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Sudan generals and protest leaders sign transition deal

Crowds fill Khartoum's streets to hail 'new Sudan'



KHARTOUM: (Left) Sudan's protest leader Ahmad Rabie flashes the victory gesture alongside General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, the chief of Sudan's ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC), during a ceremony where they signed a "constitutional declaration" yesterday. (Right) Sudanese men and women celebrate outside the Friendship Hall yesterday. — AFP

KHARTOUM: Rapturous crowds filled the streets of Khartoum yesterday as Sudan's generals and protest leaders signed a historic deal paving the way to civilian rule. Thousands of cheering people gathered around the Friendship Hall next to the Nile, where the documents that will govern Sudan's 39-month transition were signed. "This is the biggest celebration I have ever seen in my country. We have a new Sudan," said Saba Mohammed, a veiled 37-year woman, waving a small plastic flag.

Minutes earlier, the deal was signed by Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, deputy chief of the military council, and Ahmed Al-Rabie, representing the Alliance for Freedom

and Change protest umbrella. Heads of state, prime ministers and dignitaries from several countries - including Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Egypt's Premier Mustafa Madbuli - attended the ceremony.

The constitutional declaration formalizes the creation of a transition administration that will be guided by an 11-member sovereign council, comprised of six civilians and five military figures. The agreement brought an end to nearly eight months of upheaval that saw masses mobilize against president Omar Al-Bashir, who was ousted in April after 30 years in power. Thousands of people had arrived on trains from Sudan's provinces to take part in

the celebrations, which will include a huge gathering in Khartoum's main gardens.

"We hope Sudan can move forward now, we want to be proud of our country," said Saida Khalifa as she got off the train after an all-night ride from Atbara, the town where the protests started in December last year. "The guns must go silent now and we must pull the country out of this mess to gain peace and freedom," she said. One young girl wearing jeans and draped in a Sudanese flag rode a bicycle to the conference hall, an inconceivable sight in the conservative country even a few months ago. "This is the biggest celebration I have ever

seen in my country. We have a new Sudan," said Saba Mohammed, a veiled 37-year-old woman, waving a small plastic flag.

The composition of the civilian-majority transition ruling council is to be announced today. That follows the naming on Thursday of former senior UN official Abdalla Hamdok, a veteran economist, as transitional prime minister. He is expected to focus on stabilizing Sudan's economy, which went into a tailspin when the oil-rich south seceded in 2011. Economic woes were the trigger that sparked the initial protests.

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News in brief

Houthi attack sparks gas fire

RIYADH: An attack claimed by Yemeni rebels sparked a fire in a Saudi gas plant yesterday but caused no casualties or disruption to production, state-owned energy company Saudi Aramco said. "Saudi Aramco's response team controlled a limited fire this morning at the Shaybah natural gas liquefaction facility," the energy giant said. Early yesterday, the Houthis issued a statement claiming a "massive" attack against a Saudi gas installation, which they said was hit by 10 drones. Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih said the operation was carried out at 0320 GMT by "booby-trapped drones". "This terrorist sabotage follows a series of actions, including attacks against oil tankers, aimed at disrupting international oil supplies," Falih said. — AFP

Downpour paralyzes Istanbul

ISTANBUL: Turkey's mega city Istanbul was lashed by a heavy rainstorm yesterday, killing a homeless man and leaving parts of the historic Grand Bazaar flooded. The homeless man was found dead at an underpass in the Unkapani district apparently drowned by the flood. Flash floods briefly halted the ferry services connecting Asian and European sides of the city, while authorities warned citizens to be careful in the adverse weather conditions. Floods which lasted around two hours also affected the historic Grand Bazaar, with shop owners rushing to evacuate. The private NTV television reported many cars stranded in traffic and rescued by fire engine teams. In one district, a parked car fell into a pit the heavy rain had caused on the road. — AFP

Customer kills French waiter

BOBIGNY, France: A waiter at a restaurant near Paris was shot dead by a customer angry at having to wait for a sandwich, a source close to the case said yesterday. Colleagues of the victim called police after he was shot with a handgun at an eatery in the eastern Paris suburb of Noisy-le-Grand on Friday night, the source said. Attempts to revive the 28-year-old failed and he died at the scene. The gunman, who witnesses said lost his temper "as his sandwich wasn't prepared quickly enough" for his liking, fled the scene. — AFP

Iran tanker in limbo as US issues warrant

GIBRALTAR: A last-minute US warrant to seize an Iranian oil tanker preparing to leave Gibraltar after weeks of detention cast doubt over its departure yesterday, prolonging a diplomatic spat between Tehran, London and Washington. The US Justice Department alleged the ship was part of a scheme "to unlawfully access the US financial system to support illicit shipments to Syria

from Iran by the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps," which Washington has designated a foreign terrorist organization. There was no comment from Britain or Gibraltar, its overseas territory.

Any detention order would ultimately have to come from Gibraltar's Supreme Court. So far, that has not happened and the ship is still free to sail. Richard de la Rosa, managing director of Astralship, the vessel's shipping agent, told AFP the ship was preparing for departure. "Within the next two days, she'll be going," he said. "They're performing crew changes. She needs some reprovisioning," he said, adding new Indian and Ukrainian crewmembers were due to arrive today.

Continued on Page 24



GIBRALTAR: Iranian supertanker Grace 1 is seen off the coast of Gibraltar on Aug 15, 2019. — AFP

Syria regime strikes kill mom, 6 kids

DEIR SHARQI, Syria: Regime air strikes yesterday killed a woman and six of her children in northwest Syria, a war monitor said, a day after Russian bombardment pummeled a nearby displacement camp. The air strike hit the family's one-story home in the village of Dayr Sharqi in Idlib province, killing everyone inside, said the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. A photo-

grapher collaborating with AFP said he saw a man leaving the site of the blast, carrying the bloody corpse of a young girl, her hair streaked with blood.

A rescue worker carried the dust covered body of a second child, he added. The photographer said he also saw the charred remains of a third victim trapped underneath the rubble, as rescue workers tried to retrieve it. Heightened air raids by the Syrian regime and its ally Moscow on the Idlib region - the last major opposition bastion in Syria's northwest - have killed hundreds since the end of April. The latest air strikes on the village of Dayr Sharqi wounded three other people, the Observatory said.

Continued on Page 24



DEIR SHARQI, Syria: A Syrian carries the body of a child at the site of a regime air strike on this village on the eastern outskirts of Maaret Al-Numan in Syria's northern province of Idlib yesterday. — AFP

Tlaib scraps trip; grandma slams Trump

JERUSALEM: Palestinian-American lawmaker Rashida Tlaib on Friday turned down Israel's offer to let her visit her grandmother in the occupied West Bank, owing to restrictions she termed oppressive. It was the latest twist in a saga hinging on Israel's war against those who would boycott it over its treatment of the

Palestinians. On Thursday, Israel barred from entry the US Congress' first Muslim female lawmakers, Tlaib and Ilhan Omar, on the grounds that they support the boycott movement, and after President Donald Trump urged the Jewish state to block the two Democrats.

But it held out the carrot of allowing Tlaib to make a private visit to her elderly grandmother, if she agreed to abide by conditions including a pledge not to advocate boycotting Israel. "This could be my last opportunity to see her. I will respect any restrictions and will not promote boycotts against Israel during my visit," she initially wrote. On Friday, Israel's Interior Minister Aryeh Deri announced that

she would be permitted a "humanitarian visit", but a few hours later Tlaib announced a change of heart.

"I have decided that visiting my grandmother under these oppressive conditions stands against everything I believe in - fighting against racism, oppression & injustice," she wrote in a series of tweets. "When I won, it gave the Palestinian people hope that someone will finally speak the truth about the inhumane conditions," added the 43-year-old congresswoman, elected in January. "I can't allow the State of Israel to take away that light by humiliating me & use my love for my city to

Continued on Page 24



Rashida Tlaib

Local

Demographic issue not featured in Assembly's agenda for next term

Multifaceted issue that cannot be resolved in just a few months: Sources

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Some MPs spoke about what some of their colleagues have said about the population structure, calling for legislations to be discussed during the upcoming term that will prevent bringing expat labor to the country. Parliamentary sources said the demographic issue has no presence on the National Assembly's agenda for next term which will start at the end of October. They said the population issue is multifaceted with many government agencies involved, such as the interior ministry, manpower authority, chamber of commerce and the civil service commission, and it is impossible to make conclusive decisions in just a few months.

The sources said some MPs proposed solutions such as halting work permits for some nationalities, increasing service fees, allocating a quota for each community, in addition to imposing health insurance



KUWAIT: The National Assembly's building and other Kuwait City landmarks. — KUNA



Studies needed to prevent negative repercussions

on every expat and an annual fee for services. They said such proposals are made for electoral gains, but they need extensive studies and legislative amendments because they may have negative repercussions, especially since the public sector is still suffering from a weakness in Kuwaitis' productivity. This made many government agencies to retain expats, while many are

employing expats on an ad hoc basis, because the civil service commission hasn't allocated places for non-Kuwaitis.

Licenses to build

Separately, official sources at the housing authority said the owners of land south of Sabah Al-Ahmad City will not be given licenses to build before completing the infrastructure of the area, the first of which is the new sewerage system that links the city with two stations being built south of the country. The sources said the housing authority wants to avoid problems of hasty

granting of construction licenses in Sabah Al-Ahmad, believing companies will finish their work before citizens build their homes, which led to the flooding of the area and damaging homes. They said the sewer station in Um Al-Haiman, which will be ready soon, will deal with any problem in the sewerage network, adding that the city when complete will be named Sabah Al-Ahmad (Sabah I) City.

In other news, the Commerce and Industry Ministry moved 10 experienced employees from the supervision and consumer protection department to Sharq fish market to boost the supervisory presence there.

Kuwait Amir condoles Pakistan president on mosque blast victims

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a cable of condolences to Pakistan President Arif Alvi over victims of a blast at a mosque near the city of Quetta, killing at least four and injuring 22 others. His Highness the Amir prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow blessing upon the deceased, and wished a speedy recovery for the injured. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also sent a cable of condolences to President Alvi over the victims of the explosion. His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent a similar cable. Meanwhile, Kuwaiti National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem sent cables of condolences to Pakistan's parliament speaker Asad Qaiser and President of the Senate Mohammad Sadeq Sanjrani. The blast took place in the premises of a religious seminary located in Kuchlak area on the outskirts of the provincial capital shortly after the Friday prayer. — KUNA

Kuwait Airways eighth in punctuality among 175 airlines

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways ranked eighth in punctuality among 175 international airlines, according to a report by the British aviation company (OAG), which is specialized in checking the productive performance of the civil aviation sectors. "We are honored by the latest report issued by the world's most credible agencies in evaluating the performance of airports and airlines in the world," Chairman of Kuwait Airways Board of Directors, Yousef Al-Jassem, said in a press release. Jassem pointed out that the results of the report showed that the rate of the punctuality of Kuwait Airways was 88 percent in July. He noted that being the eighth place among the 175 major international airlines affirms the good application of time-bound policies adopted by the board of directors and implemented by the executive management efficiently and professionally. Jassem stressed the company's

endeavor to achieve more, to acquire the satisfaction of its customers in various fields, and to complete its leading role in the field of civil aviation at both Arab and international levels. Kuwait Airways was established in 1953 as a private company under the name of 'Kuwait National Airlines Limited.' The government of Kuwait acquired 100 percent ownership in 1962 and has about 40 destinations worldwide. — KUNA



Food trucks, Kuwaitis' latest trend



KUWAIT: Many young Kuwaitis have a knack for dabbling with fresh ideas for small businesses, and the food truck one is the latest of those. A large vehicle with an installed kitchen, the idea of a food truck is to go to where customers reside and/or work, lending the concept of 'customer approach' a rather literal meaning. — KUNA

local spotlight

Kuwait's foreign policy



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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While the Gulf region and many countries including the US are confronting serious challenges in the region, Kuwait appears safe from conflicts under the wise foreign policy led by HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, and many Kuwaitis are not worried. Has Kuwaiti foreign policy succeeded in maintaining a difficult balance in the tense region? The answer is yes, and here is why.

Kuwait is the only Arab country that has not publicly faced a foreign diplomatic crisis in the past 10 years with almost any country except in its relations with the Syrian regime within the framework of the Gulf, Arab and international stance to condemn the violence there. Yet, lines remain open for dialogue and diplomacy.

Kuwait's foreign policy is supported by the positions of the political leadership represented by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, who is considered one of the most open Arab leaders and most committed to the protocol of participation in regional, Arab and international events. In fact, the policy of neutralizing adversaries has been very successful for Kuwait, and it did not drift to enter into a tense relationship with any external party or state within its territorial sphere.

