticity of its history and integrating it with luxurious modern touch.



Fahed Abushaar, the Complex General Manager of Sheraton Kuwait.





Lifestyle | Features



Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo da Vinci was born, is pictured from the house of Leonardo Da Vinci in the outskirts of the village.— AFP photos



A general view shows the Santa Croce church (left) and the Conti Guidi castle (Castello dei Conti Guidi) in Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo Da Vinci was born.



A general view shows the Santa Croce church in Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo Da Vinci was born.



A general view shows Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo da Vinci was born.



A tourist looks at a souvenirs shop in Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo da Vinci was born.

# Tuscan paradise where da Vinci's genius bloomed

Butterflies flutter around centuries-old olive groves in Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo da Vinci was born and honed his inventor skills as a child by studying the local flora and fauna. Locals preparing to mark the 500th anniversary of Leonardo's death say little has changed among the vineyards, lush fields and brooks that appeared in his art. The Renaissance polymath, whose most famous works include the Mona Lisa and The Last Supper but whose vast range of talents is legendary, drew lifelong inspiration from his humble rural upbringing, according to experts.

"The landscapes, impressions and interests that influenced Leonardo throughout his life remain almost intact," Roberta Barsanti, director of the Leonardian Museum of Vinci, told AFP. "From his native house, set away from the village, we can still see the view he reproduced in 'Landscape', his earliest-known drawing, which he dated August 5, 1473," she said. Born on April 15, 1452, from an illegitimate liaison between a notary and a teenage peasant girl, Leonardo was raised by his grandfather and uncle. It was with them that he explored the surrounding countryside, studying and sketching insects, animals,

plants and flowers. The natural world was a rich source of ideas for the prolific and imaginative inventor, who designed machines that would only be built centuries later—from tanks to telescopes, flying machines to scuba gear.

### 'Language of peasants'

Da Vinci was fascinated by the mills around Vinci and the various rivers that fed them. The Tuscan master, who left Vinci and moved some 30 kilometers (19 miles) away to the city of Florence as a teenager, would go on to study hydraulic energy and its mechanical applications, as

shown in his many drawings on this subject. Da Vinci, who would draw himself in self-portraits with a stern brow and flowing beard, also developed a passion for anatomy, architecture, music, painting and sculpture. Experts say the rhythms of Vinci life—and even the colloquialisms of the rural inhabitants—echo throughout his later works.

"Leonardo is the expression of a territory. He has internalized many things about this land, starting with the world of peasants," said Nicola Baronti, president of the "Vinci nel cuore" (Vinci in the heart) association. "When he draws his inventions, he uses the language of Vinci's peasants, and has thus immortalised terms still used in engineering world-wide," he added.

### 'Secret signature'

Tourists who visit Vinci can walk the paths he trod five centuries earlier, and gaze upon the same waterfalls or vineyards. Baronti, a local history buff, said numerous devotees had been drawn to Vinci over the centuries, including many eccentric inventors who feel an affinity with the Renaissance pioneer. A few years ago, he said, an American dressed all in white wandered the streets of the village claiming to be in contact with da Vinci, who died on May 2, 1519. The village takes its name from the "Vinchio" willow tree, whose soft branches were used by farmers to tie their grape vines.

The pattern of the knots typical in Tuscany since the 11th century is a familiar artistic motif—plaster peeling off the walls in a nearby church in San Pantaleo recently revealed the ancient design beneath. "These interlacing threads, which recall the wicker braids specific to Leonardo's native village, can be found in his paintings, even on the corsage of the Mona Lisa," Baronti said. "It is the master's secret signature, as if he were telling us 'I left, that is true, but this is where I come from'." — AFP



A general view from the Conti Guidi castle (Castello dei Conti Guidi) shows the Santa Croce church in Vinci, the Tuscan village where Leonardo Da Vinci was born.



In this file photo taken on October 6, 1947 an employee of the Louvre museum hangs the famous portrait of Mona Lisa (or the Joconde) by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci (1452-1519), for the reopening of the gallery. May 2019 marks the 500th anniversary of the death of Italian Renaissance master Leonardo da Vinci.

## Idjwi, a haven of peace in DR Congo's conflict-ridden east

Luc Henkinbrant fought against the impunity of war criminals in the conflict-ridden east of the Democratic Republic of Congo for a decade. Now the Belgian former UN human rights official dreams of turning the Lake Kivu island of Idjwi into a magnet for ecotourists. He and his Congolese wife Esperance Mawanzo divide their time between the Belgian town of Liege and their little island paradise poking up through the lake's placid waters, ringed by the DR Congo's verdant mountains and the hills of neighboring Rwanda. Their Esperance (Hope) agency in Bukavu, on Lake Kivu's southern shore, aims to encourage tourism that respects both the environment and the local population. Their clientele is drawn mainly from among expatriates working for Henkinbrant's former employer—the rights division of the UN peacekeeping force MONUSCO—and humanitarian groups working in the region.

### Coffee beans

Setting off from the region's main city of Goma, the boat sails one and a half hours before reaching the first islets of an archipelago rich in vegetation including



Coffee cherries at the CPNCK coffee co-operative are pictured on the Idjwi island.—AFP Photos

eucalyptus and bougainvillea. Idjwi's peak is 2,300 meters (7,600 feet) above sea level, while the lake itself is already nearly 1,500 meters in altitude. The couple greet visitors at a pier in the village of Bugaruva at the foot of a lush forest. Once past a wary "migration" official—passports must be presented even for internal trips in the DR Congo—any anxiety begins to evaporate. Here, there are none of the jeeps flying UN flags or bearing the logos of Goma's numerous aid groups. In fact, four-wheeled vehicles are rare on the island's red dirt roads, reserved for VIPs such as the local "mwami" or traditional chief, while most people get around on motorbike taxis. The lake island-Africa's second largest at 310 square kilometers (120 square miles), or about the size of Malta—is home to some 200,000 people.

With its temperate climate varying from 20 to 25

degrees Celsius (68 to 77 Fahrenheit) all year round, Idjwi produces sweet potatoes and cassava—but especially, coffee. The beans produced by more than 2,000 growers make their way to Starbucks cafes in the United States, their cooperative's president Gilbert Makelele told AFP.

### 'Potential is enormous'

But islanders say their main asset is being a haven of peace in a region where dozens of armed groups have operated for decades. "You can walk around all day on Idjwi without being hassled by armed groups or soldiers," Henkinbrant says. Elsewhere in Kivu, the militias—many a by-product of the 1994 genocide in neighboring Rwanda — sow terror, extorting and killing civilians, pillaging villages and raping women. Their women victims are treated in Bukavu by gynaecologist Denis Mukwege, the co-winner of last year's Nobel Peace Prize.

A 15-minute motorcycle ride from the Bugaruva pier takes the visitor to Henkinbrant's compound with thatched-roofed bungalows offering mountain and lake views. He is planning to set up more "ecolodges", eyeing the island's sandy beaches lapped by tepid waters.

"Idjwi's potential is enormous," Henkinbrant said, noting that people can enjoy walking, biking and kayaking as well as buzzing around the island on motorbike taxis.

### Darker side

For tourists wanting to explore other sites in the region, Idjwi could be part of a trip taking in the Virunga National Park, home to the mountain gorillas made famous by US primatologist Dian Fossey. The airports at Goma and the Rwandan capital, Kigali, are three hours away. While Idjwi is the stuff of picture postcards, it does have a dark side. The local Pygmy minority, which sells pottery to survive, lives on the edges of society, marginalized by the majority Bahavus.

And the main consequence of the 1994 Rwandan trauma for Idjwi was deforestation brought about by an influx of tens of thousands of Hutu refugees after the genocide targeting mainly ethnic Tutsis. The island also remains underdeveloped, having yet to be connected to the national power grid and depending on generators for power—although the mwami saw to it that Wi-Fi came to the island three years ago. — AFP



Coffee cherries are washed after being sorted.



A woman at the CPNCK coffee co-operative shows some of the coffee cherries she harvested on the Idjwi island.



Community members bring their coffee harvests to be weighed at the CPNCK co-operative on the Idjwi island.



# Classifieds

Monday, April 29, 2019

STATE OF KUWAIT  
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION  
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817  
Fax: (+965) 24348714  
www.met.gov.kw



DAY: Sunday 28/04/2019 Valid From 7 PM To 7 AM

## Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY NIGHT:** Fair with light to moderate variable wind to northerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h with a chance for light fog forming.

**BY DAY:** Relatively hot with light to moderate north easterly wind to variable wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 28/04/2019 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	27 °C	22 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	27 °C	18 °C		
ABDALY	29 °C	18 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHLA	29 °C	22 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	26 °C	23 °C		
SALMIYAH	26 °C	19 °C		
AHMADI	26 °C	23 °C		
NUWAISIB	26 °C	20 °C		
WAFRA	30 °C	21 °C		
SALMY	29 °C	19 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST					
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction
			MAX.	MIN.	
Monday	04/29	Relatively hot and some high clouds will appear	32 °C	18 °C	NE-VRB
Tuesday	04/30	Relatively hot and some scattered clouds will appear	35 °C	20 °C	NE-VRB
Wednesday	05/01	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	39 °C	23 °C	VRB-SW
Thursday	05/02	Hot and Clouds will increase gradually	40 °C	24 °C	S-SE

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:42
Sunrise	05:08
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	15:21
Sunset	18:23
Isha	19:45

All times are local time unless otherwise stated.

