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Saudi Arabia readies for hajj as tensions persist in Gulf

88,550 Iranian pilgrims due to take part in the pilgrimage this year

MAKKAH: More than 2.5 million Muslims will tomorrow begin the annual hajj pilgrimage in the Islamic holy city of Makkah, Saudi Arabia, against a backdrop of tensions in the Gulf. Crowds of worshippers have already begun to gather in Makkah in the days ahead of the hajj, the focal point of the Islamic calendar. "It's the first time I've felt something so strongly - it's striking," said 40-year-old Indonesian pilgrim Sobar in rudimentary Arabic. More than 1.8 million visitors had arrived by midday local time on Tuesday, authorities said.

Crowds of faithful from across the world wore flowing white robes as they descended on the holy city located in the west of the ultra-conservative kingdom. The pilgrims will undertake religious rites that have remained unchanged since the founding of Islam 14 centuries ago. "Islam united us. We are all together... so that's why I'm very happy," said Leku Abibu, 46, a Ugandan mechanic who wore a beige salwar kameez. "I'm enjoying it here."

This year's hajj takes place amid tensions in the Gulf region exacerbated by a series of attacks on oil tankers, drone strikes and interceptions of maritime

traffic on the high seas. Saudi, the Gulf's leading power, and its ally Washington accuse Iran - Riyadh's regional rival - of being behind the attacks and sabotage operations against commercial shipping. Tehran has denied responsibility. Despite the absence of diplomatic ties between Saudi and Iran, some 88,550 Iranian pilgrims are due to take part in the hajj this year, according to the Tasnim news agency.

Hajj is one of the five pillars of Islam and Muslims must perform it at least once in their lives if they can afford to. "There are all nations of the world, all languages. There are no differences between us," said Nurul Jamal, a 61-year-old pilgrim from India. Makkah, closed to non-Muslims, is home to the Kaaba - a cube structure draped in black cloth embroidered in gold located at the heart of the mosque.

The Great Mosque of Makkah with its Ottoman minarets sits amid skyscrapers that host upmarket malls and luxury hotels. Muslims face toward the Kaaba when praying the prescribed five times daily. Pilgrims circle the Kaaba seven times and perform a number of sacred rites.

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MAKKAH: Pilgrims perform prayers around the Kaaba in the Grand Mosque yesterday, prior to the start of the annual hajj pilgrimage. — AFP

News in brief

Martyrs' remains arrive today

KUWAIT: Informed sources said remains of several Kuwaiti prisoners of war and missing persons will be handed over by Iraq to Kuwait today through the Safwan border and onboard an Iraqi military aircraft. The sources said several officials from the International Red Cross will be present alongside Kuwaiti officials to receive the martyrs' remains. The Iraqi defense ministry announced a military aircraft was allocated to bring the remains of Kuwaiti martyrs directly to their country. — A Saleh

MPs threaten to grill ministers

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Riyadh Al-Adasani yesterday reiterated threats to grill the prime minister, the interior minister and the entire Cabinet if needed over alleged violations in various sectors, while MP Mohammad Al-Mutair, another opposition lawmaker, threatened to hold the premier accountable. Mutair tweeted another employment wrongdoing happened in admitting prosecutors like the one that happened several months ago at the government's legal department. Adasani continued his sharp criticism of the interior minister over what he claims is a biased report by the police against him in a case against him by a former lawmaker. — B Izzak (See Page 4)

Two UAE-backed fighters killed

ADEN: Two members of an Emirati-backed force in Yemen were killed yesterday in clashes with pro-government fighters in the southern city of Aden, security officials said. They said the fighting broke out after the funerals of police personnel killed last week in the government-held port city. Tensions have often run high in Aden between the Security Belt force and forces backing the Aden-based government of President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi. — AFP

Saudi, UAE offer Sudan wheat

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates are providing Sudan with 540,000 tons of wheat as part of aid promised following long-time leader Omar Al-Bashir's overthrow, their state media said yesterday. Both countries "allocated 540,000 tons of wheat to the Sudanese people, meeting the population's basic food requirements for three months", the Saudi Press Agency and the UAE's WAM news agency said. "The first and second batch comprising of 140,000 tonnes of wheat have already been shipped." The wheat was part of \$3 billion worth of aid pledged by the oil-rich Gulf states in April after Bashir's ouster. — AFP

Pak expels Indian envoy as Kashmir dispute escalates

ISLAMABAD/SRINAGAR: Pakistan said yesterday it would expel India's ambassador and suspend bilateral trade with its archrival after New Delhi stripped its portion of the contested Kashmir region of special status. Neighbors China and Pakistan, which both claim parts of Kashmir, have voiced fierce opposition to India's removal of a constitutional provision that had allowed the country's only Muslim-majority state to make its own laws.

Nuclear-armed India and Pakistan have twice waged war over Kashmir and in February engaged in an aerial clash. India, which has been battling insurgents there for 30 years, said the special status had hindered Kashmir's development and it wanted to fully integrate the region with the rest of the country. Moin-ul-Haq, Pakistan's newly appointed ambassador to India, has yet to take up his post but will not move to New Delhi, while Indian Ambassador Ajay Bisaria will be expelled, Islamabad said in a statement yesterday.

"It is very obvious that our ambassador wouldn't be in Delhi, and obviously the man who is here will also leave," Foreign Minister Shah Mahmood Qureshi said in a telephone interview with Pakistani TV channel ARY News.

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SRINAGAR: Policemen move barbed wire on a street during curfew yesterday. — AFP

Housing woes testing Saudi reform drive

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia is building a futuristic megacity with promises of talking robots and flying taxis, but for hundreds of thousands like academic Abdullah a simple dream remains elusive - owning a home. Housing is a potential lightning rod for public discontent in a country where affordable dwellings are beyond the reach of many, posing a key challenge for Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as he seeks to overhaul the oil-reliant economy.

For decades, the once tax-free petro-state dished out interest-free housing loans. But Saudi Arabia is now pushing to boost mortgage lending in a contentious policy shift that is squeezing the middle-class as it chips away at its cradle-to-grave welfare in an era of low oil prices. For many like Abdullah, a 39-year-old father of three with a rented apartment in Riyadh, this has delayed the dream of building his own home on the city's outskirts.

After more than a decade on a waiting list for an interest-free loan from the kingdom's Real Estate Development Fund, Abdullah says it referred him to a commercial bank to take out a mortgage worth 445,000 riyals (\$119,000). He used the money to start building a house.

Continued on Page 24



RIYADH: Foreign laborers work on the construction of new luxury houses in the Saudi capital on April 13, 2019. — AFP

Shipping sheep in summer heat, Romania defies EU

MIDIA, Romania: Under the burning sun in Romania's Midia port on the Black Sea, the Lady Maria stands ready to embark its passengers - thousands of sheep to be shipped to Libya for the Eid Al-Adha holiday. Despite a warning from the EU and shock footage released last year of heat-stricken sheep struggling to breathe on ships travelling from Australia to the Middle East, Romania continues to export livestock during the height of summer.

A Midia port operator official insists conditions aboard the Lady Maria, which flies a Tanzanian flag and has been travelling the seas for more than 50 years, are "similar to a five-star hotel". But

activists have labelled the livestock transport vessels - about 100 of which leave Midia every year - as "death ships". "The question is how many sheep will die during this journey," says Gabriel Paun of Animals International.

Denouncing "undue suffering", he recalls a 2015 incident when thousands of sheep exported to Jordan by Romania died from thirst or literally were cooked alive during the transport. The journey from Romania to the Gulf can take several weeks, comparable to the trip from Australia. The risks this year are particularly high since Eid, the Muslim festival which sees the ceremonial slaughtering

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STOENESTI, Romania: A picture taken on Aug 2, 2019 shows sheep in a field on the outskirts of this Romanian village. — AFP

Local



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Bahraini King lauds Kuwait Amir's supportive stances

MANAMA: Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa praised on Tuesday His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's "genuine" and "supportive" position toward his country, official media reported Tuesday. King Hamad also commended His Highness the Amir for his efforts to boost joint Arab action and serve and defend Arab interests, according to Bahrain News Agency. The Bahraini King made his remarks while meeting the Dean of Diplomatic Corps, Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah. He affirmed that the Kingdom holds the Kuwaiti leadership and people in high regard, the state-run news agency said. Furthermore, the two sides reviewed the current state of their relationship and lauded its recent growth, progress, and development. King Hamad later honored the Kuwaiti diplomat with the Order of Bahrain of First Class for his efforts in bolstering relations between the two countries. — KUNA



MANAMA: Bahrain's King Hamad bin Isa Al Khalifa presents the Order of Bahrain of First Class to Kuwaiti Ambassador to Bahrain Sheikh Azzam Al-Sabah. — KUNA

Amir laments victims of Afghanistan suicide blast

Crown Prince receives state officials at Bayan Palace

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday commiserated with Afghanistan's President Ashraf Ghani over the loss of life caused by a suicide car-bomb attack on a police station in Kabul. In a cable addressed to the Afghan leader, His Highness the Amir said he was distraught over the terrorist attack that left tens of people dead and many more wounded. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Afghan president.

In other news, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

News in brief

Kuwait, India FM discuss developments

KUWAIT: First Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received a phone call late Tuesday from Indian Minister of External Affairs Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, during which the two sides discussed issues of mutual concern, the Foreign Ministry said in a statement yesterday. The phone conversation also touched the latest regional and international developments, added the statement. — KUNA

Service centers closed

KUWAIT: Citizens' service centers will close during the weekend, specifically on Saturday, and the occasion of Eid Al-Adha holiday between August 11 and 13, the Interior Ministry said yesterday. Eid Al-Adha is celebrated during one of the major pillars of the Islamic religion, the Hajj, which involves millions of people making the pilgrimage to Makkah. — KUNA

KFH participates in hajj awareness campaign

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) participated in the Hajj awareness-raising campaign in collaboration with the Ministry of Health (MOH). KFH team gave a send-off to pilgrims when they departed to the Holy land of Makkah to perform hajj through Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 4 (T4). This initiative comes as part of the bank's social responsibility and efforts to participate in all social, religious and national events that are of interest to the society.

Media Office at Ministry of Health along with KFH provided the pilgrims with helpful instructions in the holy places. A booth of the Media Office at the airport was accessible to pilgrims to offer some medical check-ups in addition to some instructions and leaflets that help the pilgrims in their journey.

KFH team received and bid farewell to the pilgrims at the Kuwait International airport wishing them a blessed pilgrimage and safe return to home. KFH presence at the airport reiterates its commitment towards



KFH representative bidding farewell to pilgrims.



Dr Ghalia Al-Mutairi honors KFH.

optimally assuming the corporate social responsibility, while reflecting its collaboration efforts with the concerned authorities. Meanwhile, Head of the media office

of the Ministry of Health Dr Ghalia Al-Mutairi praised the role of KFH in participating in hajj awareness-raising campaign.

Kuwait Airways transports 10,770 pilgrims to Saudi

JEDDAH: Kuwait Airways announced yesterday that it had transported about 10,770 pilgrims via 36 flights to Saudi Arabia. The aviation company transported about 4,770 pilgrims from Kuwait and about 6,000 others from different countries, regional director of GCC in Kuwait Airways Meshal Al-Dalk said. The company is using its new Boeing 777-300ER planes to provide all means of comfort and entertainment on board for pilgrims, he noted. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Pilgrims are seen leaving through Kuwait International Airport to Makkah, Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj. — Photos by Fouad Al-Shaikh

Local

Ministry suspends 23 fishing licenses after protests against new regulations

New circular helped drop prices dramatically

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Commerce and Industry asked the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources and the Public Authority for Manpower to take legal action against owners of 23 fishing licenses who reportedly refrained from fishing yesterday, as well as the fishermen and workers on boats. The ministry said this action was taken after a large number of fishermen stopped fishing in an attempt to reduce fish supply and force prices to increase again after new ministry regulations stopped what has been speculated to be an artificial rise in prices. A tour by commerce ministry officials Tuesday of Souq Sharq fish market to make sure that the new regulations are implemented resulted in reducing the price of mullet from KD 84 per basket to as low as KD 8.

Earlier yesterday, Commerce Ministry Undersecretary Abdullah Al-Afasi, Assistant Undersecretary for the Consumer Sector Eid Al-Rashidi and Director of the Commercial Supervision Department Faisal Al-Asari met head of the Kuwait Fishermen Union Thaher Al-Suwayyan, board member Tariq Bajran and general assembly member Yousuf Al-Sairafi, and discussed several issues including rumors about a strike by fishermen. Suwayyan said fishermen did not strike and are going about their work as usual.

He said officials understand the fishermen union's demands, and the coming days will see the fruits of cooperation between the union and the commerce ministry. He said the fishermen union is concerned with supplying the local market with fish and having prices at reasonable levels. He said all



KUWAIT: People attend a shrimp auction at the Souq Sharq fish market in this file photo. — Photo by Fouad Al-Shaikh

the fishermen's catch is dedicated for the local market, and asked everyone to visit the market and witness the auction, which is conducted with total transparency under the supervision of concerned government authorities.

Suwayyan said fishermen are ready to enter the sea and fish for mullet, but the designated places to fish for it do not have any, because mullets live in shallow waters, and the union is talking with concerned authorities to find a solution for this problem. Meanwhile, Municipal Council member Abdulsalam Al-Randi lauded the commerce ministry's decision to not allow expats to participate in

auctions, to stop what he described as the "greed of some merchants."

The ministry's new circular, released earlier this week with hopes of preventing 'manipulation of prices', stipulates that expatriates are not allowed to enter fish auctions unless authorized, and that after receiving complaints that auctioneers, who are mostly expatriates, allegedly raise the prices to increase their profits. Fish prices reportedly dropped dramatically on the first actual day of implementing the new rules on Tuesday, before surging back up again yesterday following reported fishermen boycotts in protest of the regulations.

Glanders disease forces suspension of equestrian sports

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Public Authority for Sports suspended equestrian activities including training and racing, and forbade horses' movements. The authority sent a circular to all equestrian clubs about the discovery of Glanders disease in Kuwait, adding that everyone should comply with the instructions of the Public Authority for Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources and contact it in case of any suspicions.

In other news, Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah partially reshuffled some top-ranking officials at the ministry. The reshuffle included the appointment of Dr Mohammad Owaidha as Director of Farwaniya health zone, Dr Bader Al-Enezi as Director of Jahra health zone, Dr Abdellatif Al-Sahli as Director of Sabah medical zone, Dr Humoud Al-Zobi as Director of Hawally health zone and Dr Ahmad Al-Satti as Director of Ahmadi health zone.

The reshuffle also included the appointment of Dr Mubarak Al-Ajmi as Director of the Medical Council, Dr Ahmad Al-Husseini as Director of the geriatric department, Dr Nader Al-Awadhi as Director of Jaber Hospital, Dr Ali Al-Mosawi as Director of Kuwait Cancer Fighting Center and Dr Areej Al-Kandari as Deputy Director of Mubarak Hospital.

Local daily reveals Egyptian investigations with 'Kuwait cell'

KUWAIT: A high-ranking Egyptian security source said investigations and interrogations by Egyptian security authorities, which sent their results to the higher state security prosecution with regards to the "Muslim Brotherhood cell" that was deported from Kuwait recently, said the cell planned to create Brotherhood cells in Gulf countries - particularly Kuwait, Saudi Arabia and UAE - to expand the group's activities in Arab countries as well as collect donations to use in terrorist operations in Egypt.

The source, who was quoted in a report published in Al-Qabas daily yesterday, said the "Kuwait cell" worked on planting Brotherhood elements in Gulf countries to collect economic and political information and send it to members of the Brotherhood who escaped abroad and are currently in Turkey. The Egyptian security source said Egyptian investigations revealed the "Kuwait cell" collected information about various sectors in Kuwait and the country's political and economic situation, and sent it to the Brotherhood leadership abroad. They also sent it to the Brotherhood channels "Elsharq" and "Mekamellen" with the aim of harming Kuwait.

The source said authorities prepared a list of persons "Kuwait cell" sent money to, including women in Egypt, as they were receiving the money and distributing it to the families of Brotherhood elements, including those involved in the assassination of the public prosecutor.

The Egyptian source said one of the surprises revealed during investigations was that the cell sent money to a person named Mustafa S, which in turn reached armed elements in Sinai, and the aim was to support the Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis organization financially to buy weapons used against the police and army in Sinai and Arish. Money was also being sent to a woman who was delivering it to a terrorist who had connections with Ansar Beit Al-Maqdis, which confirms their support for armed terrorist organizations.

The Egyptian security source said the suspects worked in various sectors in Kuwait including as teachers, accountants and clinical pharmacist, and that a leader in the Egyptian security was in communication with Kuwait's Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and security officials in Kuwait during the

interrogations with the "Kuwait cell".

Egypt's national security department handed Kuwait security officials a file that revealed the conspiracy of the Brotherhood cell against Egypt, so it was decided to hand over the cell due to the harm they caused to both countries. Some of the suspects escaped outside Egypt after the removal of former President Mohammad Morsi, particularly after the break-up of the Rabia Al-Adawiya sit-in, and a few days prior to the June 30 revolution, while others escaped after the assassination of the public prosecutor in 2015.

The source said the leader of the "Kuwait cell" is Abu Baker Atif Al-Sayyed Al-Fayoumi from Al-Behaira governorate, who was a member of the Freedom and Justice party and responsible for collecting financial donations for families of imprisoned Brotherhood members. He added that the other eight suspects come from Behaira, Sohag and South Saeed. The eight had participated in the Rabia Al-Adawiya sit-in, then escaped to various governorates after it was broken up, adding that Fayoumi and Momen Abu Al-Wafa were responsible for bringing demonstrators from various governorates to participate in Rabia before June 30 and paid them.

The source said Fayoumi participated in burning a police station in Fayoum, and contacted "Brotherhood" elements in 2013, who burned and stole from Tamiya police station in Fayoum, and the suspect was a member of the "quality committee" of the terrorist Brotherhood organizations. Fayoumi was responsible for conveying instructions of the Brotherhood leadership to the quality committees in Fayoum and participated in burning Al-Athra Church along with other Brotherhood members, and stealing the contents of the Anglican Church in Fayoum, and that other members participated in some violent actions. This in addition to burning Al-Odwa police station and attacking policeman in Minya during the storming of police stations.

The source said the "Kuwait cell" suspects participated in the Al-Fath mosque events after the break-up of the Rabia sit-in and fired at policemen. The source said all these details were given to the Kuwaiti side, with a file stating the violence the suspects participated in. The "Kuwait cell" communicated with the first accused in the case of assassinating the public prosecutor Yahya Mousa through Telegram and Signal apps while in Kuwait, and Mousa sent to the cell suspects money transfers from Turkey to Kuwait. Investigations revealed that the suspects were in communication with Engineer Mahmoud Fathi Bader, member of the "Supporting Legitimacy Alliance" that belongs to the Brotherhood, and the head of the Virtue party. — Al-Qabas

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Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A pearl diving boat arrives for the annual pearl diving season on July 30, 2019 off the coast of the port city of Khairan, 100 kilometers (62 miles) south of Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Kuwait's PIC acquires 49% of South Korea's SKC petrochemical operations

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Company (PIC) has acquired 49 percent of operations of South Korea's SKC, and the two firms agreed to establish a joint company producing propylene Oxide (PO) and propylene glycol (PG).

"The acquisition is part of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation's (KPC) strategy to boost its international petrochemical investments, particularly core petrochemical products with high added value," KPC CEO Hashem Sayyed Hashem said in a statement yesterday. He said this partnership with SKC also included acquisition of 45 percent of SKC Evonik Peroxide Korea.

PIC CEO Mutlaq Al-Azmi said the partnership with SKC aimed at diversifying PIC's international portfolio with the aim of securing better revenues and addressing fluctuation of prices. SKC had \$2.5 billion revenues last year. The company's assets registered \$3.5 billion in first quarter this year. SKC, whose main operations are in PO and PG production, exports products to more than 60 countries. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Petrochemical Industries Company and South Korea's SKC react after signing the agreement. — KUNA

Kuwaiti photographer chosen for professional photography program

BEIRUT: The distinguished body of work by Kuwaiti photographer Mohammed Al-Kouh was chosen as one of nine winning entries at the sixth edition of the Arab Fund for Arts and Culture's (AFAC) photography pro-

gram. A short documentary about Failaka Island was presented in a creative style and it was chosen by judging committee of the event, said Director of grants at AFAC Kati Khattar. The documentary shed light on the importance of social life in the Arab world reflected in an innovative and creative way to document the history of the island, she added.

In regards to the program, it offers support for professional photographers with expertise: the winners will get an eight-month scholarship, a production award worth \$5,000 to cover project expenses, and a technical support provided by the program's trainers, she explained. About 92 applicants from 16 Arab countries

were submitted: nine projects from Egypt, Sudan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Algeria, Yemen, and Bahrain were accepted.

In their projects, photographers presented a variety of topics including displacement, migration, memory, youth issues, tension, violence, social expectations and others. Arab cultural activists founded the AFAC in 2007 as an independent foundation to support individual artists, writers, researchers, intellectuals, as well as organizations from the Arab region working in the field of arts and culture. Based in Beirut, AFAC works with artists and organizations all over the Arab region and the rest of the world. — KUNA

Two MPs threaten to grill premier, ministers

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Opposition MP Royadh Al-Adasani yesterday reiterated threats to grill the prime minister, the interior minister and the entire cabinet if needed over alleged violations in various sectors while MP Mohammad Al-Mutair, another opposition lawmaker, threatened to hold the premier accountable.

Writing on Twitter, Mutair said that another employment wrongdoing happened in admitting prosecutors like the one that happened several months ago at the government's Legal Department.

MPs had claimed that a number of new entrants to the legal department were selected on the basis of favoritism and not competence and demanded immediate action against those responsible for the violation.

Mutair said that the same thing happened at the public prosecution which calls for holding the prime minister accountable, accusing the government of adopting such a policy to prevent people fighting corruption from getting employed.

MP Adasani on his part continued his sharp criticism of Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah over what he claims a biased report by the police against him in a case against him by a former lawmaker.

Adasani was questioned by the public prosecution a few weeks ago for saying that former MP Abdullah Al-Tameemi had obtained financial aid from the prime minister's office for a Kuwaiti citizen.

Tameemi sued the lawmaker for defamation while Adasani reiterated yesterday that he only repeated what Tameemi himself had said publicly.

Adasani claimed that the police report to the public prosecution was against him and considered that an act of intimidation because of his opposition to the government and for pursuing corruption cases.

The lawmaker reiterated in a statement yesterday that he will continue to expose cases of corruption like the one being investigated by the public prosecution over allegations that at least one MP, some businessmen and former lawmakers are involved in a money-laundering case. Adasani vowed again that he will not hesitate to grill the prime minister over this issue and threatened he would hold the interior minister accountable for his failures in many cases.



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry officers offer services at Kuwait International Airport to pilgrims leaving to Makkah, Saudi Arabia to perform hajj.



Local

Kuwait's newest air terminal to witness first direct flight to New York today

Flight KU 117 seventh and last phase of operating the facility



KUWAIT: The Terminal 4 (T4) building. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The Terminal 4 (T4) building, the back-up facility for Kuwait International Airport, will witness today launching first direct flight to New York, exactly one year after commercial flights started at the state-of-the-art facility. Flight KU 117 constitutes the seventh and last phase of operating the facility, thus Kuwait Airways will leap to an advanced position in commercial aviation. Last December, the air facility had witnessed flights to all Kuwait Airways destinations, except for New York, that were still scheduled via Terminal 1 (T1).

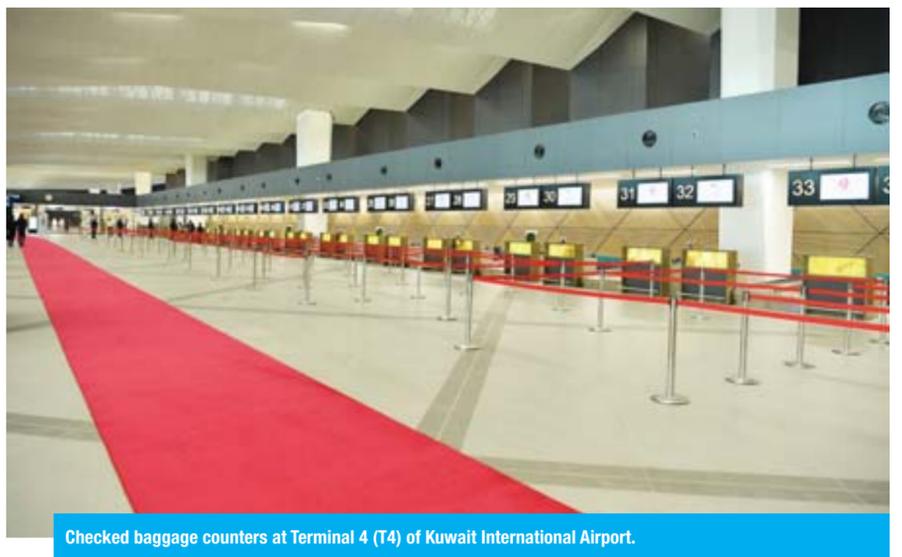
Terminal 4 inaugurated commercial flights to Bahrain on August 8, 2018, followed by a trip to Dubai August 15, 2018. In September 2018, Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) began organizing flights to all GCC countries. On October 10 2018, KAC declared increasing operations from T4, covering all Arab states. Moreover, the corporation announced on October 21, 2018 launching two-way flights to European cities except for London via its new building. On October 28, 2018, it announced scheduling flights to Heathrow Airport via T4. On December 2, 2018, KAC declared plans to stage departing and incoming flights to Iran, Pakistan, Thailand and the Philippines via the new terminal.

On July 16, 2019, Kuwait Airways planned direct flights to New York via T4 after completing all relevant

procedures warranted by the American aviation authorities. These operations have been executed according to a plan set by the civil aviation authority for phased shifting of flights from T1 to T4. The national plan is in harmony with guidelines set by the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) for gradual shifting of operations from old to new terminals to provide time for assessment. The Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) has secured buses to transport passengers from T1 to T4 in some cases. A special team examines passengers' needs and provided services at T4.

The new terminal was inaugurated on July 4, 2018 under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. The modern facility is considered a main achievement on the path towards making Kuwait a regional business hub. The 55,000-sq-m T4 has a capacity to accommodate some 4.5 million passengers per year. It provides jobs to 2,000 citizens and contributes with \$60 million to annual state revenues. DGCA signed the contract to build T4 in 2016 with the Turkish Genghis company and the Kuwaiti Al-Oula company at a value amounting to KD 52.89 million (\$173.2 million).

The Korean Incheon International Airport Corporation (IIAC) manages the T4 facility. The complex, built according to criteria of the International Air



Checked baggage counters at Terminal 4 (T4) of Kuwait International Airport.

Transport Association (IATA), features state-of-art designs, technology and security systems. Its construction has helped in balancing distribution of passengers among national air facilities, including Sheikh Saad air-

port (T3) and Al-Jazeera terminal (T5). KAC was established in 1953 as a private aviation company. In 1962, the government acquired its entire stakes. It operates to 40 destinations worldwide. — KUNA



One year after start of operations

NBK provides toll-free numbers in main travel destinations

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to provide an exceptional banking experience to its customers, even during their travels by providing them with a large banking network spanning across the world and toll-free numbers available in popular travel destinations to enable customers to easily get in touch with the bank around the clock, every day of the week, as well as during Eid Al-Adha and other official public holidays.

The toll-free numbers are available to all customers to contact the bank at their convenience when traveling to inquire about any service while ensuring they enjoy a safe and comfortable holiday. The numbers are available in nine of the most popular destinations and for free at any time of the day. The countries in which these numbers are available are: US, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Turkey, Italy, Spain, and UAE.

"NBK ensures it stays close to its customers wherever they are in the world, especially during the Eid and public holidays, giving them access to a wide range of unique services that meet their needs," said Tamer Allam, Head of Contact Center, National Bank of Kuwait

Allam added: "These services available for customers start at the Kuwait International Airport with branches available at T1 and T4 which carry Multi-Currency ATMs, in addition to the other services available to all customers."

- The toll-free numbers are:
- United States: 1-855-577-7625
 - United Kingdom: 08000988456
 - Canada: 1-855-577-7625
 - France: 0805080765
 - Germany: 08001811475
 - Turkey: 008001139247
 - Italy: 800792255
 - Spain: 900839159
 - UAE: 8000320555

Customers can also contact an NBK Contact Center agent directly and anytime

from anywhere in the world at +96522248361. The bank can also be contacted by the NBK WhatsApp number +965 1801801 which is also available around the clock. NBK Services are as well available at the convenience of customers through NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking.

NBK provides as well its services at the Airport through the Multi-Currency ATMs which allow them to withdraw cash in six currencies that are the Kuwaiti Dinar, US Dollar, Euro, British Pound Sterling, UAE Dirham, and Saudi Riyal. The ATMs are conveniently located at the departure gates and the arrival area to give easy access to everyone.

Providing convenience and reliability when travelling, NBK continues to offer its customers a wide range of exclusive services and offers to satisfy the needs of customers. NBK has the widest banking presence with over 140 branches across four



Tamer Allam

continents in 15 countries in cities that comprise Geneva, London, New York, Paris, Shanghai and Singapore and regionally in Bahrain, Egypt, Jordan, Iraq, Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and UAE.



KUWAIT: Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) officials toured the project site of the new Kuwait International Airport terminal (Terminal 2) on Tuesday to inspect safety measures there and follow up with procedures to implement safety requirements at the building. The visit came after a meeting held with officials from the company that is carrying out the project. — By Hanan Al-Saadoun



Veteran Indian politician Swaraj passes away at 67

Biden ties Trump's 'toxic tongue' to US shootings



KHAN SHAYKHUN: An aerial view taken shows graffiti scribbled on the roof of a collapsed building in the town of Khan Shaykhun in the southern countryside of Idlib, reading in Arabic 'truce is betrayal', 'Russia kills us and the civil defense saves us', and other insults against Russian President Vladimir Putin. — AFP

IS 'resurging' in Syria as US pulls troops

Regime advances after scrapping northwest Syria truce

WASHINGTON: The Islamic State (IS) jihadist group was "resurging" in Syria while the United States withdrew troops, and has solidified its insurgent capabilities in neighboring Iraq, a Defense Department watchdog said yesterday. The jihadists—who suffered major territorial losses at the hands of Iraqi and Syrian forces backed by a US-led international air campaign—are exploiting weaknesses in local forces to make gains, the report from the Office of Inspector General said.

"Despite losing its territorial 'caliphate,' the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria (ISIS) solidified its insurgent capabilities in Iraq and was resurging in Syria this quarter," according to the report, which uses an alternate name for the jihadist group. IS has been able to "regroup and sustain operations" in the two countries partially because local forces "remain unable to sustain long-term operations, conduct multiple operations simultaneously, or hold territory that they have cleared," the report said.

The group's Syria resurgence came as Washington "completed a partial withdrawal" from the country, a move made despite commanders saying that the local US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces (SDF) "needed more training and equipping for counterinsurgency operations." Last year, US President Donald Trump declared victory against IS and ordered the withdrawal of all American troops from Syria—a decision that prompted then defense secretary Jim Mattis to quit.

'Create turmoil'

A small number of American troops have remained in northeastern Syria, an area not controlled by the regime of President Bashar Al-Assad, and Washington is pushing for increased military support from other members of the international coalition against IS. IS jihadists have carried out targeted assassinations, ambushes and suicide bombings in both countries and in Iraq have "established a more stable command and control node and a logistics node for coordination of attacks," the report said. The group's strategy in the two countries is to "create turmoil in territory it has lost" and prevent local security forces "from establishing effective control and maintaining civil order."