Even in the global campaign against terror, Kuwait has always been content to provide logistical support to the international coalition, even in times of tension with Iran or Iraq. Moreover, Kuwait has offered various initiatives to neighboring Iraq following the tensions after the invasion by the former Saddam regime and maintained a balance in respect for the self-determination of the peoples of neighboring countries.

Indeed, Kuwaiti diplomacy has succeeded in not creating opponents, which is difficult today for many Arab and foreign countries, as Kuwait is among the few countries in the world that does not have direct enemies or even tensions in its external relations that pose a threat to security of the country's nationalism. So, Kuwait indeed is the Arab country with the most positive external alliances with various countries in the world.

Kuwait is located in a geopolitical and geographic area that is inflamed by wars, disputes and conflicts, in addition to being a rich oil country. The reality is that the Gulf states, including Kuwait, export 40 percent of the world's energy needs, and their strategic position contributes to the stability of the world.

While many Arab countries have classified the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, Kuwait has not made such a classification to respect the privacy of every country as long it is under the law and the constitution that allows freedom of thought and expression to all components of society, taking into account the diversity of the Kuwaiti society's composition of citizens and expats. The majority of the components of the society are in harmony under the state and a constitution that guarantees all rights and freedoms that may not be permitted by other countries.

Moreover, internal political movements and the opposition did not have any negative impact on Kuwaiti foreign policy and its relations with other countries. I know that we are not an ideal state and we have opponents or individuals who chose to exile themselves and stay outside the country over political rivalries, but this did not change or affect foreign policy in any way.

While Kuwait's neighbors have been tense with Iran, including the United States, Kuwait did not sever its relations with Tehran. Kuwait also acted as a peace broker, and the same applies to its position towards Qatar and the Gulf states. As a Kuwaiti citizen, I feel proud that my country is on the rise. I like it that Kuwaitis can enter many nations without a visa, although citizens of many Arab countries face difficulties in the freedom of travel and getting a visa.

I believe that there is a deep understanding in Kuwait's foreign policy that no country in this world should think it has a right to interfere in the affairs of others, or that their religions or beliefs are incompatible with the concepts adhered to by the countries of the world under the charter of the United Nations.

According to the Index of Peace in International Relations, Kuwait is among the governments that do not face clear tensions in relations at all political, military, security, economic levels. There is no doubt that Kuwait's foreign policy has succeeded for decades, while others have failed or are struggling in maintaining a balance. I am proud of my political leadership and the success of my homeland.

Local

Firefighters douse apartment block blaze in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh

Car oils, gas cylinders threatened further explosions

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Firefighters put out a fire at an apartment block, which includes several garages, a gas cylinder store room and residential units, in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh with no injuries reported. In spite of arriving at the scene within five minutes, firefighters faced the danger of

further explosions due to the presence of car oils, tires and gas cylinders in a residential area, Kuwait Fire Service Directorate said. It noted that the building's owners would be held liable and would face severe measures for using residential units in contrary to their intended purpose presenting a high risk to occupants and firefighters.



Jleeb 'catastrophe' by all standards, says councilmember

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Municipal Councilmember and head of Ahmadi governorate committee Fuhaid Al-Muwaizri lauded a decision by State Minister for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Shula to form a specialized committee with several government agencies as members with regards to dealing with Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh's problems. He said the committee will concentrate on checking all "negatives" in the area and find the necessary solutions within six months. The committee will then submit its report to the minister.

Muwaizri said the area has numerous problems, in addition to the escalating health and environmental issues, adding it's a "catastrophe" according to all standards. He said the area is considered a haven for lawbreakers and residency violators, and has piles of trash, insects and rodents, with an absence of health and educational awareness among its Asian communities.

Meanwhile, the committee following up with the issue of 'bachelors' residing in private residential areas, headed by Deputy Director General for Farwaniya

and Mubarak Al-Kabeer affairs Ammar Al-Ammar, held a meeting with the participation of Farwaniya security director, director of environment police, debris department director at the Environment Public Authority, assistant undersecretary for distribution networks at the ministry of electricity and water, representative of the Public Authority for Civil Information and other officials.

The meeting discussed obstacles the team faces in order to remove them and stop the phenomenon of single expat men living in private residential areas. The "Be Sure" campaign was discussed, where power was cut to 135 houses, in addition to discovering 303 houses occupied by bachelors out of 558 violating houses.

In the meantime, Municipal Councilmember and head of the petitions and complaints committee Meshaal Al-Hamdan said he will ask the municipality's legislative branch about evicting bachelors from private residential areas all over Kuwait during the period from Jan 2019 until now. Hamdan wants statistics showing the number of evictions in each governorate, the date and the procedures taken in this regard.



The Municipal Council.

Ministry denies 'increasing thefts' reports

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department denied reports claiming that thefts in residential areas are on the rise,

adding that concerned authorities are working round the clock and are fully prepared and vigilant to ensure security and safety and counter any violation of the law. The department said that social media reports claiming an increase in thefts are inaccurate and lacks credibility. The department commented on a video of a house that was burgled, saying necessary legal action was taken by forensics and criminal detectives. In other news, detectives arrested a person who insulted God in a social media video, the interior ministry said.

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Local

Chinese, Arabs agree on boosting 'health Silk Road' at Beijing forum

Kuwait's participation in China forum strengthen ties: Minister Al-Sabah



BEIJING: Officials attend the Second China-Arab States Health Cooperation Forum. — KUNA



Chinese Minister of Health Ma Xiaowei speaks during the forum.

BEIJING: The Second China-Arab States Health Cooperation Forum concluded on Friday with conferees' approval of the 'Beijing Initiative' designed to bolster health cooperation between the Chinese and Arab nations this year. According to a statement issued at end of the meeting, the Chinese and Arab conferees held in-depth discussions on deepening mutual cooperation in health 'and joint building of the Silk Road.'

The two sides affirmed resolve to pursue cooperation for bolstering "the process of construction of the Arab-Chinese Silk Road in the health sector" and seek to build healthy societies in the two nations. According to the 'Beijing Initiative,' as cited by the convention final statement, health is a basis for attaining objective of comprehensive sustainable health by 2030; with special attention to health care for mothers, children and teenagers. It noted necessity of boosting dialogue, swapping information about the two sides' strategies with respect of health development, systems and legislations.

The 'Beijing Initiative' called for Sino-Arab cooperation in the fields of prevention from major diseases, as well as communicable and emerging ailments, through enhancing technical coordination. Moreover, aspired greater cooperation between the two nations, according to the initiative, calls for personnel training, swap of specialists, enhanced emergency services, in addition to securing medical services for the impoverished, the elderly, women, the kids and the people of special needs.

It applauded a proposal to establish a joint center for applied research and called for a framework to merge benefits of the modern medicine with those of the Chinese popular medicine. Furthermore, it called for establishing a joint network for cooperation among hospitals, exchanging expertise in hospital management, cadres' training and

conventional medicine. It noted that the third session would be held at a member state of the Arab League, but indicated that the date of it would be set according to a future agreement between the Arab and Chinese sides.

Strengthening ties

Meanwhile, Kuwaiti Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Humoud Al-Sabah, representing State of Kuwait at the forum, said the Kuwaiti participation crowned the 2018 state visit to China by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah



Special attention to mothers, children healthcare

Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. Addressing the meeting, the minister affirmed that the Kuwaiti involvement in the event emanated from the solid ties between the two countries, noting that His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit to Beijing last year resulted in elevating level of the relations between the two friendly countries, turning them into a comprehensive, strategic relationship. He expressed gratitude to all personnel who played a role in organizing this major forum for the second time, noting that it constituted a good result of the constructive coop-



Arab League assistant general secretary for social affairs Haifa Abu Ghazala addresses the conferees.



Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah represents Kuwait at the forum.

eration between the Council of Arab Health Ministers and China. Such a relationship is a framework for exchanging views, expertise, policies and programs between the two sides' health leaders for facing challenges and attaining the international goal for sustainable development, 2030, with respect of the sector in particular, Sheikh Dr Basel added. The 'Beijing Declaration' opens a new chapter in the relations between the two sides for bolstering health cooperation, he added further.

The State of Kuwait participated in the meeting with a delegation from the Ministry of Health headed by Sheikh Dr Basel. It includes the State of Kuwait Ambassador to China Sameeh Hayat. Also addressing the gathering, Ambassador Haifa Abu Ghazala, the Arab League assis-

tant general secretary for social affairs, indicated that the conferees would address a host of issues, namely health policies, pharmaceutical industries, conventional medicine, public health, training cadres, producing vaccines and serums. Meanwhile, Chinese Minister of Health Ma Xiaowei urged for pressing ahead with building 'the Silk Road' in the health sector, noting that Beijing had inked 12 memoranda of understanding in the health field with Arab states, also indicating that the cooperation had resulted in executing a number of cooperation ventures in sectors of prevention from epidemics, building public health facilities, mother and child health care and conventional medicine. He called for enhancing the Arab-Chinese cooperation at this level. — KUNA

Kuwait reaches out to needy people during Eid Al-Adha

KUWAIT: Kuwait has continued distribution of humanitarian aid to people in need in many parts of the region last week, helping Syrian refugees and Yemenis who are living amidst an armed conflict in their country. Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) joined hands with Jordanian Red Crescent and distributed clothes and meat to 2,200 Syrian and Jordanian families during the Eid Al-Adha holiday. The three-day humanitarian campaign, which began on first day of Eid Al-Adha, aims at giving clothes to Syrian orphans and refugees living in camps dotted around Amman. This campaign will benefit 700 families, said Hayat Marzouq, head of the KRCS team. Marzouq said this campaign also included distribution of meat to 1,500 Syrian and Jordanian families during Eid Al-Adha holiday. She thanked Jordan's Red Crescent for their logistical support that contributed to delivery of aid for people in need.

KRCS also launched a similar campaign during Eid Al-Adha in Lebanon. The Kuwaiti society, in cooperation with Lebanon's Red Cross, distributed hundreds of packages of clothes and packages of meat for Syrian refugees in the north and east of Lebanon. Mona Al-Shatti, head of KRCS team, said that they visited a bread distribution center and helped in giving out loaves of bread to Syrian and Palestinian refugees. In Yemen, KRCS opened a number of relief projects in Maareb governorate as part of the 'Kuwait By Your Side' campaign. The projects include a foundation stone for the drilling of a water well and installation of a pump and pipes in Jufaina camp for the internally displaced persons (IDPs). KRCS also provided nine incubators for newborns in three hospitals. The Kuwaiti society also distributed 350 livestock for 248 families in six Yemeni governorate during Eid Al-Adha holiday.

Meanwhile, Kuwait Awqaf Public Foundation distributed meat to Iraqi IDPs and families in Irbil during Eid Al-Adha holiday. Kuwait Consul General in Irbil Dr Omar Al-Kandari said the distribution of meat was part of the 'Kuwait by Your Side' campaign, and within His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's instructions to help alleviate suffering of the Iraqi people. He said more than 2,600 families received Eid Al-Adha meat. — KUNA



KRCS workers distribute Eid Al-Adha meat in Yemen's Maareb governorate.



KRCS workers distribute Eid Al-Adha meat in Yemen's Maareb governorate.



KRCS distributes humanitarian aid to Syrian refugees in Jordan.



KRCS workers lay the foundation stone for the drilling of a water well and installation of a pump and pipes in Jufaina camp in Yemen.



A Kuwait-funded relief project in Yemen's Maareb governorate.



KRCS-provided incubators for newborns in Yemen.



Doctors perform surgery on a child in Yemen in an operation funded by Kuwait.

Local

Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Kuwait Towers pictured during sunrise. — Photo by Sudhish Somanath (KUNA)

Ooredoo Kuwait gifts pilgrims with roaming packages

KUWAIT: Stemming from Ooredoo Kuwait's firm belief in the importance of shouldering its social responsibilities as a reflection of its corporate citizenship and in line with its mission to enrich customers' experience, a team of Ooredoo employees recently gifted pilgrims departing for the Holy Land with SIM cards together with activated and prepaid roaming packages, enabling them to stay in touch with their families and friends. The initiative, which has become a tradition observed and performed annually by Ooredoo with the arrival of the hajj season, was carried out in cooperation with the Ministry of Health's Information Office and in coordi-

nation with a number of hajj campaigns. Commenting on this initiative, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Al-Ayoub asserted Ooredoo's firm commitment to consistently collaborate with the various concerned entities to enrich the experience of its customers with offers and initiatives that are aligned with their needs and lifestyle. He availed the opportunity to extend Ooredoo's gratitude to the Information Office at the Ministry of Health and the Directorate General of Civil Aviation for their tireless support and commitment to the success of this annual initiative that Ooredoo holds annually.