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	32 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	54 %
MIN. RH	12 %
MAX. Wind	SE 36 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

2019/04/28 14:25 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.ت.ع.ج. 8-1

## 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

### CHANGE OF NAME

I, Deepthi Thankachan passport holder No. T0309013 hereby change name as it appears in my passport from given name: Deepthi Thankachan to surname: Thankachan and given name: Deepthi for all future purposes. (C 5519)

I, Sajan Rajasekharan Nair Indian Passport holder No. L1429316 issued in Kuwait hereby change name as it appears in my Passport from given name: Sajan Rajasekharan Nair to Surname: NAIR and given name: Rajasekharan for all future purposes. (5520)

29-4-2019

By this did, I undersigned

Kuldeep Singh (new name) S/o Ram Singh, previously called Kuldip Singh S/o Ram Singh, resident of ward no. 7, Cinema Chowk, Hajipur road, Dasuya, Punjab. (C 5518)

By this did, I undersigned Farash Kayum Ahmed (new name) S/o Kayum Ahmed, previously called Farash (old name) S/o Kayum Ahmed, resident near Chuna bhatti, rajtalab, banswara (raj.) solemnly declare. (C 5517)

By this did, I undersigned Danish Kayum Ahmed (new name) S/o Kayum Ahmed, previously called Danish (old name) S/o Kayum Ahmed, resident near chuna bhatti, rajtalab, banswara (raj.) solemnly declare. (C 5517)25-4-2019

## Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
	22924455
Jet Airways	22414400
FlyDubai	22423888
Qatar Airways	22425747
KLM	22418064/5/6
Royal Jordanian	22425635
British Airways	22430224
Air France	22921555
Emirates	22456700
Air India	22438185/4
Air india EXPRESS	22424444
Sri Lanka Airlines	22421578
Egypt Air	22421516
Swiss Air	22426306
Saudia	22423073
Middle East Airlines	22422493
Lufthansa	22421044
PIA	22452977/8
Bangladesh Airlines	22456700
Indian Airlines	22958787
Oman Air	22453820/1
Turkish Airlines	22404838/9
Aeroflot	

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION



Arrival Flights on Monday 29/4/2019				Departure Flights on Monday 29/4/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	AXB	790	CNN	13:10
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	JZR	115	Doha	13:25
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	IRA	600	Tehran	14:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:20
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	KAC	105	London	15:55
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	JZR	405	Kochi	16:00
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:20
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	FDB	052	Dubai	17:10
JZR	502	Lahore	04:35	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	KAC	155	Istanbul	17:35
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	621	Doha	17:50
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	SAW	706	Dammam	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:15
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	127	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:25
JZR	102	Bahrain	07:00	JZR	733	Cairo	18:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	JZR	253	Amman	19:10
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20
RBG	211	Luxor	07:25	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
MSC	401	Alexandria	08:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	FDB	064	Trivandrum	19:50
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	KAC	331	Sharjah	20:00
QTR	8201	Doha	08:15	RJA	641	Amman	20:05
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	KAC	357	Kochi	20:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	DLH	624	Dammam	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:25
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	RBG	210	Sohag	21:35
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1089	Doha	21:50
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:40	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00
JZR	216	Jeddah	10:55	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:10
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	12:10	KAC	383	Delhi	22:35
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	JZR	407	Ahmedabad	22:40
JZR	142	Al Najaf	12:35	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	KAC	551	Cairo	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
				SVA	515	Riyadh	23:25
				SVA	503	Jeddah	23:45





Competitors climb a sand dune during stage 1 of the 14th edition of the Titan Desert 2019 mountain biking race around Merzouga in Morocco yesterday. — AFP

# Protesters hail breakthrough in talks with Sudanese army

**KHARTOUM:** Sudanese protesters yesterday welcomed a breakthrough in talks with army rulers who agreed to form a joint civilian-military council, paving the way for the civilian administration demanded by demonstrators. Saturday's agreement would replace the existing 10-member military council that took power after the army ousted veteran leader Omar Al-Bashir on April 11 amid massive protests.

"What happened yesterday is a step to have a civilian authority," said Mohamed Amin, one of thousands of demonstrators who have been camped for weeks outside the army headquarters. "We are happy about the progress in the talks, but we are still waiting for the composition of the council and the civilian government."

The joint civilian-military council would be the overall ruling body, the protest leaders say, while a new transitional civilian government was expected to be formed to run the day-to-day affairs of the country, a key demand of protesters. That civilian government would work towards having the first post-Bashir elections. "When we have a civilian government, then we can say our country is on the right track," said Amin.

The demonstrators said they would pursue their sit-in until a civilian administration is set up. "Last night's agreement is a step forward in the stability of our country. But I don't think we will leave the sit-in until we achieve our demand of a civilian government," said protester Sawzan Bashir. Protest leader Ahmed Al-Rabia confirmed to AFP the decision to form a joint council. "We are now in consultation about what percentage of the council should be represented by civilians and how much by the military," said Rabia, who is involved in talks.

Yesterday, protest leaders from the Alliance for Freedom and Change met to discuss the progress of talks with the military council. Later, the joint committee bringing together the military and protest leaders was expected to resume



KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters paint a mural during a sit-in outside the army headquarters yesterday. —AFP

talks. Activists say the new council could be a 15-member body, with eight civilians and seven army generals. The decision to have a joint council came after hours of talks on Saturday, the first by a joint committee representing the current ruling military leadership and protesters.

Bashir was ousted by the army after months of protests against his three-decade rule. Thousands of demonstrators, braving volleys of tear gas fired by security forces, reached the sprawling military headquarters on April 6, demanding the army support those opposing Bashir. Five days later, the army toppled Bashir and took power through a transitional military council. Protest leaders had previously held several rounds of inconclusive talks with the council after Bashir was ousted. The military council has so far insisted it has assumed power for a two-

year transitional period.

Western governments have expressed support for protesters' demands, but Sudan's key Gulf Arab lenders have backed the military council, while African states have called for more time for the army to hand over to civilians. Last week, Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates announced \$3 billion in financial aid for Sudan following Bashir's overthrow. Of the \$3 billion, the oil-rich countries pledged to inject \$500 million Sudanese central bank to support its weakening currency. The remaining \$2.5 billion was to help provide food, medicine and petroleum products, according to the official Saudi Press Agency. Yesterday, the UAE-owned Abu Dhabi Fund for Development said it would deposit \$250 million in Sudan's central bank as part of the aid package.—AFP

## Royal advisor in trial no-show

**WASHINGTON:** Two top Saudi royal advisors have been linked to journalist Jamal Khashoggi's murder. One has been labeled the "ringleader" but questions are swirling over the absence of the other in the closed-door trial of 11 suspects, multiple sources told AFP. Saudi prosecutors have said deputy intelligence chief Ahmed Al-Assiri oversaw the Washington Post columnist's killing in the kingdom's Istanbul consulate last October and that he was advised by the royal court's media czar Saud Al-Qahtani.

Both aides were part of Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's tight-knit inner circle and have formally been sacked over the killing but only Assiri has appeared in the five court hearings since January, according to four Western officials privy to the information. "Qahtani is not among the 11 facing trial," one of the officials told AFP. "What does his absence mean? Are the Saudis keen to protect him or discipline him separately? No one knows."

The kingdom's public prosecutor last November indicted 11 unnamed suspects, including five who could face the death penalty over the murder. Diplomats from the UN Security Council's permanent members - the US, Britain, France, China, Russia - as well as Turkey are allowed to attend as observers of the legal proceedings that are held entirely in Arabic. They

are not allowed to bring interpreters and are usually summoned at short notice, the sources said.

A representative of the Khashoggi family - which this month rejected reports of a settlement with the Saudi government - has attended at least one court session, they said. Maher Mutreb, an intelligence operative who frequently traveled with the crown prince on foreign tours, forensic expert Salah Al-Tubaigy and Fahad Al-Balawi, a member of the Saudi royal guard, are among the 11 on trial who could face the death penalty, the officials said. The defendants are allowed legal counsel.

Many of them have defended themselves in court by saying they were carrying out orders by Assiri, describing him as the "ringleader" of the operation, according to the officials. The kingdom's media ministry did not respond to AFP's request for comment. The defendants' lawyers could also not be reached. Assiri, lionized in Saudi military ranks as a war hero, does not face the death penalty, the Western officials added.

Believed to have previously worked closely with US intelligence, he is also not named in two American sanctions lists of Saudis implicated in the murder. Qahtani, who led fiery social media campaigns against critics of the kingdom and was seen as a conduit to the crown prince, is on both lists. He met the Saudi hit squad team before they left for Turkey to share "useful information related to the mission based on his specialization in media," according to the Saudi prosecutor's office.—AFP

## Mystery of 'Salvator Mundi', the world's...

Continued from Page 1

"The Louvre has asked the Department of Culture and Tourism in Abu Dhabi for the painting to be given on loan," a Louvre spokesperson told AFP. "But we have not yet had any reply."