The US-led coalition against IS believes the jihadist group likely has between 14,000 and 18,000 "members" in Iraq and



Jihadists exploit weaknesses to make gains

mand and control node and a logistics node for coordination of attacks," the report said. The group's strategy in the two countries is to "create turmoil in territory it has lost" and prevent local security forces "from establishing effective control and maintaining civil order."

The US-led coalition against IS believes the jihadist group likely has between 14,000 and 18,000 "members" in Iraq and

Syria, among them up to 3,000 foreigners, the report said. IS has suffered major losses, but its predecessor the Islamic State of Iraq likewise appeared on the ropes after Sunni Muslim tribesmen turned against the jihadists, combining with the US "surge" of troops in 2007-2008 to deal them a body blow.

Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi was however able to revive the extremists' fortunes, drawing on subsequent widespread Sunni anger with Iraq's Shiite-led government to rebuild, aided by the chaos and violence of the Syrian civil war. The jihadists seized control of large parts of Syria and Iraq, declaring an Islamic "caliphate" in 2014 and committing widespread atrocities, and were only pushed back after multiple years of heavy fighting and a massive US air campaign.

Regime advances

Meanwhile, regime loyalists captured a town and a village from jihadists and allied rebels in northwest Syria Wednesday, after fierce clashes that killed nearly 30 combatants overnight, a war monitor said. The town of Al-Zakat and the Al-Arba'een village in Hama province came under regime control on Wednesday morning, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. It said the clashes overnight killed 10 regime loyalists and 18 opposition fighters, including 13 jihadists. The push has also seen regime loyalists reach the edges of Kafr Zita and Al-Latamneh - respectively, a major town and a village - held by the opposition in northern Hama, according to the Observatory.

IS presence

The blast was not the only violence to rock the Afghan capital in the past 24 hours.

Afghan commandos stormed three Islamic State group houses in Kabul, officials said. Despite non-stop strikes from the US and Afghan forces, the Middle Eastern jihadist group has maintained a persistent presence in Afghanistan since 2015. The houses were being used as bomb factories, the Afghan intelligence service said in a statement. Two IS fighters and three Afghan commandos were killed in the raids. "A lot of explosives, suicide vests, arms and technical tools of making car bombs and mines were seized," the statement read. In Baghlan province in northern Afghanistan, authorities said they stopped an attack on a security forces convoy.

According to an Afghan army statement, three attackers were driving in an explosives-packed Humvee toward the convoy, but Afghan troops spotted them and destroyed the vehicle with a rocket-propelled grenade. On Tuesday, at least five people were killed and seven wounded in Kabul when a vehicle carrying workers from the counter-narcotics directorate was bombed, the interior ministry said. Deputy interior minister General Khoshal Sadat said 4,769 Taliban fighters had been killed since they announced their spring offensive in April.

The Afghan military does not reveal how many of its troops have been killed, but numbers are thought to be several thousand per year. Still, Sediq Sediqqi, the spokesman for Afghan president Ashraf Ghani, said Afghan security forces are foiling about seven in 10 planned Taliban attacks. "Their leaders are being targeted and air operations have increased. To retaliate they are attacking civilian places in the cities," Sediqqi said. The violence comes as Afghans prepare to celebrate the Eid al-Adha holiday next week. — AFP

Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS), a jihadist group led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, has since January controlled Northern Hama as well as all of Idlib and adjacent parts of Aleppo and Latakia governorates. A truce that started on Friday was supposed to protect three million people living in the region after three months of deadly bombardment by the regime and its ally Russia. But HTS on Saturday refused to comply with a key condition to that truce, declaring it would never withdraw from a planned buffer zone around the area.

On Monday, the government declared the truce over, accusing its opponents of attacking civilian areas and bombarding an air base of its ally Russia. Moscow and Damascus have since resumed air strikes. "The regime leveraged the ceasefire to send reinforcements to Northern Hama," said Rami Abdul Rahman, the head of the Britain-based monitor. A Turkish-Russian deal struck in September last year was supposed to avert a massive government offensive on the Idlib region.

But that deal was never fully implemented as jihadists refused to withdraw from the planned demilitarized cordon. Instead, heightened attacks by the regime and Russia have killed more than 800 civilians since the end of April, the Observatory says. It has also pushed 400,000 people from their homes, according to the UN. Syria's conflict has killed more than 370,000 people and driven millions from their homes since it started with the brutal repression of anti-government protests in 2011. — Agencies

Taliban bomb kills at least 14

KABUL: At least 14 people were killed and 145 wounded in a massive Taliban bomb blast yesterday as fresh violence gripped Kabul even as insurgents appear to be closing in on a peace deal with the US. The bloodshed in the capital comes amid an ongoing surge in attacks across Afghanistan, where some 1,500 people were killed or injured last month alone. A huge plume of black smoke was seen rising over western Kabul following a massive explosion at the entrance to a police compound around 9:00 am.

The Afghan interior ministry said the explosion was caused by a car bomb, but the Taliban, which claimed the attack, said it was a much larger truck bomb. An Afghan security official also told AFP it was a truck bomb. Images on social media showed toppled blast walls surrounding several largely destroyed buildings in a compound. Afghan authorities said at least 10 civilians and four police officers had been killed. Another 145 people, including 92 civilians, were wounded.

"As the air cleared, I saw several women crying, desperately looking for their husbands or children near the blast site," local journalist Zakeria Hasani, who lives near the police station said. Shopkeeper Ahmad Saleh said his store windows had blown out, sending glass flying. "My head is spinning and still I don't know what has happened but the windows of about 20 shops around one kilometre from the blast site are broken," he said.

The US and the Taliban are meeting in Doha this week for an eighth round of talks aimed at striking a peace deal



KABUL: Afghan security forces investigate the site where a Taliban car bomb detonated at the entrance of a police station in Kabul yesterday. — AFP

that would slash the American military presence in Afghanistan. Despite the bloodshed sweeping the nation, both sides have cited "excellent progress". The attack came after the Taliban warned Afghans on Tuesday to keep away from public gatherings ahead of the presidential election planned for September 28.

The Taliban ordered their fighters to "stand against" the polls, and previous elections have been rocked by frequent attacks by militants trying to undermine Afghanistan's fragile democracy. More than 1,500 civilians were killed or wounded in the Afghan conflict in July, according to the United Nations, the highest monthly toll so far this year and the worst single month since May 2017.

Photo of US officers leading black man by a rope sparks outrage

WASHINGTON: A police chief in Texas has apologized after a photo went viral of two officers mounted on horseback walking a handcuffed black man by a rope, as if on a leash. The image caused outrage, serving as a painful reminder of some of the bleakest moments in America's brutally racist past, including the chaining of enslaved people and lynching of blacks in the Jim Crow South in the years after emancipation.

Vernon Hale, police chief for the coastal Texas city of Galveston, said that Donald Neely, who was arrested Saturday for trespassing, should have been taken to the station in a police car, but only mounted officers were available. Neely was then escorted on foot, led by a length of rope and flanked by the mounted officers.

"Although this is a trained technique and best practice in some scenarios, I believe our officers showed poor judgment in this instance," said Hale, in a statement published Monday on Facebook. "First and foremost I must apologize to Mister Neely for this unnecessary embarrassment," Hale said, adding that policy had been changed so that the technique would no longer be used. Hale's statement sparked frustration, with some activist groups saying his response was "weak." —AFP

International

Kidnappings soar amid Boko Haram insurgency in Niger

Islamist insurgency claims hundreds of lives, ravaged communities

NIAMEY: In the desert landscape of southeastern Niger, a radical Islamist insurgency has claimed hundreds of lives, fractured families and ravaged communities, fearful of the next Boko Haram attack. Strategically located in the Lake Chad basin in the middle of the Sahel, the Diffa region's borders are crisscrossed by militant groups and traffickers competing for money and influence. The threat of sexual violence and killings has prompted tens of thousands to leave their homes. And hostage taking by armed groups - often targeting girls for rape, enslavement or ransom - has soared.

On average, nearly one person a day has been kidnapped this year, according to the UN, often by the Islamist extremist group Boko Haram. A total of 179 people have been captured so far in 2019, many of them young women and girls. "Whether you're a farmer or trader, no one is safe from kidnapping," said Diffa city resident Lawan Boukar. The disappearances often occur at night in villages along the Komadougou Yobe river, the natural border between Niger and Nigeria.

"These kidnappings are worrying a large proportion of the population and the authorities," said Bako Mamadou, mayor of Bosso, a town which has been attacked several times since February 2015. Mamadou said some women and girls are raped and "permanently detained" by their captors. Ransoms are usually paid in Nigeria's naira currency, he said, and can exceed one million CFA francs (1,500 euros) - a huge amount for most in the impoverished, arid nation on the edge of the Sahara.

Hardline 'Islamic State'

Boko Haram, loosely translated as "Western education is banned", wants to create a hardline Islamic state. The

group has fought a decade-long uprising and promotes a version of Islam that forbids Muslims from taking part in political or social activity associated with the West.

A regional military coalition is battling the group, but at least 27,000 people have been killed in Nigeria alone. In recent years the group has splintered into competing factions. In 2015, a faction of Boko Haram pledged allegiance to Islamic State group leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi. Diffa, which borders the birthplace of Boko Haram in northeastern Nigeria, has suffered a string of cross-border raids and population displacement.

In March at least 25 people were killed in a series of attacks in the region, according to an AFP tally, as well as nine soldiers. The next month, in the regional capital, also called Diffa, suspected Boko Haram militants launched an attack on the central police barracks, killing officers and taking hostages before eventually blowing themselves up. In June, a would-be suicide bomber with a submachine gun was arrested outside a church in Diffa city, while four other would-be bombers were killed elsewhere.

Kidnapped for ransom

Boko Haram is well aware of the terror it reaps by kidnappings, particularly following the 2014 abduction of almost 300 Nigerian schoolgirls in the town of Chibok, Borno state which received global media attention. "Parents are fleeing to put their girls in a safe place," said Madou Adam, a resident of Gueskerou, on the Niger-Nigeria border. Some kidnapped boys are enlisted as combatants while women are forced to marry or are used for "suicide bombings," he said.

In June last year, three suicide bombers killed at least six people in separate attacks in Diffa city - two of the



BAGA: A vehicle allegedly belonging to the Islamic State group in West Africa (ISWAP) is seen in Baga. — AFP

attackers were girls, according to the interior ministry. "We have managed to weaken Boko Haram with military actions but also security measures," a Niger minister, who

wished to remain anonymous said. He insisted that the group now has "less money" due to a crackdown on racketeering and forced taxes. — AFP

How likely are Turks to attack northeast Syria?

BEIRUT: After 18 months of threats, Turkey's president has warned that his troops could attack Kurdish-held areas of northeast Syria "very soon". Why would Turkey lead such a cross-border incursion, what do Syria's Kurds want, and how is the United States - an ally of both sides - trying to ease tensions?

Why the Turkish threats?

While Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of their country's eight-year war, they have set up their own institutions in a semi-autonomous region in its northeast. Across the border, Turkey has eyed this push for increased independence with suspicion, regarding Kurdish fighters there as "terrorists". Ankara views the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG) as an offshoot of the Kurdish PKK, which has fought an insurgency inside Turkey for the past 35 years.

To keep any Kurdish expansion in check, Turkey has launched two campaigns in Syria since 2016. Last year it seized the key Kurdish enclave of Afrin after months of deadly bombardment. On Tuesday, Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said his country had "the right to eliminate all threats against its national security". "God willing, we will carry the process (already started) to the next stage very soon," he said.

On Sunday, he expressed frustration with stalling US-Turkish talks in Ankara that aim to prevent a Turkish offensive by

setting up a buffer zone along its southern border. Turkey would like such a "security zone" to run 30 kilometers wide inside Syria and to be controlled by Turkish troops.

What do the Kurds want?

Across the frontier, the Kurds initially rejected any Turkish presence in a buffer zone inside Syria, demanding international monitors instead. But on Monday, a top political official in the Kurdish region said they were prepared to be flexible. Aldar Khalil told AFP they had agreed to a buffer zone of around five kilometres wide, but Turkey rejected the proposal. "It wants to control the area all on its own," he said.

He also said the Kurds had been asking to take part in "safe zone" talks between Washington and Ankara, but that the latter had refused. Syrian Kurdish forces have played a key role in the US-backed fight against the Islamic State group. YPG-led forces ousted the extremists from the last scrap of their "caliphate" in March. Today, they hold thousands of suspected jihadists in jail, as well as alleged IS family members in overcrowded camps.

A Turkish offensive "would make guarding the jails and camps difficult," Khalil warned. Urgently needing support, the Kurds have opened channels with the Russia-backed regime of President Bashar Al-Assad. "The conversation is ongoing" with the Kurds hoping to "negotiate a certain formula for these areas", Khalil said. "But Damascus has not yet decided anything or made its true position clear despite the urgency of the situation," he added. If diplomacy failed, he said, Kurdish forces would have no choice but to "resist" the Turks.

Can the US save the day?

The United States - both a NATO ally



TADIF: Turkish-backed Syrian fighters cross between buildings in Tadif, near the city of Al-Bab, in the eastern countryside of Aleppo province. — AFP

of Turkey and backer of the Kurds - is stuck in the middle. Despite Kurdish fears, on Monday the Pentagon insisted any unilateral offensive by Turkey would be "unacceptable". But finding an arrangement that will suit both sides is a tricky task, analysts say. Nicholas Danforth, a fellow at the German Marshall Fund, said the Americans and the Turks had different goals. "US safe zone proposals have focused on the narrow goal of keeping Turkey's border safe," he said.

But "Turkey envisions something like Afrin", which it now totally controls with its Syrian rebel proxies. Ankara's latest threats come amid signs of growing hostility towards the Syrian refugee population in Turkey, the largest in the world at 3.6 million. Fellow analyst Nicholas Heras said

Erdogan also aims to "relieve domestic political pressure on himself by resettling tens of thousands of Syrian refugees back inside Syria".

Faced with Ankara's demands, the United States would likely seek a compromise in joint patrols, including both Turkey and the anti-IS coalition, said Heras, from the Center for a New American Security. "If they give Erdogan the 'win' of forcing a Turkish military presence in some areas... in chaperoned patrols with the US and perhaps French forces, then the threat of further Turkish military action can be averted," he said. But Washington is not asking the YPG-led Syrian Democratic Forces if they will accept a Turkish military presence, he added. "It is telling the SDF this is a fait accompli." — AFP

which make coffee taste different to apple juice but it can easily tell the difference between these complex chemical mixtures." Whisky is poured over a checkerboard pattern of tiny pieces of gold and aluminum - which act as "tastebuds" - and researchers then measure how they absorb light while submerged. Slight changes of color in the gold and aluminum pieces are measured to build up a statistical profile for each of the samples tested.

"In addition to its obvious potential for use in identifying counterfeit alcohols, it could be used in food safety testing, quality control, security - really any area where a portable, reusable method of tasting would be useful." The valuation and consultancy service Rare Whisky 101 found last year in laboratory tests that of 55 "rare" Scotch whiskies bought on the secondary market, 21 were discovered to be fake. The 21 bottles collectively could have been valued at around \$635,000 (\$775,000, 692,000 euros), had they been genuine.

Annabel Meikle, director of the Keepers of the Quaich, a society of whisky experts, said the industry would welcome the technology. "We really, as an industry, would welcome something which would help to stamp out the counterfeit whisky," she told BBC radio. "I don't think the master blenders are going to be quaking in their boots but really quite grateful." Meikle said she

could identify counterfeit whisky by taste but the technology could be used to replace some of the vast amount of routine human taste checking. — AFP



GLASGOW: Photo shows Lecturer in Biomedical Engineering Alasdair Clark holding a scaled-up version of the materials which make up an artificial 'tongue'. — AFP

Artificial 'tongue' can distinguish between whiskies

LONDON: Scientists revealed Tuesday they have come up with an artificial "tongue" which can distinguish subtle differences between whiskies. Experts at the University of Glasgow have built the miniature taster which can even tell the difference between the same brand aged in different barrels, with more than 99 percent accuracy.

It can also distinguish between whiskies aged 12, 15 and 18 years. The technology can identify a host of different chemicals within a complex mixture. It could be used not only for quality control but also to combat the booming counterfeit alcohol trade: the method found several hugely expensive bottles of whisky to be fake. "We call this an artificial tongue because it acts similarly to a human tongue," said Alasdair Clark, of the University of Glasgow's School of Engineering.

"Like us, it can't identify the individual chemicals

Twitter reveals unauthorized data use

PARIS: The social network Twitter said overnight that user's personal data had been used for advertising purposes, without their consent and despite dedicated settings to counteract such events. A Twitter statement said the fault was corrected Monday and that an investigation was being conducted to determine how many people had been affected, while advising users to verify their data

sharing settings. The situation involved two cases, the first one arising if users clicked or viewed an advertisement for a mobile application and then interacted with it since May 2018. "In that case, we may have shared certain data (e.g., country code, if you engaged with the ad and when, information about the ad, etc) with trusted measurement and advertising partners, even if you didn't give us permission to do so," the statement said. The second case involved Twitter showing people ads "based on inferences we made about the devices you use, even if you did not give us permission to do so," it added. In that case, data was not used outside the company and did not contain personal information such as passwords or e-mail accounts, according to Twitter.

Twitter apologized for not respecting users' choices, and insisted that it was "taking steps to make sure we

don't make a mistake like this again." "What is there for you to do? Aside from checking your settings, we don't believe there is anything for you to do," the statement said. It provided a link to a form that allows users to contact its office of data protection for more information. The problems arose after Europe's General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) took effect in May 2018.

The GDPR binds social media platforms and websites to ensuring they have user's explicit consent to collect personal data for advertising purposes or on behalf of third-party enterprises. It also obliges companies that have been a victim of personal data loss to alert competent authorities in the country where their European headquarters are located, in this case Ireland, within 48 hours of their discovery, and the people affected as soon as possible. — AFP

News in brief

'Most wanted' millionaire

LOS ANGELES: A British-born millionaire who went on the run for more than four years has been arrested in Mexico and extradited to the US to face trial for the murder of his wife at their California home, Peter Chadwick, a 55-year-old naturalized American citizen, was located near Mexico City thanks to a tip after authorities offered a \$100,000 reward, police said at a press conference Tuesday. "Today is sweet. We apprehended a fugitive on America's Most Wanted List," Orange County district attorney Todd Spitzer said, adding: "Let's not forget it's bitter - there's a victim, a loving wife of 21 years, a mother of three kids." In 2012, Chadwick had called police and claimed that a handyman had killed his wife Quee Choo Lim before taking him hostage. — AFP

Two Iran Guards killed

DUBAI: Two members of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards have been killed in clashes with militants in a northwestern region near the border with Turkey, Iranian state television reported yesterday. "The governor of Maku said two Guards were martyred in a clash with terrorists while defending the fatherland," the television reported. It gave no further details. There are frequent clashes in western Iran between the Islamic Republic's security forces and Iranian Kurdish militant groups mostly based in neighbouring Iraq, including the Party of Free Life of Kurdistan (PJAK), accused by Tehran of links to Kurdish PKK insurgents in Turkey. — Reuters

'Elder care' trafficking ring

MADRID: Police said yesterday they have broken up a family-run human trafficking ring that smuggled Nicaraguan women into Spain where they were forced to care for old people. All seven members of the gang, including two sisters, were arrested during raids in Madrid and the northeastern regions of La Rioja and Huesca, the Civil Guard police force said in a statement. They all belonged to the same Nicaraguan family. One of the ring leaders, a 48-year-old woman, was arrested at the capital's airport as she arrived with three "victims from Nicaragua who were going to be exploited," the statement added. Police suspect that 50 women were brought from Nicaragua to Spain since 2016 and forced to hand over virtually all of the money they earned by looking after the elderly or seriously ill. — AFP

IS bomb kills 5 in Syria

AL-QAHTANIYA: A car bombing claimed by the Islamic State group killed five people, including three children, in a Kurdish-held town in northeast Syria yesterday, a war monitor said. The explosive-rigged vehicle detonated in Al-Qahtaniya, a town in Hasakeh province, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based monitor. Hoker Ararat, a security official, said the bomb was detonated remotely in front of the town post office. "Three children were killed in the bombing because it was very close to a primary school," he said. A member of the local security forces was wounded in the attack, he added. State news agency SANA also reported the bombing, saying it killed several people, including children. IS claimed the attack on its Telegram channel. — AFP

Double suicide attack kills 3

KANO: Two female suicide bombers killed three civilians and wounded eight in a suspected Boko Haram attack in northeast Nigeria, emergency services said yesterday. The twin blasts tore through a crowd late Tuesday in the town of Mafa, some 50 kilometers from regional capital Maiduguri. "The female bombers killed three people and wounded eight others," Bello Danbatta, head of security for the State Emergency Management Agency (SEMA) in Borno state said. The assailants entered the town among a group of local women who had gone to fetch firewood for cooking, Danbatta said. Local district spokesman Adamu Mohammed, who gave the same toll, said the bombers waited until around 8:30pm before launching their attack. — AFP

International

Lone wolves and free speech hinder domestic terror fight

Surge in attacks by right-wing extremists in US

WASHINGTON: The surge in attacks by right-wing extremists in the United States has caught law enforcement flat-footed and calling for tough new "domestic terrorism" laws. But the tendency of attackers to act alone with no support network and little forewarning, plus the Trump administration's hesitance to pursue a movement that many identify with the president, continue to hamper prevention efforts, experts say.

According to the New America think tank, since the September 11, 2001 Al-Qaeda attacks the number of deaths inside the United States from far right extremist attacks has outpaced those by Islamic jihadists, 109 to 104. After treating extremists like neo-Nazis, white supremacists and anti-Semites as a secondary threat for a long time, the FBI has stepped up its monitoring of such groups.

Yet that didn't stop a 21-year-old Texas man who wrote of an "invasion" of immigrants across the Mexican border from shooting dead 22 people, many of whom were Latinos, in El Paso on August 3. Nor did it keep a 26-year-old anti-Semitic truck driver from slaughtering 11 Jews in a Pittsburgh synagogue last October. Critics say President Donald Trump, himself accused of fomenting racism, has not firmly put his own support behind a campaign against right-wing extremism.

"It's time that we deal with this domestic terrorism set of issues with as much energy and commitment and resources as we've dealt

with the set of international terrorism issues," Nick Rasmussen, the former director of the National Counterterrorism Center, told MSNBC on Tuesday. "If we don't have that backing from the president, if the president doesn't grab onto this and actually show some leadership on it, it's hard to imagine we are going to make some progress."

Hundreds of probes

Since the 9/11 attacks, US counter-terrorism investigators have been laser-focused on jihadists like Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State group (IS). With a surge in domestic mass shootings unrelated to extremist Islam, FBI Director Christopher Wray insisted in July that they were now putting significant resources into domestic terror threats. With some 850 "domestic terrorism" investigations currently open, Wray said that so far this year around 100 people have been arrested in relation to political extremism.

The majority of those cases, he said, are "what you might call white supremacist violence." But success has been impeded by both US laws and the nature of the attackers and their ideology. None of attackers in the recent mass shootings were on the FBI's radar. The agency was not aware of the El Paso shooter, who published a racist screed upon his attack. Nor did they know about the 19-year-old man who subscribed to white supremacist ideals and killed one person in Gilroy, California in an attempted mass attack on July 28.

Evasive 'lone wolves'

By contrast, the FBI was able to arrest nearly 200 potential jihadists over the past decade because they sought affinity online or by other means with IS or other jihadist groups, which investigators monitor closely. FBI assistant director Michael McGarrity told Congress that it is extremely hard to detect people who self-radicalize online and are not connected to any organization. "The current racially motivated violent extremist threat is decentralized and primarily characterized by lone actors," he said in a May hearing.

Experts also say it is impossible to monitor potentially hundreds of thousands of people legally expressing extremist views online. And given the open US market for guns, a potential white supremacist attacker can easily arm himself without attracting attention. "Frequently, these individuals act without a clear group affiliation or guidance, making them challenging to identify, investigate, and disrupt," said McGarrity.

Freedom of speech

The FBI is also hamstrung by the US constitution, which guarantees free speech and guards against unreasonable searches. Post-9/11 laws gave authorities sweeping powers to monitor any international communications between a US individual and someone linked to a designated terror group like IS. But they don't have that power to monitor an American discussing extreme ideas domestically. Those



TEXAS: People pray and pay their respects at the makeshift memorial for victims of the shooting that left a total of 22 people dead at the Cielo Vista Mall Walmart (background) in El Paso, Texas. — AFP

discussions are considered free speech and the FBI cannot open a probe without evidence of a violent plot developing.

"Our focus is on the violence," Wray told Congress last month. "We, the FBI, don't investigate ideology, no matter how repug-

nant. When it turns to violence, we're all over it." For that reason the FBI and some politicians are calling for Congress to legislate a specific federal crime of domestic terrorism that would expand law enforcement's ability to get ahead of attacks. — AFP

Italy Senate backs train link with France, widening coalition rift

ROME: The Italian Senate yesterday rejected a motion by one of the ruling coalition parties, the 5-Star Movement, to block an alpine rail link with France, paving the way for the long-contested project to continue. The planned line, meant to connect the Italian city of Turin with Lyon in France, includes a 58-km tunnel through the Alps. It is fiercely opposed by 5-Star but supported by its coalition partner, the right-wing League, and by most other parties in parliament.

The upper house of parliament rejected the 5-Star's motion by 181 votes to 110. The 5-Star Movement is the largest party in parliament but it was outvoted by the combined forces of the League and opposition parties from the left and right. A subsequent motion by the opposition Democratic Party, in favor of the TAV, was passed by 180 votes to 109.

Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte said last month that new financial offers from the European Union and France had made the infrastructure, known as the TAV, less costly for Italy, and it would now cost more to block it than to complete it. Italy then wrote to the European Union pledging to go ahead with it, according to the European Parliament president David Sassoli. The TAV, which has been repeatedly held up by protests and bottlenecks since it was first planned some 30 years ago, is among a raft of issues that have divided the League and 5-Star in recent months, as the two parties have squabbled incessantly.

5-Star says tunneling through the Alps hurts the environment and the project is a waste of money that would be better spent on upgrading Italy's existing transport network. The League says it will create jobs and promote growth, and shifting freight from road to rail is environmentally friendly. League leader Matteo Salvini said on Tuesday that tensions with 5-Star meant the government could soon collapse, and the parliamentary debate ahead of the Senate vote exposed the growing gulf between the two parties. — Reuters

'Violent' explosion rocks Danish office

STOCKHOLM: Danish police said yesterday foul play was involved in a powerful explosion that rocked the national tax agency in Copenhagen, causing severe damage to the building's exterior but no serious injuries. The cause of the blast, which occurred Tuesday around 10:00 pm at the agency's headquarters in the capital's Osterbro district, was not immediately known, Copenhagen police said.

But investigators were treating the incident as a criminal act. "It's something someone has done on purpose," Copenhagen police inspector Jorgen Bergen Skov, told a press briefing yesterday, adding that it was too early to say what the motive could have been. Investigators and bomb sniffer dogs were at the scene yesterday, police said. The blast had smashed windows and torn apart the front of the building. One person was hit by flying fragments and sought treatment at a hospital. Two people were inside the agency at the time of the explosion but escaped injury, a police spokeswoman told AFP, adding that employees have been asked to work from home yesterday. Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen has described the incident as a "deliberate act", but said it was too early to speak of a "terror attack".

"We are talking about a serious crime and a very violent explosion, so it is a wonder no one was seriously injured," Frederiksen told reporters. Danish Tax Minister Morten Bodsbo told the Ritzau news agency it was "pretty obvious the facade has been blown up" deliberately, calling it a "totally unacceptable act". "Copenhagen police are conducting an investigation, but if anyone knows anything they should come forward," he said. — AFP

UNAIDS to get new chief after divisive Sidibe era

GENEVA: AIDS experts have voiced concern over the future of the United Nations body tasked with fighting the epidemic after top officials stood behind a former agency chief accused of serious mismanagement. Opinions on the former executive director of UNAIDS, the Malian national Michel Sidibe, remain deeply divided.

An Independent Expert Panel (IEP) report commissioned by UNAIDS's governing body said he "created a patriarchal culture tolerating harassment and abuse of authority". The agency's culture under Sidibe also failed "to uphold the United Nations' laws and values", the IEP said. But UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres, who is due to choose a new UNAIDS chief within weeks, has continued to praise Sidibe.

Sidibe, who was born in 1952, left UNAIDS in May after a decade-long tenure to become Mali's health minister. After Sidibe resigned, Guterres applauded his "dedication and championing of an AIDS response that is people-centred and anchored in human rights". "It is rather unfortunate that the secretary general himself, despite all these problems we have found, would still go ahead and praise (Sidibe)," said Penninah Iutung, the Africa bureau chief for the AIDS Healthcare Foundation, one of the world's largest HIV/AIDS organizations.

"Culture change is very difficult," Iutung told AFP, adding that UNAIDS reform will require leadership that does not equivocate about the past. In an email to AFP, Sidibe did not criticize the IEP report, saying only: "The report was duly considered by the UNAIDS Program Coordination Board (PCB) together with the UNAIDS Management Response and the PCB has decided on actions it deemed appropriate and relevant."

A good leader 'indeed'

The IEP report was submitted in December after several managerial issues emerged at UNAIDS. Sidibe had been reprimanded for mishandling a sexual assault investigation involving one of his top deputies. He was also heard



Malian Michel Sidibe

fiercely criticizing whistleblowers in a leaked recording of a staff meeting. The IEP's research showed reluctance among staff to report abuse because they believed nothing would be done.

The report included a submission that described UNAIDS "as a predators' prey ground". "You can use promises of jobs, contracts, and all sorts of opportunities and abuse your power to get whatever you want especially in terms of sexual favors," the testimony said. Instead of facing consequences, alleged wrongdoers were "moved aside, promoted or given extended administrative leave".

The "failure of (UNAIDS) leadership to meet its responsibilities is reflected in repeated examples of favoritism, preferment, and ethical blindness", the IEP said. Sidibe himself "accepted no responsibility," for the agency's problems, it added. Despite these findings, UNAIDS's acting executive director Gunilla Carlsson has publicly backed him. Asked by AFP last month if Sidibe had been a good executive director, Carlsson said "yes, indeed," citing "a lot of good progress in the AIDS response over the last 10 years".

'Rules were followed'

Internal UNAIDS contracts given to AFP show that Sidibe's wife, Christine Sidibe, was hired in 2015 by the agency's Djibouti country office to assist with resource mobilization. The documents show the initial contract was for 15 working days. UNAIDS, which confirmed the authenticity of the documents, said it was valued at \$14,000. The contract also fell below the threshold that required approval

by a "financial or administrative authority", the documents show. UNAIDS stressed that Christine Sidibe had the requisite experience for the role. The contract was "approved at the regional level and the former executive director was not involved in the contracting or the work carried out", the agency said. "The applicable rules were followed." In an email, Christine Sidibe told AFP she had "intensive experience working in HIV/AIDS issues," including 13 years at the World Health Organization.

After retiring from WHO, she consulted for several major organisations, she added. "The Executive Director of UNAIDS was not involved or aware of this (UNAIDS) work until I accepted the offer," she said. The IEP nevertheless found that under Sidibe "every aspect of human resources-related decision-making (was) subject to the Executive Director's authority and discretion". IEP members declined to answer follow-up questions from AFP, including concerning Christine Sidibe's contract.