KUWAIT: Ooredoo employees gift SIM cards with activated and prepaid roaming packages to pilgrims.

Kuwait partakes in commemorating earthquake anniversary

ANKARA: Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi took part in an event commemorating the 20th anniversary of the tragic Izmit earthquake, which struck the Sea of Marmara region in 1999. The commemoration was held at the Search and Rescue Association (AKUT) headquarters in the northwestern province of Kocaeli's Golcuk. Kuwaiti embassy said in a statement on Friday. Inviting Zawawi to participate in the event is a gesture of appreciation by the Golcuk municipality to Kuwait's humanitarian contribution and aid to Turkey in the quake's aftermath, it added. Meanwhile, Zawawi expressed, in his speech, Kuwait's sympathy and sorrow over victims of the tragic incident, reiterating its keenness to support all humanitarian activities and efforts around the world as part of its foreign policy. He also recalled the international appreciation of Kuwait's humanitarian activities worldwide that resulted in the UN's naming His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah as 'Humanitarian Leader,' the first-ever title in history given to a state leader, and Kuwait as 'Humanitarian Center.'



Kuwait's Ambassador to Turkey Ghassan Al-Zawawi.

million-worth loan to Turkey to reconstruct a road network connecting housing units, built post the 1999 Izmit earthquake. KFAED granted another loan amounting \$28.3 million to rehabilitate the quake-damaged infrastructure in the Marmara Sea region. His Highness the late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has personally donated \$1 million as a humanitarian contribution to provide relief for victims of the devastating earthquake, and help alleviate their suffering. Moreover, several Kuwaiti philanthropic societies provided relief, aid, and financial support to the quake victims. A devastating 7.5-magnitude earthquake struck the Sea of Marmara region of Turkey on August 17, 1999, and caused death to over 17,000 people. — KUNA

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Disgraced US financier Epstein hanged himself

'Until her bones are broken': Myanmar's activists fight domestic violence

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MUZAFFARABAD: Pakistani soldiers carry a coffin holding a body of a colleague killed in cross border shelling, at a funeral in Muzaffarabad, the capital of Pakistan-controlled Kashmir. —AFP

Pakistan, India exchange cross-border fire

India hints at changing 'no first use' nuclear policy

SRINAGAR: India and Pakistan exchanged "heavy" cross-border fire yesterday, after New Delhi's move to strip the restive Kashmir region of its autonomy prompted a rare meeting of the UN Security Council. The two foes regularly fire potshots over the Line of Control (LoC) in the disputed Himalayan territory, which is divided between the two countries and poisoned their relations since independence in 1947.

But the latest exchange follows India's decision this month to rip up the special constitutional status of its part of Kashmir, sparking protests from the local population, outrage from Pakistan and unease from neighboring China. "The exchange of fire is going on," a senior Indian government official told AFP, calling it "heavy". One Indian soldier was reportedly killed. Pakistan made no immediate comment on the violence.

Late Friday, Pakistan and China succeeded in getting the UN Security Council to discuss Kashmir-behind closed doors-for the first time since the Indo-Pakistan war of 1971. Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan yesterday hailed the gathering, saying that addressing the "suffering of the Kashmiri people & ensuring resolution of the dispute is the responsibility of this world body".

New Delhi insists the status of the territory is a purely internal matter. "We don't need international busybodies to try to tell us how to run our lives. We are a billion-plus people," India's UN envoy Syed Akbaruddin said after the meeting. US President Donald Trump urged the nuclear-armed rivals to come back to the negotiating table, speaking to Khan by phone on the importance of "reducing tensions through bilateral dialogue".

Phone lines

India yesterday meanwhile gradually restored phone lines following an almost two-week communications blackout in its part of Kashmir, imposed hours before Prime Minister Narendra Modi's

surprise August 5 gambit. Seventeen out of around 100 telephone exchanges were restored yesterday in the restive Kashmir Valley, the local police chief told AFP.

But mobiles and the internet remained dead in the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley, the main hotbed of resistance to Indian rule in Jammu and Kashmir state in a 30-year-old conflict that has killed tens of thousands. Fearing an angry and potentially violent response, India also sent 10,000 extra troops to the area, severely restricted movement and arrested some 500 local politicians, activists, academics and others. The state's Chief Secretary BVR Subrahmanyam had said Friday there would be a "gradual" restoration of phone lines over the weekend, with schools to resume classes in some areas next week.

Clashes

The transformation of Srinagar into an eerie maze of barricades, soldiers and concertinas of barbed wire has failed to stop public anger boiling to the surface. "We want peace and nothing else, but they have kept us under this lockdown like sheep while taking decisions about us," resident Tariq Madri told AFP. "Even my nine-year old son asked me why they had locked us inside," he added. Several hundred protesters clashed with police in the city on Friday, who responded with tear gas and pellet-firing shotguns.

People hurled stones and used shop hoardings and tin sheets as improvised shields, as police shot dozens of rounds into the crowd. No injuries were reported. The clashes broke out after more than 3,000 people rallied in the city's Soura neighborhood, which has witnessed regular demonstrations this month. A week earlier around 8,000 people staged a protest which also ended in a violent confrontation with police, residents said. "I want the government to know that this aggression and aggressive policies don't work on the ground," said 24-year-old Adnan Rashid, an

engineering student.

Some people took to the streets yesterday to buy essential goods but most shops in Srinagar remained closed. Mohammed Altaf Malik, 30, said people remained angry about the stripping of Kashmir's special status "and the way it was done". "There is widespread corruption and the police here have made it a business to pick up any people it wants and then ask for money to release them from detention," Malik said as he went to visit a sick neighbor in hospital. "We don't see anything changing from this for ordinary people like us," he added.

Changing 'no first use'

Meanwhile, India's defense minister hinted on Friday that New Delhi might change its "no first use" policy on nuclear weapons, amid heightened tensions with fellow atomic power Pakistan. India committed in 1999 to not being the first to use nuclear weapons in any conflict. Among India's neighbors China has a similar doctrine but arch rival Pakistan does not. Defense Minister Rajnath Singh made the comment on Twitter after visiting Pokhran, the site of India's successful nuclear tests in 1998 under then prime minister Atal Vajpayee. "Pokhran is the area which witnessed (Vajpayee's) firm resolve to make India a nuclear power and yet remain firmly committed to the doctrine of 'No First Use'," Singh wrote. "India has strictly adhered to this doctrine. What happens in future depends on the circumstances," Singh tweeted. The statement comes as tensions rise with Pakistan after Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government stripped Indian-administered Kashmir of its autonomy, a move sharply condemned by Islamabad.

'Stop lying'

Singh's comments prompted considerable noise in both India and Pakistan, with Pakistan's minister for human rights

Shireen Mazari tweeting that India "need to stop lying". "India's claims to NFU ended when on 4 Jan 2003 Indian govt declared it would use nuclear weapons against any (even Chemical or Biological) attack 'against India or Indian forces anywhere'," she said. Observers said Singh's statement is the clearest so far with regards to a change in India's nuclear doctrine.

Vipin Narang, a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, tweeted it was the "highest level declaration that India may not feel indefinitely or absolutely bound to No First Use." Singh received support from Subramanian Swamy, a hardliner parliamentarian from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). "Rajnath is correct as to warn about possible review of Vajpayee's no first use of n weapons since Pak leadership is more crazed today than in 1998," he tweeted.

"First use is required now on if we get credible evidence that Pak faced with ignominy may go for first strike. We must pre-empt that," Swamy wrote. This is not the first time that the Modi government has made a statement regarding its nuclear policy. In 2016, then defense minister Manohar Parrikar had expressed his reservations over the "no first use" nuclear policy. Parrikar, who died last year, had said India was a responsible nuclear power and "it would not use it irresponsibly."

A revision to the policy was part of the BJP's election manifesto in 2014. Then front runner Modi, however, stated that if voted to power, he had no intention of changing the stance. Running for a second term earlier this year, Modi had said his government had called Pakistan's "nuclear bluff". "India has stopped getting scared of Pakistan's threats. Every other day they say, 'we have a nuclear button.' What do we have then? Have they kept it for Diwali?," he said, referring to a Hindu festival when fireworks are set off. —Agencies

Rashida Tlaib, US lawmaker at the center of uproar

WASHINGTON: No sooner had Rashida Tlaib been sworn in as a member of the 116th US Congress last January, than the daughter of Palestinian immigrants caught flak for her off-color cry to impeach Donald Trump. She has been in America's blazing political glare ever since. Whether it's her relentless needling of the president, being told by Trump to "go back" to the "corrupt" country she came from despite being born in Michigan, or being barred from visiting Israel Thursday by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Tlaib is a political lightning rod.

She became part of an international controversy when she and fellow first-term US lawmaker Ilhan Omar - together the first Muslim women to serve in Congress - were denied entry to Israel and the Palestinian territories on a congressional trip. On Friday Tlaib ramped up the heat, rejecting the Jewish state's compromise offer to allow her into the West Bank on a "humanitarian" visit to see her grandmother.

Accepting that offer under Israel's "oppressive conditions stands against everything I believe in — fighting against racism, oppression & injustice," she said. Tlaib and Omar have clashed with congressional colleagues, especially regarding their support of a boycott of Israel over its treatment of Palestinians,

and comments seen by many as anti-Semitic. Trump himself has sought to exploit the controversy, saying the two "are the face of the Democrat Party, and they HATE Israel!"

Tlaib is 43, the eldest of 14 children born to Palestinian immigrants. A self-described "progressive warrior," she grew up in modest means in Detroit, eventually becoming a social justice attorney. A mother of two sons, she speaks with genuine affection for her relatives. But that belies a fiery voice which has often led her into controversy. In 2016 Tlaib disrupted a Trump campaign rally to protest what she said was his "hate-filled rhetoric."

Also that year she raised eyebrows by supporting a one-state solution, a departure from her Middle East peace stance that envisioned Israel and a Palestinian state side by side. "It has to be one state. Separate but equal does not work," she told In These Times magazine. The comments antagonized Jews who believe a one-state solution could dissolve the world's only Jewish state, Tlaib's election stood in contrast to the rise in anti-Muslim sentiment around the country.

But just hours after being sworn in as the first Palestinian-American woman in Congress, Tlaib drew criticism for using profanity to demand Trump's ouster. "We're gonna go in there and we're gonna impeach the motherfucker," Tlaib bellowed at a progressive gathering, in video that went viral. She has continued to make waves. In May Tlaib said she finds "a kind of calming feeling" in knowing that Palestinians were involved in creating "a safe haven for Jews" following the Holocaust.

Tlaib has emerged as a member of the self-



DETROIT: People hold signs in support of US Democratic Representative for Michigan's 13th congressional district Rashida Tlaib during 'Shabbat in the Park With Rashida' event with pro BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) group in Pallister Park in Detroit, Michigan. —AFP

styled "squad" of four progressive newcomers, ethnic minority women whom Trump has repeatedly demonized. But Tlaib insists she won't be cowed, not by Trump or Israel. She wanted to go to the village of Beit Ur Al-Fauqa to "pick figs" with her grandmother, but ultimately declined. "Silencing me with treatment to make me feel less-than is not what she wants for me," Tlaib said. "It would kill a piece of me that always stands up against racism and injustice." —AFP

Italy political standoff keeps migrants at sea

LAMPEDUSA: A charity rescue ship carrying 134 migrants, mostly Africans, waited off the coast of Italy on Friday as a battle between former political allies in Rome stopped it docking at the southern island of Lampedusa. Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has ordered his officials to prevent the boat disembarking the migrants, who were rescued off Libya 16 days ago, in defiance of his own prime minister and despite six European Union nations agreeing to take them. The migrants' plight underlines the breakdown of Italy's ruling coalition and how immigration has become central to Salvini's plan to take his right-wing League party out of government, drag the nation to elections and return to power as prime minister. Five seriously traumatized people were moved off the Open Arms boat, run by the Spanish charity group of the same name, on Thursday, accompanied by four relatives. Three more three requiring urgent medical attention were taken ashore during the night along with one companion, Open Arms said on Twitter.

"They are self-harming and getting angry with other people in the group," Alessandro di Benedetto, a psychologist with Italian aid group Emergency, told RAI radio after examining the five people who were brought ashore on Thursday. "Some of them are having suicidal thoughts, so they think it is better to die here than go back there," he added.