According to the Wall Street Journal, the buyer of the picture was Saudi prince Badr bin Abdullah, acting in the name of powerful Saudi crown prince Mohammed bin Salman. He has never confirmed or denied the report. Prince Badr was appointed to head the kingdom's culture ministry in a government shakeup in June. Saudi Arabia and the neighboring United Arab Emirates are very close allies who are both engaged militarily in the war against rebels in Yemen.

Mohammed bin Salman (known as MBS) is also a close confidant of Abu Dhabi Crown Prince Mohamed bin Zayed, who along with Macron opened the Louvre Abu Dhabi in 2017, the first foreign institution to carry the name of the great Paris museum. Artprice, the leading art market information service, said clerics from Islam's leading authority the Al-Azhar university in Cairo told MBS the painting could not be displayed on religious grounds. Jesus (PBUH) is a prophet within Islam, which prohibits any physical depiction of God. But the picture portrays him as a savior and thus a deity.

Many art experts remain unconvinced of the painting's authenticity. "Certain details are very telling," said Jacques Franck, a specialist in da Vinci's technique, pointing to the poor depiction of a finger and other elements that are "anatomically impossible". He said that at the time the canvas was painted, da Vinci had his workshop complete certain paintings because he himself had very little time.

Daniel Salvatore Schiffer, another da Vinci expert, also believes the painting was not done by the Italian master. "When you analyze the details, nothing is by Leonardo, it doesn't have his spirit." Ben Lewis, an art historian who wrote "The Last Leonardo" said London's National Gallery, which exhibited the painting in 2011, had not taken on board the advice of five experts who were sent to authenticate the painting. Although two of them believed it was authentic, another didn't, and the others were unsure. But the painting was presented at the exhibition as a genuine work by Leonardo da Vinci.

But Diane Modestini, who worked on the restoration of the painting from 2005, said she did not understand the controversy, insisting that "Leonardo da Vinci painted it". A Christie's spokesman said, "We stand by the thorough research and scholarship that led to the attribution of this painting in 2010. No new discussion or speculation since the 2017 sale at Christie's has caused us to revisit its position."

The Louvre says its exhibition, due to open in Paris in the autumn, will bring together "a unique group of artworks that only the Louvre could bring together" in addition to its own outstanding Leonardo collection. But whether people will be able to draw their own conclusions by actually seeing the "Salvator Mundi" remains to be seen.—AFP

during the first grilling.

Meanwhile, MP Babtain said that he totally backs a final solution to the decades-old problem of stateless people (bedoons), but will not approve a draft law that grants them wider rights because the bill does solve the problem. A number of lawmakers are pressing to get the law approved in order to grant bedoons basic human rights while waiting for a final solution.

Dozens of foreigners died in the attacks and the government has said it expects the number of overseas tourists to fall by 30 percent this year, at a cost of \$1.5 billion in revenues. Finance Minister Mangala Samaraweera said the island - which depends on tourism as a cornerstone of its economy - could take up to two years to fully recover. The United States, Israel, Australia, India and Britain have all warned their citizens against visiting Sri Lanka.

## Iran could shut Hormuz; drone...

Continued from Page 1

"It is in our vital national security interest to keep the Persian Gulf open, to keep the Strait of Hormuz open. We have done that in the past and we will continue to do that in the future," he added. Meanwhile, an Iranian Revolutionary Guards' drone successfully carried out a surveillance flight over an American aircraft carrier in the Gulf, Tasnim news agency claimed in a report yesterday on its website. A video published by the agency, which could not be immediately verified, shows a light blue colored drone with the name "Ababil III" written on the wings in Farsi and Latin script.

## For one Palestinian, Trump peace efforts...

Continued from Page 1

Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas cut ties with the Trump administration in Dec 2017, when the US leader broke with decades of international consensus and recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Palestinians want the eastern part of the disputed city as the capital of a future Palestinian state. Trump is expected to release his long-awaited plan for Israeli-Palestinian peace in the coming weeks. Palestinian leaders have already dismissed it, saying they have no doubt it will be blatantly biased in favor of Israel.

Shami ran as a Democrat for governor of Texas in 2010 but says he has maintained a good relationship with Trump. He says he had dinner with him and a group of American politicians a few months ago in Houston. Farouk said Trump asked him how he was, to which he replied "business is good, but we need peace in Palestine". "He said 'me too, I want peace in Palestine'." Trump then asked after the health of 84-year-old Abbas. "I said Abbas is wonderful and he wants peace and we all want peace. I said we love America and we want to be free like America. Then he switched the subject, asking me about Miss Universe."

It is seen taking off from a desert base near the sea, as the soundtrack of an action movie plays in the background, and flies over first an escort ship and then an aircraft carrier with fighter planes parked on the deck. "The naval force of Sepah (the Guards' Farsi name) is aware of all the movements of American terrorist forces in the region and the Persian Gulf and closely monitors them," Tasnim wrote. Tasnim did not name the aircraft carrier or say when the video was shot.

In the Holy Quran, ababil refers to a type of miraculous birds that protected the holy city of Makkah in Saudi Arabia against an invader king's elephant army by dropping stones on them. The Tasnim report comes nearly three weeks after the United States branded the Guards as a "foreign terrorist organization" and added it to a blacklist. Iran swiftly retaliated by declaring US troops "terrorists". The Guards is an ideological military force that works in parallel to the regular army. It naval arm is charged with the defense and the security of the Gulf, including the strategic Strait of Hormuz. — AFP

Shami, who has both Palestinian Authority and American passports, says he has met Abbas and other Palestinian politicians in recent years. But he said he doesn't want to become a political mediator between Palestinian and American leaders. Shami, who was visiting the West Bank to launch two new projects to train Palestinians in hairdressing and cosmetology, says both Trump and his wife Melania use his company's products.

The US leader's comb over hairstyle is globally famed and sometimes mocked, but Shami thinks it suits him. "I think he has a beautiful hairstyle. He combs it and sprays it and it looks good on him," he said. "Of course because his color is light ... sometimes it looks orange" because of the reflection of the light, he said. "But his hair looks good, believe me."

Born in the village of Beit Ur near Ramallah, he visits the West Bank twice a year. He says he has spent tens of millions of dollars on projects in the Palestinian territories, including in the education and business sectors. "My body is in America, my heart always in Palestine. I cannot get freedom to Palestine at this point but I think we need to build our economy." In Beitunia, close to the city of Ramallah where Abbas is based, Shami last week opened an institute to train Palestinian hairdressers. He is also funding a new beauty academy in Abu Dis, on the outskirts of Jerusalem. "We are not here to sell them products," he said. "We are here to give them more education and more training so they can improve their income." — AFP

## MPs step up pressure...

Continued from Page 1

MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaei decided in the meantime to postpone filing a second grilling against the Minister of Commerce and Industry Khaled Al-Roudhan. The lawmaker said last week he will file a second grilling against the minister because he provided false information during the first grilling last month. He said the postponement came to allow a parliamentary panel to investigate the accusations made



## Sports

# 10th-inning rally pushes Padres past Washington Nationals

## Phillies belt three homers, outslug Marlins

WASHINGTON: Manuel Margot's bases-loaded single keyed a six-run 10th inning, and the visiting San Diego Padres beat the Washington Nationals 8-3 on Saturday for their fifth consecutive win. Ty France singled off Wander Suero (1-3) to open the 10th, and Francisco Mejia doubled to right. Greg Garcia then flied out to deep left, scoring France with the go-ahead run. After Fernando Tatis Jr. and Wil Myers walked to load the bases, Washington's Justin Miller entered and hit Manny Machado with a pitch, forcing in the fourth San Diego run. Margot lined a two-run single to left to make it 6-2. Hunter Renfroe added a sacrifice fly, and another run scored on center fielder Victor Robles' throwing error. Luis Perdomo (1-0) struck out the side in the ninth inning for the win. Robbie Erlin yielded a run in the bottom of the 10th in a non-save situation.

### DODGERS 3, PIRATES 1

Joc Pederson hit a two-run triple, and Clayton Kershaw pitched seven strong innings as Los Angeles rallied for a victory over visiting Pittsburgh. The Dodgers were held scoreless by Joe Musgrove over the first six innings before starting their rally in the seventh inning on a leadoff single by Max Muncy. After an Alex Verdugo single, Chris Taylor tied the game 1-1 on a sacrifice fly. Austin Barnes singled, and one out later, Pederson delivered his two-run hit to right-center field. Kershaw (1-0) gave up one run on four hits with no walks and eight strikeouts in just his third outing of the year. His start to his season was delayed because of shoulder inflammation that cropped up early at spring training.

### ASTROS 4, INDIANS 3 (10 INNINGS)

Pinch hitter Tony Kemp hit a walk-off home run leading off the 10th inning, and Houston claimed a victory over visiting Cleveland. Kemp drilled a 2-1 slider from Adam Cimber (2-2), sending it 360 feet over the wall in right field. The blast made a winner out of Roberto Osuna (2-0), who worked two scoreless innings of relief. The Astros will attempt to salvage a series split.