Paula Donovan of the Code Blue Campaign, which has been at the forefront of exposing alleged abuses at UNAIDS, told AFP that "from an ethical viewpoint" Christine Sidibe's contract should have been subject to oversight at the headquarters. If the executive director's wife getting a contract that "skidded in just below the level requiring vetting... is not firmly against the rules, then the rules must be changed," added Donovan, co-director of the NGO AIDS-Free World.

AFP has also received internal UNAIDS emails that show staff discussing funeral arrangements for Sidibe's mother Jeanne, who died in 2017. The emails also indicate that several UNAIDS employees flew to Mali's capital Bamako for the funeral. There is no evidence of agency funds being spent on the funeral. Those who travelled to Mali did so on their "own time and personal expense," the agency said. Emails among staff about the funeral were necessary because there was a need for "security measures to be put in place", it added. The IEP found that Sidibe fostered a "cult of personality" around himself, where personal loyalty was prioritized.

Donovan argued that there was "probably no better evidence" of this personality cult than the fact that staff participated in funeral logistics over work email with no apparent objections. Responding to AFP's questions about the Djibouti contract and his mother's funeral, Sidibe said: "I can assure you that all the actions described by you were taken in accordance with the applicable regulatory framework and approved at the relevant level." — AFP

Biden ties Trump's 'toxic tongue' to US shootings

LOS ANGELES: Democratic presidential front-runner Joe Biden yesterday accused Republican President Donald Trump of fueling the white supremacy blamed for several US mass shootings, as Trump prepared to visit two cities hit by massacres last weekend. "In both clear language and in code, this president has fanned the flames of white supremacy in this nation," former Vice President Biden was expected to say in a speech in Burlington, Iowa, according to excerpts released in advance.

One of his rivals for the Democratic presidential nomination, US Senator Cory Booker, was planning to give his own speech on white nationalism and gun violence at the historically black South Carolina church where white supremacist Dylann Roof shot and killed nine people in 2015.

"These acts of hatred do not happen in a vacuum," Booker was expected to say at Emanuel African Methodist Episcopal Church in Charleston, according to his prepared remarks. "They are harvested only once they have been planted." The speeches come amid intensifying criticism of what many say is incendiary rhetoric by Trump following back-to-back mass shootings this past weekend. The president, who has insisted he is not a racist, said Americans must "condemn racism, bigotry and white supremacy" in a speech to the nation on Monday.

On Saturday, a gunman killed 22 people in El Paso, a Texas city on the border with Mexico. Law enforcement agencies say he was driven by hatred for Hispanics, citing an online manifesto apparently written by the shooter that was rife with anti-immigrant hatred. In the second mass shooting 13 hours later, a gunman in Dayton, Ohio, fatally shot nine people, including his sister, before he was killed by police. Trump's rhetoric, including calling Central



DETROIT: Democratic presidential candidate and former Vice President Joe Biden takes a photo with a guest at Detroit One Coney Island Restaurant in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

Americans trying to enter the United States "an invasion," and his hard-line immigration policies have exposed him to condemnation since the El Paso shooting.

"How far is it from Trump's saying this 'is an invasion' to the shooter in El Paso declaring 'his attack is a response to the Hispanic invasion of Texas?' Not far at all," Biden was expected to say. Trump aides deny his rhetoric was a cause of the shootings. In his national address, the president proposed reforming mental health laws, working with social media to detect possible mass shooters and keeping guns away from people considered potentially violent. But he stopped short of calling for major gun law reforms.

He plans to visit El Paso and Dayton. Biden and Booker are among 24 candidates trying to become the nominee to take on Trump in next November's election. Most of the Democrats have called for stricter gun laws, including universal background checks for purchases and banning

assault-style weapons; Booker has also proposed requiring licenses to own firearms.

Biden was expected to invoke the rhetoric of previous Republican and Democratic presidents, including Republican George W Bush and Democrat Bill Clinton, who he said "opposed hate". In Iowa, Biden planned to say, "we have a president who has aligned himself with the darkest forces in the nation. We have a president with a toxic tongue who has publicly and unapologetically embraced a political strategy of hate, racism, and division."

In his prepared remarks, Booker rejected the debate over whether Trump is a racist, saying that what really matters is how people intend to address the problem. "If the answer to the question, 'Do racism and white supremacy exist?' is yes, then the real question isn't who is or isn't a racist - but who is and isn't doing something about it," he planned to say. — Reuters

International

N Korea says missile launches are warning to US, S Korea over drill

Latest launch - the fourth in less than two weeks

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un said his country's latest launch of tactical guided missiles was a warning to the United States and South Korea over their joint military drills that began this week, state media KCNA reported yesterday. Tuesday's missile launch, the North's fourth in less than two weeks, came amid stalled denuclearization talks with Washington and US-South Korea military exercises, although Washington and Seoul played down the tests.

Kim said the latest missile test was "an occasion to send an adequate warning to the joint military drill now underway by the US and South Korean authorities", according to KCNA. The "new-type tactical guided missiles", launched from the western area of North Korea, flew across the peninsula over the capital and the central inland region to "precisely hit the targeted islet" in the sea off the North's east coast, KCNA said. Its report confirmed the South Korean military's analysis of their trajectories on Tuesday.

The launches "clearly verified the reliability, security and actual war capacity" of the weapon, KCNA said, echoing analysts who said the launches showed North Korea's confidence in its missile technology. The United States and South Korea kicked off their largely computer-simulated Dong Maeng - or "alliance" - exercises this week as an alternative to previous large-scale annual drills that were halted to expedite denuclearization talks. North Korea decries

such exercises as a rehearsal for war aimed at toppling its leadership. US Defense Secretary Mark Esper, on his first tour of Asia, said during a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe in Tokyo that North Korea remained of great concern. Esper said on Tuesday the United States won't overreact to the missile tests. Lee Sang-min, a spokesman for South Korea's Unification Ministry that handles inter-Korean ties, urged the North to stop the tests and explore confidence-building measures such as returning to a joint military committee.

Leif-Eric Easley, who teaches international security at Ewha University in Seoul, said South Korea and the United States had reduced and refocused their joint military exercises to allow space for diplomacy with North Korea. "But Pyongyang shows no appreciation for this, keeping its own exercise schedule unchanged, conducting provocative weapons tests, and dialling up its rhetoric," he said.

Denuclearisation talks are yet to resume after being stalled since a second summit between US President Donald Trump and Kim broke down in February. The two leaders agreed to revive them during their impromptu meeting at the Demilitarized Zone between the two Koreas in June. US national security adviser John Bolton highlighted on Tuesday Kim's pledge to Trump not to resume tests of intercontinental-range missiles that threaten the United States. — Reuters



UNDISCLOSED: Photo shows launch of two new-type tactical guided missiles during its demonstration fire at undisclosed western part location of the country. — AFP

Armed soldiers patrol silent streets after Kashmir curfew

SRINAGAR: Armed soldiers stand in front of coils of barbed wire in Indian Kashmir's summer capital of Srinagar as a massive security lockdown imposed on the restive region by the Hindu nationalist government takes hold. An eerie silence hangs over the city, punctuated by sporadic bursts of gunfire and the rumbling of armoured vehicles moving through near-empty streets. New Delhi stripped the Himalayan region of its seven-decade-long semi-autonomous status Monday through a contentious presidential decree, just hours after it imposed a crippling curfew on the valley.

Home to more than one million people, Srinagar now appears a ghost-town: armed soldiers on street corners and in front of barbed-wire barricades are among the few people to be seen. Locals and even security personnel fear that once the curfew lifts, unrest will break out as protesters vent their anger and frustration at the national government's action. "You can't hold a state under curfew forever," Iltija Javed, daughter of detained former chief minister Mehbooba Mufti, told AFP from Srinagar. "I'm sure people in the valley are not going to take this lying down."

An armed rebellion against Indian rule has raged in the valley since 1989, claiming more than 70,000 lives, mostly civilians. Long a semi-autonomous state where only local residents could buy land or take government jobs, Kashmir's new status is as a territory directly ruled by New Delhi. With phone and internet services still cut and movement around Kashmir restricted, it is difficult to gauge how residents feel about their loss of autonomy - if they know at all. But those that AFP spoke to were fearful about what will happen next. "Not even in my wildest dreams had I thought India would ever do this to us. I have lost every hope in the Indian democracy and there's a sense of hate for them now," said Srinagar local Shah Nawaz Hussain. Sporadic protests have taken place, and one youth chased by police jumped into a river and died. At least six people were admitted to a Srinagar hospital with gunshot wounds and other injuries, a source at the facility told AFP.

More than 100 arrested

Authorities continue to insist the region is peaceful.



KASHMIR: Security personnel stand guard next to closed shops in Jammu yesterday. — AFP

although media reports said more than 100 people including political leaders and activists have been arrested for being a threat to the peace. There is already hostility towards scores of migrant laborers lugging heavy bags as they look for transport out of the territory. "Go back from here, this is our land," voices shout from a nearby building.

"We know Kashmir is seething, it will explode into violence but we don't know when," a security official told AFP on condition of anonymity. "I don't know how the lockdown can be lifted without an explosion of protests." He told AFP the satellite phones issued to around 300 administration and police officers were barely working, adding: "It's as if some invisible natural calamity has hit us." Meanwhile, soldiers man checkpoints about every 100 meters on main roads and only people in essential jobs are allowed to leave their homes.

Large coils of razor wire cut off neighborhoods as thousands of paramilitary troops patrol the streets. Within neighborhoods, some residents walk along small lanes while young children ride on scooters to rid themselves of boredom. Most shops are closed and residents said no fresh produce is arriving. Pigeons and stray dogs in the scenic squares are untroubled by tourists, who fled in droves over the weekend after authorities ordered them to leave.

An oft-repeated sentiment expressed by locals to AFP is they have lost their identity. "We are doomed, we have lost our identity today... We never felt like Indian citizens but now 'officially' this is India," Srinagar resident Mohammed Asif, 28, said. For university student Adil Ahmad, from central Kashmir's Budgam district, the development is nothing short of a "calamity". "There's no hope for the future. May God help us," he said. — AFP

Baby box opens lid on S Africa's adoption crisis

JOHANNESBURG: When the alarm sounds at an orphanage in the Berea district of Johannesburg, all eyes turn to a video surveillance screen in the living room. The screen is linked to a camera inside a metal box, built into the perimeter wall of the orphanage garden. Today, it is a false alarm, but the night before, at about 8:30 pm, the alarm sounded and an abandoned baby was collected from the box. "It was a boy, five months old and healthy," said Francinah Phago, the manager of the children's home run by the Door of Hope charity.

During her 15 years at the orphanage, Phago has seen scores of babies left in the simple metal box, which has one door opening onto the street and another door opening into the garden. It was installed in 1999 to provide a last resort for desperate parents forced to give up their infants. About 3,000 children are abandoned each year in South Africa, according to estimates by the National Adoption Coalition.

But according to some activists, the total number of abandoned children could be as high as 10,000 each year. Many are abandoned in the street in the first weeks of their life and die of neglect. "Baby F" - the latest arrival - is the 216th to join Door of Hope through the two "hole-in-the-wall" boxes provided at its Berea house. He is one of the lucky ones, Phago said, during a brief moment of quiet while 17 infants in the house were napping.

'Not protecting young women'

"There are lots of babies abandoned on the street, on the side of the road, in parks or in toilets," she said, adding that police recently arrived with a baby picked up in the street by a passer-by. Dee Blackie, founder of the National Adoption Coalition, took up the cause after seeing a photo in a newspaper of a newborn baby left for dead in a landfill in Soweto township. "It's important to remember that women who abandon babies have often been abandoned themselves - by the father, by their family, and communities and society as a whole," she said. "We're not protecting young women in this country."

According to Blackie's research, almost half of all pregnancies that lead to abandonment are the result of rape. Many of the mothers are minors or immigrants, and are often aware of their condition only after the legal deadline for an abortion, which is set at 20 weeks in South Africa. In a country where almost half of the population lives below the poverty line, mothers using the baby box "are in a desperate situation and making desperate decisions," Blackie said.

'You let go of your traditions'

At Door of Hope, mothers sometimes prefer to leave their children directly with staff. "Most of the time, they cry," Phago said. "They love their child and do not want to leave it, but because of their situation, they decide to have it adopted." Adoption "is a taboo in our black community," said grandmother Thuli Mahlangu, wringing her hands. Four years ago, her only daughter - then 21 - became pregnant by accident. "It would be unfair to bring another person into the way we live," Mahlangu said. "We survive, we do not live."

After long weeks of reflection, Mahlangu and her daughter made the painful decision to have the baby adopted - without discussing it with most of their loved ones. "They consider that adoption is like throwing your baby away," she said, tears streaming down her cheeks. "Our first thought was 'we are going to be judged.'" But the two women stuck to their decision. "You let go of your beliefs and your traditions, and go for what seems right to you," she said. Two years later, her daughter again became pregnant and that child also was put up for adoption.

Adoption agencies and children's rights groups have been worried about a drop in the number of adoptions in the country: just 1,186 children were adopted in 2018, a quarter of the number eight years ago. Activists attribute the fall to a 2010 Children's Act, which introduced more stringent conditions in a bid to prevent child abuse and trafficking. The figures are likely to drop further under a proposal to ban adoption fees, which could push many private agencies to close. "This legal amendment will essentially close down all international adoptions, and all private adoptions," Blackie said. — AFP

Oh rats! Store apologizes after viral rodent video

TOKYO: Japanese convenience store chain FamilyMart apologized after video went viral on social media of rats scurrying about one of its stores in Tokyo's popular Shibuya district, prompting it to close the outlet until further notice. Video clips posted on YouTube and Twitter appeared to show at least six of the long-tailed rodents, with some descending from refrigerated display racks stocked with "onigiri" rice balls and bento meals before scampering down an aisle. Reuters was unable to independently verify the authenticity of the video. Public broadcaster NHK said it had been viewed more than 5 million times.

"We deeply apologize for making you feel uncomfortable and uneasy," FamilyMart said in a statement on its website about an "unsanitary" rat video taken at one of its stores. The store is located in Shibuya, a company spokesman said. "We take this case seriously," the company statement said, noting that it had suspended business at the outlet since Monday while it investigates the cause. FamilyMart will take disinfection and prevention measures and decide whether to reopen the store taking into consideration the surrounding environment, it said. — Reuters



SILIGURI: Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) workers pay tribute to India's former foreign minister Sushma Swaraj in Siliguri yesterday. — AFP

Veteran Indian politician Swaraj passes away

NEW DELHI: Veteran Indian politician Sushma Swaraj, who most recently served as minister of external affairs, passed away on Tuesday, following a cardiac arrest. Swaraj, 67, a senior leader of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), had opted out of contesting elections earlier this year citing health reasons.

"A glorious chapter in Indian politics comes to an end,"

tweeted Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "India grieves the demise of a remarkable leader who devoted her life to public service and bettering lives of the poor." A former Supreme Court lawyer, Swaraj was the senior most woman in Modi's cabinet in his first term, which ended in May. Swaraj was an active social media user, who often responded on Twitter and intervened to help people seeking assistance.

She was also known as a fiery politician and nationalist. In 2017, she threatened to rescind the visas of all foreign executives of Amazon.com, if the e-commerce giant did not immediately take down doormats resembling the Indian flag from its Canadian portal. President Ram Nath Kovind said India had "lost a much loved leader who epitomized dignity, courage & integrity in public life." The opposition Congress party said it was "saddened". — Reuters

Analysis

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W African slavery lives on, 400 yrs after trade began

Blessing was only six years old when her mother arranged for her to become an unpaid housemaid for a family in the Nigerian city of Abuja, on the promise they would put her through school. In her home town in south-west Nigeria, her mother had trouble making enough money to feed her three children. But when Blessing arrived in Abuja, instead of going to school, the family worked her round-the-clock, beat her with an electrical wire if she forgot one of her chores and fed her rotten leftovers.

When her mother later moved to the city to be closer to her daughter, Blessing was unable to be alone with her when she came to visit. "They would tell me that my mother was coming, that I should not tell her what was happening to me, that I should not even say anything," she says of the family. "If she asks me how am I doing I should say I am doing fine, they said."

As the world marks 400 years since the first recorded African slaves arrived in North America, slavery remains a modern-day scourge. Over 40 million people are estimated to be trapped in forced labor, forced marriages or other forms of sexual exploitation, according to the United Nations. Blessing, now 11, is one such victim. She was rescued in 2016 by the Women Trafficking and Child Labour Eradication Foundation (WOTCLEF), an anti-human trafficking group, after two years of isolation and abuse. She is still under the care of WOTCLEF, which gave consent for her to be interviewed for this story.

Africa has the highest prevalence of slavery, with more than seven victims for every 1,000 people, according to a 2017 report by human rights group Walk Free Foundation and the International Labour Office. The report defines slavery as "situations of exploitation that a person cannot refuse or leave because of threats, violence, coercion, deception, and/or abuse of power." Trafficking of sex workers, many of them tricked into thinking they will get employment doing something else, is one of the most widespread and abusive forms of modern-day slavery. The experiences of Claudia Osadolor and Progress Omovhie show how poverty increases women's vulnerability to exploitation.

After Osadolor's family in Benin City in southern Nigeria hit hard times, she dropped out of university and headed to Russia after a cousin told her about someone who could help her get work there, with travel expenses paid. She left Nigeria with three other girls she did not know in June 2012. When she got to Russia a "madam" came to pick her up. Osadolor, now 28, says she was forced into prostitution and suffered internal injuries after being made to sleep with up to 20 men a day. She was trapped for three years, with the madam coming round every two weeks to take almost all of her money.

She cries as she recounts the trauma and her relief at escaping thanks to a chance meeting with a representative of the International Organization for Migration (IOM) at a metro station. "I feel like I paid the ultimate price for my family," she says. "But I thank God that I came back alive." Osadolor has been able to reintegrate into society after training as a tailor back in Benin with the support of Nigerian charity Pathfinders Justice Initiative.

Omovhie, 33, also found herself enslaved after leaving Nigeria in 2015 in search of work. She paid an agent 700,000 naira (\$2,290) - money she had borrowed - to smuggle her on a journey across the Sahara desert to Libya, hoping eventually to go to Europe. The intended final destination of people smuggled across Africa like this is often Europe, but few make it that far. Many are jailed or sold as indentured labourers when they get to Libya. Some are even sold on slave markets, according to aid groups - a chilling echo of the trans-Saharan slave trade of centuries past.

Once in Libya, Omovhie says she started working long hours as a cleaner for a well-off Arab family in Tripoli, often on an empty stomach. "I worked three months and they did not pay me in that house," she said. Another agent promised to help Omovhie escape by sending her to Italy, but she was rounded up by police on the Libyan coast and detained there for six months. She returned to Nigeria in July under a state program to help refugees and migrants. It has helped over 14,000 Nigerians return home since 2017. Blessing and Claudia Osadolor are pseudonyms requested to protect their anonymity. — Reuters

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



Pakistani Kashmiri people shout anti-Indian slogans during a demonstration in Islamabad yesterday. — AFP

Modi's high-stakes gamble with Kashmir

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's strongarm move to tighten control on Muslim-majority Kashmir is a gamble that could trigger conflict with Pakistan and reignite an insurgency that has already cost tens of thousands of lives, experts warn. Revoking Kashmir's special status, stripping away constitutionally guaranteed privileges to land and jobs, is widely seen as Modi's most spectacular effort yet to push his Hindu nationalist agenda after a landslide election victory in May.

His government insists it will bring peace and prosperity, but the massive military reinforcement that accompanied the measure is a clear acknowledgement of the underlying risks. While many Hindus celebrated, the Kashmir valley - focus of a 30-year-old Muslim insurgency against Indian rule - was smothered under one of the heaviest security clampdowns it has seen. Tens of thousands of extra Indian troops enforced a blanket curfew on top of a total communications blackout, but reports still emerged of sporadic protests and gunfire in the streets.

A S Dulat, a former chief of the Indian intelligence service and government advisor on Kashmir, said keeping a lid on violence was critical if Modi was to claim victory for his dramatic power play. "But, my own apprehension is there will be repercussions and there will be an escalation of violence," he told AFP.

Anger and alienation

D S Hooda, a retired lieutenant general who once com-

manded Indian forces in Kashmir, also voiced fears of "anger, alienation and law and order disturbances". India already had 500,000 troops in Kashmir before the reinforcements arrived. Militant activity, after some years of decline, reared up after the killing of charismatic rebel leader Burhan Wani in 2016, and Kashmiris say the current lockdown will only fuel a sense of growing resentment.

"People are not going to take this lying down," said Iltija Javed, daughter of former Kashmir chief minister Mehbooba Mufti who was detained at the weekend. "It's not physically possible to keep people under captivity for the rest of their lives," Javed told AFP from Srinagar. Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party believes it is righting a historical wrong which saw outsiders - mainly Hindus - excluded from economic power when Kashmir was granted privileged status after independence.

But many remain uncomfortable with the manner in which that status was stripped away, using a presidential decree with no debate in Kashmir and only token discussion in the New Delhi parliament. "The manner of its execution - while extraordinarily efficient - has brought deceit, disinformation and communal politics, once again, to the centre stage," South Asia counter terrorism expert Ajai Sahni told AFP.

How will Pakistan react?

Another key concern is Pakistan, whose Prime Minister Imran Khan vowed Tuesday to challenge India's "illegal" action at the UN Security Council. Late yesterday,

Islamabad took a step further, announcing it was expelling the Indian High Commissioner and suspending bilateral trade in a downgrading of diplomatic ties over the decision. The nuclear-armed rivals have already fought two wars over Kashmir, which is divided between the two countries and claimed by both. Earlier this year they came close to war yet again, after a militant attack in Indian-held Kashmir was claimed by a group based in Pakistan, igniting tit-for-tat air strikes.

Ankit Panda, a New York-based geopolitical analyst, stressed that Kashmir was a "core" interest of the Pakistan military which dominates the country's foreign and security policy. "So we may see Pakistan step up its attempts to raise tensions ... or Pakistan increasing its use of non-state groups to begin attacking Indian paramilitary personnel in Kashmir," Panda said. "If the Pakistani military decides it's going to react in that way ... things start to get very dangerous."

Indian Home Minister Amit Shah, a key architect of Modi's action, compounded international concerns when he told parliament that uniting Kashmir - including a small section under Chinese control - was a cause worth dying for. Sadanand Dhume, an analyst at the American Enterprise Institute in Washington, said it was still too early to say if Modi's move would be seen "as a wise decision or an historic blunder". "But two things are clear: India has ignored Kashmiri sentiment, and taken a risky decision with almost unfathomable implications," Dhume said. — AFP

Agri's secret weapon: Empowering women

Women farmers face the brunt of the threat posed by climate change, yet they may hold the key to helping limit its fallout, according to a landmark UN report to be released this week. Although they make up more than half the agricultural labour force in developing nations, according to the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), women farmers are far less likely than men to own the land they till. This makes it difficult for them to invest in sustainable practices that would enhance yields while protecting Nature.

Methods such as proper fertilizer management, buying better and more drought resistant seeds as well as mechanical equipment to boost productivity, can help humanity tread that delicate path between

food security and climate change mitigation, experts say. Scientists and policymakers from around the world are gathered in Geneva to finalise the most detailed scientific assessment yet of the impact that industrial agriculture, deforestation, and food waste have on our planet.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's report is expected to lay out the stark tradeoffs facing a world struggling to feed 10 billion people by 2050 while avoiding catastrophic global warming. A draft summary of the vast assessment said that empowering women would bring "co-benefits to household food security and sustainable land management."

Hindou Oumarou Ibrahim, coordinator of the Indigenous Women and Peoples Association of Chad, works with women farmers in the landlocked African nation. "There's a lack of recognition of land rights to women both officially and traditionally - men normally have land and they distribute it to the boys, not the girls," she told AFP. "Most of the time women farmers are the ones feeding the communities whereas the men are selling and doing it for their businesses."

'Man is the default'

The IPCC report is expected to address the need to boost nutrition in poorer nations while slashing food waste and loss, which are a major contributor of greenhouse gas emissions. The FAO says closing the gender gap in agriculture could increase yields on women's farms by 20-30 percent, potentially reducing the number of hungry people in the world by close to a fifth. Teresa Anderson, climate policy coordinator for ActionAid, said governments had for too long seen agriculture as a male-only sector. "Policymakers often assume that man is the default human, or the default farmer," she said. "But women farmers do things differently and face specific challenges in agriculture precisely because they are women."

In developing nations, women farmers are often also tasked with raising families, lack access to male-dominated trading markets, and have little protection against extortion or theft. They are also uniquely vulnerable to drought, flash-floods and land degradation made worse by climate change. In Chad, Ibrahim encouraged women farmers to form cooperatives to close the power imbalance with their male

peers. "This way they have better voices among the community and better production. It helped them to generate more revenue, and that's empowered them in terms of the decisions they can take." She also worked with women, many of whom were innumerate, on an accounting system based on weights and bars, allowing them to carry out more precise stock-takes - vital when the rainy season comes.

'Important for everyone'

Ibrahim wants to see land tenure laws brought into the 21st Century, allowing women to club together and buy the land they work, increasing their ability to plan long-term and think sustainably. "This is important not only to communities but also to industry, as small farms feed millions of people," she said.

Fernanda Carvalho, global policy manager for WWF's Climate and Energy Practice, said women could also prove pivotal in the generational shift away from high-carbon diets. "We need transformational change in the food sector, and women have a key role in co-parenting and providing education in the long-term effect in diet and a shift in consumption patterns," she said. — AFP

Could Mexico cactus solve world's plastics problem?

Mexico's prickly pear cactus, which is emblazoned on the country's flag, could soon play a new and innovative role in the production of biodegradable plastics. A packaging material that is made from the plant has been developed by a Mexican researcher and is offering a promising solution to one of the world's biggest pollution conundrums. "The pulp is strained to obtain a juice that I then use," said Sandra Pascoe, who developed the product and works at the Atemajac Valley University in the western city of Guadalajara.

That substance is then mixed with non-toxic additives and stretched to produce sheets which are colored with pigments and folded to form different types of packaging. "What we're doing is trying to concentrate on objects that don't have a long life," she said, particularly "single-use" packaging. Pascoe is still conducting tests, but hopes to patent her product later this year and look for partners in early 2020, with an eye towards larger-scale production.

The cacti Pascoe uses for her experiments come from San Esteban, a small town on the outskirts of Guadalajara, where they grow by the hundreds. San Esteban is located in Jalisco state where, starting next year, single-use non-

recyclable plastic bags, straws and other disposable items will be banned.

'Drop in the ocean'

Mexico City and states such as Baja California have also introduced similar measures. In May, the capital city adopted a "historic" ban on plastic bags beginning in 2020. From 2021, straws, plastic plates and cutlery, and balloons will also be banned if they're made "entirely or partially from plastic," according to the bill adopted by the local congress. Pascoe says her new material would be no more than a "drop in the ocean" in the battle to preserve the environment.

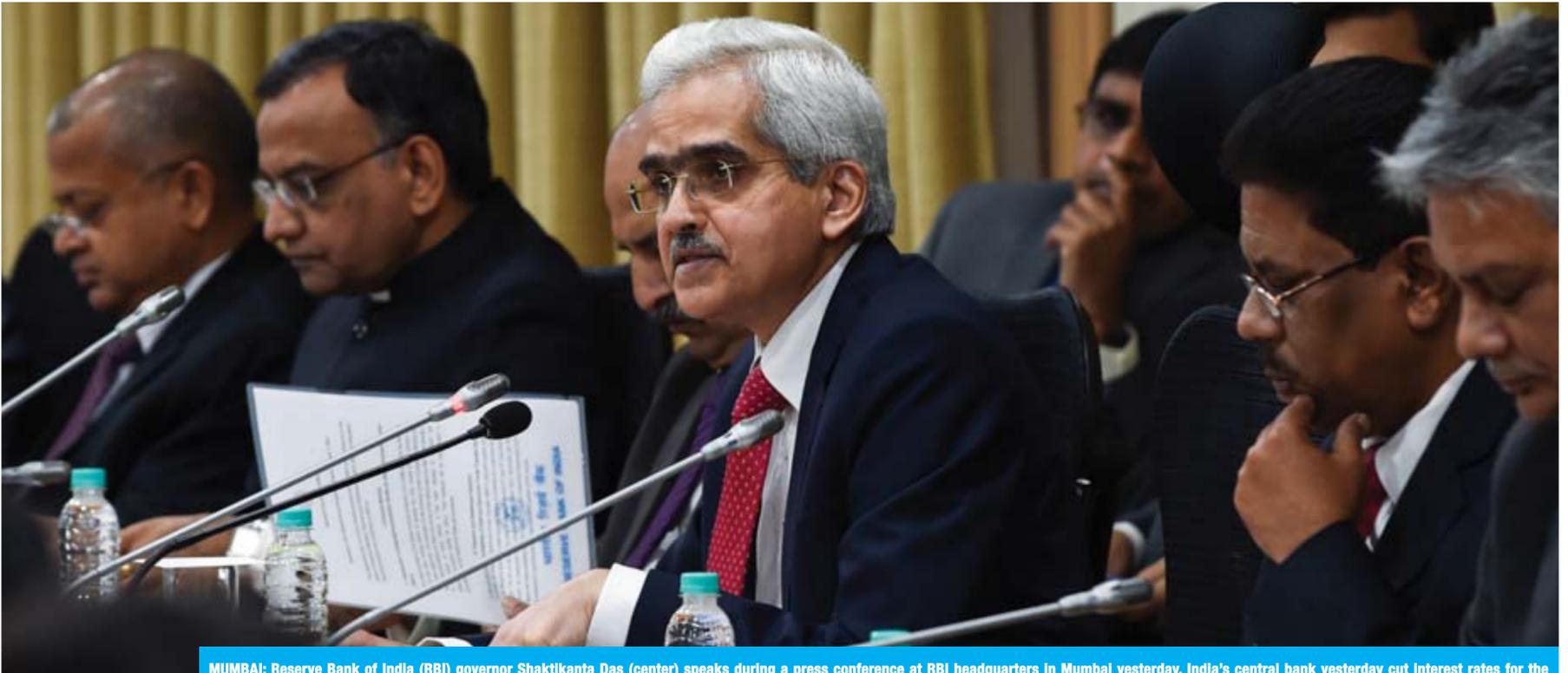
Given the rampant production of industrial plastics and the time it takes to make her material, there would need to be "other recycling strategies" to make any concrete difference, she said. Latin America and the Caribbean account for around 10 percent of worldwide waste, according to United Nations figures. In March, UN member states committed to "significantly reduce" single-use plastics over the next decade, although green groups warned that goal fell short of tackling the Earth's pollution crisis. Plastic pollution has become a global concern, particularly after bans imposed by China and other countries on the import of plastic waste from overseas. Despite widespread alarm on the environmental cost, Asia and the United States lifted world production of plastic last year while Europe saw a dip, according to numbers released by the PlasticsEurope federation in June. More than eight million tons of plastics enter the world's oceans every year. — AFP



Mexican scientist Sandra Pascoe Ortiz works at a laboratory in the University of Valle de Atemajac (UNIVA) in Zapopan, Jalisco state, Mexico on July 31, 2019. — AFP

Business

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019

12 Kuwait's CA surplus improves on higher investment income in Q1**13** 'Scary' German output figures propel renewed recession fears**14** Turkish Airlines continues its journey to the top with new cabin uniforms

MUMBAI: Reserve Bank of India (RBI) governor Shaktikanta Das (center) speaks during a press conference at RBI headquarters in Mumbai yesterday. India's central bank yesterday cut interest rates for the fourth time this year, as New Delhi battles sluggish economic growth and high unemployment. — AFP

India CB cuts rate, slashes growth forecast

Fourth cut this year as New Delhi battles sluggish growth, high unemployment

MUMBAI: India's central bank yesterday cut interest rates for the fourth time this year and slashed growth forecasts as New Delhi battles a sluggish economy and high unemployment. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) said the benchmark repo rate—the level at which it lends to commercial banks—would be reduced by 35 basis points to 5.40 percent, taking rates to their lowest level since 2010.