Salvini's tough anti-immigration stance has helped boost his popularity at the expense of coalition partners the 5-Star Movement, but his surprise bid to bring down the government and call an election is running into trouble. Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte, who belongs to no political party but is close to 5-Star, accused Salvini on Thursday of exploiting the issue and said he had convinced six European states to take in the migrants. —Reuters

International

Shared interests create opening for Washington-Tehran 'back channel'

Intermediaries urge arch foes Iran, US to cooperate on Afghanistan

WASHINGTON: Western intermediaries are trying to persuade arch foes Iran and the United States to cooperate on bolstering security in Afghanistan as US President Donald Trump seeks to extract America from its longest war, according to three source familiar with the efforts. The intermediaries, the sources say, secretly have been relaying messages between Washington and Tehran for months in hopes of getting the sides talking at a time of heightened hostility on a range of issues.

"Afghanistan is one area where there is common ground," one source with knowledge of the correspondence told Reuters, speaking on condition of anonymity. The White House declined to comment and the US State Department did not respond to requests for comment. Iran officially denies any back channel talks with the United States over any topic.

The United States and Iran share an interest in ensuring that a departure of the more than 20,000 US-led foreign troops does not plunge Afghanistan into a civil war that restores the Taliban's harsh version of Islamic rule, and does not allow Al-Qaeda or other Sunni Muslim extremist groups to expand there. Moreover, with US sanctions hammering its economy, Tehran wants to avoid Afghans fleeing to neighboring Iran if there was a surge in bloodletting, regional experts said, as has happened over decades of war in the central Asian country. Trump and Tehran have another shared interest: Both want US troops out of Afghanistan.

There are no signs, however, that either Tehran or Washington are ready to put aside disputes over Iran's nuclear program and US and Iranian activities and alliances in the Mideast to cooperate on Afghanistan. One message seen by Reuters and conveyed to Washington outlined Iran's concerns with the Trump administration's negotiations with the Taliban on a US troop withdrawal and intra-Afghan talks on a political settlement. Afghan-born veteran US diplomat Zalmay Khalilzad has erred in taking "over-zealous shortcuts by talking directly to the Taliban," a senior Iranian official said in the message.

This approach has given "political supremacy" to the Taliban as they are gaining militarily, the message said. Taliban leaders, it continued, have

told their Iranian interlocutors they will not "accept anything less than a Taliban-dominated government" that rules "an Islamic emirate." Shiite Muslim-dominated Iran long has been wary of the Sunni Muslim Taliban. It nearly went to war during Taliban rule when the militants killed at least eight Iranian diplomats and an Iranian journalist in 1998.

Back Channel

Direct contact between Iran and the United States would be a stark contrast to the tensions that took them to the brink of military confrontation after Iran downed an unmanned US drone in the Gulf in June and Trump then halted a retaliatory air strike on Iran's coast. While Iran is open to talks, it wants at the very least a suspension of US sanctions designed to slash its oil exports to zero, Tehran's main source of income, according to two



Trump seeks to extract US from its longest war

sources familiar with the US and Iranian positions.

Iranian officials believe that a new peace process should be devised in which the Afghan government - which has been excluded from the US-Taliban talks in Qatar - played a "dominant" role, the message said. Several back-channel efforts, the sources said, are driven by a hope that cooperation on Afghanistan could lead to negotiations to lower the tensions ignited when Trump pulled the United States out of the 2015 international agreement designed to prevent Iran from developing a nuclear weapon in exchange for sanctions relief.

But one source familiar with the US and Iranian positions said as far as Iran was concerned, if Washington acknowledged common interests in

Afghanistan "and is willing to talk to Iran on the basis of equality about those common interests, then Iran will talk to the United States." Now all Iran is getting from the United States is that they have no common interests, the source added. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and national security adviser John Bolton oppose any sanctions relief for Iran and were opposed to any talks on Afghanistan, believing Tehran will give in to US demands, one of the sources said, who asked not to be identified. The US State Department declined comment.

One former Afghan official pointed out that since the 2001 US-led invasion to oust the Taliban government, Iran has built ties to the Taliban that it could use to help shape a peace settlement and a US troop withdrawal. Iran "could be very valuable," said Ali Jalali, who served as Afghanistan's first post-Taliban interior minister. "This is a very good opportunity for Iran." Tehran maintains high-level Taliban contacts and is a haven for some insurgent families. It has supplied limited quantities of weapons to the insurgents to keep pressure on US forces near its border, according to Western officials.

Pompeo has accused Iran of being a "co-conspirator" of the Taliban. But some regional experts counter that Tehran is hedging its bets in case the militants return to power. It also sees the Taliban as a counter force to Islamic State's Afghan affiliate. Tehran also wields influence in Kabul, having backed Afghan governments for nearly two decades. Iran maintains close ties with the Shiite Hazaras, Afghanistan's third largest ethnic group, and strongmen of other ethnic minorities.

Washington and Tehran, regional experts said, also share the goal of preventing Afghanistan from reverting to a base of Sunni Muslim extremist groups, especially an affiliate of Islamic State, whose avowed enemies include the United States and Iran. Whether Iran can play a meaningful role in any peace effort, or that Washington would allow it to do so, is an open question, said Ryan Crocker, a former US ambassador to Kabul. "I'm pretty skeptical that they (the intermediaries) will get any traction ... because of the policy this administration has developed on Iran. I'm afraid that ship has sailed." —Reuters

Israeli planes hit Gaza after rocket attack

GAZA: Israeli warplanes struck at least three targets in the Gaza Strip yesterday but caused no apparent casualties, a Palestinian security source said. The strikes, which came after Palestinians fired a rocket from the territory at southern Israel late Friday, hit a Hamas observation post in Beit Hanoun, in the northern Gaza Strip, an unidentified target near Gaza City and open ground near Deir El Balah in the central part of the territory, the source said.

An Israeli army statement mentioned only two strikes, against "underground targets belonging to the Hamas terror organization in the northern and central Gaza Strip." It did not elaborate. The army said that Friday night's rocket launch at southern Israel was the first since July 12. A military statement said the rocket was intercepted by Israel's Iron Dome defense system, after air raid sirens sounded in the southern town of Sderot and its surroundings.

Earlier Friday, the Palestinian health ministry said that 32 Palestinians were wounded by Israeli live fire during weekly protests along the Gaza border. An Israeli army spokeswoman told AFP that about 5,600 people demonstrated along the border, some throwing hand grenades and explosive devices toward soldiers and attempting to reach the border fence. She said that troops responded with "riot dispersal means" but she was unaware of any live fire. Regular protests along the border began in March 2018.

At least 302 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza or the border area since then, the majority during demonstrations or associated clashes. Seven Israelis have been killed in Gaza-related violence over the same period. The protests have declined in intensity in recent months after UN and Egyptian officials brokered an informal truce between Israel and Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas. Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza, have fought three wars since 2008. —AFP

Hezbollah shows its 'missile arsenal' used against Israel

BEIRUT: Hezbollah released footage of what it says are anti-ship missiles of the kind it used 13 years ago against Israel before marking on Friday its self-declared "victory" in the 2006 war. Israel has fought several conflicts against the Iran-backed Hezbollah, the last in 2006. More than 1,200 Lebanese, mostly civilians, and more than 160 Israelis, the majority soldiers, died during the last conflict but many in Israel consider the war a failure as Hezbollah was not defeated.

Since 2006, Israeli officials have repeatedly warned that the Shiite group maintains an arsenal of several hundred long-range missiles that could be used to target Israel. On Thursday night, a series of videos on Hezbollah-run media purported to show at least five anti-ship missiles stored inside metallic containers in an unknown location. Hezbollah's logo could be seen printed on the warheads.

It was not clear when the footage was filmed. A Hezbollah naval commander, identified as Haj Jalal, told Hezbollah's Al-Manar TV on Thursday that the anti-ship missiles are of the same kind used in a 2006 attack on one of the Israeli navy's top warships, the INS Hanit. The warship was struck off the coast of Beirut in July



UNDISCLOSED LOCATION: This grab from a video released by the media office of Lebanon's Shiite militant group Hezbollah shows footage of anti-ship missiles of the kind used to strike an Israeli warship during the July 2006 war. —AFP

2006, killing four soldiers and causing extensive damage to the corvette. It was the first direct strike on an Israeli warship in decades and Hezbollah celebrated it as among its biggest victories of the 34-day war.

An investigation found that the missile hit because officials did not believe Hezbollah had such sophisticated technology and so didn't turn on anti-missile systems. On Thursday, Hezbollah released what it said are videos of the 2006 missile attack. One clip purported to show men dressed in Hezbollah uniform tracking the Israeli warship using a radar. It also purported to show a truck-mounted launcher firing two anti-ship missiles, that were filmed streaking through the night sky. Shortly after, the video shows a distant blaze. —AFP



ADEN: Photo shows cars driving beneath a large billboard showing Yemen's internationally recognized government of President Abdrabbuh Mansour Hadi, along a road in Yemen's second city of Aden. —AFP

Coalition warplanes fired flares over Aden at dawn yesterday near camps occupied by separatist fighters after the alliance renewed a call for them to withdraw from all sites they captured last weekend. The separatists, backed by coalition member the United Arab Emirates, are a main component in the anti-Houthi alliance. But the war has rekindled old strains between north and south Yemen - formerly separate countries until 1990. The coalition statement urged all forces in the south to unite in the fight against the Houthis.

Southern Transitional Council (STC) sources told Reuters their forces, which had already moved away from the nearly empty presidential palace and central bank, were vacating government institutions under the supervision of a Saudi-UAE delegation. However, they said the forces would not quit the government military camps that give them effective control of the city. —Reuters

Yemen separatists quit Aden's posts

ADEN: Southern Yemeni separatists withdrew yesterday from some government buildings in Aden that they seized last week but held on to military camps that give them control over the southern port, interim seat of Yemen's Saudi-backed government. The separatists' takeover of Aden has strained a Saudi-led military coalition formed to confront the Iran-aligned Houthis as the movement stepped up attacks on the kingdom, hitting a Saudi oil installation yesterday.

A Houthi military spokesman said the group launched 10 drones on oil installations at Shaybah in eastern Saudi Arabia, describing it as the "biggest attack in the depths" of the kingdom and vowing further operations. State oil company Aramco said the attack caused a "limited fire" at a gas plant which had been contained and did not impact production. Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih condemned the strike as "cowardly" sabotage directed at global oil supplies. The Yemen conflict is widely seen in the region as a proxy war between Saudi Arabia and regional rival Shiite Muslim Iran.

The Western-backed, Sunni Muslim coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 to try to restore the internationally recognized government of Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi after the Houthis ousted him from power in the capital Sanna in late 2014. The tensions have complicated United Nations efforts to implement a stalled peace deal in the main port city of Hodeidah, on Yemen's west coast, and pave the way for political talks to end the war that has pushed the country to the brink of famine.

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International

Disgraced US financier Epstein hanged himself, Coroner rules

Women file new \$100 million lawsuit against Epstein estate

NEW YORK: An autopsy on disgraced US financier Jeffrey Epstein - who was found dead in his jail cell - has concluded that he committed suicide by hanging, a coroner said, answering one of the questions surrounding his death. The ruling comes six days after the 66-year-old, who was accused of trafficking girls as young as 14 for sex, was discovered dead in New York's high-security Metropolitan Correctional Center. New York's chief medical examiner Barbara Sampson said in a statement emailed to AFP that "after careful review of all investigative information, including complete autopsy findings" it was determined that Epstein killed himself.

The New York Times cited officials as saying that Epstein had used a bedsheet to hang himself. The report came a day after US media reported that preliminary findings from the post-mortem examination had found broken bones in Epstein's neck. Epstein, a multi-millionaire who once counted Britain's Prince Andrew and US President Donald Trump as friends, was charged with one count of sex trafficking of minors and one count of conspiracy to commit sex trafficking of minors.

According to prosecutors, Epstein sexually exploited dozens of teenagers at his homes in Manhattan and Florida between 2002 and 2005. He denied the charges but faced up to 45 years in jail if found guilty. Epstein's lawyers said Friday they were "not satisfied with the conclusions of the medical examiner" and would conduct their own investigation into his death, including demanding to see video footage from the jail.

"It is indisputable that the authorities violated their own protocols," the lawyers said, decrying the "harsh, even medieval conditions" at the facility. The FBI and Justice Department are investigating how such a high-profile inmate managed to take his own life just weeks after an earlier reported suicide attempt. The warden of

the Metropolitan Correctional Center where Epstein was housed has been temporarily reassigned and two guards put on administrative leave pending an investigation. The guards were reportedly asleep when they should have been checking on Epstein.

Epstein's death came a day after a court released documents in which an alleged victim said he used her as a "sex slave" and that she was forced to have sex with well-known politicians and businessmen. Virginia Giuffre has alleged she was forced to have sex with Prince Andrew, former US Senator and architect of the Northern Irish peace deal George Mitchell, ex-New Mexico governor Bill Richardson and American celebrity lawyer Alan Dershowitz.