### ROCKIES 9, BRAVES 5

Charlie Blackmon put Colorado ahead with a two-run double in the ninth inning, and Trevor Story added insurance with a three-run homer as the Rockies rallied for the win at Atlanta. Colorado's five-run uprising came against A.J. Minter (0-3). David Dahl doubled and went to third on a one-out wild pitch. After fanning Raimel Tapia to move the Braves within one out of a win, Minter walked pinch hitters Ian Desmond and Drew Butera to load the bases. Blackmon then rapped the first pitch he saw to drive in a pair.

### CUBS 9, DIAMONDBACKS 1

David Bote had his first career two-home run game along with five RBIs and Anthony Rizzo had a homer and two doubles as visiting Chicago broke Arizona's five-game winning streak. Bote's three-run homer capped a five-run third inning off Arizona starter Zack

Godley (1-2), and he added a two-run homer for a 7-0 lead in the fifth. Benches and bullpens cleared and players congregated along the first base line after Matt Koch hit Bote with a pitch in the left shoulder in the seventh inning, following a Rizzo homer and a double by Javier Baez. No punches were thrown and no one was ejected.

### PHILLIES 12, MARLINS 9

Nick Williams, Andrew McCutchen and Rhys Hoskins homered to lead host Philadelphia to a win over Miami. The Phillies have won three of four while the Marlins have lost three of four. The Marlins, who trailed 10-1 before scoring eight consecutive runs over three innings, were led by Curtis Granderson, who went 3-for-4 with two RBIs, and Jorge Alfaro, who slugged a two-run homer against his former team. Phillies shortstop Jean Segura, playing his first game since returning from the injured list after recovering from a hamstring injury, was beaned in the second inning. There were no immediate updates on the severity of the injury to Segura, who was removed from the game immediately after getting hit in the head by a 90 mph fastball from Trevor Richards.

### RANGERS 15, MARINERS 1

Elvis Andrus and Rougned Odor hit three-run homers in the opening two innings as Texas snapped a five-game losing streak with a rout of host Seattle. Joey Gallo also homered for the Rangers, a solo shot in the eighth inning. Rangers left-hander Mike Minor (3-2) allowed one run on three hits in seven innings, with one walk and a season-high 13 strikeouts. Right-hander Ariel Jurado pitched the final two innings for the Rangers to cap a three-hitter.

### YANKEES 6, GIANTS 4

Gary Sanchez broke open a tight game with his first career grand slam, and J.A. Happ pitched seven shutout innings as visiting New York beat San Francisco in an interleague game. The win was New York's fifth in six games at the start of a nine-game trip, and combined with a 7-3 win in the series opener on Friday night, gives the Yankees a shot Sunday at the first sweep in the history of the rivalry with the Giants. In the ninth, San Francisco got a three-run homer from Yangervis Solarte and a solo shot from Erik Kratz before Aroldis Chapman entered. The New York closer fanned the only batter he faced, Pablo Sandoval, for his fifth save.

### ROYALS 9, ANGELS 4

Hunter Dozier had a pair of two-run triples, and Kansas City scored six runs in the third inning en route to a victory over visiting Los Angeles. The Royals had a season-high 15 hits. Dozier posted career highs with four hits and four RBIs. He is the first designated hitter with two triples in a game since David Ortiz did it on July 22, 2004. Scott Barlow (1-0) pitched 1 1/3 scoreless innings to pick up the win. Angels reliever Jaime Barria (2-2) took the loss, allowing seven runs on 10 hits in 1 2/3 innings.

think we need to maximise what we can. I think we had some pace, but we had to keep an eye on Max behind."

On a clear blue-skied afternoon by the Caspian sea, Bottas, on pole for the eighth time, made a clean start and held on as Hamilton, who had an even quicker getaway, drew alongside. The Finn, on the cleaner line, held on and rebuffed Hamilton twice more before the champion relented. Vettel stayed third, but his Ferrari team-mate Leclerc climbed from 10th, having started eighth, to fifth by the end of lap eight. On lap 10, he passed Verstappen with aplomb at Turn One to go fourth behind Vettel.

The Racing Point team began the pit stops, followed by Daniel Ricciardo's Renault and then Vettel, attempting an under-cut for Ferrari, with a stop in 2.4 seconds. Bottas responded by pitting in 2.8, after 12 laps, to leave Hamilton leading Leclerc by just four seconds. Bottas rejoined fourth behind Verstappen.

Hamilton came in after 13 laps as Leclerc passed to lead with Verstappen second and Bottas third. Hamilton rejoined fourth, two seconds clear of Vettel, thus negating the German's earlier stop.

By lap 30, the top trio were separated by just 2.5 second, Hamilton closing on Bottas as Leclerc clung on. On lap 32, Bottas dived past Leclerc to regain the lead while Ricciardo failed in a lunge on Kvyat at Turn Three where both ran off. The Australian then reversed into the Russian's Toro Rosso car causing both to retire.

Hamilton followed Bottas past Leclerc on lap 33 and soon afterwards Vettel also went by. Finally, Leclerc pitted for fresh tyres after lap 35 and rejoined sixth, Ferrari having explained that an earlier stop was unworkable because the softer tyres would not last.

All this left Leclerc, who swiftly passed Gasly, more than 21 seconds adrift of Verstappen with 14 laps remaining while the Mercedes duo set the pace with Vettel, third, in pursuit. Gasly then slowed into a slip road to retire with a power failure, prompting the use of a brief Virtual Safety Car period that ended with Bottas pulling three seconds clear of Hamilton and Vettel closing up in a final five-lap dash to the flag. —AFP

Africa. Victory lifted the Argentine outfit five places to sixth in the combined standings of the southern hemisphere club championship and to third in the South African conference. The Australians also came into the match on the back of two victories over South African opposition, the Golden Lions and the Western Stormers.

They were in with a chance of winning right to the end of a match that contrasted sharply with the last between them in Buenos Aires—a 39-15 triumph for the Brumbies two years ago. It was tense affair in perfect conditions for rugby with never more than seven points between two evenly matched sides. The Jaguares turned around a seven-point deficit midway through the opening half to lead 17-15 at half-time. There was only one addition to the score in the second half, a penalty slotted by Argentine fly-half Domingo Miotto on 62 minutes.

The Canberra outfit must have fancied their chances when the hosts were temporarily reduced to 14 men with the sin-binning of loose forward Marcos Kremer after 66



LOS ANGELES: Cody Bellinger #35 of the Los Angeles Dodgers is safe at second with a stolen base as the ball get past Cole Tucker #3 of the Pittsburgh Pirates in the eighth inning of the game at Dodger Stadium in Los Angeles, California. —AFP

### BREWERS 8, METS 6

Christian Yelich hit his major-league-leading 14th homer and Josh Hader recorded a six-out save as Milwaukee recorded a victory at New York. The reigning National League MVP gave Milwaukee a 5-1 lead when he parked a full-count changeup from Noah Syndergaard (1-3) over the right-center-field fence. Yelich tied the major league record for homers before May 1. He shares the mark with Albert Pujols (2006) and Alex Rodriguez (2007). Ben Gamel preceded Yelich's latest homer with a home run in the fourth as Milwaukee beat the Mets for the second straight night.

### RAYS 2, RED SOX 1

Jose Alvarado struck out Jackie Bradley Jr. with the bases loaded to end the eighth inning, and Tampa Bay hung on for a victory at Boston. Alvarado entered the game after Diego Castillo allowed a homer to Mookie Betts to open the inning and issued a one-out walk to Xander Bogaerts. After a single, a strikeout and a walk, Alvarado escaped the jam. Yandy Diaz hit a solo homer for the Rays in the first inning, and Mike Zunino added an RBI single in the fourth.

### CARDINALS 6, REDS 3

Marcell Ozuna homered and drove in five runs as host St. Louis posted a victory over Cincinnati. Harrison Bader had a pinch-hit RBI single and Yadier Molina and Paul Goldschmidt extended their hit streaks to 14 and 13 games, respectively, for the Cardinals, who won for the sixth time in seven games. Dakota Hudson (2-1) allowed three runs on seven hits

in 5 2/3 innings. Two relievers bridged the gap to Jordan Hicks, who retired the side in order in the ninth to secure his eighth save. Jose Peraza and Eugenio Suarez each had an RBI single and Derek Dietrich added a sacrifice fly for the Reds, who fell for the third time in nine games.

### TWINS 9, ORIOLES 2

Max Kepler homered twice as Minnesota hit five home runs for the second straight day and defeated Baltimore in Minneapolis. The five homers upped Minnesota's total to 21 in five games against the Orioles this season. Kepler homered in the seventh and eighth innings and finished with four RBIs while C.J. Cron, Jason Castro and Marwin Gonzalez also went deep. Gonzalez, Castro and Kepler homered in a four-run eighth against Jimmy Yacabonis. Castro and Kepler went back-to-back. Minnesota is 5-0 this season against the Orioles and has won 11 straight in the head-to-head matchup dating to 2018.