"The monetary policy committee was of the view that a 25 basis point rate cut was inadequate due to evolving global economic conditions while a 50 basis point cut would be excessive," RBI governor Shaktikanta Das told reporters. "Hence, 35 basis points was viewed as a balanced level of cut due to the current circumstances."

All 36 economists surveyed by Bloomberg News had predicted the central bank would cut rates by 25 basis points. The Reserve Bank also revised down its growth

projection for 2019-20 from 7.0 percent to 6.9 percent, noting that the global economy has been losing pace.

"Domestic economic activity continues to be weak, with the global slowdown and escalating trade tensions posing downside risks," it added in a statement. A fall in domestic demand lowered India's growth rate in the last quarter to 5.8 percent, with unemployment at its highest since the 1970s. Indian carmakers including Mahindra & Mahindra have halted production and reported falling sales as consumer demand fell throughout 2019. The cut to borrowing costs comes as central banks around the world adopt a more dovish tone on monetary policy amid the global slowdown.

Challenges ahead

This is the fourth reduction this year under governor

Shaktikanta Das, an ally of Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was appointed in December after his predecessor quit following a spat with the government over alleged interference. Modi—who won a second landslide victory in recent national elections—faces a massive challenge to create enough jobs for the 1.2 million Indians who join the labor market each month.

The new government that took charge in May faced twin blows when data showed economic expansion falling to a five-year-low and rising unemployment. The growth figures had come in at 5.8 percent in the fourth quarter. It meant India had lost its place as the world's fastest-growing major economy to China, which is currently on a 6.4 percent-growth trajectory.

Meanwhile, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman's budget announcements in July created panic with a new

tax proposal for the super-rich that also targeted trusts used by a large number of foreign funds.

Economists said further cuts could be on the cards. "RBI has moved its stance to accommodative and inflation is under control. RBI will cut interest rates by 50 basis points incrementally throughout 2019 after this rate cut," Elara Capital economist Garima Kapoor said.

India's inflation rose to an eight-month high of 3.18 percent in June but was within the RBI's target of four percent. Capital Economics' Shilan Shah warned further policy loosening could be a misstep, and "lead to higher inflation and interest rates in the future".

"The extent of the slowdown is open to debate. Soft surveys show that spare capacity remains limited, while bank lending growth is close to a five-year high," Shah said. — AFP

Asian CBs flag growth concerns with surprising interest rate cuts

WELLINGTON/MUMBAI: Asia central banks signaled major concerns yesterday about the outlook for economic growth, stunning markets with a series of surprising interest rate cuts and pointing to policymakers' dwindling ammunition to fight off a downturn. The moves came after trade tensions and slowing global growth prompted the US Federal Reserve to cut rates for the first time in a decade and the European Central Bank to signal policy easing. Australia's central bank eased policy in June and July. "Almost every tool in the box has been used to engineer a soft landing in the current economic cycle downturn," analysts at OCBC in Singapore said in a market note, arguing that limited stimulus options, given that rates are generally very low, were problematic.

"We may stave off this recession with rate cuts – but when the accumulation of stresses comes due in the next downturn, the lack of monetary policy space is likely to result in a harder landing for the global economy." New Zealand's central bank cut its official cash rate 50 basis points to a record low of 1 percent. That caught off guard investors who expected a 25 basis point cut, prompting a 2 percent fall in the country's currency.

The Bank of Thailand followed suit, cutting its one-day repurchase rate by 25 basis points to 1.5 percent. All but one of 15 analysts in a Reuters poll had predicted no rate change. Citing growth concerns as "the highest priority", the Indian central bank cuts its repo rate a bigger-than-expected 35 basis points to 5.4 percent.

Market volatility this week as the trade war ramped up has added to concerns for central banks. In South Korea, policymakers said they stood ready to cut rates if needed

to deal with the impact of anxious markets. Pointing to similar concerns over the global economic outlook, Bank of Japan (BOJ) policymakers called for the central bank to talk about increased stimulus, according to a summary of views from the July policy review.

With interest rates hovering around zero, the BOJ is left with little ammunition to fight a downturn. Prolonged ultra-low rates have also heightened the cost of additional easing by hurting margins for banks. After cutting rates, the governor of New Zealand's central bank, Adrian Orr, pointed to the risk that the central bank will have to do much more to counter the slowdown in economic growth.

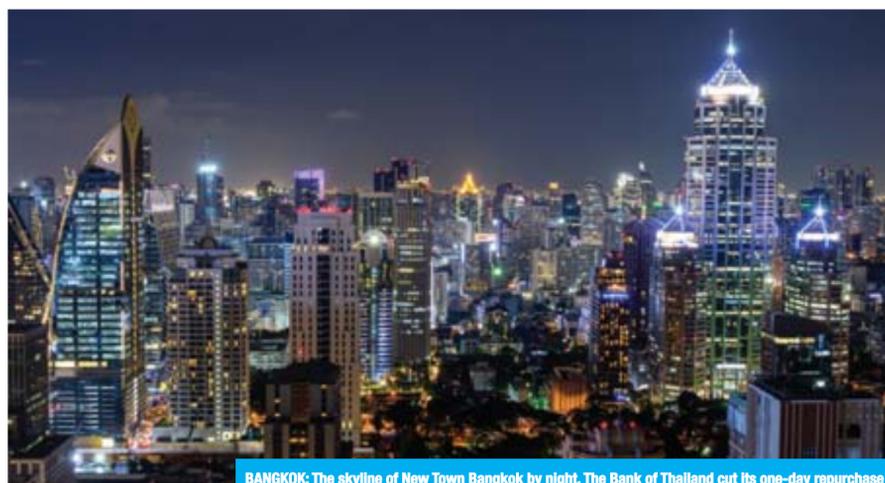
"It is easily within the realms of possibility that we might have to use negative interest rates," Orr told a news conference after Reserve Bank of New Zealand's policy meeting. "This was a stunning decision," said Westpac's

NZ chief economist Dominick Stephens, noting New Zealand had cut rates by 50 basis points or more on only three other occasions.

Offence beats defense

Policymakers everywhere have been forced to consider more stimulus as fears grow over the broadening fallout of the trade dispute on the global economy. Markets are wagering that the ECB and BOJ will have to ease policy, otherwise their currencies could rise to uncompetitive levels.

"Offence is the best form of defense," Josh Williamson, an economist at Citi, said of the New Zealand central bank's rate cut. "Committee members were more concerned about global growth headwinds and the potential impact on the New Zealand economy via the trade channel." — Reuters



BANGKOK: The skyline of New Town Bangkok by night. The Bank of Thailand cut its one-day repurchase rate by 25 basis points to 1.5 percent. — AFP

Gold hits \$1,500 per ounce, investors seek safety in bonds

LONDON: Money poured into the world's bond markets yesterday as investors shunned riskier investments such as stocks for the relative safety of government debt. Gold, another safe-haven favorite, rose to levels last seen six years ago.

As bond prices surge, their yield or returns to investors fall, with benchmark 10-year government paper in the US and elsewhere dropping to multi-year lows. Markets now believe that the world's key central banks will cut interest rates further to stave off, or at least alleviate, any coming slowdown, analysts said.

Commodity markets also followed the logic of economic worry, with safe-haven investment gold surging and oil, the fuel of economic growth, falling.

Gold hit \$1,500 per ounce for the first time since 2013. "We see the ongoing steep rise in the gold price as an expression of the high risk aversion among market participants," said Commerzbank analysts. "Gold is quite clearly still in demand as a safe haven in the current market environment."

London Brent oil slid to its lowest level since early January, while New York crude touched depths last witnessed in mid-June. "It is concerns about demand in connection with the trade conflict that are putting pressure on prices," Commerzbank said.—AFP

Business

NBK economic report

Kuwait's CA surplus improves on higher investment income in Q1

Net outflows from financial account edge lower

KUWAIT: Recently published preliminary estimates of Kuwait's current account (CA) balance in the first quarter of the year show the country's surplus widening slightly by KD 167 million to almost KD 2 billion (KD 1.998 billion, or 19.5 percent of GDP) compared to KD 1.8 billion (16.9 percent of GDP) in 4Q18.

The improvement in 1Q19 was driven by an increase in the income balance, which rose 48 percent q/q to KD 1.9 billion, mainly due to higher returns (KD 818 million vs. KD 482 million in 4Q18) on overseas investments. Direct and other investment income also increased, helping total investment income rise to KD2.1 billion (+41.5 percent q/q).

Kuwait's trade balance, the difference between exports and imports of goods, fell to KD2.7bn (-13 percent q/q), or 26.7 percent of GDP, which is the lowest since 4Q17 and the third consecutive quarterly decrease. Movements in the trade balance are largely a function of movements in the oil price, given that oil exports account for almost 91 percent of total exports. The downward movement in oil export revenues q/q in 1Q19 roughly tracked the downward trajectory in oil prices (KEC) (avg of \$62.9 in 1Q19 vs. \$67.1/bbl in 4Q18). However, the drop in oil exports (-9.3 percent q/q) to KD 4.5 billion was steeper than the drop in oil prices (-6.2 percent q/q) owing to the fact that crude oil exports were down due to the OPEC+ production cuts. Oil exports as a share of GDP was 44.2 percent in 1Q19. The value of non-oil exports was almost the same quarter-on-quarter at around KD 449 million: as a share of total exports, they did rise slightly to 9 percent from 8.2 percent in the previous quarter.

Imports, meanwhile, fell for the second consecutive quarter, by 2.4 percent q/q, to KD 2.2 billion. The fact that imports declined in the first quarter of the year when they may have been expected to rise given that



economic growth looked to have picked up (according to preliminary official data) could perhaps be explained by the appreciation of the Kuwaiti dinar (KD) against the currencies of Kuwait's main trading partners.

Regarding the financial account (usually aggregated with the capital account), net outflows decreased in 1Q19 to KD 831 million from KD 2.4 billion in the previous quarter (and KD 992 million in 1Q18). This was due to a sizeable reversal in resident direct investment abroad: Kuwait traditionally records a debit (outflow) in this category, but in 1Q19 this figure turned to a positive KD 1.64 billion, indicating a repatriation of resident capital from overseas. This drawdown could be due to the sale of some direct investments abroad by the private sector, perhaps with a view to searching out more lucrative domestic investment opportunities, such as in the local stock market following upgrades of Bursa Kuwait to emerging market status by FTSE, S&P and, in 2020, by MSCI. More likely, however, is the inflow a result of drawdowns in the overseas General Reserve Fund (GRF) for the purpose of financing domestic spending.

There was also, for the third quarter in a row, a repatriation of foreign-held assets, with overseas residents liquidating about KD 23 million of domestic foreign direct investments (FDI) in Kuwait in 1Q19.

Chart 1: Current account (CA) balance

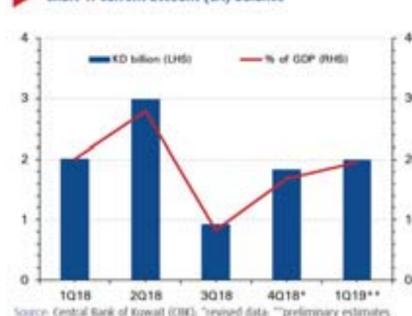


Chart 2: Contributions to the current account (net)

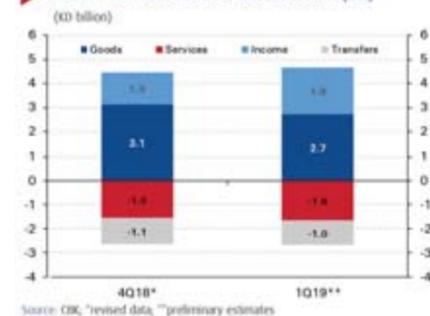
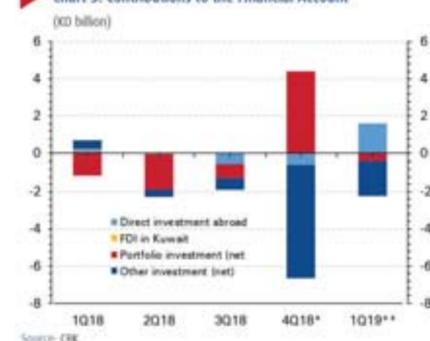


Chart 3: Contributions to the Financial Account



Net portfolio investment by Kuwaitis overseas resumed in 1Q19 (KD 360 million), following the previous quarter's substantial decline of KD 4.4 billion. That divestment by Kuwaitis overseas was in both foreign equities and bonds. KD 33.5 million worth of Kuwaiti equity portfolio investments were purchased by foreigners in 1Q19, compared to just KD 4 million in the previous quarter. This was offset by KD 19 million worth of debt securities offloaded by foreigners, so Kuwait's foreign liabilities increased by KD14 million net.

Official reserves

Official reserves of the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) were about \$37.9 billion in June (-0.3 percent y/y), falling noticeably from the previous month. Excluding KIA's foreign holdings, estimated at about \$600 billion, CBK's official reserves covered just under 8 months of Kuwait's goods and services imports.

Commerzbank sees uphill struggle to boost profits in 2019

FRANKFURT: Germany's second-biggest lender Commerzbank yesterday said second-quarter profits were steady, but cautioned that any increase in the full-year bottom line looked increasingly out of reach. Net profit at the Frankfurt-based firm shrank 0.3 percent, to 271 million euros (\$304 million), beating forecasts from analysts surveyed by Factset.

Revenues fell back 2.2 percent, to 2.1 billion euros, even as Commerzbank succeeded in boosting turnover from interest-bearing products as it continued to add customers. The bank has gained 1.3 million customers since 2016, "an important factor in mitigating the effects of the negative interest rate environment, low margins in the competitive German banking market and the restrictive regulatory situation," CFO Stephan Engels told reporters.

Looking ahead to the full year, the bank expects "higher underlying revenues" compared with 2018's 8.6 billion euros and "a slight increase in consolidated net-income" from 865 million euros last year, it said in a statement. But "this target has become significantly more ambitious given the earnings development in the first half of the year, the noticeable worsening of the macroeconomic situation, and the increasingly uncertain geopolitical situation," Commerzbank added.

"Challenges continue to increase for the industry and for us," chief executive Martin Zielke said, even as he highlighted a net



gain of 108,000 customers in the retail and small business banking division.

One headwind could intensify as soon as September, as the European Central Bank weighs plunging the interest rate on banks' deposits further into negative territory—penalising lenders who park cash at the institution. "We don't currently plan to pass on the negative rates to our customers," CFO Enels said, although "if a trend develops in the market, we'll have to look at it more closely."

In April, Commerzbank gave up on a high-stakes potential merger with rival Deutsche Bank, saying it would maintain its independent strategy focused on retail banking and small- and medium-sized

business clients. But Zielke said the bank was considering whether pressing on "might require further investments". In the second quarter, operating, or underlying profit at Commerzbank fell back 25.5 percent, to 298 million euros, as it set aside more cash to cover potential risks.

And its return on tangible equity—a key measure of bank profitability—was flat at 4.3 percent, and short of its 2020 target of "between five and six percent".

Commerzbank's performance should allow it to pay out a dividend at the same level as 2018, at 20 euro cents. Yesterday's news saw Commerzbank shares drop 3.1 percent by 1:00 pm in Frankfurt (1100 GMT) to 5.53 euros. — AFP

Cathay Pacific reports profit but warns of protests impact

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's flagship airline Cathay Pacific warned yesterday that increasingly violent protests in the financial hub had hit booking demand. Announcing interim results that showed the airline in the black after huge losses in the first half of last year, chairman John Slosar warned of further impact to the business in response to both the unrest and global trade tensions.

"Geopolitical and trade tensions are expected to continue to affect the global economy and, in turn, demand for air travel and air freight," he said. "The protests in Hong Kong

reduced inbound passenger traffic in July and are adversely impacting forward bookings."

The previously troubled airline reported first-half earnings of 1.35 billion HKD (\$172 million), compared with a loss of 263 million HKD in the same period last year.

Despite the uncertainty, Slosar said he still expects to achieve even better results in the second half of the year, as is usual in the aviation industry. Images of clashes between masked protesters and police firing tear gas in the streets of Hong Kong have made continued global headlines, with no end in sight to the unrest. On Monday, more than 160 flights at the city's airport were listed as cancelled as a general strike caused transport chaos in the city.

Many were with Cathay Pacific, with its flight attendants union confirming some of its members had walked out. Analysts have warned that the unrest could signal further economic woes for the city's sluggish economy and cause long-lasting damage to business confidence. — AFP

Munich Re confirms 2019 objectives after solid Q2

FRANKFURT: German reinsurer Munich Re announced a sharp increase in net income for the second quarter yesterday, due to fewer global natural disasters, but the company kept its annual forecast unchanged. In April-June, the Munich-based reinsurer—which backs up insurance firms against the risks they run—posted a net income of 992 million euros (\$1.1 billion), the highest in four years, up from 723 million euros last year.

The higher figure beat a 903 million prediction from analysts surveyed by Factset. Munich Re's operating, or underlying profit amounted to 1.57 billion euros, up 57 percent year-on-year.

The 2018 figure was weighed down by high reimbursements linked to damage from natural and man-made disasters. Over the past quarter, the reinsurer had to spend 202 million euros on claims in excess of 10 million euros, mainly related to tornadoes and major storms in the United States, compared with a charge of 605 million over the same period last year.

In its direct insurance division Ergo, profit increased to 135 million euros for the quarter, driven by the life and health insurance branches. On the damage side, costs mainly stemmed from violent hailstorms that struck Germany earlier in the year. — AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

AL-MUZAINI EXCHANGE CO.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.450
Euro	342.27
Sterling Pound	372.340
Canadian dollar	230.300
Turkish lira	55.860
Swiss Franc	314.190
US Dollar Buying	297.250

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.870
Indian Rupees	4.294
Pakistani Rupees	1.941
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.714
Nepali Rupees	2.680
Singapore Dollar	221.180
Hongkong Dollar	38.845
Bangladesh Taka	3.585
Philippine Peso	5.870
Thai Baht	9.928
Malaysian Ringgit	77.864

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.241
Qatari Riyal	83.675
Omani Riyal	791.293
Bahraini Dinar	808.950
UAE Dirham	82.945

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.650
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Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.401
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.223
Tunisian Dinar	109.510
Jordanian Dinar	430.230
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.354

DOLLARCO EXCHANGE CO. LTD

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.540
Canadian Dollar	232.485
Sterling Pound	371.925
Euro	341.305
Swiss Frank	303.485
Bahraini Dinar	809.885
UAE Dirhams	83.320
Qatari Riyals	84.555
Saudi Riyals	82.105
Jordanian Dinar	430.820
Egyptian Pound	18.375
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.727
Indian Rupees	4.421
Pakistani Rupees	1.906
Bangladesh Taka	3.606
Philippines Peso	5.995
Cyprus pound	18.115
Japanese Yen	3.805
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.773
Malaysian Ringgit	74.645
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.710

Thai Baht	10.885
Turkish Lira	55.205
Singapore dollars	223.632

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.362951	0.376851
Czech Korune	0.005221	0.014521
Danish Krone	0.041601	0.046601
Euro	0.333443	0.347143
Georgian Lari	0.103687	0.103687
Hungarian	0.000958	0.001148
Norwegian Krone	0.030100	0.035300
Romanian Leu	0.055124	0.071974
Russian ruble	0.004657	0.004657
Slovakia	0.009102	0.019102
Slovenia	0.027675	0.032675
Swedish Krona	0.304996	0.315996
Swiss Franc		

Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.195847	0.207847
New Zealand Dollar	0.188537	0.198037

America		
Canadian Dollar	0.223452	0.232452
US Dollars	0.300350	0.305650
US Dollars Mint	0.300850	0.305650

Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.002985	0.003786

Chinese Yuan	0.042142	0.045642
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036739	0.039489
Indian Rupee	0.003797	0.004569
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002779	0.002959
Korean Won	0.000240	0.000255
Malaysian Ringgit	0.069636	0.075638
Nepalese Rupee	0.002678	0.003018
Pakistani Rupee	0.001295	0.002065
Philippine Peso	0.005921	0.006221
Singapore Dollar	0.214457	0.224457
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001375	0.001955
Taiwan	0.009538	0.009718
Thai Baht	0.009578	0.010128
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013

Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.801407	0.809467
Egyptian Pound	0.018639	0.021999
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.424503	0.433503
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000151	0.000251
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021379	0.045379
Omani Riyal	0.785648	0.793549
Qatar Riyal	0.082969	0.083803
Saudi Riyal	0.080100	0.081400
Syrian Pound	0.001291	0.001511
Tunisian Dinar	0.102332	0.110332
Turkish Lira	0.048027	0.057872
UAE Dirhams	0.082257	0.083085
Yemeni Riyal	0.000990	0.001070

Business

'Scary' German output figures propel renewed recession fears

Industrial output down 1.5%, data points to overall economic contraction

BERLIN: German industrial output fell more than expected in June driven by weaker production of intermediate and capital goods, in a further sign that Europe's biggest economy contracted in the second quarter as exporters get caught in trade disputes. Industrial output dropped by 1.5 percent on the month - a far steeper decline than the 0.4 percent fall forecast in a Reuters Poll of analysts, figures released by the Statistics Office showed yesterday.

"The continued plunge in production is scary," Bankhaus Lampe economist Alexander Krueger said, adding that a recession in the manufacturing sector was likely to continue due to the escalating trade dispute between China and the United States. Both countries are important export destinations for German manufacturers, which means that the tit-for-tat tariff dispute between the world's two largest economies is having a disproportionately large impact on German goods producers.

"The longer this continues, the more likely it is that other sectors of the economy will be dragged into this. Growth forecasts for Germany are likely to be trimmed further," Krueger said. In the second quarter as a whole, industrial output fell by 1.8 percent on the quarter, driven by steep drops in metal production, machinery and automobile manufacturing, the economy ministry said.

"Industry remains in an economic downturn," the ministry said. Production in construction fell 1.1 percent

in the second quarter while energy output dropped 5.9 percent in the same period.

Prelude to recession

The figures came after German industrial orders on Tuesday exceeded expectations in June, but the economy ministry cautioned that the sector had not yet reached a turning point as a slowing world economy, international trade disputes and Brexit uncertainty are taking their toll. Commerzbank economist Ralph Solveen said the industrial figures supported expectations that the German economy shrank slightly in the second quarter and that manufacturing output was likely to decline also in the coming months. "A look at the individual sectors shows that the crisis in the automotive sector is continuing unabated," Solveen said, adding that car production had not recovered from the slump caused by problems associated with last year's switch to a new emissions measurement standard.

"However, the main reason for this weakness is now likely to be significantly weaker foreign demand," Solveen said. The German government expects the economy to grow by a meager 0.5 percent this year and rebound with a 1.5 percent expansion in 2020. Andreas Scheuerle from DekaBank said the industrial data suggested the economy contracted by 0.2 percent in the second quarter after expanding by 0.4 percent in the first three months of the year.

"We assume that this is the prelude to a technical



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Industrial production in European powerhouse Germany fell back in June, official data showed yesterday, adding to the picture of a Eurozone suffering from trade wars and global uncertainty. — AFP

recession," Scheuerle added. A technical recession is normally defined as at least two quarters of contraction in a row.

The Federal Statistics Office will release preliminary gross domestic product figures for the April-June period next Wednesday. — Reuters

US Steel job cuts highlight EU sector woes

KOSICE, Slovakia: As day breaks through smudged tram windows, Slovak workers heading to the US Steel Kosice plant mull their fate after hearing the company plans to sack a fifth of them. Some stare silently at the morning haze behind the chimneys of the sprawling communist-era factory. With 12,000 workers, it is central Europe's largest integrated steel producer.

It is also the leading employer in this poor region of eastern Slovakia, a eurozone state of 5.4 million people heavily reliant on auto production. With regional unemployment at around eight percent—well above the national average of 4.9 percent—the job cuts will be painful. "Everyone's afraid. Young people took loans. What will they do if they lose their jobs?" a mill worker with 20 years under his belt who gave his name as Jozef, asked AFP.

Pittsburgh-based US Steel blames the job cuts on cheap steel imports from outside the European Union and EU environmental regulations that are driving up the cost of the electricity needed to run the massive plant. EU industries using power generated from coal face rising costs under the bloc's Emissions Trading System (ETS).

In July, US Steel CEO James Bruno announced 2,500 job cuts by the end of 2021 at the Kosice plant and its subsidiaries, insisting that they were necessary to "protect our business, to remain competitive." Martin Vlachynsky, an analyst with the Bratislava-based Institute of Economic and Social Studies, says steel producers across the EU face similar problems. Cheap steel from Asia, a result of the US-China trade war, and high carbon emissions costs are taking a toll on European steel mills, making them less competitive, he said. In May, the European Steel Association urged the EU to help the sector, which has been swamped by cheap steel from Asia since the



The US Steel Kosice steel-mill in Kosice, eastern Slovakia. The United States Steel Corporation's Slovakian unit which is one of Slovakia's biggest employers recently announced cuts of 2,500 jobs by the end of 2021. — AFP

US imposed import tariffs in 2018.

Global and local factors

Workers going on duty filed past those streaming out after working the graveyard shift. The ritual dates back to 1965 when the first blast furnace began smelting iron ore at the Kosice mill, which now produces 4.5 million metric tons of steel a year, with sales of 2.7 billion euros (\$3 billion) and a net profit of 89 million euros in 2018. Some workers argue that global factors are not entirely to blame for the cuts, insisting that a lack of investment in the ageing plant was now taking a toll.

"I work with a tool that was produced 54 years ago," says Dusan Tittke, a turbine operator. "This company used to make money, but it all went to the US. Now it would have to invest more to survive, but it won't," says the 58-year-old who has spent four decades at the mill.

US Steel Kosice spokesman Peter Baca rejects the claim, saying the company invested two billion dollars since it bought the plant in 2000. Others believe the job cuts are meant to

pressure the Slovak government into offering tax breaks or other incentives.

"Every now and then, when they want something, they make threats so the government gives in," an electrician named Stefan said. Emil Machyna, president of OZ KOVO, an industrial trade union body, shares the workers' views. "A company that doesn't invest depreciates... and it's just a matter of time before it goes bankrupt," he said, calling US Steel's efforts to boost profits through job cuts "a very short-term solution". So far, US Steel has not offered any severance plans.

'No way out'?

Skirted by ornate 18th and 19th century residences, Kosice's old town boasts a thriving pedestrian zone abuzz with summer holidaymakers. But the mood at city hall is grim. Nearly every family in the city of 240,000 has someone working at US Steel. "We're talking about 2,500 families, which is a tragedy," says mayor Jaroslav Polacek, himself a former mill employee who is determined to stop the cuts. — AFP

British Airways cancels flights after IT failure

LONDON: British Airways was forced to cancel some flights to and from London yesterday after it suffered "a systems issue". Reports suggested dozens of flights in and out of Heathrow-Britain's busiest airport—had been cancelled, grounding around 15,000 passengers.

BA declined to confirm how many services had been cancelled. "We are working as quickly as possible to resolve a systems issue which has resulted in some short-haul cancellations and delays from London airports," the airline said in a statement. "A number of flights

continue to operate," it added, apologizing to passengers impacted by the disruption and noting back-up manual systems were being used to keep many services in place.

BA said it was offering customers booked to travel yesterday on short-haul flights departing from Heathrow, Gatwick and London City airports the chance to rebook to travel on another day between August 8-13. Frustrated passengers took to social media to vent their anger and demand answers from BA, while photos shared showed airport terminals filled with stranded travellers.

A Heathrow spokesperson said BA was experiencing "a technical issue with its systems" impacting check-in and departures there. "We are working to support the BA team and passengers impacted. We understand this is incredibly frustrating for passengers and encourage them to check with British Airways for the latest information." — AFP



LONDON: In this file photo taken on May 29, 2017 a display warns passengers to "Expect Disruption" to British Airways flights, inside Terminal 5 of London's Heathrow Airport. British Airways was forced to cancel flights to and from London yesterday, after it suffered "a systems issue". — AFP

Samsung seeks alternatives to Japan suppliers in trade row

SEOUL: South Korean tech giant Samsung Electronics, the world's biggest smartphone and memory chip maker, is seeking alternatives to Japanese suppliers for some key materials, it said yesterday with Seoul and Tokyo embroiled in a bitter trade dispute. The row has seen the Japanese government impose restrictions on chemical exports crucial to chipmaking and last week Seoul and Tokyo removed each other from their "white lists" of trusted trading partners.

Two of the Japanese chemicals targeted, hydrogen fluoride gas and photoresists, are essential to making memory chips, while the third chemical, fluorinated polyimide, is used for high-spec TV screens and smartphone displays, including hotly-anticipated folding models from Samsung.

Tokyo's move has also raised international concern about the effect on global supply chains and possible price hikes for consumers worldwide. A Samsung spokesperson told AFP the firm was "seeking ways to diversify" supplies of materials and components where it relied heavily on Japanese imports.

Analysts have warned the restrictions—and reduction in the availability of the materials—would "significantly impede" chip producers. Japan holds a 60-70 percent share of the global hydrogen fluoride market, according to Taipei-based market intelligence firm TrendForce, which could make it difficult for Korean companies to find alternatives elsewhere.

But the Samsung spokesperson denied a South Korean media report that the firm had decided to replace all the approximately 220 Japanese chemicals and materials it uses for chip production with Korean or overseas products. — AFP

Fed must cut rates bigger and faster: Trump

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump yesterday continued to hammer the Federal Reserve, demanding more stimulus to boost the economy as the 2020 elections approach. And as Wall Street looked set to tumble on economic fears, which sent bond yields tumbling in Europe and the US, Trump said the Fed, not China, is America's main economic obstacle.

"They must cut rates bigger and faster and stop their ridiculous quantitative tightening NOW," he said on Twitter, just a week after the US central bank cut the benchmark lending rate for the first time in more than a decade. Stock futures suggested Wall Street was due to resume this week's sell-off as Trump's trade war with China worsened. Yields on 10-year Treasuries fell sharply as investors moved away from riskier assets in a sign of mounting fears the economy could be slowing. Earlier Germany reported industrial production had fallen much more than expected in June, with declines across the board in capital, consumer and producer goods, heightening fears of a recession in Europe's largest economy and sending government bond yields to record lows.

The uncertainty generated by the trade war and concerns about a slowing global economy prompted the Fed to cut interest rates last week. But a key central bank policymaker, St. Louis Federal Reserve Bank President James Bullard, told AFP on Tuesday that benchmark US lending rates were "in the right neighborhood," suggesting he may be disinclined to cut rates as fast and as far as Trump wanted. — AFP

Ireland scrambles to help firms with Brexit customs burden

DUBLIN: Ireland is offering businesses up to 60,000 euros each to train staff on filing customs returns as it scrambles to prepare for the possibility of Britain, its nearest neighbor and a big trading partner, leaving the European Union without a deal. The Irish economy is considered the most vulnerable among remaining EU members to Brexit and Ireland faces a 12-fold rise in the number of import and export declarations made by local companies in the event of a no-deal British exit.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said that he will take the United Kingdom out of the bloc on Oct. 31 come what may, even without a transitional deal needed to pave the way for future relations with the EU. Michael D'Arcy, Ireland's minister in charge of financial services, told Reuters he believed Britain will leave without a deal, causing a severe economic shock that could require pan-EU financial support for countries including Ireland.