Lawsuits

They have all strenuously denied the allegations. Prosecutors have pledged to pursue cases against anyone else involved in Epstein's alleged crimes and earlier this week FBI agents raided his private island in the Caribbean. Several women have also come forward seeking damages. On Wednesday, Jennifer Araoz filed a lawsuit against Epstein's estate, his former girlfriend Ghislaine Maxwell and three other female accomplices.

Araoz said she was raped by Epstein as a 15-year-old. She said Maxwell, a British socialite and daughter of the late fraudster and media mogul Robert Maxwell, enabled his crimes. Maxwell's whereabouts are unknown but she was recently photographed at a restaurant in Los Angeles, according to US reports. On Friday two other women filed a \$100 million lawsuit against Epstein's estate. They were working as hostesses in a Manhattan restaurant in 2004 when a woman described as a "recruiter" for Epstein approached them, they said.

The recruiter allegedly offered the pair hundreds of dollars each to go to Epstein's home and give him a



NEW YORK: A protest group called 'Hot Mess' hold up signs of Jeffrey Epstein in front of the Federal courthouse in New York City. Two more women have filed a \$100 million lawsuit against the estate of Jeffrey Epstein, accusing the tycoon of having sexually abused them 15 years ago. —AFP

massage, assuring them there would be no sexual contact, according to the lawsuit. Two days later they went to Epstein's luxurious mansion near Central Park. Once they were in the massage room, the eight-page lawsuit said, Epstein was sexually aggressive towards

them before giving them several hundred dollars. Epstein was convicted in Florida in 2008 of paying young girls for massages but served just 13 months in jail under a secret plea deal struck with the then state prosecutor. —AFP

because they murdered innocent people on our streets that day." "What people want is truth and justice, it's as simple as that."

Prosecutions and inquiries over other killings are also still ongoing, dividing British and Northern Irish society over whether - and how - justice should be sought. Some 10 percent of the 3,500 victims of "The Troubles" were killed by members of the military and police. Many are considered among the most egregious missteps in the conflict, perpetrated by security forces tasked with ensuring law and order, sometimes against unarmed civilians.

Rallies for veterans

The matter has been complicated by British MPs calling for amnesty for soldiers, matching prison release deals given to some 500 republican and loyalist paramilitaries when the conflict ended. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and other MPs have voiced fears veterans are being hounded into old age by the threat of criminal action, with little chance of conclusively clearing their names.

Whilst campaigning to take charge as prime minister, Johnson promised to end "unfair" prosecutions of soldiers. London and Belfast rallies of retired soldiers have been held to support "Soldier F" - the veteran who will stand trial - with protestors claiming they have unfairly become the main focus of investigations. But some fear offering an amnesty to soldiers who served in Northern Ireland would be a tacit admission of guilt among those who served with integrity.

'Uneven playing field'

There are also concerns there will be an imbalance in justice if prosecutions are sought for events clouded by the passing of time. "While the army kept extremely good operational records, the terrorists did not," Richard Dannatt, a former head of the British Army who served in Northern Ireland, wrote in the News Letter paper in 2018. "This makes a very uneven playing field on which to conduct these retrospective investigations."



LISBURN: Veterans pose for a photograph at a memorial event organized by the Northern Ireland Veterans Association in Lisburn, south of Belfast yesterday to mark the 50th Anniversary of the start of Operation Banner. —AFP

As a condition of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement which ended the conflict, for example, the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) also destroyed their weapons caches, a valuable source of ballistic evidence.

'Long term cost'

From the other side, there is also concern the British government would withhold evidence against its forces for purposes of national security, shielding it from scrutiny. Unionist politicians are also wary of creating a moral equivalence between the actions of state-designated terrorists and security forces. Trials could undermine the legitimacy of the British government's decision to intervene and offer legitimacy to the actions of republican paramilitaries, responsible for the overwhelming majority of killings. Professor Bryan added: "The full cost of the deployment of soldiers are not just the cost of lives at the time... but the long term cost in terms of historical memory and where it leads politics." —AFP

News in brief

32 missing as boat sinks

BUKAVU: Thirty-two people are missing, feared dead, after a boat carrying more than 70 passengers capsized on Lake Kivu in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo, officials said yesterday. Initial reports after the motorized piroque - a large canoe - sank Thursday evening "indicate that 46 people were rescued and 32 are missing," local authorities in the province of South Kivu said in a statement. It did not give a death toll but said each affected family had been given money to organise "funeral arrangements worthy of our drowned countrymen." "Overloading was the main cause of the capsizing," local head Christian Chiringwi in Luhahi said. In the neighboring province of Tanganyika meanwhile a similar accident late Thursday left two people dead, local officials said. Such incidents occur regularly in DR Congo, with poorly built and maintained boats often overloaded with people and cargo while safety equipment is minimal. —AFP

Boy stages own kidnap

LAGOS: A 15-year-old Nigerian boy has been arrested for demanding a ransom from his father after staging his own kidnap with his friends in central city of Jos, police said yesterday. The teenager and four accomplices aged between 15 and 22, were apprehended by police last week, after demanding a 500,000 naira (1,250 euros) ransom from his distressed father. "It was staged perfectly", Plateau State police chief Terna Tyopeye said. "We are detaining them to ascertain why they did it and whether they have been behind other kidnaps that have been occurring in the area," he said. When the boys were asked why they staged the kidnap, they made "suspicious claims", including that they wanted to buy clothes, Tyopeye said. Days before the incident, the boy's father had sold his car to raise money for school fees for his children and to pay household bills. —AFP

Mexican women protest

MEXICO CITY: Hundreds of women demanding protection from Mexico City's police force took to the streets Friday after a number of high-profile sexual assault cases involving serving officers. To shouts of "I do believe you!" and "My friends protect me, you don't," the initially peaceful rally ended with some participants lighting a fire on the second floor of a police building and vandalizing a bus station. The protesters also sprayed graffiti on the capital's Independence Monument, adorning the base of the stone edifice with the slogan "damned pigs!" Two reports of attacks on women this month have sparked outrage and bitter recriminations against the city's police force, with protesters mobilizing on social media through the hashtag #NoMeCuidanMeViolan, or "They don't protect me, they rape me." A 17-year-old girl said four police officers assaulted her in a patrol car in the city's north. —AFP

Russia's one-man protests

MOSCOW: Russian opposition activists held small one-man protests in Moscow yesterday to demand free elections, as the wave of the Russian capital's larger demonstrations took a breather this weekend. In a move to circumvent restrictions by the authorities, activists took turns to hold protest signs as such demonstrations do not technically need approval. The protests, held at several locations in central Moscow, were a far cry from the wave of rallies in which tens of thousands took to the streets after opposition figures were banned from local elections a month ago. The previous rallies, which have taken place every Saturday since the ruling, were the biggest since mass protests broke out in 2011 against President Vladimir Putin's return to the Kremlin after a term as prime minister. Police have come down hard on the demonstrations, which have tapped into wider anger over declining living standards and a stalling economy. —AFP

50 years on, Northern Ireland still reckons with army killings

LISBURN: For many Britons, the soldiers who intervened in Northern Ireland 50 years ago this week are unsung heroes who tried to keep the peace in a region riven with sectarian tensions. To many Irish, they instead helped fuel the conflict. The army's 38-year presence in the province has left a bitter legacy in the form of a fierce political debate over whether soldiers should be prosecuted for alleged crimes.

"The ramifications echo right through contemporary Northern Ireland - the politics of now," said Dominic Bryan, a professor at Queen's University Belfast. The dispute has led to demonstrations on both sides. The Northern Ireland Veterans Association, which is holding an anniversary memorial event in the town of Lisburn yesterday, said its members were "concerned".

The most emblematic incident was "Bloody Sunday". On January 30, 1972, British soldiers opened fire on a Catholic civil rights march in Londonderry, killing 13. One more person died later. After a long campaign for justice by the families, Northern Irish prosecutors earlier this year announced that one soldier will stand trial for murder in September.

The announcement infuriated supporters of Britain's military intervention but was broadly welcomed by the families, although they said it was not enough. "It's still an ongoing campaign," John Kelly - whose brother Michael was killed on Bloody Sunday - told AFP. "Out of 18 soldiers there's only one being prosecuted. All 18 should have been prosecuted

people for various offences, but rights groups said there had been 128 arrests.

'Worse than Mugabe'

Dozens of police were deployed in running battles with protesters, many of them from the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The protest took place in Africa Unity Square, overlooking the Zimbabwean parliament, where crowds gathered in November 2017 to demand Mugabe, the country's long-time autocratic ruler, step down.

MDC leader Nelson Chamisa slammed Friday's "brutal" clampdown as even worse than during Mugabe's era. "We not only have an illegitimate regime in this country, we have a rogue regime," Chamisa said. Seven people suffered serious injuries, including a woman, he said. "What is clear is that it's turning out that the regime in Harare is far worse than the Mugabe regime. One would be persuaded to think that Mugabe is back."

Friday's protests went ahead after MDC plans for large-scale marches were banned by police late Thursday. An MDC attempt to challenge the ban in court was then rejected. The party's vice president, Tendai Biti, told reporters outside the High Court: "The fascist regime has denied the right for Zimbabweans to demonstrate". "There is no difference between Mngangwa and Mugabe. We jumped from the frying pan into the fire after the November coup," he said.

Supported by the military, Mngangwa took over from Mugabe before winning disputed elections in July

Zimbabwe police beat protesters

HARARE: Riot police in Zimbabwe on Friday fired teargas and beat demonstrators who defied a protest ban, as the opposition accused President Emmerson Mnangagwa's government of surpassing Robert Mugabe's regime in brutality. Scores of people gathered in a square in the capital Harare to demonstrate against the country's worsening economy, despite massive police deployment and a ban upheld by a court the same morning.

Police cornered one group of protesters and beat them with batons, an AFP reporter saw. One woman was seen being carried into a Red Cross ambulance. The protesters then regrouped, singing songs condemning police brutality. As the crowd swelled, police fired teargas and water cannons.

"People were just singing... peacefully. Then they saw the police coming - they were encircling people, they were actually surrounding the supporters then they came closer to us and started beating people," a 35-year-old protester who gave her name as Achise said. She said police beat "an old woman". "This is worse than during colonial times," said a man who declined to be identified. Police said in a statement they had arrested 91



HARARE: A protester lies unconscious on the ground after being beaten by police near Unity Square in Harare. —AFP

2018. He vowed to revive Zimbabwe's sickly economy. But many Zimbabweans say the situation has worsened, with shortages of basic goods and skyrocketing prices. Around five million people - almost a third of the country's 16 million population - are in need of aid and at least half of them are on the cusp of "starvation", the World Food Program (WFP) warned this month.

'Long winter of discontent'

The government, through the information ministry's Twitter account, described Friday's violence as "a few skirmishes". "Normalcy has returned to

Harare," it added. Zimbabwe Human Rights NGO Forum, a coalition of 21 human rights groups, on Thursday said six opposition and rights activists had been abducted and tortured by unidentified assailants ahead of the demonstration. Chamisa said the number had grown to 18. Chamisa vowed to push on with more protests. "What you are seeing is just but a teaser, this is an introduction, we are going to be on the streets until the state responds," he said. Friday's protests are the first since rallies in January against Mnangagwa's decision to hike fuel prices that ended in deadly clashes with troops. —AFP

International

N Korea fires missiles, derides S Korea's Moon as 'impudent'

Pyongyang says talks with South Korea are over

SEOUL: North Korea launched at least two short-range ballistic missiles on Friday, South Korea's military said, shortly after Pyongyang described South Korea's president as "impudent" and vowed that inter-Korean talks are over. The North has protested against joint US-South Korea military drills, largely computer-simulated, which kicked off last week, calling them a rehearsal for war. It has also fired several short-range missiles in recent weeks.

North Korea fired two more short-range projectiles into the sea off its east coast on Friday morning, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) said in a statement. Japan's defense ministry said it did not see any imminent security threat from the latest projectile launch. A US official, speaking on condition of anonymity, said initial information indicated at least one projectile was fired by North Korea and appeared to be similar to the short-range missiles fired in previous weeks.

Another official said the United States was consulting with South Korea and Japan. An official at Seoul's defense ministry said the latest test involved ballistic technology and detailed analysis was under way with the United States with the possibility that the North fired the same type of missiles it used on Aug. 10. The missiles were launched shortly after 8 am Friday and flew around 230 kms to an altitude of 30 kms, South Korea's JCS said.

The launches have complicated attempts to restart talks between US and North Korean negotiators over the future of Pyongyang's

nuclear weapons and ballistic missile programs. Those denuclearization talks have been stalled despite a commitment to revive them made at a June 30 meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Earlier on Friday, Pyongyang rejected a vow by South Korean President Moon Jae-in a day earlier to pursue talks with the North and to unify the two Koreas by 2045.