### BLUE JAYS 7, ATHLETICS 1

Randal Grichuk had three hits and two RBIs, Aaron Sanchez pitched five strong innings, and Toronto defeated visiting Oakland. Brandon Drury also had three hits for the Blue Jays, who have won all five games with the A's this season after losing all seven meetings last year. Sanchez (3-1) allowed an unearned run, two hits and four walks while striking out four. Oakland starter Brett Anderson (3-2) allowed six runs in 4 1/3 innings on 10 hits and two walks. He struck out two. —Reuters

## ‘Proud’ Bottas wins as Mercedes sweep home one-two again

BAKU: A determined Valtteri Bottas resisted an attacking final charge by his Mercedes team-mate Lewis Hamilton to win yesterday's Azerbaijan Grand Prix and regain the lead in the 2019 drivers title race.

In a thrilling, closely-fought and dramatic race, the Finn came home 1.5 seconds ahead of Hamilton as Mercedes swept to a fourth successive season-opening one-two finish, the first time to do so since Ferrari in 1952. It was Bottas' second win this year and delivered some redemption after leading last year on the streets of Baku until his car suffered a puncture with three laps remaining. "Yes, ha!" said the delighted Bottas. "Amazing job guys—really, really strong. I am so proud to be part of this team."

The two Mercedes men came home ahead of Sebastian Vettel of Ferrari, Max Verstappen who was fourth for Red Bull and, after a storming effort, Ferrari new boy Charles Leclerc, who started eighth on the grid and scored the fastest lap after a late pit stop.

"We are all performing really, really well," said Bottas of the Mercedes team. "It was a tough race even though not that much was happening. Lewis put on pressure, but it was under control."

His fifth win lifted him one point clear of Hamilton in the embryonic championship courtesy of his fastest lap in Australia. Bottas has 87 points, Hamilton 86 and Vettel has 52. "Congratulations to Valtteri - he drove a fantastic race, made no mistakes and deserved the win," said defending five-time champion Hamilton.

"It was all lost in qualifying (for me), but it's great for the team - the best start we've ever had," Vettel said: "There's plenty of work for us to do, but at this point I

## Jaguares hold out against Brumbies to complete hat-trick of wins

BUENOS AIRES: The Jaguares survived a yellow card and several late ACT Brumbies onslaughts to win 20-15 in Buenos Aires Saturday and complete a Super Rugby hat-trick. A deserved, hard-earned round 11 success at Estadio Jose Amalfitani came after they defeated the Northern Bulls and the Coastal Sharks on a tour of South

## Momota hails 'new badminton generation' after Japan double

SHANGHAI: Kento Momota declared that "a new generation of players is taking over" after the world number one roared back to beat Shi Yuqi and retain his Badminton Asia Championships title yesterday. On a red-letter day for Japan in the Chinese city of Wuhan, Akane Yamaguchi became the first Japanese to win the women's crown with an emphatic victory over home player He Bingjiao.

In a repeat match of last year's World Championships final, the 24-year-old Momota recovered from a slow start against Shi, who is second in the rankings behind the Japanese. With Lin Dan in the twilight of his career aged 35 and his long-time rival Lee Chong Wei having treatment for nose cancer, Momota feels there has been a changing of the guard.

"A new generation of players is taking over and I am pleased to be part of it," said Momota, who will be favourite for gold at the Tokyo 2020 Olympics. "Retaining my title in Wuhan is mission accomplished."

Momota, who defeated Shi to win the world title last summer, conceded the opening game 21-12 to the Chinese, who at 23 is very much part of the new wave himself. The Japanese top seed then belatedly found his rhythm and sealed the second game 21-18 with a delicious smash.

The momentum was with Momota and he clinched the title in 69 minutes by easily winning the third game 21-8 against a badly deflated Shi. There was more joy for Japan at the home of their arch rivals as Yamaguchi, a silver medallist two years ago, eased to victory against China's fifth-seeded He 21-19, 21-9.

The 21-year-old Yamaguchi, the third seed, raced out of the blocks in both games against her stunned opponent, who is a year older. Yamaguchi went 12-2 up in the first game and was ahead 11-1 in the second on the way to the title in just 42 one-sided minutes.

"Becoming the first Asian women's singles champion from Japan is not that important to me," said Yamaguchi with a hint of mischief. "Instead, I was proud to be on the top of the podium surrounded by three Chinese opponents," she added, referring to He and bronze medallists Chen Yufei and Cai Yanyan.

Momota and the others will now have their eyes on next summer's Tokyo Games with the 12-month qualification period starting today. —AFP



BAKU: Winner Mercedes' Finnish driver Valtteri Bottas celebrates with the trophy after the Formula One Azerbaijan Grand Prix in Baku yesterday. —AFP

minutes. Several times the visitors forced line-outs five metres from the Jaguares' tryline, but they could not force their way over. Defeat keeps the Brumbies 12th overall and third in the Australian conference, four points behind the pacesetting Melbourne Rebels.

Both teams were guilty of handling errors at crucial moments, with the Argentines the slightly more frequent offenders. But the home side were less prone to mistakes in the crucial closing stages, defending heroically to thwart the Brumbies. "This was a wonderful performance by all our players—the starting 15 and the replacements who came on in the second half," said Jaguares skipper Jeronimo de la Fuente. "I believe we deserved the victory, particularly because of our bravery in defence when reduced to 14 men for 10 minutes in the closing stages." Sebastian Cancelliere and Folau Fainga'a exchanged early tries before the impressive Tom Banks went over and Christian Lealiifano converted to give the Brumbies a 12-5 advantage.—AFP



## Sports

# Kipchoge runs second-fastest marathon for fourth London win

## Kenya's Kosgei wins women's London Marathon

**LONDON:** Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge stormed to a record-breaking fourth victory in the London Marathon yesterday with the second-fastest time ever seen over the distance. Olympic champion Kipchoge's time of two hours two minutes and 37 seconds was second only to the 2:01:39 he ran in Berlin last year.

The 34-year-old, whose previous London triumphs came in the 2015, 2016 and 2018 editions, was in imperious form as he powered ahead from the 14-mile mark, with Ethiopia's Mosinet Geremew and Mule Wasihun second and third respectively. "I'm happy to win on the streets of London for the fourth time and to make history, on a day that the event has raised £1 billion (for charity)," Kipchoge told the BBC.

"The crowd in London is wonderful and that spirit pushed," added Kipchoge, who has now won 11 of the 12 marathons he's contested. Asked where he would run next, he replied: "As usual, I do not chase two rabbits, I only chase one and that was London. I have caught that rabbit so I will discuss with my team what follows."

Britain's Mo Farah, whose build-up to race day was overshadowed by an extraordinary row with distance great Haile Gebrselassie over an alleged robbery in a hotel owned by the Ethiopian great, could not cope with the pace as he finished in fifth place.

Gebrselassie responded to Farah's allegations by saying the four-time Olympic champion and his entourage had featured "multiple reports of disgraceful conduct". Farah was adamant the row had not hampered his preparations.

"It didn't distract me at all," he insisted. "What I said is the truth and it was all about the London Marathon today. I didn't mean to take any limelight away from the

sport... Had I won the race, it would have been a different story, but I think I will take time to think about the next step." Reflecting on the race itself, Farah said: "My aim was to follow the pacemaker, but after 20 miles when he dropped out, the gap opened up and it became hard to close. My aim was to try and reel them back but the wheels came off and I was hanging in there."

Farah, who insisted "I will be back" then paid a generous tribute to Kipchoge. "Congratulations to Eliud and the better man won today. He is a very special athlete and he is humble. If Eliud can run those sort of times it just gives us another level of possibility."

There was also a Kenyan winner in the women's race, Brigid Kosgei going one better than last year in London to lead the field in a time 2:18:20.

Victory saw Kosgei, at the age of 25 years and 67 days, become the youngest winner of the women's race, breaking the London record of Aselefech Mergia (25 years and 92 days) set in 2010.

Kosgei's compatriot Vivian Cheruiyot was second on Sunday, in after beating Kosgei to finish first in London last year. Kosgei left the rest of the elite women's field behind her with a blistering second half of the race.

Cheruiyot was initially able to stay with her when Kosgei made a break at the 20-mile mark but could not maintain the pace and drifted away some four miles from the finish. Daniel Romanchuk of the United States won the men's wheelchair race in 1:33:38, just ahead of experienced Swiss competitor Marcel Huig.

But there was a Swiss win in the women's wheelchair event, with Manuela Schar first in 1:44:09 — more than five minutes clear of Tatyana McFadden of the United States. — AFP



**LONDON:** Britain's Prince Harry, Duke of Sussex, is flanked by men's race winner Kenya's Eliud Kipchoge (L) and women's race winner, Kenya's Brigid Kosgei (R) at the medal ceremony at the 2019 London Marathon in central London yesterday. — AFP

## Nuggets edge Spurs in game seven to reach second round

**LOS ANGELES:** Nikola Jokic had a triple-double and Jamal Murray tallied 23 points as the Denver Nuggets punched their ticket to the second round of the NBA playoffs with a 90-86 game seven win over San Antonio. Serbian Jokic finished with 21 points, 15 rebounds and 10 assists while Murray, of Canada, floated in several clutch baskets with the game on the line as the host Nuggets won their first game seven in over four decades.

The last time the Nuggets were victories in a deciding game was May 1978 when they beat the Milwaukee Bucks in the playoff quarter-finals. Murray said everybody played a role in helping them get the series victory on Saturday.