The Irish government will offer firms 6,000 euros (\$6,730) per trainee - up to a maximum of 10 per company - as well as a free training program for all eligible customs agents, intermediaries and affected businesses as it said

the country will not have enough agents to help firms file returns if Britain crashes out without a deal. "If you trade with the UK, Brexit will most definitely impact your business. This targeted measure is aimed at supporting and incentivizing capacity building in the customs agent sector," Finance Minister Paschal Donohoe said in a statement.

Old trade ties

Goods trade between Ireland and the United Kingdom totalled 36 billion euros last year, representing 15 percent of all Irish exports and imports. At another 43 billion euros, trade to and from Britain in services accounted for a similar share in 2017. While Ireland has been cutting its reliance on the British market in recent years, the proportion of trade is far higher if Ireland's raft of foreign-owned firms are excluded, with employment-heavy industries in rural areas among the most reliant on trade across the Irish Sea.

The number of Irish firms dealing with customs could surge to 100,000 from 17,000 last year if Britain is no longer a member of the EU's customs union, requiring 20 million annual declarations, the agency responsible for customs estimates. "You should make necessary preparations now to minimize disruption to your business come October 31," Donohoe said, referring to the date Britain is due to leave the EU. Ireland's Office of the Revenue Commissioners is in the process of intensifying its engagement with firms as many that trade with Britain have not yet applied for a customs number to continue doing so after Brexit. — Reuters

Business

Turkish Airlines continues its journey to the top with new cabin uniforms

New uniform designed with the aim of celebrating airline's 85th anniversary



KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines cabin crew, whose new uniforms take to the skies, redefines elegance in the sky. The cabin crew will now greet passengers with "welcome onboard" dressed in new uniforms on long haul flights of the national flag carrier. The new cabin crew uniforms of Turkish Airlines, flying to the most countries in the world, were designed with the aim of celebrating the airline's 85th anniversary and will be visible on the entire cabin crew on the long haul flights of the

carrier as of Tuesday.

The new uniforms in flag-red and anthracite gray colors, which were rigorously tested on long-range flights in different climates, have been tailored to 25,000 employees in order for cabin crews to serve passengers comfortably. Inspired by many classical details in Turkish culture, from the currents of the Bosphorus to the artisanal glassware, ceramics and calligraphy patterns produced by local artisans, the cabin,



cockpit, ground handling personnel and flying chef uniforms came to life under a single design in order to give their passengers a holistic brand experience.

In his statement regarding the new uniforms, M. Ilker Ayci, Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee of Turkish Airlines said: "The elegance and comfort of our cabin crews, which constitute the most important element of our unrivaled service quality, are of great importance for our brand that continues to fly

at the top of its industry. I believe that our brand's presence in the skies will be much more impressive when the new cabin uniforms, which bear elements of our culture, are combined with the elegance of our cabin crews." Italian haute couturier Ettore Bilotta designed the new cabin uniforms, which were specially sewn by Vakko, and the main fabrics were produced by Altinyildiz, based on the compliance of Turkish Airlines with flight standards

Dell Technologies appoints new Channel Head for ME, Russia, Africa and Turkey

DUBAI: Dell Technologies yesterday announced that Vangelis Lagousakos has been appointed as the Senior Director, Channel for the Middle East, Russia, Africa and Turkey region.

In his new role, Vangelis will be responsible for strengthening relationships with channel partners, with a view to developing and enabling a robust partner community. Through its simple, predictable, and profitable approach, Dell Technologies Partner Program is designed to drive growth and profitability for the whole channel ecosystem. Recognizing that partners are integral to delivering excellent customer experiences, the Dell Technologies Partner Program is

designed to drive new business through a fully integrated and streamlined process.

By providing access to its broad portfolio of solutions and offerings across its strategically aligned businesses, the recently enhanced program aims to support partners as they deliver transformational solutions to customers. The program provides partners with simplified engagement, training and competencies, new badging and expanded opportunities around storage and next-generation cloud solutions to enable the rapid adoption and optimization of emerging technologies.

As the new regional channel lead, Vangelis will continue to develop a cohesive ecosystem to better serve partners in their effort to accelerate their customers' digital transformation, helping them take advantage of all the capabilities that Dell Technologies' family of businesses offers, while also reskilling their



Vangelis Lagousakos

staff for the future.

Moving from his role as the Senior Director for Sales Planning and Operations Channel Business for EMEA, and with over 30 years of experience Vangelis brings a wealth of experience and expertise to his new role. He has worked with Dell Technologies for 17 years in leadership roles across EMEA, including a stint as the Regional Sales Director for the UAE and Gulf region from 2015 to 2017. He replaces Javier Haddad, who takes on the role of General Manager for the Gulf region at Dell Technologies.

Mohammed Amin, Senior Vice President - Middle East, Russia, Africa and Turkey, Dell Technologies, said, "Vangelis' valuable experience and expertise has been a great asset to Dell Technologies over the years. His track record of building relationships and delivering results, will be critical to our growth in the region as we strengthen our focus on enabling our partners to build deep expertise in delivering the full spectrum of our portfolio of solutions. Vangelis and his team will continue to build on the successes of our partner program by providing partners with a clear roadmap and investing in skills development, that will enable them to successfully navigate the ever-changing digital landscape."

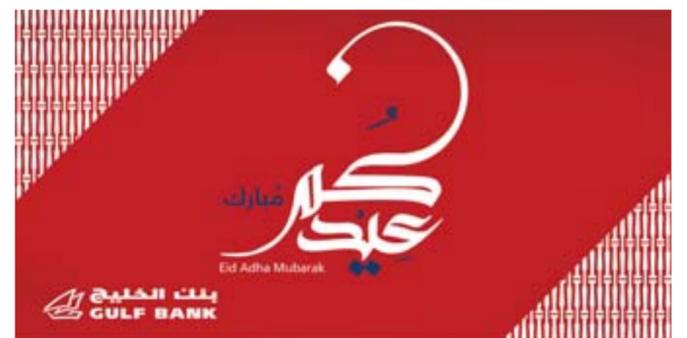
Gulf Bank extends best wishes for Eid Al-Adha

KUWAIT: On the blessed occasion of Eid Al-Adha, and as per the approved guidelines set by the Kuwait Banking Association (KBA), all Gulf Bank branches and its head office will be closed Sunday 11 August until Tuesday 13 August and will resume working on Wednesday 14 August.

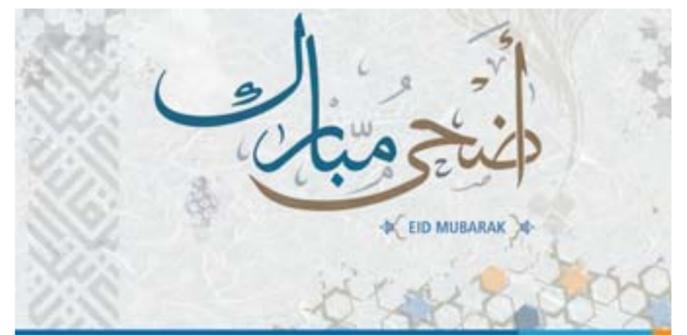
Gulf Bank's customers will continue to be served around the clock through the dedicated Customer Contact Center, which can be reached at 1805805. Moreover, Gulf Bank's Interactive Teller

Machines (ITMs) will be available during the Eid holiday from 8 am until 11:45 pm in Jabriya, Shaab, Adan, and Fahaheel (Al-Ghanim Electronics). Clients can also direct their queries through the Gulf Bank WhatsApp service on 65805805. To find out more about the latest products and services, customers can access the Bank's online portal (www.e-gulf-bank.com) or download the Mobile Banking App (App Store/Android) to monitor accounts and conduct self-service banking transactions. Customers can also connect with Gulf Bank on its various social media channels.

Gulf Bank extends its warmest congratulations and best wishes to the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; His Highness the Crown Prince, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah; and His Highness the Prime Minister, Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and to the people of Kuwait on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha.



Burgan Bank announces working hours during Eid Al-Adha holiday



KUWAIT: Burgan Bank yesterday announced that Airport Branch will continue its operations during the upcoming Eid Al-Adha holiday. The branch will remain open 24 hours for seven days a week, to conveniently provide services to clients during public holidays.

The contact center will also be at customers' service over the clock at 1804080, to ensure customers enjoy services throughout the holiday period. On this occasion, Burgan Bank extends its best wishes and greetings to the public on the coming of Eid Al-Adha.

Nexans launches straight panels with angled connector ports

DUBAI: Nexans, the worldwide leader in cables and cabling systems, launched two modular 24 port LANmark patch panels suited for all snap-in connectors. Both panels combine the benefits of straight and angled panels.

Compared to its angled equivalents, these straight panels:

- save space inside the cabinet
 - require no recessed mounting positions for the cabinet door to close
 - eliminate the need for patch guides
- Characteristics
- both panels come with a straight front shape



- 1 panel has a cable support tray at the back (N521.681BK), the other not (N521.680BK)
- 30° mounted twin ports allow for connectors to be placed at an angled position
- 6 twin ports are oriented towards the left side, 6 others towards right side

- connectors must be inserted horizontally (latch right or left) using keystone clips
- 24 blue colored keystone clips are included in each panel
- additional cable ties are supplied for the panel with cable support (N5213681BK)

Warba Bank to hold Al-Sunbula weekly draw today

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best Investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, will be organizing its weekly Sunbula draw Number 30 (today) on Thursday at 11 am in presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Bank officials.

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 gain the opportunity to win prizes

throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million.

In the running campaign, Warba Bank continued its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each throughout the year, yet introduce the "Mega Draws" that take place on a quarterly basis to reveal five winners, the 1st winner gets KD 100,000 in cash! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest 2019 Land Cruiser 5.7 VXR. And more, as the last Mega Draw will give away 2 more Land Cruisers!

As per the winning chances, each customer will be participating in the draw for each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. It is also worth noting that the Sunbula Fixed Deposit rewards its investor with both high expected returns, reaching up to 3.5 per-

cent, as well as winning chances. And such investors have full flexibility in choosing the desired tenure and the profit distribution method.

Furthermore, Warba Bank is leveraging on its Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request the opening of Al-Sunbula account in a simple electronic manner without having to visit the branch, through 5 simple steps in five minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, through the new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Representatives will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

What's On

Joyful Eid atmosphere in Marina Hotel Kuwait

Eid Al Adha is fast approaching, and Marina Hotel Kuwait is prepared to welcome guests as they celebrate with their friends and family in the seaside hotel's warm, hospitable ambience. To reflect the family-centric occasion and pool-side weather, Marina Hotel has an Eid Package in place. Guests who book a spacious room or luxurious suite - both available at a special rate - gain access to the Coral Reef Health Club & Spa and its trinity of pools, palm-treed beach, and up-to-date gym. Enjoy time away with the ones you love most by the water and in the sunshine while enjoying views of the glittering Arabian Gulf and the Kuwait City skyline.

Poolside lounging builds an appetite, which is why Marina Hotel has included a full dining experience in the Eid Package. Start your day with a fully-stocked breakfast buffet featuring international cuisine at the Six Palms Restaurant, on the house. For lunch and dinner, enjoy 20%

off the Atlantis Restaurant, which serves a premium buffet spread of mouthwatering international and traditional Arabic dishes and tempting desserts. Have guests you'd like to invite for lunch or dinner? The 20% discount extends to anyone who reserves a table at the Atlantis Restaurant this Eid, as long as they book through reception.

Nabil Hammoud, General Manager of Marina Hotel said: "We promise our guests a fantastic holiday with their family and friends as our priority is to always exceed their expectations. We wish everyone a happy Eid in advance and look forward to welcoming you and your loved ones." Apart from the well-appointed hotel facilities, Marina Hotel offers guests a comprehensive experience due to its location in the heart of Salmiya, one of Kuwait's most prominent shopping and dining districts. Hotel guests are a short walk from the Marina Mall and Marina Crescent, which house a variety of international shops, restaurants and cafes.



ICSK summer camp 2 culminates successfully

A unifying event, Sunshine 2019-ICSK summer camp commenced its second session on July 3rd 2019 as a fun way of learning for the children where different methods were adopted to improve the learning levels of students. ICSK has taken an initiative in this direction by organizing the summer camp which included various creative and artistic activities. The last day of Sunshine 2019 summer camp 2 was August 1, 2019 and it gave the students a wonderful opportunity to exhibit their innate talents through their scintillating performances.

The day started with welcoming the Chief Guest Ravi Ayanoli, Vice Principal, ICSK Khaitan, and Guest of Honour Deepak Seth, HR and administrative officer, ICSK. The program began with verses from the Holy Quran followed by the camp prayer sung by the camp choir. Rajam, Camp coordinator of the ICSK Summer camp wholeheartedly greeted the audience. During her address she highlighted that it is with the grace of the Almighty, the ICSK management, their mentor Dr V Binumon, Senior Administrator & Principal ICSK Senior and parents whose support that was helpful in making the camp a successful one.

The vibrant tiny tots of pre-primary touched everyone's heart deeply with their flawless performance on western tunes. The camp orchestra group



also enthralled the hearts of the audience with the outstanding song Phoolkataronka. Yoga postures and asanas were demonstrated by the campers to attain complete self-realization. Radical Karate moves made the children energetic. The students enchanted everyone present with a brilliant Zumba performance in different styles. Camp experiences were shared with the audience by two children and they recounted the wonderful time spent by them during Sunshine 2019.

The Chief Guest of the day Mr Ravi motivated the parents and gave valuable feedback to everyone and also commented on the necessity of having a third session. Mrs Shubashini, camp teacher of the sunshine 2019, proposed the vote of thanks. A group photograph was taken to make the ICSK summer camp a more memorable one.



Closing ceremony of LAPA summer camp

On Tuesday, LAPA celebrated the closing ceremony of their first summer camp with more than 100 children and their parents at the presence of Fare'a Al-Saqqaf; Chairman of the Board Directors and Managing Director of the LOYAC Academy and Arts of LAPA and board members Fattouh Dallali and Abeer Al-Essa. The camp began on July 8th and lasted for nearly one month.

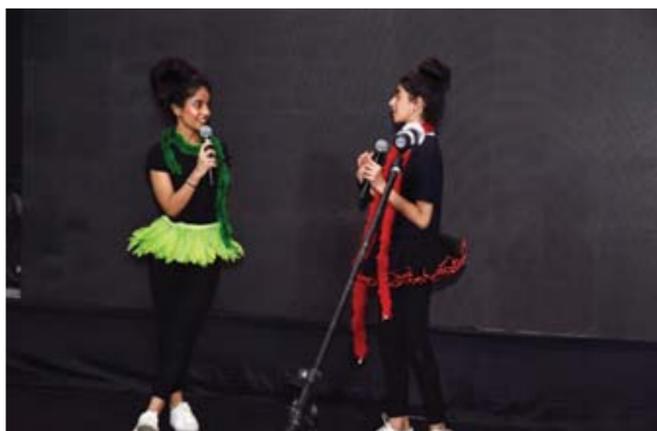
The children were the stars of the concert, along with the creations they presented to

the public in a variety of short films. They were the heroes both in front of and behind the camera in an exciting theatrical performance that included acting, dancing and singing.

Al-Saqqaf said that the activities that included children are the most joyful and closest to her heart and that she is overjoyed by the brilliant success achieved by the camp. The children's parents praised the camp and those who stood behind its achievements. Al-Saqqaf added that the camp was designed

very carefully to provide a balanced program for young people combining arts, sports, culture and entertainment.

She praised the team of trainers, specialists, supervisors and administrators who were at the highest level of professionalism and love of the children. She concluded saying that she, like children, did not want the camp to end. Starting from next October, the academy will open clubs for each of the arts during the scholastic year.



South African Embassy notice

On the occasion Eid Al-Adha, the Embassy of the Republic of South Africa will be closed from Sunday, 11th August 2019 to Tuesday, 13th August 2019 and will reopen on Wednesday, 14th August 2019 with its official office hours from 8h00 to 16h00 and the Consular Section operation hours will be from 8h30 to 12h30. For emergency calls please contact: 94924895.

Health & Science

All-natural and low-sugar: Once niche kombucha drink takes the US by storm

NEW YORK: The recent US kombucha craze has been fermenting for decades. All-natural, low-sugar, and packed with supposed health benefits, the once-niche drink has invaded grocery stores, supermarkets and cafes. US sales of the cloudy, bubbly beverage reached \$412 million in 2018 according to Nielsen data, up 42 percent from the year before.

The now-ubiquitous fermented drink, whose exact origins are unknown, is even stocked by the American retail giant Walmart. Across the United States, it's not uncommon to find shops offering up to 10 different brands. For Alex Ingalls, who founded Pilot Kombucha in 2015, the buzzing popularity of the slightly alcoholic drink (the kind sold in stores only has 0.5 percent alcohol content) is due to "a mix of things."

A "hardcore base" that has drunk kombucha for years was likely drawn to its supposed health benefits, particularly for the digestive system, she said, though there has been no clinical study on the matter. The claim is based on the fermentation process used to make kombucha, which contains probiotics: live micro-organisms that can help the growth of intestinal bacteria. However Ingalls mainly sees the kombucha wave as the result of its major advantage over sodas and even juice: low sugar levels. "These days, everyone is very conscious about sugar intake," she said.

"They're trying to drink less soda and even less diet soda," whose ingredients have raised eyebrows over the years. "Since I don't drink so much soda, when I settle on something flavor-y... I think kombucha is a pretty good alternative," said Renata Ontman, after a class on kombucha-making at the Brooklyn Brainerd recreation center. The course was taught by Cheryl Paswater, founder of the kombucha company Contraband Ferments. "I always try to eat as healthy as I can, and I think (of it) as a sort of snack in the afternoon," said

Sarah Gilberg, who also attended the class, adding that the fizzy beverage makes her feel "energized."

'Room for everybody'

Four years after founding her company, Ingalls produces about 97,200 gallons of kombucha per year, which she sells at 400 different locations throughout the area. Hers was one of the first New York-area brands, and she will soon open her first office in Red Hook, Brooklyn, anticipating that her production levels will triple. Pilot Kombucha not only has competition from kombucha giants such as GT'S, an established probiotic drink-maker, but also from PepsiCo, which bought kombucha brand KeVita in 2016, and Coca-Cola, which recently invested in kombucha maker Health-Ade.

"I think there's enough room for everybody" in the market, said Ingalls, a former chef. In her opinion, kombucha is going to be like craft beer — which also took bars and supermarkets by storm — "where everybody has different variations and riffs on certain styles." The home-brewing process for kombucha is much simpler than that for beer, though, and the rapid growth in sales has been matched by a proliferation of amateur fermenters across the United States.

"I don't want to spend money on it," said Gilberg, who took the kombucha class, noting that bottles cost \$3-\$4 apiece. Rather than continue to buy kombucha twice a week, she wanted to learn how to make her own. "We do a lot of community workshops... classes at libraries, kids classes," said Paswater. "People want to know more. People want to understand, whether they're doing it themselves or not," she added. Paswater, who has been fermenting her own kombucha for more than a decade, does not necessarily see a big difference between homemade and mass-produced kombucha. "There



NEW YORK: A woman drinks Kombucha as she attends a workshop by Fermentationist Cheryl Paswater in the Brooklyn borough. — AFP

are some things that are kombucha-like that are coming out of the market that I question a little bit as far as ingredients or even some of the marketing... but there's also a lot of amazing kombucha out there," she said. — AFP

Nations agree landmark UN climate report after marathon talks

GENEVA: Negotiators from 195 countries yesterday finalised the most comprehensive scientific assessment yet of how the land we live off affects climate change, after marathon talks in Geneva, sources told AFP. The land use report from the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), running over 1,000 pages compiled by 108 scientists drawing from thousands of data points, is expected to spell out the stark

choices facing a warming planet with a growing, hungry population. Experts from around the world have spent the last few days poring over the report's summary for policymakers — a concise run-down of the science containing a range of possible solutions and trade-offs. A key sticking point during negotiations was the role of bioenergy — power derived from burning plant matter — and to what extent such schemes should be rolled out to combat climate change.

Bioenergy, and other largely untested geo-engineering initiatives, will require an enormous amount of land to achieve the emissions reductions needed to limit temperature rises to 1.5C (2.6 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. With the world's population expected to rise to 10 billion by mid-century, there are fears there is simply not enough land to both sustainably feed people and mitigate climate change.

Sources close to the talks in Geneva said countries with large forest cover, including Canada, Brazil,

Sweden and Norway, had pushed for a greater role for bioenergy in climate planning, something nations already facing desertification and drought pushed back on. The final summary for policymakers will be made public today and is expected to highlight food inequality on a global scale, with two billion adults overweight or obese sharing a planet with 820 million suffering chronic hunger.

UK residents return home

In related news, Residents evacuated last week from an English town threatened with flooding after a nearby reservoir partially collapsed were allowed to return to their homes yesterday, police said. More than 1,500 people had been evacuated from the Derbyshire town of Whaley Bridge after part of the dam wall of the Toddbrook Reservoir disintegrated Thursday following heavy rain. Hundreds of emergency workers had since worked around the clock to pump water out of the reservoir to ease pressure on the wall. A military Chinook heli-

copter also dropped hundreds of tonnes of stone and gravel in sacks to shore up the damaged portion.

"The hard work and dedication to achieve this has been quite simply incredible and means that I am now able to lift the evacuation order placed on Whaley Bridge and the surrounding area," Deputy Chief Constable Rachel Swann said in a statement from Derbyshire Police. "The danger posed by the millions of tons of water, which would have destroyed homes and livelihoods, could not be underestimated," she added.

Swann said further work would be completed by Britain's Environment Agency to assess the extent of the damage caused to the dam wall and what action would be required. Residents had been forced to spend nearly a week away from their homes and were only allowed back briefly over the weekend to collect essential items. Prime Minister Boris Johnson visited the area on Friday, where he said the 180-year-old dam would require a "major rebuild", while opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn also paid a visit Monday. — AFP

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Kuwait Times

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Stars

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ACROSS

1. An associate degree in applied science.
4. A chief of a North American tribe or confederation (especially an Algonquian chief).
12. A state-chartered savings bank owned by its depositors and managed by a board of trustees.
15. Owed and payable immediately or on demand.
16. An extinct Semitic language of northern Syria.
17. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
18. Someone who engages in arbitrage (who purchases securities in one market for immediate resale in another in the hope of profiting from the price differential).
19. A cry of sorrow and grief.
20. Hungarian choreographer who developed Labanotation (1879-1958).
22. United States physicist (born in Austria) who proposed the exclusion principle (thus providing a theoretical basis for the periodic table) (1900-1958).
24. Produced by a manufacturing process.
25. With the mouth wide open as in wonder or awe.
26. A republic in southwestern Asia.
28. A switch made from the stems of the ratan palms.
30. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
34. The capital and largest city of Ghana with a deep-water port.
37. South African term for 'boss'.
42. Whiten with Blanco.
44. Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
45. A lipoprotein that transports cholesterol in the blood.
46. An alliance made up of states that had been Soviet Socialist Republics in the Soviet Union prior to its dissolution in Dec 1991.
47. A city in Indonesia.
49. Escape, either physically or mentally.
51. Of or relating to or characteristic of Sparta or its people.
54. A member of one of the four divisions of the prehistoric Greeks.
56. A choice or delicious dish.
58. The act of scanning.
60. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
62. The basic unit of money in Bangladesh.
66. A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
67. A variety of albatross with black feet.
70. A nonmetallic bivalent element that is normally a colorless odorless tasteless nonflammable diatomic gas.
72. 100 avos equal 1 pataca.
74. A city in southern Japan on Kyushu.
77. A religious belief of African origin involving witchcraft and sorcery.
78. (Irish) The sea personified.
79. Green turtles.
80. The most common computer memory which can be used by programs to perform necessary tasks while the computer is on.
81. A light touch or stroke.
82. Relating to, or coming from, Europe and Asia.
83. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. (Babylonian) A demigod or first man.
2. 100 aurar equal 1 krona.
3. The oily secretion of the sebaceous glands.
4. A nonsteroidal anti-inflammatory drug (trade name Clinoril).
5. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
6. The 3rd letter of the Greek alphabet.
7. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
8. That which is responsible for one's thoughts and feelings.
9. The fur of an otter.
10. A state in New England.
11. Enthusiastic approval.
12. Antipsychotic drug (trade name Mobar) used in the treatment of schizophrenia.
13. A blow from a flat object (as an open hand).
14. Something causes misery or death.
21. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
23. Acquire or gain knowledge or skills.
27. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
29. A public promotion of some product or service.
31. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
32. A genus of Ploceidae.
33. American filmmaker and comic actor (1935-).
35. A metal frame or container holding cartridges.
36. Any of several plants of the genus Manihot having fleshy roots yielding a nutritious starch.
38. A resource.
39. The capital and largest city of Yemen.
40. German mystic and theologian who founded modern theosophy.
41. Turn sharply.
43. A strategically located monarchy on the southern and eastern coasts of the Arabian Peninsula.
48. Pose a threat to.
50. Everyone except the clergy.
52. A characteristic sound.
53. A hard gray lustrous metallic element that is highly corrosion-resistant.
55. Evergreen shrubs with intricately twisted wiry stems that in summer are smothered in small yellow flowers.
57. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
59. Type genus of the Caviidae.
61. City in Sudan.
63. 100 agorot equal 1 shekel.
64. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
65. (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
68. Belonging to some prior time.
69. An island of central Hawaii (between Molokai and Kauai).
71. A city of central China.
73. The ball-shaped capsule containing the vertebrate eye.
75. An internationally recognized distress signal in radio code.
76. Black tropical American cuckoo.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Today finds you sympathetic and understanding of the feeling of those close to you. You seem to have thrown your more judgmental attitude out of the window. You have learned you thrive when you surround yourself with those who are positive and uplifting. You are becoming the friend to others that you wish them to be for you. This is a great step in the right direction. Your life and all things in it seem to be full of happiness. You are on a very positive path. Hard work and dedication will lead you to great reward.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may find you tendency to be indecisive may cause conflict with someone you care about. Consider all the options diplomatically, then make a choice. Recognize that ignoring this situation is not the right choice. Consider consequences, then choose, and act. Someone may find your actions offensive. Pay no attention to anyone who doesn't seem supportive. They will get over it.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Today may find you a bit unsatisfied with your surroundings. It may be someone or the physical place you are in that is just not sitting right with you. You may feel as if someone or something is holding you back or may just feel frustrated by your life in general. This may be a great time for an evening out and about. Change your surroundings. Clear your head but choose your company wisely to avoid any conflict as this is a time you need to have fun. You have to find a comfortable balance between work life, family, and social life. Gemini, remember it is good for you to get out and enjoy yourself from time to time.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

The company you keep says a lot about you. Make time for your loved ones. Don't wait for a holiday or a special event. What is a little thing to you can make a big difference in the life of someone you care about. You are creative enough to turn a small act into a big memory. Take the time. Make the effort. The reward will be great.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have a tendency to be indecisive at times. This could cause conflict with someone special to you. Consider all the options and put much thought into your decisions today. Make a choice. This is not the time to procrastinate. Someone may be offended by or not agree with the choice you make. Remember, Leo, you can not please everyone all of the time. Do what is best for you and yours.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You can stop looking for perfect relationships. Since every person is flawed, a relationship between two of those persons can't be perfect. You just have to decide how much imperfection you can tolerate. Limit your relationships to the people who don't have the flaws you can't live with. Surround yourself with people who are aware of your imperfections and love you anyway. Peace is conceived when love and tolerance are united.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Others may be amazed when you turn your creative ideas into reality. Your mind is in overdrive and your creativity is off of the charts. You have a million great ideas running through your head. Today finds you able to turn them into reality. You are gifted and talented in many ways. When your mind takes over you may find it hard to relax. This would be a good evening for escape. Grab a book, light some candles, or curl up on the couch and watch a movie. It will take a while to wind down this evening after this productive day.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Today finds you sympathetic and understanding of the feeling of those close to you. You seem to have thrown your more judgmental attitude out of the window. You have learned you thrive when you surround yourself with those who are positive and uplifting. You are becoming the friend to others that you wish them to be for you. This is a great step in the right direction. Your life and all things in it seem to be full of happiness. You are on a very positive path. Hard work and dedication will lead you to great reward.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

All eyes are on you today and that is just what you crave. You have a great desire to be the center of attention. You crave appreciation for your gifts and talents. This will be a time you are able to look back on with pride. You are drawn to romance. This is a great time to spend with a special someone. Share your passion, whether it be cooking a meal together or painting a picture. Involve the one you love in a project tonight. This may bring you closer and the results good be amazing.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find yourself getting mixed signals from someone close to you. You feel as if you don't know up from down. The harder you try to please this person, the more you seem to do wrong. You could find yourself in the company of someone whose values are opposite of yours. You do not like what they represent. You have a strong sense of values and morals and are very picky about the company you keep. It is important to remain kind and try to be understanding. This is why they make chocolate and vanilla, not everyone has the same taste.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

This is a time you feel more inward. You may be in the mood to only spend time with those closest to you. A nice evening at home will bring the most peace into your world today. This is a great time to do some soul searching. You have questions about what all happened in your world the led you to the place you are in today. You may be able to appreciate the hardships you have experienced and the lessons they taught you. This is a point you start to appreciate the wisdom you have gained through your life. You have learned to look for the positive in all life brings your way. This alone will make you a better person who others want in their lives.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Your relationships have taken priority in your life. You value the love you have for others and the love you feel from them. Your emotional needs are being deeply satisfied. There is a vast difference between independence and loneliness. At this time, you seem to be becoming more of a homebody. You find more at ease staying in surrounded only by your loved ones or close friends. This is where you belong as your feelings are finding you more reflective rather than expressive. You crave new beginnings, perhaps this would be a great time for a new experience or a new hobby. Pisces, take the time to reflect and learn from your past and make plans for your future.

Wordsearch Puzzle

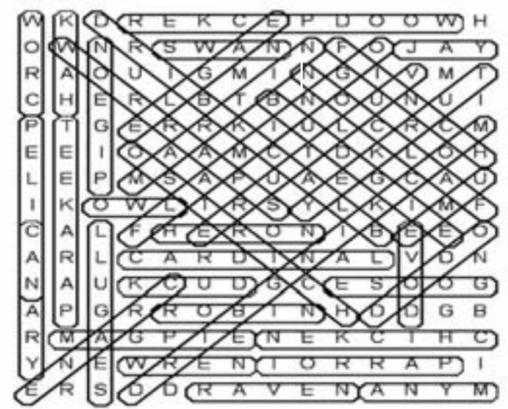
Breakfast

Find and circle all of the breakfast items that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a popular breakfast drink.