The loss of dialogue momentum between the North and South and the stalemate in implementing pledges made at an historic summit between their two leaders last year was entirely the responsibility of the South, a North Korean spokesman said. The unidentified spokesman repeated criticism that the joint US-South Korea drills were a sign of Seoul's hostility towards the North.

"We have nothing to talk any more with the South Korean authorities nor have any idea to sit with them again," the North's spokesman for the Committee for the Peaceful Reunification of the Country said in a statement carried by the official KCNA news agency. The committee manages relationships with the South. The rival Koreas are technically still at war after the 1950-53 Korean War ended with a truce rather than a peace treaty.

South Korea's unification ministry called North Korea's comments about Moon "not in line" with inter-Korean agreements and unhelpful for developing relations between them. After an emergency meeting of South

Korea's National Security Council held to discuss the launches, officials reiterated that the joint drills are simply an opportunity to evaluate whether South Korea could eventually assume wartime control of the allied forces on the peninsula.

'Impudent guy'

Moon and Kim have met three times since April last year, pledging peace and cooperation, but little progress has been made to improve dialogue and strengthen exchanges and cooperation. "North Korea makes it exceedingly difficult to build trust when it interprets restraint as weakness and looks to exploit divisions within South Korea," said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor at Ewha University in Seoul.

Seoul and Washington should continue to seek working-level talks with North Korea but the allies should also prepare new sanctions and renewed military cooperation if Pyongyang continues to violate United Nations resolutions and threaten its neighbors, Easley said. The South's Moon said in a Liberation Day address on Thursday it was only through his policy of Korean national peace that dialogue with the North was still possible. "In spite of a series of worrying actions taken by North Korea recently, the momentum for dialogue remains unshaken," Moon said in a speech marking Korea's independence from Japan's 1910-45 colonial rule. The North's spokesman described Moon as an



UNDISCLOSED LOCATION: Photo shows the test-firing of a new weapon, presumed to be a short-range ballistic missile, at an undisclosed location. — AFP

"impudent guy" who is "overcome with fright". He said Moon had no standing to talk about engagement with the North because of the ongoing military manoeuvres. "His open talk about 'dialogue' between the North and the South under such a situation raises a question as to whether he has proper thinking faculty," the spokesman said.

It was "senseless" to think that inter-

Korean dialogue would resume once the military drills with the United States were over, he said. However, the spokesman left open the possibility of talks with the United States. Trump and Kim have met twice since their summit in Singapore last year and said their countries would continue talks. However, little progress has been made on the North's stated commitment to denuclearize. — Reuters

Indonesia leader pledges to boost economy, move the capital city

JAKARTA: Indonesian President Joko Widodo said he would press on with plans to move the nation's capital and roll out measures to kickstart Southeast Asia's biggest economy as it feels the sting of slowing global growth. Widodo asked parliament to sign off on a plan for a new capital in Borneo, shifting Indonesia's political heart from Jakarta - one of the world's fastest-sinking cities that is plagued by a host of ills, from eye-watering traffic jams and pollution to the risk of earthquakes and floods.

"I'm asking for your permission to relocate our capital to the island of Kalimantan," he told lawmakers, referring to Indonesia's portion of Borneo, in a sweeping state-of-the-nation address. "A capital is not only a symbol of a nation's identity, it also represents its progress," he added. Widodo did not reveal a specific location for the country's new capital or timing for any move.

Speaking a day before the 74th anniversary of



BALI: Participants climb greasy poles to claim a prize at Seminyak beach on the resort island of Bali yesterday during a pole climbing contest to celebrate Indonesia's 74th anniversary of independence from Dutch rule. — AFP

Indonesia's independence, the recently re-elected leader said his second term would focus on cutting red tape and luring foreign investment. He pledged to boost lagging productivity, turn Indonesia into an electric-vehicle hub and focus on improving worker skills in the sprawling country of some 260 million people. Analysts have said Indonesia should overhaul its rigid labor laws and dizzying bureaucracy, which have been cited as barriers to investment.

"We have to be faster and better than our neighbors," Widodo said. "We're facing a tumultuous global economy and geopolitical change." Later Friday, Widodo announced a spending budget of 2.5 trillion rupiah (\$175 billion) for 2020, and ticked up the government's economic growth forecast for next year to 5.3 percent, from an earlier 5.2 percent. "That's going to be difficult to achieve given current global conditions," said University of Indonesia economist Lana Soelistianingsih, referring to the new forecast.

Widodo struggled to lift growth in his first term despite a huge roads-to-railways infrastructure building blitz. The economy has been expanding around five percent annually, but that is well short of the seven percent Widodo had pledged in his first term. This week, it posted its slowest rate of quarterly growth in two years. Resource-rich Indonesia is grappling with weaker prices for commodities like coal and palm oil, as the global economy falters on the back of US President Donald Trump's intensifying trade war with China. — AFP

'Until her bones are broken': Activists fighting to outlaw domestic violence

YANGON: Cradling her one-year-old daughter in a house in southern Myanmar, 22-year-old Nu Nu Aye recalled the reasons her husband gave for beating her. She hadn't looked after his rooster. She wouldn't have sex with him. In a meeting brokered by a village elder, he said he would beat her when "necessary". "His abuse got worse after that," she said. Finally, he tried to strangle her while she was sleeping.

In Myanmar, where the US-funded Demographic and Health Survey suggested at least one-fifth of women are abused by a partner - a figure activists say is likely an underestimate because many cases are not reported - there is no specific law against domestic violence. Women such as Nu Nu Aye, whose account Reuters could not independently verify, usually rely on intervention by local leaders to arrange settlements with partners whose abuse is largely regarded as a private affair.

Activists hope the first National Prevention and Protection of Violence Against Women law, which the government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi has been working on, will give women more protection from violence, including domestic abuse. But the law, first proposed in 2013, remains stuck in the drafting stage, its provisions debated and revised over issues such as whether to outlaw marital rape.

The delays are a growing source of frustration for activists disappointed by the sluggish pace of reforms in an area entirely under the control of the civilian government, which rules with the military in an awkward power-sharing arrangement. "We have been waiting too long for this law and are still waiting," said one of the activists, Nang Phyu Phyu Lin. The Ministry for Social Welfare and Resettlement did not respond to questions sent by Reuters and did not answer phone calls seeking comment.

'No protection'

Socially conservative and male-dominated, Myanmar lived under military rule for half a century until the election of the first fully civilian government in 2015. With the obvious exception of Suu Kyi, women are largely absent from public leadership roles - there are no other women in the cabinet and just 10 per cent of lawmakers elected in 2015 were female.

A local saying, sometimes used in jest and sometimes seriously, posits: "If you beat your wife until her bones are broken, she will love with all her heart." Myanmar's Penal Code, which dates back to the British colonial era, is vague and rarely used to prosecute cases of domestic violence. Its definition of rape is narrow and excludes marital rape. "There is no protection as a woman in Myanmar society," one 28-year-old woman, who asked not to be named for fear of retaliation, told Reuters.

When arguing with her husband over his drug use, she was forced to protect herself and her baby son with a kitchen knife, she said. "I didn't know who to call for help." Enforcement of the law is especially weak in conservative rural areas, where women are often regarded as the property of their husbands, activists say. Of 27 cases of domestic violence reported to police in south-eastern Karen state in recent years, for example, just one reached the courts, said Naw Htoo Htoo, the program director at Karen Human Rights Group.

The other cases were settled by a village elder, imposing "little or no fine" on perpetrators, she said, adding that those reported likely represent just a fraction of the total number cases. In Dawei, a sleepy coastal town further to the south, 31-year-old Kyu Kyu Win recalled how her husband, accusing her of flirting with other men, dragged her along the ground by her hair. "If we have to stay together again, I will kill myself," she said. As she spoke, her brother interrupted. "I don't believe her," he said. "Why do people always talk about women's rights? What about men's rights?" Local police often ignore or play down complaints of domestic abuse, said Nu Nu Hlaing, the general secretary of the Tavoyan Women's Union, which runs one of the country's nine safe houses in the town. — Reuters

Taleban chief's brother killed in Pakistan blast

QUETTA: The Afghan Taleban leader's brother was among four people killed in a blast at a mosque in southwestern Pakistan Friday, insurgent sources and a Pakistani official said. The Taleban have not officially commented, but an unofficial statement circulating among Taleban fighters on WhatsApp and seen by AFP confirmed the claim. The blast comes at a delicate moment as a deal between the insurgents and Washington to end America's war in Afghanistan is believed to be imminent.

Provincial police chief Mohsin Hassan Butt said the explosion - the latest violence in a string of attacks in restive Balochistan province - was caused by a remotely detonated bomb in the town of Kuchlak. "The death toll is four ... and there are 23 others wounded," senior police official Abdul Razzaq Cheema told AFP. A senior official with the Balochistan provincial government confirmed that Ahmadullah Azkhundzada, brother of the Taleban chief Haibatullah Akhundzada, was among the dead.

"This is confirmed that he is the brother of Haibatullah," he told AFP on condition of anonymity as he was not authorized to speak to media. Two Taleban sources - one in Quetta, the capital of Balochistan, and one in Chaman, on the border with Afghanistan - also said Ahmadullah had been killed. "The explosion took place while Hafiz Ahmadullah was reading sermon. Hafiz Ahmadullah was killed," one said.

The list of dead and wounded issued by Sandeman Hospital also carries the name "Hamdullah son of Maulvi Mohammad Khan". Taleban expert Rahimullah Yusufzai said the mosque was attached to a madrassa that had formerly been run by Haibatullah, the Taleban leader. "After he became the emir he left this place," Yusufzai said. "His younger brother ... was running the madrassas. He has been killed as far as we know."

Local residents in Kuchlak on condition of anonymity also said the mosque belonged to the family. They said that Ahmadullah was a respected Islamic scholar but had no links with the Taleban, taking over only after Haibatullah left to head up the Taleban in 2016. The police official Cheema denied the mosque was owned by the family, telling AFP that it instead belonged to a local Baloch man who was out of town at the time. There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, which came as speculation has reached fever pitch in Kabul that an announcement about a deal between the US and the Taleban is imminent. — AFP



SRINAGAR: Protesters shout slogans at a rally against the Indian government's move to strip Jammu and Kashmir of its autonomy and impose a communications blackout in Srinagar. — AFP

A birth, a death amid Kashmir's harsh lockdown

SRINAGAR: Around the time Mohammad Sikander Bhat lay dying at home in Indian Kashmir's main city of Srinagar, Shafiq Ahmed was racing to get his pregnant wife to a hospital, negotiating about 85 km of highways through a maze of heavily guarded checkpoints. Amid severe movement restrictions and a total communications blockade, triggered by Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's decision to withdraw special rights for Jammu and Kashmir state, one man perished without his last wish fulfilled: that of seeing his three daughters.

The other battled the odds, saved his wife, and became father to a son. The death and the birth and both families' struggles reflect the human cost of the government's harsh clampdown in the Kashmir valley, home to nearly seven million people. For the first five days after the government's move, parts of Srinagar had been turned into a fortress, blanketed with armed paramilitary and rolls of concertina wire blocking main streets. Anyone attempting to cross the checkpoints faced questions.

It was around 2 pm on Aug 7 that Bhat - suffering from cancer in his 70s - asked his son to go fetch his daughters, his son said, declining to be named because he feared authorities could disapprove of him talking to the press. On most days, it would not take more than 10 minutes to drive to their homes, he said. That day it took more than an hour. "By the time I came back, father had passed away," he told Reuters. Under normal circumstances, he said they would have tried to call a doctor and make one last attempt to save Bhat, a moustached man with a love for gardening.

"This time, we could do nothing," his son said, because

there were no telephones available to help bring a doctor quickly to Bhat's side. Authorities say the lockdown and the detention of hundreds of local leaders aim to prevent widespread protests in the region, which is also claimed by neighboring Pakistan. Some of these movement restrictions have now been eased, but aside from a few hundred public telephones, all communication remains blacked out for the 12th straight day.

Highway hell

Kokernag, a town in southern Kashmir, where Ahmed lives with his wife and daughter, was also locked down on Aug 7, he said. A lean man with a ready smile, Ahmed took his expectant wife to a nearby hospital for a check-up. There, doctors concerned about her blood pressure, referred her to the district hospital at Anantnag, some 25 km away, saying they did not have staff because of the shutdown. "And if something happened, they said they wouldn't be able to manage without communications," Ahmed said.