"We are hooping and winning games," said Murray. "We haven't gone this far in a while. "We were able to close it out and it was an amazing effort from the team all around." The second-seeded Nuggets advance to play the fourth-seeded Portland Trail Blazers in the second round. Game one is Monday in Denver.

The Nuggets led wire-to-wire Saturday but had to sweat it out at the end as the Spurs fought back to make it close. San Antonio were at times their own worst enemies. In the closing seconds of game seven, Spurs coach Gregg Popovich walked part way onto the court and yelled at his players to foul but they ignored him. Popovich didn't get the foul and the Nuggets were able to run the clock down and hold on for the series clincher. "He didn't hear anybody cause he didn't foul," said Popovich of LeMarcus Aldridge, who was the closest of the five players to the ball. "I think both teams sent basketball back in the first half. I was surprised people stayed."

This is the first time a Popovich-coached team has lost consecutive seasons in the first round. Rudy Gay had 21 points, DeMar DeRozan and Bryn Forbes scored 19 each and LaMarcus Aldridge had 16 points and 11 rebounds for seventh-seeded Spurs.



**DENVER:** Nikola Jokic #15 of the Denver Nuggets is guarded by Lamarcus Aldridge #12 of the San Antonio Spurs in the fourth quarter during Game Seven of the first round of the 2019 NBA Western Conference Playoffs at the Pepsi Center in Denver, Colorado. —AFP

Forbes hit a three-pointer before DeRozan made one of two free throws with 70 seconds left to make it 88-84. Forbes dunked after a Denver miss to make it a two-point game with 52 seconds left. Murray, of Toronto, drained a floating 14-footer make it a four-point lead, and Torrey Craig blocked DeRozan's drive to the basket with 28 seconds left.

"I am extremely happy and proud of my guys," said Nuggets coach Michael Malone. "This was a really hard-fought series. If we played them 20 times it would be 10-10. I love our grit and toughness tonight. We never lost our composure."

In a second round East series opener, Kawhi Leonard scored a career playoff best with 45 points

and grabbed 11 rebounds as the Toronto Raptors defeated the Philadelphia 76ers 108-95.

Pascal Siakam added 29 points and seven rebounds for the Raptors and Kyle Lowry added nine points and eight assists. JJ Redick had 17 points for the 76ers. Joel Embiid chipped in with 16 points and eight rebounds, while Tobias Harris had 14 points and 15 rebounds. Ben Simmons also had 14 points with nine rebounds, James Ennis had 11 points and Jimmy Butler had 10.

The Raptors led by as many as 19 points and took an 11-point lead into the fourth quarter.

Leonard's 14-footer led the Raptors leading by 18 with 7:06 remaining. The lead reached 20 on Leonard's jumper with 4:17 to play. — AFP

## ‘Scandal, disgrace’: Title despair in Dortmund after derby debacle

**BERLIN:** Captain Marco Reus admitted that the Bundesliga title was slipping from Borussia Dortmund's grasp after he was sent off in a shock 4-2 derby defeat to Schalke on Saturday.

The defeat severely harmed Dortmund's title hopes, handing Bayern Munich the chance to go four points clear with three games to go when they play Nuremberg yesterday. "As long as we are not winning our games, it will be hard to catch Bayern," said Reus.

Dortmund coach Lucien Favre also said that he had given up hope of catching league leaders Bayern. "The title race is over," he said. "I have never experienced anything like this." "It is very, very hard to accept, especially the way we lost today."

"We are not used to getting red cards, and it was difficult after that." Reus' red card, given for a reckless foul on Schalke's Suat Serdar, proved a turning point in Saturday's disastrous defeat, as Daniel Caligiuri put Schalke 3-1 up from the result-

ing free-kick.

Team mate Marius Wolf was also sent off for a similar challenge on Serdar, but it was an entirely different refereeing decision which caused controversy after the game. Favre was left furious about a handball decision against Julian Weigl which allowed Schalke to equalise with a penalty after Dortmund had taken an early lead.

Favre called the recent adjustments to the handball rule "a disgrace" and "the biggest scandal in football". "I was a player for 15 years and have been a coach for a long time," he said. "Whoever invented this rule has obviously never played the game. It has nothing to do with football."

Favre also said that an incident involving Jadon Sancho had contributed to Schalke's equaliser. The English youngster appeared to be hit in the face by an object thrown from the away block as Dortmund celebrated their opener, and briefly left the pitch for treatment. The Dortmund coach said that Sancho was not back in position by the time Schalke were given the penalty at the other end. "It is very difficult to accept this defeat. For me, it is clear that the title race is done," said Favre.

Dortmund's players director and former captain Sebastian Kehl struck a more positive note. "Obviously we wanted to win every game and live our dream, but I am not giving up hope yet," he said. "A derby defeat is always bitter but it is extremely so in this situation."

"We need to let the defeat sink in. We have three games to go, which we want to win. Then we'll see where we are." — AFP

## Dhawan, Iyer help Delhi enter IPL play-offs

**NEW DELHI:** Half-centuries from Shikhar Dhawan and skipper Shreyas Iyer helped Delhi Capitals out-play Royal Challengers Bangalore by 16 runs to enter the Indian Premier League play-offs yesterday.

A 68-run second-wicket stand between Dhawan and Iyer and a late cameo from Sherfane Rutherford of West Indies steered Delhi to 187-5, a total their bowlers successfully defended.

The left-handed Dhawan, who is part of India's World Cup team, hit 50. Iyer made 52 and Rutherford's unbeaten 28 off 13 deliveries lifted the hosts to a big total at a slow-scoring Feroz Shah Kotla pitch in Delhi.

Virat Kohli's Bangalore lost regular wickets to finish on 171-7, but the bottom-placed side still have a chance to make the play-offs. Delhi, who made the play-offs for the first time since 2012, moved to the top of the eight-team table, overtaking Chennai Super Kings who have already booked their spot in the final four.

"This is an amazing feeling. Before the start of the tournament we wanted to qualify, so we are really satisfied and happy now that we have qualified," said Iyer. "We are going to maintain the same intensity and mindset for the rest of the tournament. We were termed as the underdogs before the start of the tournament and before the start of every match we think the same," he added. Bangalore opener Parthiv Patel, who top-scored with 39, and Kohli, who made 23, gave their team a brisk start but their batting fell flat once the two were back in the dugout. South African paceman Kagiso Rabada-IPL's highest wicket-taker so far with 24 scalps from 12 games-struck first after sending back Patel.

Left-arm spinner Axar Patel then got Kohli's prized scalp after the Indian skipper pulled the ball straight into the hands of Rutherford at deep mid-wicket. "The fun factor should never go away, we still got two games and we'll work hard. We'll go out there, play expressive cricket and be positive," said Kohli. "When we're done with the two games, we'll sit down and see where this tournament goes." —AFP

## Prograis stops Relikh to claim WBA title

**LOS ANGELES:** American Regis Prograis captured his first major crown Saturday by stopping Kyril Relikh in the sixth round of a WBA super lightweight world title fight in Lafayette, Louisiana.

The 30-year-old, undefeated Prograis knocked the Belarusian down in the first round and cut him on his nose in the second round of the lopsided bout. Despite being the challenger, Prograis came into the fight as the favourite and he lived up to that billing by improving his career record to 24-0.

"I am the real deal. I am a different animal," said Prograis. "Whoever they put in front of me they going to get the same treatment." Relikh, 30, dropped to 23-3 and has now lost three of his last five fights.

Prograis knocked Relikh down in the first round with a stinging body shot. The punch sent Relikh staggering backwards before he fell to the canvas. Relikh and his trainer also had to deal with a deep cut over the bridge of his nose from the second round on. On the undercard, Filipino Nonito Donaire knocked out Stephon Young in the sixth round to retain his WBA bantamweight title. It was an easy victory for Donaire against Young who was originally expected to fight further down the undercard but was moved up when South African southpaw Zolani Tete pulled out with a shoulder injury. — AFP

## Smith wins Warner battle with stunning IPL catch

**JAIPUR:** Australia's Steve Smith took a stunning catch to dismiss international compatriot David Warner in the Indian Premier League and help his side Rajasthan Royals stay in the race for the play-offs. Warner, ruling IPL's batting chart with 611 runs for Sunrisers Hyderabad, mistimed a hit over mid-off as Smith ran back and dived full length to his right to hold on to the ball. The effort from Smith off paceman Oshane Thomas cut short Warner's innings on 37 as Hyderabad managed 160-8, a total Rajasthan chased down with five balls to spare in Jaipur. "Just landed on the elbow. Hopefully it's okay. I'll know more when I take the tape off," Smith, who had his elbow operated in January, said after his team's seven-wicket win.

"But it was a good end to our home season," added Smith, who leaves the IPL after his team's next game against Royal Challengers Bangalore on Tuesday to be with Australia ahead of the World Cup. Both Smith and Warner returned to the Twenty20 tournament after missing the previous edition over a ball-tampering scandal. The disgraced duo served a one-year ban from club and international cricket that ended last month.

Smith took over the Rajasthan captaincy from Ajinkya Rahane midway into the tournament despite the Australian being barred from leading the national team. —AFP



# Messi fires Barca to eighth La Liga title in 11 years

## We’ve done it two years in a row: Ernesto Valverde

**MADRID:** Lionel Messi clinched an eighth La Liga title for Barcelona in 11 seasons on Saturday as he scored the only goal in a 1-0 win at home to Levante. The Argentine star struck his league-leading 34th goal of the campaign after coming off the bench for the second half to help Barca wrap up the title with three games remaining.