- | | | | |
|------------|---------------|-----------|----------|
| BACON | EGGS | JELLY | ROLLS |
| BAGELS | FRUIT | MARMALADE | SAUSAGES |
| BISCUITS | GRANOLA | MILK | TEA |
| BREAD | HAM | MUFFINS | TOAST |
| CEREAL | HASH BROWNS | OATMEAL | WAFFLES |
| COFFEE | HONEY | OMELETS | YOGURT |
| CROISSANTS | HOT CHOCOLATE | PANCAKES | |
| DOUGHNUTS | JAM | PORRIDGE | |

Birds



- | | | | |
|-----------|----------|-------------|------------|
| BLACKBIRD | EAGLE | MARTIN | ROBIN |
| BUDGIE | EMU | MOCKINGBIRD | SEAGULL |
| CANARY | FALCON | MYNA | SPARROW |
| CARDINAL | FINCH | OSTRICH | SWAN |
| CHICKEN | FLAMINGO | OWL | TURKEY |
| CRANE | GOOSE | PARAKEET | VULTURE |
| CROW | HAWK | PARROT | WOODPECKER |
| DODO | HERON | PELICAN | WREN |
| DOVE | JAY | PIGEON | |
| DUCK | MAGPIE | RAVEN | |

The hidden message is: HUMMINGBIRD

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, AUGUST 8, 2019



This aerial photo shows some 1,400 hairdressers making haircuts as they attempt a Guinness world record for the largest number of people cutting hair at the same time in Shenyang, China's northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP

Tourists banned from sitting on Rome's Spanish Steps

Tourists to the Eternal City will no longer be able to catch their breath on the Spanish Steps, after Rome banned people from sitting on the famous monument. Police could be seen blowing whistles to order people up and off the Steps in the historic center on Tuesday, an AFP photographer reported. The marble steps, one of the architectural jewels of the Italian capital, have long been a place for weary sightseers to stop and watch the world go by-while possibly scoffing down a quick sandwich or slurping a milkshake.

But in an attempt to crack down on slovenly behav-

ior, the council issued new rules earlier this summer banning all "camping out" or "sitting" on historic monuments, including the Steps and the "boat" fountain at its feet. Transgressors could be slapped with a fine of up to 400 euros (\$448) for everything from sitting, to going shirtless, bathing in fountains and dragging wheeled suitcases down historic steps. The landmark, made famous in the United States by the 1953 film "Roman Holiday" starring Audrey Hepburn and Gregory Peck, underwent a 1.5-million-euro renovation in 2016 financed by upmarket jeweler Bulgari.

The marble had been discolored by years of pollution but also caked in chewing gum and stained by wine and coffee spills. The Steps, designed by architect Francesco de Sanctis between 1723 and 1726 and dominated by the Trinita dei Monti church at the top, are a UNESCO site. Last month, two German tourists were fined 950 euros for making themselves a coffee on the steps of the famous Rialto bridge in Venice and asked to leave the city. — AFP



'Roma Capitale' local traffic auxiliaries patrol the Spanish Steps of Trinita dei Monti church in Rome.



A Roma Capitale local police officer patrols the Spanish steps of Trinita dei Monti church in Rome.



In this file photograph tourists sit on The Spanish Steps in Rome. — AFP photos

100 years ago,
French daredevil
flies under
Arc de Triomphe



This photograph taken on August 7, 1919 and released by the Musee de l'Air et de l'Espace (Air and Space Museum) - Le Bourget / Agence Prieur-Branger shows French aviator Charles Godefroy flying through the Arc de Triomphe in Paris with his Nieuport 27 airplane. — AFP

Early on a Thursday morning 100 years ago, a French WWI veteran took off on a secret mission that would propel him into the record books: a daredevil flight under the monumental Arc de Triomphe in Paris. Charles Godefroy pulled off the stunt on August 7, 1919, to the astonishment of crowds gathered below on the Champs-Elysees. Dozens fled or threw themselves on the ground as the biplane whizzed just a few metres over their heads. Like other airmen who fought during World War 1, Godefroy took offence when pilots were ordered to march alongside other soldiers during the national Bastille Day military parade just a few weeks earlier on July 14.

He was determined to remind the country of pilots' exploits and sacrifices during the war, and began preparing his flight with the help of a journalist friend, Jacques Mortane. Other aviation pioneers had already renounced the attempt, including Roland Garros who claimed that trying to fit through the narrow 14.5-metre (48-foot) opening would lead to an untimely death, according to French historian Philippe Gras. But Godefroy had practiced by flying under a bridge at Miramas on the Mediterranean coast and chose a Nieuport fighter plane with a wingspan of just nine meters.

Mortane was waiting when Godefroy zoomed under the monument at around 8:00 am and captured the feat on film. Despite having flouted any number of military rules, Godefroy got off with a mere warning from his superiors and became a hero in his hometown of La Fleche in western France, which erected a plaque in his honor. Since then, several illicit flights under the arch have been made over the years while other daredevils have buzzed under the much wider arches of the Eiffel Tower. — AFP

IN IRAQI HOLY CITY, ROW OVER FEMALE VIOLINIST AT SOCCER MATCH SHOWS SOCIAL RIFT

The match should have been cause for young Iraqis to celebrate. Their national team beat Lebanon 1-0 in the first competitive international hosted by Iraq for years in the holy city of Karbala, complete with an opening ceremony of music and dance. Instead, the event drew high-level criticism which many of the city's youth say shows the gulf between them and the political and religious establishment.

At the opening ceremony last week for the West Asia Football Federation Championship, a tournament of Arab countries hosted by Iraq, a Lebanese woman violinist not wearing the Islamic headscarf and with uncovered arms played Iraq's national anthem.

Many Iraqis were elated that such a ceremony, typical of international football tournaments, could finally take place on their soil after football governing body FIFA last year partially lifted a ban largely in place since 1990 on Iraq hosting competitive matches over security concerns. Iraq's Shiite Muslim endowment which administers religious sites and property, backed by prominent conservative politicians, rushed to condemn the performance saying it "overstepped religious boundaries and moral standards ... and violated the holy sanctity of Karbala."

Iraq's Ministry of Youth and Sport which organized the ceremony first defended it, then said: "the ministry will coordinate with official bodies to prevent any scenes that contrast with the holiness of the province." For many Iraqis, especially women, it was a reminder of the power Islamic authorities, Islamist parties and conservative Iran-backed politicians still wield after years of conflict and sectarian killing, as Iraq tries to recover and open up to the outside world.

"We thought the event was a positive message, that a more normal life can come to Karbala," said Fatima Saadi, a 25-year-old dentist, sitting in a coffee shop in Karbala. "Most of us rejected the politicians' comments - the holy ground is where the shrines are, but outside those places there's a different life." Karbala is hallowed ground for Shiite Muslims. It houses the shrine of the Imam Hussein, the Prophet Mohammed's grandson and most revered Shiite imam who was slain in battle. Millions of Shiite pilgrims, mostly from Iraq and Iran, visit every year. Shiite religious authorities say women should wear the headscarf everywhere in the city.

"There's nothing to stop a ceremony taking place at



Performers release balloons during a ceremony ahead of a football match between Iraq and Lebanon in the West Asian Championship at the Karbala Sports City stadium.

Karbala stadium, or from women attending," said Sheikh Wael Al-Boudairi, a local cleric. "But we disagreed with the way in which the woman appeared in that stadium, and that she played (violin) - it is against the holy character of Karbala."

Shiite scholars hold various views on what type of music pious Muslims should listen to. For many, playing of an instrument in Karbala would be forbidden, they say.

Looking to the ayatollah

Saadi, who wears a headscarf but not the full black robe that most women in Karbala wear in public, said

society had closed off there since the 2003 US invasion of Iraq that toppled dictator Saddam Hussein and since which mostly Iran-backed Islamist parties and groups have dominated Iraq. Former Prime Minister Nuri Al-Maliki of the Dawa party and Qais Al-Khazali, a rising political leader who heads a powerful paramilitary faction took to social media to criticize the ceremony.

Observant but liberal Iraqis, who say they are the majority in the country's urban centers, hoped for high-level pushback from Iraq's top Shiite cleric Grand Ayatollah Ali Al-Sistani, who holds enormous sway, but he has not commented on it. Other Iraqis say the football ceremony debate



A dancer looks on after performing during a ceremony ahead of a football match between Iraq and Lebanon in the West Asian Championship at the Karbala Sports City stadium in the holy city of Karbala. — AFP photos

has been used to distract from Iraq's real problems, including corruption and a suppression of rights they blame on those in power. "The politicians and religious authorities are out of touch. They don't understand what the street wants or the nature of Iraqi society," said Dhikra Sarsam, a civil activist in Baghdad. "But this isn't a new issue for us. Whenever we try to take a step forward on women's rights, they try to send us 100 steps back." —Reuters



Henri Belolo

Village People creator dies aged 82

Henri Belolo, the music producer who helped create the Village People, has died aged 82, the French authors' copyright board said Monday. The Moroccan-born songwriter and impresario was one of the pioneers of the disco movement, which swept the world's dance floors in the late 1970s. He formed the six-piece band which had huge hits such as "Y.M.C.A.", "In the Navy" and "Macho Man" along with fellow Frenchman Jacques Morali after he moved to New York. Village People played on camp gay fantasy characters of butch builders, bikers, cowboys and soldiers, and quickly became a pop culture sensation. "Y.M.C.A." quickly became an anthem for the LGBT community.

Although Belolo was not gay himself, he saw the band's image as embodying the carefree party spirit of the community in the years before the AIDS epidemic. The French society of authors, Sacem, told AFP that Belolo's son had confirmed he had died. "Sad to learn of the death of Henri Belolo," the group tweeted. "He contributed to the rise of dance, disco and house music in France and wrote for... the Village People," it added.

Belolo and Morali—who was also born in Casablanca—had already been successful in France with their Carabine label before the friends left for the US in 1973, where they formed the Philadelphia disco outfit, The Richie Family, who had a global hit with "The Best Disco in Town" in 1976.

Morali—who also wrote songs for Cher and the Franco-Egyptian diva Dalida—died of AIDS in 1991. The pair helped popularize breakdancing and hip hop in Europe in the early 1980s with the New York group Break Machine. Their Scorpio Music label was also a key player in the rise of house music in France later in the decade. — AFP

Nigerian pop star quizzed over lorry of 'half-naked' dancers

Popular Nigerian musician Augustine Kelechi, known as Tekno, has been questioned for throwing cash at scantily clad women dancing in a glass-sided van in Lagos, police said yesterday. "We invited Tekno yesterday for questioning over an incident involving him and some half-naked girls dancing in a moving lorry around the Lekki area," Lagos state police spokesman Bala Elkana told AFP. "He was released after interrogation." Elkana said investigations were "ongoing" into the incident on Friday night in Nigeria's economic capital and it was too early to say if charges would be pressed.

A video went viral over the weekend showing the singer throwing money at ladies wearing lingerie as they danced around a pole in the glass-sided vehicle while it crawled along in traffic. The 26-year-old singer took to his Instagram page on Sunday to offer an unreserved apology to anyone who "felt offended by the scenery they saw".

The performer claimed he was shooting a music video and "had a shortage of vehicles to convey people to the next location". He denied it was an advert for a strip club or "dancing naked on the streets for any type of reason". But the Lagos State Signage and Advertisement Agency slammed the incident as a publicity stunt "of crass immorality". "Nobody can hide under the guise of engaging in the outdoor advertising business to display obscenity that is antithetical to our cherished cultural and moral values," it said in a statement. — AFP



Popular Nigerian musician Augustine Kelechi, known as Tekno.



R Kelly's girlfriend, Jocelyn Savage arrives for the second hearing in the racketeering and sex trafficking case of Kelly at Brooklyn federal court in New York.



In this file photo R Kelly leaves the Leighton Criminal Court Building after a hearing on sexual abuse charges in Chicago, Illinois. — AFP photos

R Kelly faces new sex abuse charges in Minnesota

The sprawling sex abuse scandal involving R&B singer R. Kelly expanded on Monday to the state of Minnesota, where charges against him include engaging in prostitution with a minor. The new charges come days after the disgraced superstar pleaded not guilty in New York to federal charges including racketeering, which allege he systematically recruited girls for sex while touring. He faces separate federal charges linked to child pornography in his hometown Chicago.

Along with the felony count of prostitution with a minor, Kelly also faces one count of soliciting a minor for sexual purposes, the attorney's office for Hennepin County, which includes the state's most populous city of Minneapolis, announced. County attorney Mike Freeman told journalists the charges are related to an incident dating to July 11, 2001, when a victim under 18 years old was attempting to obtain an autograph from Kelly, known for hits such as "I Believe I Can Fly."

The 52-year-old artist gave her the autograph along with a phone number, and after she called, she was invited to his hotel, Freeman said. When the girl arrived, "she was offered \$200 to take off her clothes and dance for him," he said. "After accepting the \$200, she got naked and they proceeded to dance." Freeman, who dubbed the incident

"simply not acceptable," said sexual contact occurred but not intercourse. She was then granted VIP access to one of his concerts, which was meant to be for adults 18 and over. It is unclear when or whether the musician, whose given name is Robert Sylvester Kelly, will appear in Minnesota to face the new charges.

Following his recent arraignment in New York, it was expected Kelly would return to Chicago, where he must attend a status hearing on September 4 in a case involving child pornography. He was denied bond in both Chicago and New York. Prior to his arrest in July over the federal indictments, Kelly had been out on bond in connection with state felony charges of aggravated sexual assault in Chicago's Cook County criminal court. Kelly has a decades-long history of abuse allegations, especially of underage girls, but for years maintained a solid fan base, performed and won awards. He began facing renewed scrutiny earlier this year upon the release of the docu-series "Surviving R. Kelly," which nabbed an Emmy nomination for outstanding informational series or special. — AFP

The German city 'Augsburg' is a World Heritage city



At its 43rd session held recently in Baku, Azerbaijan, the World Heritage Committee of UNESCO, granted the Augsburg Application of the 'Augsburg Water Management System' with the exclusive UNESCO World Heritage title. At this meeting, 36 proposals were identified from around the world - three of them with German participation. The city's delight is huge and a major water festival was launched in the city center.

Mayor Dr Gribl: "An incomparable treasure in the city" Mayor Dr Kurt Gribl says in a first reaction: "With the recognition of the Augsburg Water Management System as a World Heritage Site, UNESCO honors an incomparable treasure that the city has retained since its founding. The location of Augsburg at the confluence of 'Lech' and 'Wertach' is no coincidence, but strategically well considered. Augsburg enjoys the full economic and cultural development of both river waters and the abundance of

drinking water in the Forest City. For centuries, Lech's hydropower was used in an innovative way to drive wheel mills and pumping stations.

Augsburg's craftsmanship flourished and made the city rich - also because, thanks to an ingenious canal system, good hygienic conditions prevailed and the best drinking water was available to the citizens. The interaction between human ingenuity, pioneering engineering science and the art of the Great Fountain is the winning concept of the unique water management system that can be tested in Augsburg for more than eight centuries. To this day, we can truly take pride in this world heritage as a city and be happy with all our hearts."

Cultural Officer Thomas Weitzel (in Baku/Azerbaijan) "The system of the Augsburg water management located like a connecting bracket around the city, which is rich in cultural monuments, from the oldest water towers in

Europe and the art-historically important fountains to outstanding monuments of industrial culture or the canoe route in the former Olympic site. The 22 objects of the Augsburg World Heritage Application represent a unique special case in a combination of historical and artistic significance: They are all closely linked to the technological achievements of hydraulic engineering, the sustainable use of hydropower and the resource-saving separation of drinking and service water. The title of UNESCO requires us to preserve the excellent monuments. At the same time we realize that with the world title, we accept mediation order through the exchange of tradition and knowledge of the sustainable use of water as a vital resource and communication with the international community."

Lifestyle | Music & Movies



Director Guillermo Del Toro poses during the ceremony for his Star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame, in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos



(From left to right standing) Singer/songwriter Lana Del Rey, directors Guillermo Del Toro and J.J. Abrams attend the ceremony honoring Del Toro with a Star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame.



(From left) Singer/songwriter Lana Del Rey, directors Guillermo Del Toro and J.J. Abrams attend the ceremony for Del Toro's his Star on The Hollywood Walk of Fame, in Hollywood, California.

Del Toro gets Hollywood star, urges immigrants to reject fear

Mexican director Guillermo del Toro was honored Tuesday with a star on Hollywood's Walk of Fame, where he urged fellow immigrants to reject fear and division in the US. The double Oscar-winning filmmaker, 54, is known for creating surreal worlds filled with fantastical monsters in movies such as "Pan's Labyrinth" and "The Shape of Water." Speaking in the aftermath of the El Paso mass shootings, he told the crowd that "great fear" was being used to divide people,

but "those divisions are complete fantasies." "When people say, 'You dwell in fantasy,' I say, 'I don't. Politicians do, churches do, I don't. I deal with facts of the soul and the stories.'" He added: "Do not believe the lies they tell about us. Believe in the stories you have inside and believe that we all can make a difference." Del Toro left Mexico in 1998 after his father was kidnapped for a \$1 million ransom that he only managed to pay with the help of fellow director James Cameron.

He is now known as one of the "three amigos" of Mexican film along with fellow Oscar-winning directors Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu ("Birdman," "The Revenant") and Alfonso Cuaron ("Gravity"). He told the crowd how searching Tinseltown's sidewalk in the 1970s for the stars of horror legends Boris Karloff, Lon Chaney and Alfred Hitchcock had inspired him in creating his famed horror universes. "What I felt with those stars is there were people that were as weird as me and they were here, so

that gave me hope," he said. "This star is for you, all of you that feel weird to come over and sit for a moment." "Star Wars" filmmaker J.J. Abrams and singer Lana Del Rey attended the ceremony. Del Rey provides a song for "Scary Stories to Tell in the Dark," a horror film produced by Del Toro out Friday. — AFP



(From left) Sarah Hammond, Sian Clifford, Phoebe Waller-Bridge and Brett Gelman accept the Outstanding Achievement in Comedy Award for "Fleabag" onstage during the TCA Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, California.

'Fleabag' creator rules out third season - until she's 50

Emmy-nominated "Fleabag" creator Phoebe Waller-Bridge has ruled out a third season of the hit British comedy—at least for another 16 years. The British actress and screenwriter wrote the offbeat, irreverent BBC series based on a play of the same name about a self-absorbed young Londoner struggling to deal with family, sex and social conventions. It was streamed globally by Amazon Prime and has become a phenomenon—its second season received 11 Emmy nominations, including writing and acting nods for Waller-Bridge as well as best comedy series. Asked at a Los Angeles screening Monday whether her upcoming reprisal of the original play in London's West End is the last we will see of "Fleabag," Waller-Bridge said the show had come "to a natural end."



Phoebe Waller-Bridge accepts the Outstanding Achievement in Comedy Award for "Fleabag" onstage during the TCA Awards at The Beverly Hilton Hotel. — AFP photos

who wanted to inject more humor into the film set for release next year. Beyond that, she has been signed to executive produce a new HBO series, "Run," about a woman given a chance to break with a humdrum existence and reinvent herself—written by Waller-Bridge's longtime associate Vicky Jones who directed the original "Fleabag" play. — AFP

"I think it's time to go to the next chapter, and I'm so grateful for the character," she said. "I have a fantasy of bringing 'Fleabag' back when I'm 50," she added. Waller-Bridge, 34, noted that the play contains a line in which the titular character says she is 26, joking that the production therefore "has a sell-by date." "Fleabag" plays with convention by having its flawed heroine break the proverbial fourth wall and talk directly to viewers. Waller-Bridge also received an Emmy nomination last month for writing hit BBC spy thriller "Killing Eve."

Lewinsky-produced 'impeachment' drama to air weeks before US election

Monica Lewinsky will produce a major true crime series about impeachment proceedings against former US president Bill Clinton set to air just weeks before the 2020 election, the FX network said Tuesday. The third season of the "American Crime Story" franchise will dramatize events that saw White House intern Lewinsky and two other women become "swept up ... in the country's first impeachment proceedings in over a century," FX said in a statement.



In this file photo TV Personality Monica Lewinsky attends The Hollywood Reporter's Power 100 Women In Entertainment at Milk Studios, in Los Angeles, California. — AFP

"I don't believe it's going to determine who the next president of the United States is going to be," he added in response to the swift backlash. Lewinsky said in a statement to Vanity Fair that she was initially "more than a little scared" to join the project, but ultimately decided to in order to "fully reclaim (her) narrative."

"I'm so grateful for the growth we've made as a society that allows people like me who have been historically silenced to finally reintroduce my voice to the conversation," she said, referring to the explosive #MeToo movement against sexual harassment. "Powerful people, often men, take advantage of those subordinate to them in myriad ways all the time," Lewinsky said, noting that "this narrative is one that is, regrettably, evergreen." The latest installment of the Ryan Murphy-produced franchise will star Sarah Paulson as Linda Tripp, who blew the whistle on Lewinsky's affair with Clinton. Lewinsky will be played by Beanie Feldstein and Annaleigh Ashford will portray Paula Jones, who sued Clinton for sexual harassment.—AFP

It follows the network's first two seasons of "ACS," which dealt with the trial of O.J. Simpson and the murder of Gianni Versace, respectively, and together earned a bevy of awards—and considerable controversy. The announcement of season three prompted an immediate social media storm, with many users claiming a renewed focus on a sex scandal which nearly toppled a Democratic president would benefit incumbent Republican Donald Trump.

Meanwhile, Democratic support for impeachment proceedings against Trump is growing, with more than half of House Democrats now backing the procedure, media tallies showed last week. "People are going to be very interested in this around the presidential election and it is going to be a great show," FX chief John Landgraf told a television critics' gathering in Los Angeles, according to Deadline.

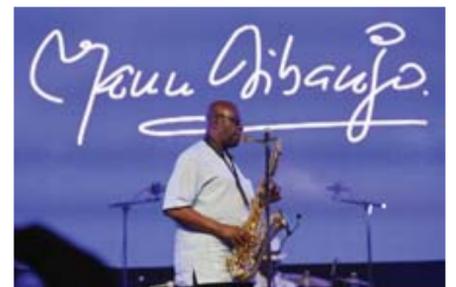
Celebrated saxophonist builds musical bridges between Africa and the West

In a career spanning six decades, Afro-European star saxophonist Manu Dibango has played a fusion of everything from jazz, funk and traditional rhythms from his native Cameroon, creating music that he says "builds bridges". The 85-year-old, who was born in Cameroon but moved to France as a teenager, has played with such greats as Herbie Hancock and Fela Kuti, and is credited with inspiring an array of musicians including Michael Jackson.



In this file photo taken on March 30, 1986 Cameroonian saxophone player Manu Dibango (right) and French singer Tom Novembre perform in Bourges, central France, during the 8th Bourges' Spring Festival. — AFP photos

"We are the builders of bridges between the West and Africa," he told AFP in an interview at the Jazz in Marciac festival in southern France, where the towering saxophonist with the shaved head and spangly shirts is a regular. Dibango shot to global prominence in 1972 with the afrobeat hit "Soul Makossa", a highly catchy track that was spotted by DJs in New York on the B side of a single containing a song for the Cameroonian national football team.



In this file photo Emmanuel N'Djoko Dibango, known as Manu Dibango, saxophonist performs during his concert at the Ivory Hotel in Abidjan.

He claims Michael Jackson pilfered a line from that track for his 1983 hit "Wanna Be Startin' Something" on the Thriller album, but settled the matter out of court. The king of Afro-jazz bears no grudge against the king of pop, whom he credits with giving the track a second life and making it into a standard that has since been reprised by other stars, including Rihanna and, more recently, Beyonce. Producing a follow-up to such a hit would have daunted a lesser musician, but Dibango proved himself the master of reinvention and musical fusion.

"In the morning I tell myself, 'Look, I'm still alive. What can I be doing?'. My problem is: 'What's my agenda' and not 'Ah, yesterday was great'," the performer said. Despite having lived longer in Europe than in Africa Dibango refuses to be put in a box and warns against doing the same with music. "I'm just a guy who is a musician and not a European nor an African musician," he says, warning against a "blinkered" approach to music whereby "if you're an African musician you play the djembe, balafon or kora and if you play the sax, oops, it's more black American and you're no longer really African for some people".



This file photo taken in 1975 shows Cameroonian saxophone player Manu Dibango performing in Ivory Coast.

It's worse again for players of the piano and guitar, instruments also seen by some as "un-African", even though, Dibango says, "there are pianos in every hotel in Africa and in every orchestra there are guitars!" "These are fantasies that people project onto you. And maybe part of our life is to chase them away," he said. But it's "very hard, even for me," he admitted.

Living life in stereo

Born in Douala in what was then the French-administered part of Cameroon, Dibango was influenced by a wide variety of genres from a young age. His uncle played the harmonium and his mother ran a choir. "I have the harmony of Bach and Handel in my ear, with Cameroonian lyrics," he said, adding with his trademark optimism: "It's a gift to be able to have at least two possibilities. In life I prefer to be stereo than mono".

At the age of 15 his parents sent him to study in France

Disney sees box office gains, but earnings fall short

Walt Disney Co. said Tuesday second-quarter results were lifted by strong box office gains but failed to meet Wall Street forecasts, sending shares sharply lower. Disney shares tumbled more than three percent in after-hours trade after reporting profits fell 51 percent to \$1.4 billion while revenues rose 33 percent to \$20.2 billion. The results included the recently acquired film and television assets from 21st Century Fox, which puts Disney atop the Hollywood box office as it looks to boost its share in an on-demand television battle with Netflix and Amazon.

enhance and advance our strategic transformation," said Disney chief executive Bob Iger. "I'd like to congratulate The Walt Disney Studios for reaching \$8 billion at the global box office so far this year—a new industry record—thanks to the stellar performance of our Marvel, Pixar and Disney films." The latest results were highlighted by box-office hits such as "Avengers: Endgame," "Aladdin," "Captain Marvel" and "Toy Story 4." The latest "Avengers" film smashed records this year to become the all-time top grossing film with \$2.8 billion.—AFP

"Our third-quarter results reflect our efforts to effectively integrate the 21st Century Fox assets to



A general view shows a worker putting salad seeds to grow onto a water basin at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano. — AFP photos

Italian hydroponics farm bets on 'red gold'

The Italian tomato is prized around the world, but its reputation has soured in recent years over reports of mafia infiltration, slave labor and toxic fires that poison water sources. Southern Europe's biggest hydroponics farm is out to change all that, by growing pesticide-free crops in environmentally friendly greenhouses—and getting bees to do the hard work. Set among organic vineyards in Tuscany, Sfera Agricola was launched in 2015 by Luigi Galimberti as a response to repeated UN warnings that food production will need to increase sharply to feed the growing global population.

the midday heat where styrofoam boards holding baby lettuces are floated on a nutrient-rich, oxygenated solution. As the company expands, it hopes to grow cabbages, spinach, courgettes, peppers and aubergines as well.

Galimberti tapped private investors and banks to raise the 20 million euros (\$22.4 million) needed to open the 13-hectare greenhouse, which now employs 230 people and produces crops every day of the year. Italian tomatoes—particularly the canned variety—have received bad press in recent years, with rights charities warning that foreign workers are effectively used as slave labor. The fruit dubbed “red gold”, destined for supermarket shelves around the world, is plucked in back-breaking conditions under a pitiless sun, for pitiful wages, largely by Africans who live in shanty towns.

The illegal dumping and burning of toxic waste particularly in southern Italy has also spooked consumers over recent decades, amid reports of contaminated farm produce and a sharp rise in cancers, malformations and birth defects.

The so-called “agro-mafia” business—the infiltration of organized crime along the agri-food chain in Italy, from pickers to distributors—is worth 24.5 billion euros, according to a July report by farming association Coldiretti. “The exploitation of workers combined with exhausting conditions make picking in the south an ignoble job,” said Galimberti, who says his company’s proper contracts and paid overtime are “a rare thing in the sector”.

'Flavor advantage'

Sfera Agricola has bet on a return to the Italian tomato's glory days, producing three varieties that have fallen out of favor with farmers and distributors, but that the company is “bringing back to supermarket shelves”. “Over the last 50 years, the market has evolved rapidly for distribution and commercial reasons. Tomato skins have thickened so they last longer on the shelf, and the fruit no longer drops off the vine when ripe,” he said.

Thanks to the cubes of rockwool—a hydroponic growing medium that mimics soil and supports the roots—the plant is protected and we can use older, weaker varieties,” he added. Those have thinner skins and tend to fall off the plant when ripe, so they have to be picked and eaten relatively quickly, he said. “But they do not have ‘innovative’ characteristics, which gives them a flavour advantage,” Galimberti said. He aims to build 500 hectares of hydroponic greenhouses in the next 10 years, to become one of the biggest players in the sector in Europe. But his toughest competition may be much smaller, and closer to home. “In Italy almost everyone has someone in their family who produces their own tomatoes. Or their neighbor does, or the old man next door.” — AFP

'Insect predators'

“We use bumblebees to pollinate the flowers, and we release a series of insect predators to combat the insects we fear,” Galimberti said, adding that it had led to the creation of new bee colonies in a boost for the local ecosystem. Pickers shuttle back and forth on solar-powered platforms, delicately tying back the plants’ upper branches as the fruit below ripens. Further on, vast basins shimmer in



Employees pick tomatoes at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.

“The UN reminds us every year that by 2050 there will be 10 billion of us, and we’ll need double the amount of water and double the land to produce food for everyone,” Galimberti told AFP. “Along with the problems of a suddenly-changing climate, which is having an ever-greater impact on farming, it pushed me to imagine a more efficient, technological way of farming that produces more with less,” he said. Hydroponics is a method of growing plants without soil, using water fortified with mineral nutrients and oxygen instead.

Galimberti’s farm produces a kilogram of tomatoes or lettuce using just two litres of water, compared to 75 in fields, he says. Of those two litres, over 90 percent is collected rainwater. It relies on natural organisms to control pests and disease and the few plants that need to be treated chemically are separated and their fruit destroyed.



Founder of the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm, Luigi Galimberti shows salad roots, at the farm in Gavorrano.



A general view shows salads growing on a water basin at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



A worker sorts out tomatoes at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



An employee displays freshly picked tomatoes at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



Freshly picked tomatoes are pictured at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



An employee picks tomatoes at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



This view shows basil plants growing on a water basin at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



Tomatoes are being sorted out at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



Salads grow on a water basin at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.



An employee picks tomatoes at the Sfera Agricola hydroponic farm in Gavorrano.

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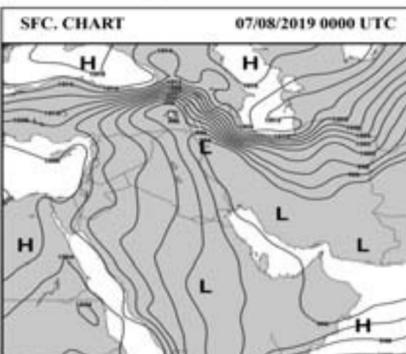
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust and some high clouds will appear.