So, Ahmed, his wife, his daughter and sister-in-law piled into an ambulance. Ahmed said what is typically a 45-minute journey took more than two hours, passing through eight checkpoints. At the Anantnag district hospital, staff quickly ran tests. Again they determined they could not risk it, Ahmed said, asking him to take his wife to the main maternity hospital in Srinagar, about 60 km (37 miles) away, for a safe delivery. They were stopped 10 times and it took them 2-1/2 hours instead of one to get to Srinagar, where his wife was able to deliver a healthy boy.

But the rest of the family is in the dark. "Nobody has a clue where we are, in Kokernag, Anantnag or anywhere else," Ahmed said, because all communication lines are down. The news of Bhat's death has not travelled far either. On an overcast morning last weekend, a crowd of about 100 men and boys gathered at Bhat's gravesite in Srinagar on the banks of the Jhelum river for prayers. A military helicopter flew overhead as they prayed for Bhat. Paramilitary police stood at an adjoining bridge. — Reuters

Analysis

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Washington Watch

He threatened us;
now he goes to jail

By Dr James J Zogby

Back in May, a jury found Patrick Syring, a former State Department official, guilty of 14 counts of making threats against my life and my staff at the Arab American Institute. This week, a federal judge sentenced Syring to five years in prison to be followed by three years of court-ordered probation.

This was Syring's second conviction. He had been found guilty of the same crimes against me and my staff in 2008 and served over a year in prison. After his release and a period of probation, he began once again to stalk, harass, and threaten me and my office. He accused me of horrible crimes - organizing dozens of terrorist attacks around the world. He referred to me as a "genocidal, anti-Semitic, homophobic murderer," in addition to threatening me with death by saying that "The only good Arab is a dead Arab" and America would only be free of terror when it was "cleansed of James Zogby" and "all Arab Americans."

Although Syring's threats were communicated directly to me, he made a practice of copying other members of my staff and even our young interns. In all, we received over 700 such emails from Syring and because of their frequency and the hate-filled threats they contained, they were a cause of real concern.

Each day, when I entered my office I could tell on the faces of my staff and interns whether or not Syring had struck again. Especially after a terrorist attack either in the US or internationally, his language became so extreme that we had to call local police for protection and report the threats to the FBI. The support they provided us was so appreciated. For a time, two agents accompanied me to public events. The Department of Homeland Security gave us an assessment of measures we should take to make our building and office more secure. And because we knew who had sent the threats, they often visited Syring to warn him that there would be consequences to his behavior.

His obsession with me and his hatred of Arab Americans was so great, that he continued until the Department of Justice finally convened a grand jury and indicted him for his crimes. Nothing, however, stopped him. It was this obsession and hatred that concerned us most precisely because we never knew when he might act on his threats of violence. Our concern was heightened by his apparent willingness to continue despite having already been punished for the same crime and having been repeatedly warned by law enforcement to stop what he was doing.

So now the sentence has been given. Syring will be in a federal prison until 2024. At that time, he will begin three years in court-ordered probation, undergoing psychiatric evaluation, and be required to avoid any contact or communication with me or any current or former staff member of the Institute.

It gives me no pleasure to see this man going to jail for a long period, but it does provide us all with a sense of enormous relief. I've been threatened before. My wife, my children, and I have received death threats for the past 50 years - owing to my advocacy for Palestinian rights and the rights of the Arab American community. My office was fire-bombed and an Arab American colleague, whom I hired, was murdered. Two individuals who, in the past, made death threats against me and my children were convicted and sentenced to prison terms. But this case was different.

In the first place, Syring had tormented us for over a decade. He literally became a part of our daily lives. My wife had his picture handy and if a car was parked outside of our house, she would check to see if he was the driver. My staff had to be instructed to alter their behaviors - so as not to take the same route to and from the office. And some even had to receive counseling. It was especially troubling to see the reactions of young interns when they would be the unlucky recipients of a Syring email. They had come to have a Washington work experience, not to be threatened or have their ethnicity maligned.

This is also different because for more than two decades Syring had been a State Department official who had served two tours in Lebanon. During the 2008 proceedings, I learned that on more than one occasion he had been rebuked by the DOS for displays of anti-Arab behavior. I was shocked that instead of taking action they simply moved him to another posting. They even allowed him to remain in the federal service after he was indicted for his first threats against me - some of which he made from his State Department phone or his State Department computer. At that time, I asked DOS officials, "What if a foreign service officer had threatened a Jewish American leader and made repeated anti-Semitic comments against him and called for genocide against the Jewish community - what would the reaction have been?"

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

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Members of the Venezuelan National Constituent Assembly (ANC) wave flags as its president Diosdado Cabello speaks during a session at the ANC headquarters on Aug 12, 2019, in Caracas. — AFP

Early Venezuela polls to pressure opposition

Threatening to bring forward parliamentary elections is the latest card played by Venezuela's regime to put pressure on the US-backed opposition at the negotiating table, analysts say. The National Assembly is the only branch of government under opposition control, and elections are not scheduled until December 2020. But Diosdado Cabello, the most powerful regime figure after President Nicolas Maduro, set up a committee earlier this week to study the possibility of calling parliamentary elections at the start of next year. "It gives you something extra to protect you in negotiations," said Felix Seijas, director of pollsters Delphos.

National Assembly president and opposition leader Juan Guaido has warned Maduro that any attempts to bring forward elections would end in "disaster" for the government. In January, the National Assembly branded Maduro a "usurper" before Guaido declared himself acting president, garnering support from more than 50 nations but plunging the oil-rich and cash-strapped country into a political crisis.

A new vote could threaten the opposition's hold on the National Assembly and with it Guaido's claim as head of the body to be the country's legitimate presi-

dent. The US has been pressuring Maduro through sanctions into acquiescing to opposition demands to step down and hold new presidential elections, something he has steadfastly refused to countenance. Cabello has admitted that the proposed early elections are a "counter-attack" after the United States increased its sanctions on the government.

Representatives from the government and opposition were holding crisis talks mediated by Norway until Maduro called those off last week. "Maduro left the talks because he hoped to use the opposition to get sanctions relief. But not only did he not get that, (the US) ramped up the sanctions," political scientist Luis Salamanca told AFP.

'Resuscitated'

Parliament was elected in 2015 and its mandate lasts until Jan 2021. However, in reality its hands are tied. The Supreme Court declared it in contempt and the Constitutional Court - considered illegitimate by many countries - assumed most of its powers and ordered some 20 legislators prosecuted for crimes such as treason. However, "this assembly that was considered dead was suddenly resuscitated as a counterweight fighting Maduro

for legitimate power in Venezuela" with Guaido at its head, said Salamanca.

It's not clear how the National Assembly would react if the regime does bring forward legislative elections. The opposition does not recognize the electoral authorities, which it accuses of supporting the regime and rigging polls. That's why most of the opposition boycotted last year's presidential elections in which Maduro won a second term. "The opposition has put its own neck in the noose because all year long it's insisted that unless the usurpation ends, nothing more can happen," said Seijas.

Guaido's demands have never wavered: Maduro's exit, a transitional government led by him, and free elections. "It would be very difficult to explain to the people that now they're going to participate in an election without the usurpation having ended," added Seijas. But Salamanca believes that given Guaido's leadership and popularity, and the fact he's largely united the opposition, if he decided to take part, "the opposition would win". However, if they decide to abstain again, the opposition runs the risk of reigniting old divisions that facilitated the regime's grip on power since Maduro's predecessor, the late Hugo Chavez, won his first election in 1999. — AFP

From tsunami to ripples: Other emerging markets surf Argentina's latest shock

Argentina's latest financial market shock has failed to swamp other emerging markets in the way its previous plunges have done - in part due to the increasing isolation of the country's credit and investments from the rest of the pool. Argentina's economy and banking system are probably too small to cause significant ripple effects by themselves. And while emerging economies are clearly under pressure from global trade and recession fears, they have not yet been materially infected by Argentina's latest shock.

An estimated \$3.4 billion has exited emerging markets outside Latin America so far this week, Institute of International Finance data shows, but analysts say only a part of that outflow is likely due to fallout from Argentine President Mauricio Macri's heavy defeat in Sunday's primary election - a result that's seen the peso lose more than a third of its value in just three days.

Argentina's currency plunge has echoes of its previous traumatic episode in 2018 which contributed to billions of dollars being pulled from emerging markets around the world. This week's jolt initially sparked some debt and equity selling in South Africa, Indonesia and Thailand and currency losses for Turkey, Mexico, Brazil

and South Africa. However, the shockwaves have been less severe so far this time and by the end of the week the contagion beyond Argentina began to fade. Analysts cited the country's idiosyncratic situation and likened its string of recent crises - in 2001, 2014 and 2018, as well as 2019 - to a diminishing echo. "The direct fallout from Argentina's crisis on the rest of the emerging world should be limited, since Argentina's economic footprint has diminished and it is a relatively closed economy," said Stephanie de Torquat, macro strategist at Lombard Odier.

The MSCI Emerging Markets Index for stocks is down 1.4 percent for the week, less than the 2.2 percent dip in its global all-country equivalent. Argentina accounts for an aggregate weight of only 0.26 percent within the index, significantly smaller than the weight of the largest five countries. Neighboring Brazil's weighting is 8.1 percent. Bond markets have also rebounded, with the Bloomberg Barclays Emerging Markets USD Aggregate Index back in positive territory for the month, reversing a 1 percent slide in the wake of the election outcome.

"Argentina isn't the largest (debt) issuer in emerging markets, it is just 2 percent or 2.5 percent in the indices, so it's fairly manageable from a broader contagion perspective," said Shamaila Khan, director of emerging market debt at AllianceBernstein in New York. "In a year like this when emerging markets has had very strong returns I do not think that the price movement in Argentina is going to derail the appetite for emerging markets."

Argentina amplification

Argentina's economy, South America's second largest, has been mired in recession since last year, while assets in its banking system, which has so far held up relatively well, account for around 20 percent of GDP. Brazil, one of

its main trading partners, is most vulnerable to direct contagion, but Argentina's trade with other emerging markets is more limited beyond China, Chile and Vietnam.

"Argentina's event can amplify any negative news on the global front," said Magdalena Polan, global emerging markets economist at Legal & General Investment Management. Some of the bond and equity outflows from non-Latin American emerging markets this week might be due to foreign investors offloading other holdings as they're unable to liquidate loss positions in Argentina.

"The main impact to emerging markets is not through direct economic or financial linkages but rather portfolio VaR shocks that could necessitate reducing risk, or hedging exposure, in other high beta, high yield fixed income exposures," said Jason Daw, Societe Generale's head of emerging market strategy. VaR shocks can happen when a spike in losses in one market can force portfolio managers to sell other parts of their portfolio to bolster cash holdings in their funds.

Third quarter outflows from non-Chinese emerging markets were around \$11 billion so far, short of the \$15 billion offloaded in 2018, according to Robin Brooks, chief economist at IIF. Then financial crises in Argentina and Turkey, as well as China and U.S. trade tensions, spread to South Africa, Indonesia and Brazil. The 2018 sell-off was larger than during 2013's taper-tantrum, when investors dumped emerging market assets after the Federal Reserve hinted at a reduction in stimulus. IIF data shows.

Still, unlike last year when emerging markets faced added pressure from rising interest rates, this time a more dovish monetary policy stance from the Fed and other leading central banks appear to be offering a softer landing even if the more bullish hopes of a big 2019 recovery have been dashed again. — Reuters

Eye of the swarm:
Experts take sting out of urban beekeeping

When others flee in terror, they head into danger. They are the Swarm Squad, Washington's best, last and only line of defense against a rise in swarms blamed in part on urban beekeeping. With populations in decline across the planet, environmentalists are especially worried about the fate of the honeybee, an insect that pollinates 70 out of the top 100 human food crops. But as city dwellers flock to join the growing urban apiary movement, installing hives on their rooftops and in gardens, Washington has been coping with the opposite problem.

"A swarm of bees... really looks like a biblical event," said 53-year-old Del Voss, one of about 100 amateur beekeepers in Washington. "It can really be terrifying for somebody." In 1947, there were about six million US honeybee hives but the figure dropped to 2.4 million in the following 60 years, thanks to pesticides, habitat destruction and other manmade threats, as well as parasitic mites. Apiarists have been leading the fightback, but the relocation of populations into cities has turned swarms from a strictly rural phenomenon into an alarming urban problem.

'Rock stars'

Hives typically house up to 70,000 bees. But healthy communities can grow too big, forcing half of the insects to fly off - known as "swarming" - in search of a place to build a new hive. When any of the dozens of members of Washington's Swarm Squad get the call, they suit up in protective clothing, grab boxes and buckets, and head to the threat. Anyone tempted to deal with a swarm in a wall cavity at home should know that it's not as simple as spraying it with pesticide.