Barca hold a nine-point lead over second-placed Atletico Madrid, but the Catalans cannot be overtaken thanks to their superior head-to-head record. It is Barca's 26th league title and nudges them closer to Real Madrid's record of 33 in Spain.

"To win the title with a distance and gap is difficult with the rivals we have. We've done it two years in a row," Barca coach Ernesto Valverde told Movistar. "We're happy and to see people enjoying it makes us proud. But we still have challenges ahead."

Valverde initially left Messi on the bench with Wednesday's Champions League semi-final first leg against Liverpool in mind, but he replaced Philippe Coutinho at the break at the Camp Nou. Coutinho and Luis Suarez pressed Levante goalkeeper Aitor Fernandez into action early on, the Brazilian coming closest to breaking the deadlock when his free-kick rattled the crossbar shortly before half-time.

He was sacrificed for Messi though, and it proved an inspired decision as the Argentine swept in the winner on 62 minutes following a frantic scramble inside the Levante area. The visitors, not yet safe from the threat of relegation, responded and put

Barca on the defensive but were denied a last-gasp equaliser when the ball hit the post and rolled into the grateful arms of Marc-Andre ter Stegen.

"In the end he scored the goal. He always scores goals everywhere," Valverde said of Messi, who celebrated winning his 10th league crown.

Atletico had delayed Barca's title party earlier in the day as they scraped past strugglers Real Valladolid 1-0 after surviving late VAR penalty drama. Joaquin Fernandez's own goal put Atletico ahead midway through the second half, but they had to endure a nervy final few minutes in which Jan Oblak had to be at his best and they survived a late VAR check over what looked like a clear Santiago Arias handball in the area.

"It's controversial, a ball that hits the hand and the referee's decision is to see if it's voluntary or not," said Saul Niguez, whose cross led to their fortunate winner. Diego Simeone's side are nine points ahead of local rivals and reigning European champions Real Madrid, who travel to Rayo Vallecano on Sunday amid increasing speculation they will respond to a disappointing season by swooping for Eden Hazard and Neymar.

"It's what we deserve, no more, no less. We've come so far," added Saul. "There were moments when we wanted to be first and others that I would say no, that's what we deserve." Valladolid meanwhile stay 17th, just one point and a place away from the



**BARCELONA:** Barcelona's players celebrate after the club won their 26th league title at the end of the Spanish League football match between Barcelona and Levante at the Camp Nou stadium in Barcelona. — AFP

relegation zone after a match they will feel they were unlucky to lose.

Earlier on Saturday, Athletic Bilbao and Alaves did their chances of European foot-

ball next season no favours with a 1-1 draw in the Basque Country. Seventh-placed Bilbao are five points away from the Champions league places-with Alaves a fur-

ther three points back-and could also see Valencia and Sevilla take the Europa league further away from them when they take on Eibar and Girona. —AFP

## Mbappe sent off as PSG lose French Cup final to Rennes

**PARIS:** Kylian Mbappe was sent off for a shocking tackle late in extra time as Paris Saint-Germain were stunned by Rennes in Saturday's French Cup final, losing 6-5 on penalties after a dramatic game finished 2-2 at the end of extra time.

Substitute Christopher Nkunku blazed his sudden-death spot-kick over the bar in the shootout, sparking scenes of joy among the Rennes fans at the Stade de France as they won a first trophy in almost half a century.

It was a remarkable comeback from the Brittany side, who had seen Dani Alves and Neymar give Ligue 1 champions PSG a 2-0 lead midway through the first half.

Thomas Tuchel's side appeared poised to wrap up a domestic double, but Presnel Kimpembe's own goal just before the break gave Rennes hope and Edson Mexer headed them level in the 66th minute to take a gripping final-attended by President Emmanuel Macron-to extra time. Penalties were already looming when Mbappe was shown a straight red card by referee Ruddy Buquet for a dreadful challenge on Damien Da Silva near the corner flag. The France star caught the Rennes defender on the knee with his studs, and can expect a lengthy ban as a result.

Without him, PSG fell short of securing the double in Tuchel's first season in charge, which will also be remembered for their Champions League exit to Manchester United in the last 16. Instead, it is traditional underachievers Rennes who celebrate a historic victory, their first silverware since the 1971 French Cup also meaning a return to the Europa League next season.

Few of their fans would have imagined that possible after the way they started the game, with PSG looking more like their former selves as Neymar made his first start in three months after injury. Alongside him, Angel Di Maria was back for his first appearance in more than a month, as PSG went look-



**SAINT DENIS:** Rennes' players celebrate with the trophy after winning the French Cup final football match between Rennes (SRFC) and Paris Saint-Germain (PSG), at the Stade de France in Saint-Denis, outside Paris. — AFP

ing for their second trophy in seven days.

Rennes had been knocked out of this competition following heavy defeats by PSG in the earlier rounds in each of the last two seasons, and another hiding looked on the cards as PSG went 2-0 up early on.

The opener came in the 13th minute when a corner fell to Alves just outside the area and he met the ball with a volley from 20 yards that flew low into the corner. The second goal came midway through the first half, as a stray Hatem Ben Arfa pass was intercepted by Alves and it was Di Maria who sent Neymar through to score with a delightful chip over Tomas Koubek, who had come off his line. It was a 21st goal of the season for the world's most expensive player, despite that enforced three-month hiatus.

Rennes roused themselves to finish the half

strongly, however, and Mbaye Niang struck a post before they reduced the arrears five minutes from the interval. Hamari Traore crossed from the right and Kimpembe sliced the ball into his own net.

They continued to cause problems to PSG at the start of the second half, and it was not a surprise when Rennes equalised in the 66th minute as Clement Grenier's corner from the left was headed home by Mexer, a rare goal from the Mozambican defender.

Into extra time they went, with Tuchel sending on Edinson Cavani, another PSG star who has spent much of the recent weeks on the sidelines. Neymar set up Mbappe for a shot against the post, but proof that Rennes had done more than just ruffle PSG's feathers came when France's golden boy was sent off. It was not to be his or PSG's night, for once. — AFP

nonetheless 18 points behind Juve and out of Europe after being beaten by Arsenal in the Europa League quarter-finals, have to hope that both Milan and Atalanta fail to win in order to guarantee Champions League football this week, but are far enough ahead that qualification is almost guaranteed.

Frosinone however will be hoping Udinese lose to Atalanta, as a win in Bergamo for the 17th-placed side and Genoa beating SPAL would send them down to Serie B. — AFP

## Mertens joins Maradona as Napoli close in on Champions League

**ROME:** Dries Mertens moved level with Diego Maradona in Napoli's all-time goalscorers chart as he helped them take a big step towards securing Champions League football for next season with a comfortable 2-0 win on Sunday.

Carlo Ancelotti's side are almost unreachable in second place thanks to Mertens' smart 19th-minute free-kick-which made the Belgian Napoli's third-highest ever scorer with 81 goals-and Amin Younes' simple finish three minutes after the break, which also all-but condemned Frosinone to relegation from Serie A.

With four matches remaining Napoli are eight points clear of third-placed Inter Milan, who drew 1-1 with newly-crowned champions Juventus on Saturday, and a full 14 ahead of AC Milan and Atalanta, who sit just outside the Champions League places on 56 points.

The pair have a chance to leapfrog Roma, who took the last spot on Saturday with a comfortable 3-0 home win over Cagliari, and close the gap on Napoli when they take on Torino and Udinese respectively. Napoli, who are

Live			Matches on TV
			(Local Timings)
SPANISH LEAGUE			
Real Betis v RCD Espanyol		22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 3			
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
Atalanta v Udinese Calcio		20:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 4			
ACF Fiorentina v Sassuolo Calcio		22:00	
beIN SPORTS HD 4			

## Ronaldo hits 600th club goal

**ROME:** Cristiano Ronaldo scored the 600th goal of his club career to earn Italian champions Juventus a 1-1 draw away to Inter Milan in Serie A on Saturday. The Turin club wrapped up an eighth successive league title last weekend but found themselves behind early on to a wonder-strike from Inter midfielder Radja Nainggolan.

However, the Portuguese responded with a powerful finish in the second half to hit 20 league goals for the season, moving within two strikes of Serie A's leading scorer, Fabio Quagliarella of Sampdoria, in the process.

Inter remain in third place on 62 points, four ahead of AS Roma below them, while Juventus, who dropped points for just the sixth time in 34 games this season, move up to 88. —Reuters

## ‘Job done’ for Guardiola despite title uncertainty

**MANCHESTER:** Pep Guardiola has insisted his Manchester City players have already done their jobs this season-regardless of whether they succeed in becoming the first team in a decade to retain the Premier League title.

The closest race for an English top-flight crown in recent memory is heading into its closing stages with City or Liverpool doomed to be disappointed at its outcome. But Guardiola firmly believes his City team is playing better now than it did 12 months ago, when it was on the brink of compiling a record 100 Premier League points.