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 42 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 07/08/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	35 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	48 °C	36 °C			
ABDALY	49 °C	33 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	48 °C	34 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C			
SALMIYAH	43 °C	35 °C			
AHMADI	45 °C	36 °C			
NUWASIB	47 °C	34 °C			
WAFRA	47 °C	33 °C			
SALMY	48 °C	30 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	08/08	Very hot and causing rising dust	49 °C	36 °C	NW	22 - 50 km/h
Friday	08/09	Very hot and causing rising dust and some high clouds will appear	49 °C	37 °C	NW	20 - 55 km/h
Saturday	08/10	Very hot and causing rising dust	50 °C	37 °C	NW	20 - 55 km/h
Sunday	08/11	Very hot and causing rising dust over open areas	50 °C	34 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:45
Sunrise	05:12
Zuhr	11:54
Asr	15:29
Sunset	18:36
Isha	20:00

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	29 °C
MAX. RH	27 %
MIN. RH	08 %
MAX. Wind	N 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, ABRAHAMCHETHI PURACKAL ABRAHAM holder of Indian Passport No. K2098802 do hereby change my name as ABRAHAM CHETHIPURACKAL ABRAHAM. (C 5574)

I, JOSEPH GEORGE KURIAPPILLY, holder of Indian Passport No. Z3830804 having permanent address Kerala, India-683518 residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: GEORGE and surname: KURIAPPILLY JOSEPH (C 5666)

I, BINDUMOL KULAT HUNKAL ABRAHAM holder of Indian Passport No. H8468361 do hereby change my name to BINDUMOL (given name) KULATHUNKAL ABRAHAM (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5571)

I, Mookan Kumar Kannan holder of Indian Passport No. J0976988 having permanent address 173-68A, Melapidavoor, Manamadurai, Sivagangai-Dist. Tamilnadu-623707, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as given name: KUMAR KANNAN and surname: MOOKKAN. (C 5573) 8-8-2019

I, NETTARWALA FOZIA FIROZ, holder of Indian Passport No. J3509812, having permanent address 6/62 Meenakshi Apts., Dockyard Road, Mazgaon, Mumbai 400010, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare

that henceforth my name will be read as given name: FOZIA FIROZ and surname: NETTARWALA (C 5570) 7-8-2019

I, JOAQUIM ANTONIO FILOMENO CAESAR HENRIQUES holder of Indian Passport No. P7117842, having permanent address at Molla, Chandor, Salcete, Goa-India, PinCode 403714, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as Given Name: JOAQUIM ANTONIO FILOMENO CESAR and Last Name: HENRIQUES (C 5665) 6-8-2019

I, SUSAN JOHN (given name) holder of Indian Passport S 3697819 do hereby change my name to SUSAN (given name) JOHN (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5664) 5-8-2019

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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 8/8/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 8/8/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	241	Alexandria	00:05	AIC	976	Goa/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSC	406	Sohag	00:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	FEG	342	Sohag	01:05
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:50
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	PGT	829	Istanbul	02:59
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05
JZR	734	Cairo	02:35	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	111	Doha	03:25
JZR	722	Alexandria	02:40	JZR	409	Delhi	03:30
JZR	254	Amman	02:40	JZR	701D	Asyut	03:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	JZR	713	Sohag	03:50
THY	768	Istanbul	02:55	THY	769	Istanbul	03:50
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
JZR	262	Beirut	03:10	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	1735	Cairo	04:40
JZR	406	Kochi	03:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:00
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:15
MSR	616	Cairo	04:25	MSR	615	Mumbai	05:25
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	THY	1465	Istanbul	06:00
THY	1414	Trabzon	05:05	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	KAC	745	Sharm el-Sheikh	06:45
IGA	170	Bahrain	05:05	KAC	212	Bahrain	06:50
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	RJA	643	Amman	07:00
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	251	Amman	07:10
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15
KAC	548	Alexandria	05:55	RBG	550	Alexandria	07:30
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	BAW	156	London	07:40
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	413	Bangkok	07:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	KAC	173	Munich	07:55
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:25	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	KAC	193	Trabzon	08:10
KAC	106	London	06:40	KAC	181	Paris/NCE	08:10
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	IRA	606	Mashhad	08:10
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	IGO	1756	CNN	08:10
QTR	8511	Doha	06:55	KAC	163	MXP	08:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	KAC	505	LCA/Beirut	08:40
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05	KAC	177	Vienna	08:45
IGO	112	Doha	07:05	KAC	561	Amman	08:55
IRA	601	Tehran	07:10	QTR	8512	Doha	09:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	07:10	KAC	121	AGP	09:00
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	117	New York	09:05
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	KAC	791	Madinah	09:10
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	QTR	1085	Doha	09:10
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	157	Istanbul	09:20
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
JZR	702D	Asyut	09:55	JZR	301	Istanbul	09:55
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	OMA	642	Muscat	10:00
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	101	London	10:05
JZR	714	Sohag	10:00	GFA	210	Bahrain	10:05
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	QTR	1071	Doha	10:30
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	FDB	056	Cairo	10:40
OMS	223	Muscat	11:00	IRA	668	Mashhad	10:55
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	SVA	513	Riyadh	10:55
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	IAW	158A	Al Najaf	11:00
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	JZR	221	Bahrain	11:20
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
JZR	410	Delhi	12:10	OMS	224	Muscat	11:40
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	JZR	309	BJV	11:45
JZR	746	Sharm el-Sheikh	12:25	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05

Hordes of Earth's toughest creatures may be on Moon

WASHINGTON: There might be life on the Moon after all: Thousands of virtually indestructible creatures that can withstand extreme radiation, sizzling heat, the coldest temperatures of the universe, and decades without food. These terrifying-sounding beings aren't aliens but instead microscopic Earthlings known as tardigrades, who likely made it out alive following a crash landing on the lunar surface by Israel's Beresheet probe in April, the US-based organization responsible for their trip said Tuesday.

Based on an analysis of the spacecraft's trajectory and the composition of the device the micro-animals were stored in, "we believe the chances of survival for the tardigrades... are extremely high," Nova Spivack, co-founder and chairman of the Arch Mission Foundation, told AFP. The non-profit is dedicated to spreading backups of human knowledge and Earth's biology throughout the Solar System, a quest it likens

to the creation of an "Encyclopedia Galactica" first evoked by sci-fi writer Isaac Asimov.

"Tardigrades are ideal to include because they are microscopic, multicellular, and one of the most durable forms of life on planet Earth," said Spivack. He added that the diminutive creatures, which are under a millimeter in size, had been dehydrated to place them in suspended animation, then "encased in an epoxy of artificial amber, and should be revivable in the future." The tardigrades were stored inside a "Lunar Library", a nanotechnology device that resembles a DVD and contains a 30-million-page archive of human history viewable under microscopes, as well as human DNA.

Spivack is confident this too survived impact - but it doesn't represent the first genetic code or life forms to be deposited on the barren celestial body. That distinction belongs to the DNA and microbes contained in the almost 100 bags of feces and urine left behind by

American astronauts during the Apollo lunar landings from 1969-1972.

Also known as water bears or moss piglets, tardigrades can live in water or on land, and are capable of surviving temperatures as high as 150 degrees Celsius and as low as minus 272 degrees Celsius, albeit for a few minutes. The grub-like, eight-legged animals can come back from being dried out to a lifeless husk for decades, withstand near-zero pressure in outer space and the crushing depths of the Mariana Trench.

If they did not burn up in an explosion, they could in theory survive the tiny pressure on the lunar surface, and the extremes of temperature, William Miller, a tardigrades expert at Baker University, told AFP. "But to become active, to grow, eat, and reproduce they would need water, air and food," so it would not be possible for them to multiply and form a colony, he added.

NASA astrobiologist Cassie Conley said that their

exact survival time would depend on the condition of the impact site and the temperatures to which they are exposed. "If they don't get too hot, it's possible they could survive for quite a long time (many years)," she told AFP. "I'd be more concerned that the animals would be affected by toxic chemicals from the epoxy or glue" used to store them, as opposed to conditions in space, she added.

Even if the creatures lived on for several years, there is no crewed mission to the Moon planned until NASA's Artemis program in 2024 at the south pole - far from Beresheet's crash site on the Sea of Serenity, so they probably won't make it home. "It is unlikely that they will be rescued in time, so my guess is that, even if they survived, they are doomed," said Rafael Alves Batista, a physicist at Sao Paulo university who co-authored a 2017 paper on tardigrades' extreme resilience. — AFP

'Herculean' parrot found in N Zealand

WELLINGTON: The remains of a super-sized parrot that stood more than half the height of an average human and roamed the earth 19 million years ago have been discovered in New Zealand. Judging by the size of the leg bones, the bird would have stood about one metre tall and weighed up to seven kilograms, according to a report by an international team of paleontologists published in the latest edition of Biology Letters.

"It could have flown but we're putting our money on it being flightless," Paul Scofield, the senior curator of natural history at Canterbury Museum, told AFP yesterday. When the bones were found in 2008 no one

was certain what they were, and they spent 11 years gathering dust on a shelf until the team looked at them again earlier this year. "The thought they were from a giant parrot did not enter our minds. We thought it could be some type of eagle until we went back and looked at it again," Scofield said.

The parrot has been named *Hercules inexpectatus* to reflect its Herculean size and strength - and the unexpected nature of the discovery. "Hercules, as the largest parrot ever, no doubt with a massive parrot beak that could crack wide open anything it fancied, may well have dined on more than conventional parrot foods, perhaps even other parrots," Mike Archer, from the University of NSW paleontology research center, said.

The bird was approximately the size of the giant "dodo" pigeon and twice the size of the critically endangered flightless New Zealand kakapo, previously the largest known parrot. Evidence of the parrot was unearthed in fossils near St Bathans in southern New Zealand,

an area that has proved a rich source of fossils from the Miocene period which extends from about five million to 23 million years ago. New Zealand, home to the now-extinct flightless bird moa which was up to 3.6 m tall with neck outstretched, is well known for its giant birds.

"But until now, no-one has ever found an extinct giant parrot - anywhere," associate professor Trevor Worthy from Flinders University said. "We have been excavating these fossil deposits for 20 years, and each year reveals new birds and other animals... no doubt there are many more unexpected species yet to be discovered in this most interesting deposit." Last year, scientists found the remains of a giant burrowing bat that lived millions of years ago in the same region. From the teeth and bones of the animal, which lived 16 to 19 million years ago, it is estimated to be three times the size of an average modern bat and weighed 40 gm. — AFP



WELLINGTON: This handout picture released yesterday shows a drawing featuring a giant-sized parrot. — AFP

Housing woes testing Saudi...

Continued from Page 1

on a 350,000 riyals parcel of land for which he took a separate bank loan, but construction had to be halted in May after he ran out of money.

Set up in 1974, the Fund is a government entity linked to the housing ministry, and covers about a quarter of Abdullah's monthly mortgage payment. But Abdullah says he is still left struggling to pay off both loans that eat up roughly half his monthly income of 20,000 riyals (\$5,300) amid rising living costs. "The (mortgage) system is destroying the middle class, it is suffocating us," he told AFP outside his half-finished home, urging a return to the interest-free loans.

The strain is felt more acutely by 41-year-old government employee Majid, who earns only slightly more than the national average monthly income of 14,820 riyals (\$3,950). Such lower middle-class citizens are already struggling as the government scales back subsidies, hiking water, electricity and gasoline prices and imposing a five percent value-added tax. He is among some 500,000 people said to remain on the Fund's waiting list for interest-free loans, with a final decision expected by 2020. The Fund and the housing ministry did not respond to AFP's requests for an interview.

"The key to addressing the Saudi housing crisis is... to stimulate private sector funding and cut the longstanding reliance on government subsidies," Saudi expert Najah Al-Otaibi told AFP. But this is all a shock to many Saudis accustomed for decades to cheap loans and a tax-free lifestyle. It highlights the petro-state's challenge in weaning citizens off government largesse amid a huge fiscal deficit, projected to reach \$35 billion in 2019, or 4.2 percent of GDP.

"In Saudi Arabia, now there is a dual tension - first is to

provide affordable housing for the younger generation feeling the pinch of higher costs of living, reduced subsidies, and less jobs," Karen Young, from the American Enterprise Institute, told AFP. "Second is to broaden financial services to expand credit products, and hope to spur consumer growth. The latter has more chances of broader economic growth than returning to free government housing practices." The world's top oil exporter says it is seeking to partner with the private sector to stump up billions of dollars to build around 1.5 million affordable homes in the coming years.

Boosting home ownership is one of the key cornerstones of Prince Mohammad's Vision 2030 reform program. Nearly half of the country's 20.7 million Saudis owned their own home in 2017, with hopes of reaching 70 percent by 2030. The kingdom also wants to reduce the cost of an average home by 2020 to five times the average annual income, down from 10 times the yearly salary in 2015. Saudi Arabia has only a single digit mortgage penetration, one of the lowest among G20 countries, according to the Arab News daily.

The housing ministry, which has announced multiple housing schemes to alleviate the crisis, says it seeks to increase total mortgages to 502 billion riyals (\$134 billion) by 2020, up from 290 billion riyals (\$77 billion) in 2017. But some Saudis are pushing back, voicing resentment over continued state spending on grand projects like NEOM, a planned \$500 billion mega city in the kingdom's northwest, while many cannot afford homes. "Where is the 250 billion riyals?" has been a recent refrain on social media.

It refers to the \$67 billion allocated to the housing ministry in 2011 by the then King Abdullah, apparently to address popular discontent as Arab Spring protests swept the region. For Majid, who waited for years for a loan from the Fund, the current scenario means he can only rent a small place rather than purchasing a house. "When my eight-year-old daughter has to change her clothes in front of her brothers, I feel ashamed I don't have a bigger house of my own," Majid told AFP, requesting that his real name be withheld. "It makes me angry." — AFP

only sell before Easter. The rest of the year we export, especially to Jordan and the Gulf countries," says Florin Dragomir, a breeder from the central region of Sibiu, known for its quality meat and dairy products. Dragomir, who has 1,500 sheep, waved away concerns about the summer transports. One of Romania's biggest breeders, Agrozoomed, which exports between 70,000 and 100,000 sheep every year, says conditions on the ships are "very good". "Someone created this scandal to serve their own interests," a company official told AFP, requesting anonymity.

Romania's main livestock breeder and exporter association, Acebop, however concedes that changes are needed to prevent the animals from suffering. "We have drafted a law to freeze the transport of livestock when temperatures exceed 30 degrees Celsius (88 degrees Fahrenheit) and to make having a veterinarian on board mandatory," Acebop president Mary Pana told AFP. She hopes the law will be adopted this autumn, saying it was urgent, because in case of EU sanctions, the farmers and not the authorities would be penalised.

Australia passed reforms to its live export trade last year following an outcry after video released by animal rights activists showed sheep - some already dead - crammed together in small, stifling pens and covered in excrement on ships. The footage was taken during five voyages in 2017 to Qatar, Kuwait and Oman from Australian ports. Sheep were reportedly forced to stay standing for three weeks, often in "blast-furnace" northern hemisphere summer conditions.

The new rules require exporters to increase cargo space for sheep by up to 39 percent, varying according to seasonal temperature, and stipulate independent observers must travel on all ships carrying cattle or sheep. Animal welfare activists have called for a ban on live exports. — AFP

Saudi Arabia readies for hajj as tensions...

Continued from Page 1

While waiting for the beginning of the hajj, worshippers roam the esplanade or pray in the mosque in stifling heat. Temperatures can surpass 40 degrees Celsius and some pilgrims carry sun shades.

Large misting machines installed at the holy sites help to make the heat more bearable. "The mosques are air conditioned, water is readily available, you just have to protect yourself from the sun," said Algerian Kamal Bouslimani, 57. Men wear two pieces of unstitched cloth called "ihram" that leaves one shoulder exposed. Pilgrims move together in large groups, led by guides holding their national flags.

Guards in khaki fastidiously lead worshippers to their five daily prayers. Traffic in the city is extremely

heavy and the air quality is poor. The odor of exhaust fumes mixes with the smell of bitumen emitted by the heated road surface and many pilgrims wear face masks. Away from prayers, many of the faithful visit the innumerable shops that speckle the Holy City. Religious tourism brings in revenues worth billions of dollars.

But the vast gathering also presents major logistical and safety challenges. In 2015, some 2,300 worshippers were killed in the worst stampede in the history of the hajj. Since then Saudi Arabia has sought to reassure pilgrims, deploying tens of thousands of security officers and installing cameras to oversee every corner of the holy sites. Even though the hajj lasts only five days, many pilgrims arrive weeks before and linger in the city.

The total number of arrivals is limited however as each Muslim country receives a pilgrim quota. Some worshippers have spent years on waiting lists - sometimes as long as a decade - just to perform their religious duty. Outside of the hajj, Muslims can also undertake a lesser, year-round pilgrimage known as umrah. — AFP

Pak expels Indian envoy as Kashmir...

Continued from Page 1

A spokesman for India's foreign ministry did not immediately respond to a request for comment on Pakistan's move.

Qureshi spoke as the government released a statement declaring that Pakistan will suspend trade with India and review its bilateral ties with Delhi. "Prime Minister Imran Khan today chaired meeting of the National Security Committee" to discuss the "unilateral and illegal actions by the Indian government" in Kashmir, the statement said. "The Committee decided to take following actions: - 1. Downgrading of diplomatic relations with India. 2. Suspension of bilateral trade with India. 3. Review of bilateral arrangements. 4. Matter to be taken to the United Nations, including the Security Council," it continued. Khan "directed that all diplomatic channels be activated to expose brutal Indian racist regime, design and human rights violations," the statement added. He also called on the military to continue its "vigilance".

Thousands of Indian security forces kept a lid on protests in Kashmir yesterday, helped by the continued suspension of telephone and Internet services after the Himalayan region's special status was scrapped this week. Streets in the main Kashmiri city of Srinagar were deserted for a third day, with almost all shops shut, barring some pharmacies. Armed federal police manned mobile checkpoints across the city, limiting people's movement.

Knots of young protesters threw stones at soldiers, police and a witness said, amid anger over the telecoms clampdown that began on Sunday. "These (protests) are mostly localized because of the heavy troop deployment," said a police officer who sought anonymity because he was not authorized to speak to media, adding that police used tear gas and pepper spray to scatter the protesters. A witness described an episode of hours of stone-throwing on Tuesday in the Old Barzulla area near the city centre, saying, "I saw around 100 boys, in small groups, pelting stones." He added, "The police fired tear gas to beat them back."

The Huffington Post reported that 13 people had been admitted with pellet injuries to their eyes to Shri Maharaja Hari Singh hospital in Srinagar, citing a hospital official. It also quoted a resident of the old quarter of Srinagar, Owais Ahmad, as saying he was walking near his house when paramilitary forces fired pellets at him. The Home Ministry in India's capital Delhi said it

had no information about the incident.

The Huffington Post also reported that a 17-year old boy jumped off a bridge into the Jhelum river when he and his friends saw a group of paramilitary police on both sides of the bridge. The Home Ministry had no comment to offer and Reuters was not in a position to verify the report. India accuses Pakistan of training and arming Islamist militants fighting its rule in Kashmir. Islamabad denies the allegation and says it only gives moral and diplomatic support to the Kashmiri people in their struggle for self-determination.

India ordered security to be increased at its airports, saying "civil aviation has emerged as a soft target". Security officials have warned of a backlash against the move to withdraw Kashmir's special status. All telephone, television, and Internet connections remained severed in Kashmir. At night, police vans have patrolled the streets with loudspeakers warning residents to stay indoors. Jammu and Kashmir Governor Satya Pal Malik asked officials to ensure people had enough supplies and assured them of their security, Reuters partner ANI said in a report.

Local authorities have not declared a curfew, but instead clamped down on non-essential travel and gatherings of four or more people, effectively keeping restive people in their homes. South Kashmir, the epicentre of the insurgency in recent years, was completely locked down, said a state government official who visited the area. "The highway was deserted, except for some trucks and buses carrying laborers out of the valley," added the official, who asked not to be named.

Officials with emergency services such as hospitals and the fire department said their staff were also frequently stopped at checkpoints, with access sometimes blocked. The principal of Srinagar's Government Medical College, which runs Kashmir's largest hospital network, comprising about 3,500 beds, had to personally visit district officials to coordinate services or seek approvals, a hospital official said. "The principal doesn't have any means of communication," added the official, who asked not to be identified. "Police stations have been given satellite phones but not him. That shows their (government's) priority."

About 200 police and local administration officials have received satellite phones, with several hundred more using a restricted military network, a police official said. Srinagar's fire officials also fear people might not be able to reach them in emergencies. "Communication is a lifeline," said one fire official who requested anonymity. "Only if someone contacts us can we do something." A radio communications network links Srinagar's 21 fire stations, but with telephone lines down and no satellite phones, firemen can only be alerted by a call from police or an individual who visits a fire station. — Agencies

Shipping sheep in summer heat...

Continued from Page 1

of animals and every year boosts Romanian livestock exports, falls in the middle of August.

Vytienis Andriukaitis, the European commissioner in charge of health and food safety, demanded last month that Bucharest stop the transport of 70,000 sheep to the Gulf, citing animal welfare and evoking "extreme temperatures". He has instructed the Commission to audit Romania's practices, threatening the EU member with an infringement procedure if it is found to have "systematically" breached the regulation on animal transport.

Agriculture Minister Petre Daea insists his country "strictly respects the rules". However, no more checks are carried out once the ships leave Romanian ports, even though the European regulation from 2005 mandates checking during the journeys. Romania, which joined the EU in 2007 but is one of its poorest members, is the bloc's third-largest sheep breeder, after the UK and Spain, and a top exporter.

In 2017 and 2018 combined, Romania exported two million sheep in total, mainly to Jordan, Libya and Lebanon, and revenues in 2017 amounted to €430 million (\$520 million), according to the UN Comtrade database. The market is booming: In February, Bucharest signed a new deal to sell 200,000 sheep to Gulf countries, and hopes to eventually sell two million sheep per year to the United Arab Emirates alone.

Local breeders depend on the exports as mutton is not hugely popular in Romania itself. "In Romania, we

Sports

New York Mets win 5th straight game, series over Miami Marlins

D-backs score 6 against Phillies' bullpen in 8-4 win

NEW YORK: Zack Wheeler scattered eight hits over eight scoreless innings Tuesday night for the red-hot New York Mets, who locked up another series win with a 5-0 victory over the visiting Miami Marlins. Wilson Ramos hit a three-run homer and Pete Alonso added a solo blast for the Mets, who have won the first three games of the four-game series and 12 of their past 13 to move two games over .500 (58-56) for the first time since April 24. New York, which has won five straight series and seven of eight since the All-Star break, earned its fifth consecutive victory. Miami has dropped five games in a row and seven of eight. Wheeler (9-6) struck out five, walked one and induced 13 ground-ball outs while throwing 101 pitches, including 72 for strikes. The Marlins hit into three double plays, stranded eight runners and went 0-for-13 with runners in scoring position.

DIAMONDBACKS 8, PHILLIES 4

Eduardo Escobar and Alex Avila each homered and drove in three runs as Arizona pounced on Philadelphia's bullpen in a victory at Phoenix. Escobar hit a two-run home run in the fourth off starter Jake Arrieta to tie the game at 2, but Arrieta left after five innings with a 3-2 lead. Philadelphia's Ranger Suarez (3-1) allowed four of the five batters he faced to reach base in the sixth, with Avila delivering a two-run single with the bases loaded for a 4-3 lead. Arizona piled on three runs in the seventh off Blake Parker, with Escobar contributing an RBI single before David Peralta's two-run home run. Avila added a solo shot to center off Zach Elfin in the eighth.

ASTROS 11, ROCKIES 6

Yuli Gurriel hit a pair of two-run homers while Michael Brantley and Carlos Correa both recorded multi-hit and multi-RBI games as host Houston overpowered Colorado. Correa added three RBIs while Brantley drove in two runs. Yordan Alvarez also hit a two-run homer for Houston, which won its fifth game in a row and eighth in the past nine. The offensive onslaught made the struggles of Zack Greinke an afterthought. Greinke (11-4) scuffled in his Astros debut, allowing five runs on six hits and two walks with two strikeouts over six innings, but he emerged with the win.

BRAVES 12, TWINS 7

Freddie Freeman homered and drove in four runs, and Ronald Acuna Jr. went 3-for-5 with a home run and four runs as Atlanta jumped out to an 11-run lead and then held on for a victory over Minnesota in Minneapolis. Ozzie Albies went 4-for-6 with three runs and two RBIs, including a run-scoring triple to highlight Atlanta's six-run sixth inning. Freeman collected three hits, Brian McCann had two hits and three RBIs, and Ender Inciarte also had two hits for the Braves, who out-hit the Twins 16-10. Nelson Cruz went 4-for-5 with two home runs and four RBIs, and Mitch Garver and Eddie Rosario also went deep for Minnesota. It was the sixth multi-homer game of the season for Cruz, tying the franchise record set by Hall of Famer Harmon Killebrew in 1964.

AS 11, CUBS 4

Dustin Garneau and Stephen Piscotty each hit three-run home runs, and Oakland cruised to a win at Chicago. Piscotty added a run-scoring single to finish with four RBIs as Oakland earned its seventh win in nine games. Matt Olson added a pair of RBIs, while Mark Canha and Chad Pinder drove in one run apiece. Kris Bryant hit a two-run homer for the Cubs, whose four-game winning

streak ended. Oakland's Brett Anderson (10-7) allowed two runs on seven hits in six innings, walking one and striking out three. Chicago's Jon Lester (9-8) gave up 11 runs (10 earned) on 10 hits in four innings.

YANKEES 9, ORIOLES 4

Mike Tauchman, DJ LeMahieu and Didi Gregorius homered in the third inning, and New York went deep six times in a victory at Baltimore. Austin Romine, Brett Gardner and Cameron Maybin also homered as the Yankees twice hit back-to-back homers and won their seventh straight. The Yankees have hit 38 homers in Baltimore in 2019, a major league record for homers in an away ballpark. Jonathan Holder served as the opener for the Yankees and gave up two runs in 2 2/3 innings. Nestor Cortes Jr. (5-0) earned the victory later with 2 1/3 innings of shutout relief after a 72-minute rain delay at the start, and Adam Ottavino got his first save as a Yankee.

REDS 8, ANGELS 4

Tucker Barnhart homered twice as Cincinnati matched a season high with five home runs and completed a two-game sweep of visiting Los Angeles. Eugenio Suarez clubbed his 30th home run, and rookie Aristides Aquino and Jose Iglesias also went deep for Cincinnati, which has won three in a row and eight of 11. It was the fourth time in 2019 that the Reds homered five times. The Angels matched a season worst with their sixth straight defeat. Veteran catcher Barnhart produced his first multi-homer game. Aquino highlighted the Reds' second three-run inning of the game when he homered in the fourth-inning second in six contests since being called up from Triple-A Louisville last week. The right fielder also made a backhanded running catch to thwart the Angels' bases-loaded threat in the eighth.

RAYS 7, BLUE JAYS 6 (10 INNINGS)

Kevin Kiermaier scored the winning run on a wild pitch with two outs in the bottom of the 10th inning as Tampa Bay overcame an early six-run deficit to defeat Toronto in St. Petersburg, Fla. Avisail Garcia, Willy Adames and Meadows hit two-run homers for the Rays, accounting for all the runs in Tampa Bay's six-run fourth inning. Brandon Drury belted a three-run homer for the Blue Jays, and Cavan Biggio hit a solo shot.

BREWERS 4, PIRATES 3

Yasmani Grandal doubled twice, driving in one run and scoring one, as Milwaukee prevailed at Pittsburgh. Bryan Reynolds homered while Jose Osuna and Pablo Reyes each had an RBI double for Pittsburgh, which has lost four straight and 14 of its last 16. Milwaukee starter Chase Anderson pitched 5 2/3 innings, giving up two runs and six hits, with four strikeouts and one walk. Junior Guerra (4-3) got the final out of the sixth in earning the win. Matt Albers gave up a run in the ninth but recorded his second save.

ROYALS 6, RED SOX 2

Jorge Soler homered twice to eclipse 30 for the season as Kansas City snapped a seven-game losing streak with a win at Boston. Ryan O'Hearn also went yard as the Royals won for just the second time in their last 12. Kansas City also ended a franchise-long run of eight straight losses to Boston. J.D. Martinez and Christian Vazquez had two hits apiece for the Red Sox, who fell for the ninth time in their past 10 contests. Boston had a record streak of 18 straight games at Fenway Park with a home run come to an end.



NEW YORK: Pete Alonso #20 of the New York Mets in action against the Miami Marlins during their game at Citi Field in New York City. — AFP

DOGERS 3, CARDINALS 1

Clayton Kershaw allowed one run and four hits in seven innings to carry Los Angeles to a win against visiting St. Louis. Kershaw (11-2), who struck out nine and walked one, has pitched at least six innings in all 20 starts this season. Justin Turner had two hits, a walk and a run batted in for the Dodgers, who have won four in a row and seven of eight. Cardinals starter Miles Mikolas (7-12) gave up two runs and six hits in 6 1/3 innings. He struck out seven and walked one. Dexter Fowler, who came in hitting .375 in his career against Kershaw, had two hits off the left-hander before finishing 2-for-4.

PADRES 9, MARINERS 4

Dinelson Lamet opened with 6 1/3 hitless innings to earn his first major league victory since Aug. 15, 2017, and San Diego won at Seattle. Lamet (1-2), a right-hander who missed the entire 2018 campaign and the first three months of this season after undergoing Tommy John surgery, pitched seven scoreless innings. He allowed two hits, walking four and striking out 12, equaling his career high. Fernando Tatis Jr., Eric Hosmer and Josh Naylor homered for the Padres, who have defeated the Mariners seven straight times in interleague play. Seattle, which has been no-hit twice since the All-Star break, including Saturday in Houston, lost its fifth consecutive game.

NATIONALS 5, GIANTS 3

Anibal Sanchez remained unbeaten in his career in the regular season at Oracle Park, pitching Washington to a victory in San Francisco. Trea Turner homered, walked twice and scored two runs, helping the Nationals run out to a 5-1 lead en route to their second straight win in the three-game series. Kurt Suzuki homered and drove in

three of Washington's first four runs. Sanchez (7-6) improved to 7-0 in his past 13 starts, allowing four hits in six innings. He gave up two runs (one earned) while walking one and striking out three. The 35-year-old ran his record at San Francisco to 4-0 with a 0.73 ERA in five career regular-season starts.

WHITE SOX 5, TIGERS 3 (GAME 1)

Jose Abreu had three hits, including a solo homer, and drove in three runs, rookie Dylan Cease recorded his second career victory, and Chicago topped host Detroit in the opener of a day-night doubleheader. Welington Castillo also homered for the White Sox while Castillo, Tim Anderson and Ryan Goins contributed two hits apiece. Cease (2-4) lasted five innings and allowed two runs on seven hits. Three relievers did the rest, with Alex Colome collecting his 22nd save. Tigers starter Daniel Norris (3-9) gave up four runs on seven hits in 5 2/3 innings. Jake Rogers hit his second career homer for Detroit, which lost its fifth straight. Harold Castro had two hits and an RBI.

TIGERS 10, WHITE SOX 6 (GAME 2)

Jordy Mercer hit a two-run homer and drove in three runs, and host Detroit snapped its five-game losing streak with a triumph over Chicago in the second game of the doubleheader. John Hicks had three hits, scored twice and drove in a run, and Miguel Cabrera supplied three hits and scored twice. Gordon Beckham contributed two hits, two runs and an RBI. Drew VerHagen (2-2) recorded his first career win as a starting pitcher. He gave up one run on seven hits in five innings. Ryan Goins had three hits and drove in two runs for Chicago. Leury Garcia supplied three hits, a run and an RBI. — Reuters



Asian Schoolboy Boxing Championships 2019 to conclude today

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The ASBC Asian Schoolboy Boxing Championships 2019 Kuwait will come to a close today under the patronage of President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad.

There will be 14 final matches starting from 33 kg to 70 + kg categories, and the Uzbekistan team seems to be the one that win the most gold medals as its boxers qualified in all 14 weight categories. The Kazakhstan team comes after the Uzbeks for competing for first place, after losing hope of competing for four gold medals, while the Indian team is third as eight boxers qualified for the finals, while the Ryrgrz team is fourth in expectations as only five boxers qualified for the finals.

Vice President of the International Boxing Association, President of the Asian Boxing Federation Anas Al-



Otaiba said the continental tournament achieved its goals adding "we witnessed during the days of competitions various levels most of which reflected the development Asian box-

ing is witnessing in all of Asia's countries which created an optimistic atmosphere and urge for more efforts to reach the best ranks in the game during the upcoming events.