And given the impressive nature of their title defence, Guardiola has already told his players that the job "is done", even though the outcome of their bid to win the league and FA Cup, in addition to the League Cup they lifted in February, hangs in the balance.

Victory at Burnley would see City restore their one-point lead over Liverpool at the top of the table with two games to play. "Why should I judge what we have done for the results if at the last moment, for example, what happened in the Champions League (happens)?" said Guardiola ahead of his team's trip to Turf Moor as he recalled their dramatic late reversal of fortune in a European quarter-final defeat by Tottenham.

"We will be judged if we lift the title or not?," the former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss added. "The players and I have spoken many times - for you, the job is done.

"In terms of me, our fans and our people, it is done. You had success this season. Hats off! "But of course we want to win it (the league). We are not going to say 'it's enough, the manager told us how good we have done and we're not going to win it'.

"No, no, no. We want to win it for sure. We want to win the Premier League," the Catalan manager insisted. "Maybe more than last season, to do something unique for this club. We want to do it.

"But I will not judge them. I will not tell them because of many circumstances-because maybe Burnley is better than us in that game. Maybe we play horrible in one of these three games. It's happened. You have to try to avoid it, but it can happen."

City have suffered a drop-off in form from very few players this season, with the injury-plagued Kevin De Bruyne arguably the only senior star who has not hit the heights he achieved 12 months ago.

By contrast, defender Aymeric Laporte, striker Raheem Sterling and playmaker Bernardo Silva have all taken their games on to an even higher level. But Guardiola said City still had collective room for improvement-which he wanted to oversee.

"If I felt we could not improve it would make no sense to continue together here," he said. "Still there are things we can do quicker, understand what we have to do in a better way. We are going to improve individually and collectively. So I don't have doubts about that."

He added: "The moment you are tired of them, they are tired of you, that is not going to leave space to move forward and then the manager has to go- "Thank you guys! "-and another one comes." Guardiola's current title contest with Liverpool also had the City manager drawing comparisons with the only other campaign in which he has won a championship in similarly tight circumstances — 2010 when his Barcelona finished with 99 points and Real Madrid 96. — AFP



**25** 'Proud' Bottas wins as Mercedes sweep home one-two again



**26** Kipchoge runs second-fastest marathon for fourth London win



**27** Messi fires Barca to eighth La Liga title in 11 years



BURNLEY: Manchester City's German midfielder Leroy Sané (2L) is surrounded by Burnley's English defender James Tarkowski (R), Burnley's English midfielder Jack Cork (C) and Burnley's English midfielder Ashley Westwood (L) during the English Premier League football match between Burnley and Manchester City at Turf Moor in Burnley, north west England yesterday. — AFP

## City returns to the top with win over Burnley

### Aguero broke through in 63rd with help of goalline technology

**BURNLEY:** It was nervy and scrappy but a 1-0 win at Burnley yesterday was enough to return Manchester City to the top of the Premier League and keep them on track for back-to-back titles.

Sergio Aguero's 63rd-minute goal at Turf Moor moved City onto 92 points, restoring their one-point advantage over Liverpool at the summit with just two games remaining.

Pep Guardiola's side now need to win their final matches at home to Leicester City and away to Brighton and Hove Albion to retain the title and break the hearts of second-placed Liverpool who have tracked them all the way.

The victory was the 12th win in a row for City, who have shown no signs of giving Juergen Klopp's Liverpool, who have lost just once all campaign, the slightest opening.

Yet the afternoon did provide some encouragement for those in Merseyside following the match, with City frustrated until the second half when they broke through

with an uncharacteristically scrappy goal.

Aguero's shot was chested out and cleared by Matt Lowton on the goalline but technology ruled the effort had crossed-a minor compensation for Guardiola after a VAR video review had led to his team's elimination from the Champions League.

It was an unusual sight to see Guardiola take off two forwards in the latter stages and replace them with central defenders and while the City boss joked that he was "trembling" at the end, his counterpart Sean Dyche claimed the Spaniard had been yelling for his team to get the ball in the corner.

City had enough possession and chances to have put the game to bed well before the tense final minutes, but even if Burnley created very little attacking threat, Guardiola was leaving nothing to chance.

"In the first half we didn't create too much but of course it is what it is," said Guardiola, who pointed the finger at a dry pitch and what he viewed as long grass for his side lacking their usual slickness.

"Ninety-two points is incredible - it is in our hands, we must win our next two games and our next one against Leicester."

"We didn't concede one shot on target or one corner, we are a small team but we are smart, in the first half the pitch was so dry and it was slow but in the second half we knew we had to score our goal."

"In the last minutes anything can happen, always it is difficult if you cannot close the game," he said.

The visitors struggled to get into their usual rhythm in the first half but came out strongly after the break and Burnley keeper Tom Heaton did well to keep out a fierce blast from Sergio Aguero at the near post.

Burnley were fortunate to escape a penalty appeal when a drive from Bernardo Silva appeared to strike the arm of Burnley's Ashley Barnes.

Heaton did well to keep out another fierce drive, this time from Bernardo Silva, before City finally took the lead. Raheem Sterling went close to a second but Burnley defender Ben Mee produced a wonderful

goalline clearance to keep the Claret's in the game.

Burnley, however, pushed hard at the end with Guardiola bringing on John Stones and Nicolas Otamendi as City held firm to claim the three points.

"It's fantastic for me to see Pep screaming 'Get the ball in corner' - that was pleasing for me... that's quite amusing," said Dyche.

Yet the biggest smile at the end of the game belonged to Aguero, City's record scorer, who set another milestone with his latest goal.

The Argentine became only the second player to score 20 goals or more in six different Premier League seasons. Only Alan Shearer, who managed seven seasons, has done it more often, and only Thierry Henry can match Aguero's record of scoring 20 or more in five consecutive campaigns.

"I am so very happy for the win," he said. "I think it was over the line. I am very happy with the goal because the first half we had chances. I was happy for the technology," he said.— Reuters

## Thiem sweeps past Medvedev for Barcelona title

**BARCELONA:** Dominic Thiem overpowered Daniil Medvedev 6-4, 6-0 yesterday to win the Barcelona Open title, boosting his credentials as a potential Roland Garros champion. A day after knocking out 11-time Barcelona winner Rafael Nadal in the semi-finals, the third-seeded Austrian claimed his second title in four events after beating Roger Federer at Indian Wells last month.

He is also the first Austrian to take the Barcelona title since Thomas Muster in 1996. "It's such an honour to win here, only the biggest champions have done it," said 25-year-old Thiem.

"I'm so happy and proud to join Muster here, now my name is on the trophy." Thiem hoisted the weighty 13-kilogram golden trophy in triumph in front of a full stadium on a cloudy, chilly day at a venue named for Nadal.

He has now reinforced his claim for a possible French Open title after losing the Paris final a year ago to Nadal. Thiem needed just 73 minutes to earn



Dominic Thiem

victory over his seventh-seeded Russian opponent, who needed treatment on his shoulder late in the first set. The Austrian got off to a slow start, losing his first serve, but made up for lost time by breaking Medvedev twice in the first set before completely dominating the second. "I had troubles at the start," Thiem said. "My slice was not working and he does not miss. — AFP

## Vardy double deals fresh blow to Arsenal's Champions League hopes

**LEICESTER:** Jamie Vardy scored twice as Arsenal's hopes of Champions League football suffered another serious setback as familiar failings saw the 10-man Gunners lose 3-0 at Leicester yesterday.

It was the third time in seven days that the north London side, once renowned for an impregnable defence, had conceded three goals following 3-2 and 3-1 Premier League league defeats by Crystal Palace and Wolves respectively.

Leicester's Youri Tielemans opened the scoring at the King Power Stadium in the second half and Vardy netted twice for the Foxes after the visitors had defender Ainsley Maitland-Niles dismissed for two bookable offences before half-time. The winning goals, however, owed little to that dismissal.

Arsenal failed to stop James Maddison's cross or mark Tielemans as he stole in to head home the first, then were embarrassingly outwitted by a goal-kick from which Vardy poached the second with the help of

a rebound off the crossbar.

It left Unai Emery's men facing an uphill battle to force their way back into the top four, although victory in the Europa League could also secure a Champions League place.

Three defeats in a row, however, have left Emery with a clear picture of the failings that linger from Arsene Wenger's reign.

Maddison had a curling shot from the edge of the Arsenal penalty area deflected wide early on before Tielemans volleyed off target from a similar position.

Arsenal had shown little attacking threat but, when Maddison squandered possession on 22 minutes, the Gunners built a quick counter-attack from which they could have opened the scoring.

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang's smart turn and pass fed Alex Iwobi and his cross from the left found Alexandre Lacazette, who volleyed wide under pressure from Harry Maguire.

At the other end, Arsenal goalkeeper Bernd Leno made a superb save to push Wilfred Ndidi's header from a corner over the crossbar.

Then, 13 minutes from the interval, Arsenal were nearly undone by Marx Albrighton's straightforward ball over the backline. Vardy beat Sokratis to collect it but lofted a shot over the bar.

Suddenly, though, Leicester were hit by a rapid counter-attack from the visitors, ending with a neat pass from Aubameyang to Iwobi and a good, low save from Kasper Schmeichel to keep out his shot. — AFP