Al-Otaiba said the reasons of the various levels is due to the difference of experience between one country and another as there are countries who allocate more time for boxers than others which creates a difference in the technical level, that apart of the existence of academies for boxing. He said the current tournament promises that Asian boxing will compete for top places at the international level within few years. Al-Otaiba thanked the President of Kuwait Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Al-Sabah for his patronage of the Asian tournament, and PAS and its Deputy Director General Dr Saqer Al-Mulla as well as President of KBF Mohammad Mansi, contributed to the tournament's success.

Kuwait wins five bronze at Arab Junior Tennis championship

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The Arab Junior Tennis Championship for under 11 & 12, and under 13 & 14, that was held in Tunis from 23/7 until 3/8, concluded under the patronage of President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The tournament saw Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Bahrain, Egypt, Algeria, Iraq and the host country participating. The closing ceremony was also attended by Tunisian Cabinet secretary Ahmad Qaloul, President of Tunis Tennis Federation Dr Salma Al-Moulhi and other federations officials. Kuwait's national team players were able to win the bronze medals in doubles category in the four categories, as doubles partners Mohammad Al-Awadhi and Abdelrahman Al-Abdallah won the doubles U11 third place, Khalid Bafqair and his partner Abdallah Dehrab won third place for the U12 doubles, Yousuf Al-Linqawi and Hassen Jamal won third place for U12 also, Abdelwahab Al-Abdallah and Othman Mahmoud won the doubles U13 while Hussein Al-Shatti and Yaqoub



Mohammad won third place of the U14. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdallah Al-Sabah congratulated the winners and expressed satisfaction towards the Kuwaiti achievements. He also thanked the President of Tunis Tennis Federation for the hospitality they gave to Kuwait's delegation as well as the rest of participants.

He also lauded the high standards shown by many players, adding that the Arab federation is keen on paying special attention to young players such as those who participated in the championship. Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber also thanked the Public Authority for Sports for all the support it gives for all activities both domestically and abroad.



Sports

Chahar's new ball skills on par with Kumar, says Kohli

Chahar's strikes reduced the hosts to 14-3 inside first four overs

PROVIDENCE, GUYANA: Deepak Chahar's new ball skills are comparable to that of an experienced Bhuvneshwar Kumar, India captain Virat Kohli said after the rookie seamer's match-winning opening spell against West Indies on Tuesday.

Playing only his second Twenty20 international, Chahar posted figures of 3-1-4-3 to leave West Indies reeling in the third and final match of the series in Guyana which India won by seven wickets to complete a 3-0 sweep.

Kumar, 29, is renowned for his ability to swing the new ball in both directions and has played 21 tests, 111 one-dayers and 40 T20 matches for India. Chahar has played a lone ODI and made the Indian squad on the back of a strong 2019 season in the Indian Premier League T20 tournament during which he finished third on the list of wicket-takers with 22 wickets.

"He was really lethal with the new ball," Kohli said at the post-match presentation. "The way he swings it and the areas he bowls in, he puts the batsman in a lot of trouble. "With the new ball, his skills are right up there (with Kumar's), swinging it both ways and getting a lot with the new ball in any conditions, and that has been his USP in the IPL as well."

Chahar's strikes reduced the hosts to 14-3 inside the first four overs and West Indies could never recover sufficiently and managed

146-6 in their 20 overs. India then rode on an unbeaten 42-ball 65 from wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant and captain Kohli's 59 to reach their target with five balls to spare.

Pant, 21, has been long earmarked as the successor to long-serving wicketkeeper Mahendra Singh Dhoni, who is a veteran of 350 one-dayers and is widely considered as the best 'finisher' in contemporary cricket.

The 38-year-old Dhoni is sitting out India's tour to discharge his responsibilities as an honorary colonel in the Territorial Army, a reservist force that draws on civilians who can do short stints to assist the military.

Pant has used his chances well in the test format and hit a century in an Oval test last year while also smashing an unbeaten 159 against Australia in Sydney in January but scored nought and four in the first two T20s.

"He's got a lot of skill and talent," Kohli said. "It's about winning and finishing games like these and gaining confidence, which he wants to do as well. "It's about giving him a bit more space to ease himself into international cricket and not putting too much pressure because of the way he's played in the IPL."

"At the international level, you need to tackle pressure differently and play yourself into the whole set-up. He has come a long way since he started. If he plays like this more regularly, we will see his potential shine for India." — Reuters



PROVIDENCE, GUYANA: India's cricket team poses after winning the 3rd T20 match between West Indies and India at Guyana National Stadium in Providence, Guyana. — AFP

No extension for Arthur as Pakistan seek coaching revamp



Mickey Arthur

LAHORE: Pakistan have decided not to renew head coach Mickey Arthur's contract, the country's cricket board (PCB) said yesterday, following the team's failure to reach the semi-finals of the World Cup in England.

Sarfraz Ahmed's men ended up tied with New Zealand on 11 points from nine matches but an inferior net run rate meant the Black Caps went through to the last four along with India, Australia and England while Pakistan headed home.

During the tournament, the PCB had promised a robust review and analysis of the side's performances, and that of the team support personnel, over the past three years. Arthur, 51, took charge of a mercurial Pakistan side in 2016 following stints with the national teams of South Africa and Australia and was keen on an extension, local media had reported.

His initial appointment was for two years but he was given an extension until the 50-over World Cup and his contract was set to expire on Aug 15. The PCB Cricket Committee unanimously recommended that the contracts of bowling coach Azhar Mahmood, batting coach Grant Flower and trainer Grant Luden were not renewed either.

"The committee comprised of individuals who possess tremendous acumen, experience and knowledge," PCB Chairman Ehsan Mani said in a statement. "The unanimous recommendation of the Committee was that it was time for new leadership and a fresh approach. I am happy to accept their strong recommendations."

"On behalf of the PCB, I want to sincerely thank Mickey Arthur, Grant Flower, Grant Luden and Azhar Mahmood for their hard work and unwavering commitment during their tenures with the national men's team."

The 1992 champions went into their World Cup opener against West Indies on the back of 10 straight losses and were bundled out for 105 inside 22 overs en route to a humiliating seven-wicket drubbing.

Notoriously unpredictable, they followed that defeat up in typical style in their second match, spectacularly turning the table on hosts and pre-tournament favourites England with a 14-run victory.

Four more wins followed but the margin of that opening loss ultimately proved their undoing when the final calculations were made. Pakistan's next assignment is a home series against Sri Lanka in October, starting with two tests that will be part of the World Test Championship.

The PCB said they would immediately advertise the four coaching roles. Former all-rounder Mahmood said on Twitter he had given his best and was looking forward to moving on. "It's been a tremendous journey with @TheRealPCB. I thank them and wish them all the very best for the future of Pakistan cricket," he tweeted. — Reuters

S Lanka suspend coach ahead of N Zealand series

COLOMBO: Sri Lankan cricket authorities yesterday suspended head coach Chandika Hathurusingha and appointed a temporary replacement for the upcoming New Zealand series. Cricket board chairman Shammi Silva said former Sri Lanka fast bowler Rumesh Ratnayake was made interim coach pending a final decision on the status of Hathurusingha.

"Hathurusingha will not be involved in this (New Zealand) series," Silva told reporters in Colombo. "We can't tell you details because this might end up being a legal issue." Sports Minister Harin Fernando said this month that Hathurusingha would be given until the start of Sri Lanka's home Test series against New Zealand, which begins on August 14, to quit and make way for a new coach.

"If Hathurusingha does not leave, we may have to consider legal action or offer him a different job at the board," Fernando said at the time. Following Sri Lanka's disappointing World Cup, where they finished in sixth-place, Hathurusingha and his assistants were expected to be shown the door.

There was no immediate comment from Hathurusingha who had earlier said he wanted to continue in the post till his contract runs out in 16 months. Fernando was critical of a reported \$40,000 monthly salary paid to Hathurusingha and said Sri Lanka could have hired a foreign coach at half the price.

Fernando said there were three international candidates hoping to replace Hathurusingha and they were asking for lower salaries of between \$17,500 to \$25,000 a month. Sri Lanka cricket was in crisis when Hathurusingha was appointed in December 2017, after a successful three-year spell in charge of Bangladesh.

They had just been hammered in Tests by India at

N Zealand expect Pocock to suit up for Wallabies

PERTH: New Zealand expect Australia's David Pocock to be "right in the thick of things" when the teams meet in Saturday's Rugby Championship test in Perth, despite the loose forward not having played since March.

Pocock missed most of the Super Rugby season, as well as Australia's first two tests of the Rugby Championship against South Africa and Argentina, with a calf injury, but was last week named in their squad for the match against the All Blacks. The 31-year-old openside flanker tweeted on Monday that he had returned to training with the main squad and New Zealand flanker Sam Cane said he expect-

ed Pocock to go straight back into the Wallabies' starting line-up. "I would expect (Pocock) to come back and be right in the thick of things," Cane said. "Your match fitness is not normally where you want it to be but because you have been in those situations before you can normally just push on through. "A guy like David Pocock, his best and worst game is not a big margin between them."

With the World Cup in Japan fast approaching, the Wallabies might be tempted to start Pocock on the bench or even hold back his return to action a little longer.

All Blacks assistant coach Ian Foster said his side were prepared to face Pocock but were also ready to adapt should he be kept in reserve.

"We're guessing that (Pocock) will play," Foster added. "You always prepare for that scenario. We've played against (Pocock and Wallabies skipper Michael Hooper) when they've played together a number of times."

"They're quality footballers so we're preparing for that. We know though that if he doesn't make it there will be someone else there to do a job." — Reuters

home and away, and played poorly in one-day internationals. Under Hathurusingha, Sri Lanka notched up Test wins against England and Australia.

The first Test against New Zealand will be played

in Galle starting August 14, and the second will begin

on August 22 at Colombo's P. Sara stadium. Three

T20s will be played on August 31, September 2 and

September 6 with all three in Kandy. — AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lankan cricket captain Dimuth Karunaratne (C) and New Zealand cricket captain Kane Williamson shake hands as they pose for photographers at a press conference in Colombo yesterday. — AFP



David Pocock

England's injured Stone ruled out of second Ashes Test

LONDON: England have suffered another Ashes setback with fast bowler Olly Stone being ruled out of contention for the second Test against Australia which starts at Lord's next week. Warwickshire bowler Stone is suffering with a lower back strain, his club said yesterday.

"It's really disappointing for Olly that he's been ruled out of action for such an important two weeks of cricket because of a recurrence of his back injury," Paul Farbrace, Sport Director at Warwickshire CCC, said on the club's website <https://warwickshireccc.com/news/stone-ruled-out-for-two-weeks>.

"At the moment there's a bit of inflammation, but he will undergo a scan later this afternoon so that we know the full course of treatment that he can undertake with the club's medical team and with the support of the ECB."

"In the meantime, he needs to rest up before he can get his body strong again and ready to deal with the demands of being a fast bowler." The 25-year-old Stone made his test debut against Ireland at Lord's, taking three wickets, and was in the squad for the opening Ashes clash against Australia, which England lost by 251 runs, but was not selected.

England's leading Test wicket taker James Anderson is already ruled out of the second test having broken down on the first morning of the heavy defeat at Edgbaston. Stone would have given England options as they sweat on the fitness of Jofra Archer who missed the first Test.

Paceman Archer provided some cheer for England as he took six wickets for the Sussex seconds on Tuesday in a bid to prove his fitness after a side strain. — Reuters

Sports

Manchester City, Liverpool ready for heavyweight Premier League battle

European champions Liverpool have more than a puncher's chance of ending City's reign

LONDON: Manchester City have Premier League immortality in their sights as they start their title defence this weekend, but Liverpool's burning desire to get their hands on the trophy will fuel a heavyweight battle for supremacy.

In the blue corner, treble winners City are at the peak of their powers and look capable of enjoying a period of sustained dominance not seen since Manchester United earned three successive Premier League titles from 2007 to 2009.

But in the red corner, European champions Liverpool, chasing a first English title since 1990, have more than a puncher's chance of ending City's reign after pushing Pep Guardiola's side all the way to the final day last season.

The first blows will be landed this week as Liverpool kick off the new Premier League campaign against promoted Norwich at Anfield on Friday, before City head to West Ham on Saturday. Sunday's no-holds-barred Community Shield clash showed the growing rivalry between England's pre-eminent teams, with City beating Liverpool on penalties following a 1-1 draw that underlined how little there is to separate the sides.

Adding Atletico Madrid's Rodri for a club-record £63 million (\$77 million) gives Guardiola an even greater embarrassment of riches. With five major trophies over the past two seasons-including Premier League

crowns clinched with unprecedented hauls of 100 and then 98 points-City are the bookmakers' favourites to become only the second club to win a hat-trick of English titles in the past 35 years after United did it twice.

Guardiola is a keen student of football history and has revelled in City's record-breaking feats, so the opportunity to further bolster his team's credentials as one of England's all-time greats will not be lost on the Spaniard.

Although City have never won the Champions League and Guardiola last lifted it back in 2011 with Barcelona, he said domestic bliss remains his preferred passion. "To maintain the health and focus of the team, the most important thing is the Premier League," Guardiola said.

"It is the standout competition because it is every weekend. In the Champions League, many things can happen in one or two games. "We will be closer to achieving in Europe when we have more Premier League titles. That is a nice process and the right process to do at Manchester City. "If I could have one thing this season, right now, it would definitely be the title."

NO HANGOVER

It would be a surprise if Liverpool do not make City sweat right to the finish once again after bouncing back from last season's agonising near-miss in the title race

by winning their sixth European Cup. No team has ever gathered more points without winning the Premier League than second-placed Liverpool did last season with their tally of 97.

Jurgen Klopp's side lost just once in their 38 league games-crucially that defeat came against City-but their 2-0 Champions League final win over Tottenham ensured there was no title hangover. Liverpool had the Premier League's meanest defence last season and boast an attack featuring two of the campaign's three leading scorers in Mohamed Salah and Sadio Mane.

Despite that wealth of talent, Liverpool midfielder Georginio Wijnaldum admits making a fast start is essential to stop City establishing a stranglehold at the top.

"You just have to collect as many points as possible, especially in the beginning, and try to build a team who will be even better at the end of the season," Wijnaldum said.

"We can try and do even better than last season. Basically it starts now because now we have the whole team together." Challengers to City and Liverpool are likely to be thin on the ground.

Since winning the Europa League, Chelsea have lost star playmaker Eden Hazard to Real Madrid and hired an idolised but inexperienced new manager in Frank Lampard, who is working under the club's transfer ban.

Guardiola suggests Manchester United



MUNICH: File pictures show Liverpool's German manager Jurgen Klopp (L) celebrating after his side scored the opening goal during the UEFA Champions League match against Bayern Munich on March 13, 2019 and Manchester City's Spanish manager Pep Guardiola gestures from the touchline during the English Premier League football match between Manchester City and Leicester City at the Etihad Stadium in Manchester. —AFP

are contenders after making £80-million Harry Maguire the world's most expensive defender and landing young talents Aaron Wan-Bissaka and Daniel James.

But it is hard to imagine United, who ended 32 points adrift of City in sixth place,

bridging that gap this season. Arsenal have the look of pretenders rather than contenders, while Tottenham have not invested enough to satisfy boss Mauricio Pochettino despite a paying a club record of around £54 million for Lyon's Tanguy Ndombele. —AFP

Pique wants to keep Coutinho at Barcelona

MIAMI: Gerard Pique wants Brazilian Philippe Coutinho to stay at Barcelona amid fevered interest from the Premier League. Coutinho arrived in Barcelona from Liverpool for a record 160 million euros (\$192 million) 18 months ago but has fallen out of favour under manager Ernesto Valverde who wants him out of the club before the start of the La Liga season on August 16th.

Barca are looking to offload the playmaker, 27, with sources telling AFP a deal to return to the Premier League remains a "strong possibility." He travelled to Miami ahead of yesterday's friendly match with Napoli at Hard Rock Stadium.

And although Arsenal distanced themselves from a transfer on Monday, North London rivals Tottenham have now been strongly linked with a move. Spurs manager Mauricio Pochettino coached Coutinho at Espanyol for a short period and has retained a good relationship with the player.

Pochettino, however, will need to free up space in his own squad by ensuring Christian Eriksen, the Danish international, moves to Manchester United for a fee believed to be in the region of \$60 million.

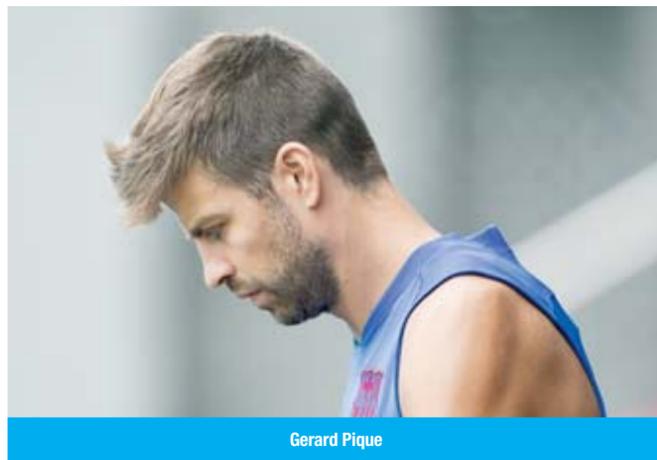
Coutinho's \$350,000 a week wages are also problematic when attempting to engineer a move away from the Camp Nou. Spanish international Pique told AFP: "I want him (Coutinho) to stay, but at the end of the day it's what he wants and I want him to be happy."

"Let's see. Until the last day of the transfer market we will not know if he stays or not. But it's not my decision, it's the club's and Philippe's." Argentine superstar Lionel Messi has not travelled with the Barcelona squad for their mini-tour to the United States - they will play Napoli again in Michigan on Saturday - because of a calf injury.

But new signings Antoine Griezmann and Dutch sensation Frenkie De Jong are both slated to appear. Barcelona won the Spanish championship last season but were stung in the Champions League after losing an epic semi-final to eventual winners Liverpool.

MLS IN ANCELOTTI'S FUTURE?

"The arrival of players like Frenkie de Jong and Antoine Griezmann will certainly help us in all competitions," Pique said. "We have to see the season with



Gerard Pique

perspective," he added. "We won La Liga last season which was great, but we should control expectations with the Champions League. Our main goal is La Liga, the Champions League is like Russian roulette."

Napoli manager Carlo Ancelotti, meanwhile, raised the possibility of returning to South Florida in the future to take charge of David Beckham's Inter Miami MLS franchise.

The Italian worked with the former

England captain at AC Milan and Paris St Germain and is open to the idea of a job in the United States. Inter Miami will make their MLS debut next March but are yet to appoint a coach.

"I heard something (about the possibility of moving to MLS)," said Ancelotti. "Beckham is my friend and I have a good relationship with him. "I have a three year contract in Napoli but why not? MLS is improving and in the future it could be a good experience." —AFP

Record-signing Hernandez starts training at Bayern

BERLIN: Bayern Munich's record signing Lucas Hernandez took part in his first squad training session on Tuesday, four months after a serious knee operation, the Bundesliga champions reported on their website yesterday.

The 23-year-old French World Cup winner has yet to feature for Bayern since his 80 million euro (\$89 million) move from Atletico Madrid in March. His medical showed damage to the medial collateral ligament in his right knee that required an immediate operation.

Hernandez is unlikely to be ready for the opening game of the season against Hertha Berlin on August 16 but it is good news for his new teammates and manager Niko Kovac. "I think the most important thing for the time being is that he's properly fit and starts to settle in," German international Leon Goretzka told the Bayern website.

The defender's return coincides with a media broadside aimed at the club by striker Robert Lewandowski who has called on Bayern to bring in at least three new players. "In attack we lost three players in the shape of Franck Ribery, Arjen Robben and James (Rodriguez)," Lewandowski told Sport Bild yesterday. "And for the moment we have no new recruits for these positions." While Robben has retired, Frenchman Ribery is out of contract and seems likely to be heading to Saudi Arabia while James has come to the end of a two-year loan period and has returned, for the moment at least, to Real Madrid.

Veteran defender Rafinha has also left in order to return to Brazil. So far this summer, Bayern have only reinforced their defence with French world champions Hernandez and Benjamin Pavard while promising 19-year-old striker Jann-Fiete Arp has arrived from Hamburg.

The German champions have also been trying for weeks to attract Leroy Sane from Manchester City but no announcement has yet been made. "Even if Sane comes, we need another winger," says Lewandowski who also called for a defensive midfielder or offensive midfielder.

Bayern's core team is made up of top-class internationals but, after the summer movement, the bench is now very shallow. "Playing an entire season with 13 or 14 experienced professionals, it's going to be tough," warns Lewandowski who has already discussed the matter with club president Uli Hoeness and chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge.

"We have 50 or 60 games, so do not just think about next week but at three, four, five or six months. And for that we do not have enough players. Hoeness and Rummenigge know my opinion." Hoeness and Rummenigge have promised to reinforce the playing ranks as they set their sights on the double of Bundesliga and Champions League. —AFP

Bale snubbed again by Zidane for Madrid friendly

MADRID: Gareth Bale's stand-off with Real Madrid continued yesterday after the forward was left out of Zinedine Zidane's squad to face Red Bull Salzburg in a friendly.

Bale has only played in two of Real Madrid's five pre-season games so far, coming on as a substitute against Arsenal and Atletico Madrid, and has now been left out completely for a third fixture in a row.

James Rodriguez and Mariano Diaz, who are both expected to be sold, were also not included for the match in Austria. Zidane has made clear that Bale is not in his plans as he looks to rejuvenate Real Madrid following their miserable season last term.

The club are keen to sign Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba, with Tottenham's Christian Eriksen and Ajax youngster Donny van de Beek potential alternatives. But Madrid first need to raise funds, after already spending around 300 million euros (\$336 million) this summer.

Zidane said last month that Bale being sold would be "best for everyone", while Bale's agent Jonathan Barnett told AFP: "Zidane is a disgrace - he shows no respect for a player that has done so much for Real Madrid."

Bale is in no rush to leave the Santiago Bernabeu, where he has a contract until



Zinedine Zidane

2022, worth around 18 million euros a year. He agreed terms with Chinese Super League club Jiaogu Suning last month but the move was called off after Madrid failed to agree a fee for the 30-year-old.

Bayern Munich retain an interest but any deal would be hugely expensive, making it increasingly likely Bale will remain at Madrid for the start of the La Liga season next weekend. —AFP

Schalke's boss Toennies steps down following 'racist' slur

BERLIN: Clemens Toennies has stepped down for three months as chairman of German Bundesliga club Schalke following widespread condemnation of alleged 'racist' comments he made last week. The club's five-strong ethics committee, in a statement late Tuesday, said Toennies had "violated the ban on discrimination contained in the club's statutes" after a lengthy meeting in which Toennies had to explain himself.

The club said Toennies had decided to step down as a member and chair of the supervisory board for three months. "He admitted the violation at the meeting on Tuesday and expressed his regret once again," said the panel in a statement.

However, the body dismissed the accusation of racism as "unfounded" and avoided the heavier sanction of firing him. The 63-year-old has been sharply criticised for saying more power stations should be built in Africa, "then Africans would stop felling trees and producing children when it gets dark".

The billionaire businessman, who employs 16,500 people and has assets estimated by Forbes at around 2.2 billion euros (\$2.5 billion), made the remark at a forum in Paderborn last Thursday while criticising tax increases to fight climate change.

'DEVASTATING'

On social media, numerous Schalke fans demanded Toennies resignation, while senior figures in German football and politics have condemned his comment. Some Schalke fans have handed back their membership cards in protest.

"The decision brings clarity and some peace. But what will happen in the three months?" Susanne Franke, chair of a Schalke fan initiative, told Sky Sports News. "There will be protests if things stay as they are."

Politician Dagmar Freitag, chairwoman of the sports committee in Germany's parliament, the Bundestag, criticised the finding of Schalke's ethics committee. "If I had pigeonholed an entire continent and its population, then it would be racism rather than 'just' discrimination, as far as I am concerned," she told broadcaster NRD yesterday.

"Such lapses are a break in what is taboo, without scruples, and their effect on society is especially in these times-devastating." Toennies had apologised for his "inappropriate" words on Sunday, insisting he backs Schalke's values against "racism, discrimination and exclusion".

Justice Minister Christine Lambrecht had previously called on the German Football Association (DFB) to "deal" with Toennies. "Racism must be loudly and clearly contradicted" at every opportunity, the politician told the Funke media group. "Nowhere is integration as successful and quick to work as in sport - that must not be put at risk."

The DFB confirmed to AFP subsidiary SID yesterday that their ethics committee will meet to discuss the matter on August 15. Meanwhile, Cacau, the Brazil-born former Germany star who heads the DFB's integration committee, was also stunned by Toennies' comment.

"The longer I think about it, the more unimaginable it becomes that a man of his position and experience speaks so... disparagingly about the population of an entire continent," said the 38-year-old. —AFP

25 Kuwait wins five bronze at Arab Junior Tennis championship



26 Chahar's new ball skills on par with Kumar, says Kohli



27 Manchester City, Liverpool ready for heavyweight Premier League battle



TORONTO: Sofia Kenin of the United States plays a shot against Ashleigh Barty of Australia during a first round match on Day 4 of the Rogers Cup at Aviva Centre in Toronto, Canada. — AFP

Kyrgios falls in Montreal Masters

Kenin stuns top-ranked Barty in Toronto

MONTREAL: Nick Kyrgios crashed back to earth with a first-round loss at the ATP Montreal Masters on Tuesday, falling 6-3, 6-4 to Briton Kyle Edmund. Two days after winning the ATP 500 series title in Washington with a burst of consistent form, the Australian court jester was unable to maintain momentum in a match delayed for 90 minutes in the second set by light rain.

"I'm a little bit tired. Physically I actually feel like I'm OK," Kyrgios said after losing in 67 minutes of actual play. "Kyle played well, served well and didn't really give me any rhythm into the match at all."

With top seed Rafael Nadal due to open his campaign, third seed and 2017 champion Alexander Zverev led the way into the third round, battling to contain Cameron Norrie before dispatching the Brit 7-6 (7/4), 6-4.

"I have great memories here from two years ago, and I've never lost in Montreal," Zverev said. "I hope it stays that way." Kyrgios, who has come under fire for his inconsistency, had been hoping to build on his

Washington success in Montreal.

"Tonight was challenging, I was actually really looking forward to playing," he said. "But I just got beaten by a better player today." Edmund, who won the opening set and stood 4-all in the second when players returned to the court, broke immediately and served out victory.

"It felt good," he said after striking 35 winners to 14 for Kyrgios. "He's a tricky player. I was watching for his underarm serve and he bluffed me once on that. "You just cannot predict what he will do. I could only concentrate on my side and play my game."

Kyrgios has returned to the Top 30 for the first time since last October as a result of his solid week in the US capital. His loss was the third of the day for Australians, with Brit Daniel Evans defeating Alex de Minaur 6-4, 7-6 (8/6) and 12th seed John Isner rallying past Jordan Thompson 3-6, 6-3, 7-6 (8/6).

Felix Auger-Aliassime won the highly-touted battle of Canadians over Vasek Pospisil 6-2, 6-7 (3/7), 7-6 (7/3). An electrifying clash lasting just over two and a half hours marked another success in a breakthrough

season for the 18-year-old winner.

The world number 21 has already reached his first three career ATP singles finals and three months ago became the youngest player to crack the Top 25 since Lleyton Hewitt in 1999.

"I'm pleased that I won, it would have been tough to lose that one," the teenager said. "There were a lot of tough moments today, but I was able to deal with them in a good way every time. There's a lot of positives to take from that."

He next faces another Canadian, Milos Raonic, the 17th seed, whom he beat at Stuttgart in June after losing on hardcourt in March, 2018. "A year and a half feels like such a long time ago. Physically back then, I changed a lot. Mentally, as well."

"For sure I have the confidence that I can win against these type of players. I'm not as nervous stepping on these big courts. "We'll see what I can do, for sure I'm a complete different player."

Two-time quarter-finalist Marin Cilic withstood 19 aces from qualifier Bradley Klahn to reach the second

round 6-3, 7-6 (9/7). Cilic, seeded 14th, has endured an indifferent season due partly to injury. He'll be hoping to see a return to form on North American hard courts, where he won the US Open in 2014.

Earlier, World number one Ashleigh Barty crashed out of the WTA tournament in Toronto on Tuesday, falling in three sets in her second-round opener to 29th-ranked American Sofia Kenin.

Australia's Barty, the French Open champion who was competing for the first time since a fourth-round exit at Wimbledon, battled back from an early break in the opening set, but she was unable to do the same in the next two sets as 20-year-old Kenin triumphed 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 6-4.

Kenin, who has climbed the rankings this season with wins in Charleston and Mallorca and a runner-up finish in Acapulco, will face either former world number one Victoria Azarenka or Ukraine's Dayana Yastremska in the third round. The defeat puts Barty's number one ranking in jeopardy, with both Japan's Naomi Osaka and Czech Karolina Pliskova eyeing the top spot. — AFP

Dacres, Thompson give Jamaica extra reason to cheer

LIMA: Jamaican discus thrower Fedrick Dacres wiped out one of the Pan Am Games oldest records and Olympic sprint champion Elaine Thompson, his compatriot, led 100 metres qualifying as they celebrated their nation's Independence Day on Tuesday.

Defending champion Dacres launched the discus 67.68m on his second attempt to beat Cuban Luis Delis's record of 67.32m set at the 1983 Games. Dacres, building for September's world championships, had set Jamaica's national record of 70.78m earlier this year.

Another Games record fell when Natasha Wodak sparked a gold-bronze finish by Canada in the women's 10,000m. Wodak won in a speedy 31 minutes 55.17 seconds, nearly four seconds ahead of Mexico's Risper Gesabwa.

Rachel Cliff took third for Canada in 32:13.34. All three runners were under the Games record of 32:41.33 set by Mexico's Brenda Flores in Toronto in 2015. British Virgin Islands long jumper Chantel Malone had every reason to celebrate after the 27-year-old national

record holder won her nation's first ever Games medal, taking gold by leaping 6.68m to narrowly defeat American Keturah Orji.

EASY TIME

Thompson, the Rio Games double gold medallist, cruised home in 11.36 seconds, well off her season's best of 10.73, but enough to shade Brazil's South American champion Vitoria Cristina Rosa (11.40) in their semi-final.

Commonwealth Games winner Michelle-Lee Ahye of Trinidad and Tobago was just off Thompson's time in winning the first semi-final in 11.37 and Canada's Crystal Emmanuel took the third race in 11.48 to set up today's final.

Brazilians won two of the three men's 100m semis. Rodrigo do Nascimento clocked 10.27 seconds to beat US favourite Mike Rodgers by two-hundredths of a second, and Paulo Andre de Oliveira equalled Rodgers' time of 10.29 to win his race.

Antigua's Cejhae Greene took the other semi in 10.31. Brazil struck gold in the women's discus when Andressa de Moraes threw a personal best of 65.98m to upset Cuba's Yaime Pere, while Mexico's Fernando Daniel Martinez Estrada won the men's 5,000 in 13:53.87.

There was some bad news for the Games, however, when Olympic 400m champion Shaunae Miller-Uibo of the Bahamas withdrew. —Reuters



LIMA: Jamaica's Fedrick Dacres poses with his gold medal in the podium of the Athletics Men's Discus Throw Final at the Lima 2019 Pan-American Games in Lima. — AFP