"If you did kill them, all that honey and wax is going to melt down and seep through your walls," said Billy Mullinax, a patent researcher and member of the Swarm Squad, part of the DC Beekeepers Alliance non-profit. "So you're still going to have to cut the wall out and get all that crap out anyway."

Jan Day, a friend of Voss's, says she started keeping bees five years ago, and made sure to educate her neighbors. When her own hives finally swarmed, not only did her neighbors not panic, they were "psyched". "Now they say, 'I make sure to plant pollinator-friendly plants for your bees!'" she told AFP.

Urban beekeeping was only widely legalized in Washington in 2012, and now there are more than 400 hives at private homes, the National Arboretum and at the city's Franciscan monastery. "In the beginning, beekeepers were rock stars and eccentrics," said Toni Burnham, the president of the DC Beekeepers Alliance. "Now, they're just your neighbors." — AFP



A bee sits on a sunflower in a field in Dortmund in western Germany on Aug 14, 2019. — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2019

12 American housing market mired in weakness, consumer sentiment ebbs**13** Emerging market stocks snap five-session losing streak**14** Meet Huawei P30 Pro 128GB new edition

BUENOS AIRES: Household goods are displayed for sale at a warehouse in Buenos Aires on August 15, 2019. Argentine President Mauricio Macri reinforced his battery of relief measures in order to face an expected rise of inflation, by eliminating the sales tax on some food products until the end of year, following a crushing defeat in party primaries over the weekend. — AFP

Fitch, S&P downgrade Argentina's debt

Default risk grows amid rising uncertainty

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's peso ended a tumultuous week Friday having shed 20 percent in its value against the US dollar as both Fitch and S&P cut the South American country's long-term credit rating, citing increased uncertainty and a rising risk of default.

The peso gained 2.75 percent to trade at 58.12 to the dollar on Friday, after several days of freefall were halted Thursday following a joint appeal for calm by President Mauricio Macri and his center-left rival Alberto Fernandez. But the outlook remains uncertain after markets went into turmoil following Macri's crushing defeat by the populist Fernandez in nationwide primary polls on Sunday.

"The Argentine peso has stabilized over the past few trading days but the collapse earlier this week has found a sovereign debt default highly likely," said analysts Capital Economics in a note. Ratings agency Fitch downgraded the crisis-hit government's credit rating two notches to "CCC" from "B." Standard & Poor's dropped it a single grade from "B" to "B-."

"The pronounced turbulence of the financial market, with a significant depreciation of the Argentine

peso and a rise in interest rates... has significantly weakened the already vulnerable financial profile," added S&P. "The downgrade of Argentina's ratings reflects elevated policy uncertainty... a severe tightening of financing conditions and an expected deterioration in the macroeconomic environment that increase the likelihood of a sovereign default or restructuring of some kind," Fitch said in its announcement.

Increased risk

Fitch said the center-right's crushing political defeat in the primaries "increases risks of a break from the policy strategy of the current administration of Mauricio Macri guided by a program with the IMF," Fernandez, now the clear favorite to unseat Macri in October's presidential election, has questioned the reform program backed by a \$56 billion rescue package from the International Monetary Fund.

The country is currently in a recession and posted 22 percent inflation for the first half of the year—one of the highest rates in the world—but the IMF said

Macri's reform program was beginning to yield results. Macri reacted on Wednesday by announcing salary hikes and tax cuts in a bid to win back voters with the October 27 presidential election looming.

Macri said the measures would "benefit 17 million workers and their families and all small and medium-sized businesses, formal and informal, state and private."

He also announced an unspecified increase in the monthly minimum wage—currently 12,500 pesos, or \$208 — saying it would benefit two million workers. In Buenos Aires, the sudden crisis left many businesses reeling. "It took us by surprise," said Juan Manuel Bujia, commercial manager of the Rodo home appliance chain that employs 400 people.

"A lot of people anticipating the increases have been coming in to buy knowing prices are going to be higher next week and next month," Bujia told AFP. He said his suppliers had already priced in 10 percent increases on Argentine products and up to 15 percent on imports. "We are trying to pass on as little as possible" to customers, he said. US retailer Walmart,

which has 92 branches in Argentina, said it had seen a 15-20 percent hike in sales volumes between Monday and Wednesday and had not yet increased prices. "It happens to us when there is a foreign exchange movement and people want to beat any price shift, especially with essentials like oil, sugar, flour, yerba mate and some dairy products," Walmart official Juan Pablo Quiroga told AFP.

Quiroga said some suppliers had notified the retailer of price increases "from the end of this week or next week." Buenos Aires has a fraught history with the IMF, and Fitch said "policy credibility and market access could still be severely tested amid weak economic conditions, high public debt and inflation."

Argentina defaulted on its debt in 2001 during the worst economic crisis in its history, and it took years before it could restore its credibility in world financial markets. Fernandez said this week he considered an exchange rate of 60 pesos to the dollar as "reasonable" and said it should no longer fluctuate wildly.

Going into last weekend's primary elections, the peso was trading at 46.5 to the dollar. — AFP

US auto sector outlook is softening

LONDON: US motor manufacturing has been a rare bright spot amid a worldwide slowdown in the auto sector and a cooling in the rest of US industry, but there are signs US automakers could now be running into headwinds as well.

US motor vehicle and parts production was up by 3.7 percent in the three months from May to July compared with the same period a year earlier, according to data from the Federal Reserve.

By contrast, production in the rest of the manufacturing was down by 0.3 percent in May-July compared with a year ago, the fastest decline since September-November 2016. US automakers had a tough time in the second half of 2018 and the first four months of 2019, but output, employment and sales all started to pick up from the end of April.

US automakers and dealers successfully pushed through further

price rises, extending a trend that started in early 2018. New vehicle prices were up 0.9 percent in the three months from March to May compared with a year earlier, the fastest year-on-year increase since September-November 2013.

But price increases have started to run into consumer resistance. The proportion of consumers saying now is a "bad time to buy" a new vehicle because "prices are high" has been creeping up in the University of Michigan's monthly survey of consumers. New vehicle sales were flat in the three months May-July compared with the same period in 2018, according to the US Bureau of Economic Analysis. Motor vehicle and parts wholesalers have been left carrying inventories equivalent to 1.77 months of sales at the current rate in June, up from 1.55 months in the same month a year ago.

Auto dealers have been left holding a stock of unsold vehicles from previous model years and are resorting to more aggressive discounting to clear the glut. "The inventory glut reflects a continued cooling of the US auto market," according to the Wall Street Journal ("Dealers dangle deals to move outgoing models", WSJ, Aug.



SMYRNA: A finished Nissan Maxima followed by a Nissan Altima comes off the line at Nissan Motor Co's automobile manufacturing plant in Smyrna, Tennessee. — Reuters

16). "Sales remain relatively healthy, but auto makers haven't adjusted their production schedules quickly enough to account for slowing demand, leading to a backup of outgoing model-year vehicles." New vehicle sales prices (including discounts) fell sharply in July, as dealers tried to shift ageing models.

US motor manufacturers will likely have to slow production in the

remainder of the year to control inventory and protect pricing. If growth in auto manufacturing slows or turns negative, it will have a knock-on effect throughout the supply chain and on employment. And if auto output slows, the faltering economic expansion will become even more dependent on continued growth in the services sector and a recovery in the rest of manufacturing. — Reuters

Trump says Apple will spend 'vast sums' in US

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump said Friday that tech giant Apple would be spending "vast sums" of money in the US in a tweet ahead of a dinner meeting with its CEO Tim Cook. The men have had several informal meetings before, including at Bedminster, New Jersey, where Trump is reportedly on a working holiday at his golf course.

"Having dinner tonight with Tim Cook of Apple. They will be spending vast sums of money in the US Great!" he tweeted at around 7 pm local time. The meeting follows Thursday's announcement from Apple that it has invested roughly \$60 billion in the US, and currently employs some 90,000 people in the country.

Many of the tech giant's products are assembled outside US and the company opposes incoming tariffs—an issue Trump is fixated on—due to come into force on September 1. Trump has rejected Apple's calls for an exemption on its products, tweeting in July the company should, "Make them in the USA, No Tariffs!"

But his administration announced Thursday tariffs on some goods would be delayed until December. Apple did not immediately respond to comment about the dinner, and Trump did not tweet again about the meeting, or what was discussed. The president's latest missive comes after a gaffe in March when he referred to Cook as "Tim Apple". Trump later claimed the naming was deliberate and a "time saving" measure. — AFP

Business

Emerging market stocks snap five-session losing streak

Currencies broadly firm against euro, ruble gains

TOKYO: Emerging market stocks gained on Friday for the first time in six sessions, helped by hopes of further stimulus, a factor which also helped developing world currencies hold their ground against the dollar.

The sentiment played into a 0.3 percent rise seen in MSCI's developing world stocks index, with the benchmark on track to post gains for only the second time in 18 trading days. Morten Lund, an analyst at Nordea Markets, said the stimulus would also benefit currencies of countries closely linked with the supply chain, especially those in Asia, though the possibility of a weaker yuan had to be kept in mind.

"We think USD/CNY is an extremely important sentiment gauge ... if it goes beyond 7.3 (yuan per dollar), we will go from a risk-off situation to a complete panic!" Lund said. MSCI's emerging market currencies index ticked 0.1 percent higher.

Taiwanese equities added 0.9 percent. Hong Kong-traded stocks also gained 0.9 percent, rising for a third straight session. Turkey's lira was 0.5 percent firmer on bearish technical factors for the USD/TRY pair, while stocks rose 0.2 percent. Data earlier in the day showed industrial production in the country fell 3.9 percent year-on-year in June, logging its tenth consecutive month of decline after the economy tipped into recession last year.

Russia's ruble strengthened 0.2 percent, while stocks advanced 0.3 percent, aided by a 1.6 percent rise in the price of oil, a key Russian export, which aided energy companies listed in Moscow.

South Africa's rand strengthened 0.6 percent while equities fell 0.3 percent. Petrochemicals firm Sasol shed about 13 percent after it delayed the release of its annual results due to possible "control weaknesses" at its US



MOSCOW: A woman passes a notice advertising loans in downtown Moscow. — AFP

ethane cracker project. Emerging European currencies were broadly firmer against the euro, with Poland's zloty 0.4 percent stronger against the common currency, while Hungary's forint was 0.2 percent firmer. Nordea

Markets' Lund said he prefers central and eastern European currencies to their Asian and Latin American peers, despite worries regarding the euro zone economy and risks arising from Brexit. — Reuters

Global markets recover at end of turbulent week

NEW YORK: Global stock markets rose on Friday as investors put economic growth fears and trade jitters to one side, deciding that they had enough drama and losses for one week.

"We're ending a turbulent week on a more positive note as exhausted traders the world over head into the weekend in a more buoyant mood," said Craig Erlam, senior market analyst at the Oanda trading group. Equities have had a volatile five days, during which trade talk hopes came and went and economic data and bond yields pointed to a possible worldwide downturn.

On Wall Street, the Dow on Wednesday suffered its worst day of the year, before recovering slightly on Thursday, and bouncing back strongly on Friday. The index gained 1.2 percent, as investors found relief in hope for progress in the trade war, and housing data offered enough good news not to ruin the party, despite a disappointing report on consumer sentiment, but was still down for the week. "In the last couple of days, the sellers have been exhausted," said Maris Ogg of Tower Bridge Advisors. "The volatility continues. But I don't think this is the beginning of a trend."

Investors also were cheered after Der Spiegel reported that the German government was ready to boost public spending to head off any coming recession—something many economists have been urging.

The spooky yield curve

The week's most nerve-wracking event was a so-called inversion of the yield curve in the US debt market that Erlam said "has spooked a lot of people." The yield on the 10-year US Treasury bond slid Wednesday below the yield on the two-year note, while the 30-year yield fell below two percent for the first time ever.

The so-called "inversion" phenomenon—when short-

term interest rates are higher than longer-term ones—is viewed as a reliable harbinger of recession. Economists have warned for months that trade tensions would drag down sentiment, which was already suffering owing to economic slowdown and fears of Brexit's impact on Britain and Europe.

GE rebounds after accusations

In New York, industrial titan General Electric surged close to 10 percent after CEO Larry Culp bought nearly \$2 million in shares, boosting investor confidence after whistleblower Harry Markopolos accused the company of massive accounting fraud—a charge the company vehemently denied.

In Asia, Cathay Pacific on Friday announced the shock resignation of its chief executive Rupert Hogg, days after the Hong Kong carrier was censured by Beijing because

some staff had supported pro-democracy protests in the city. Paul Loo, Cathay's chief customer and commercial officer, also resigned.

Until recently Cathay had been celebrating a turnaround in fortunes after Hogg initiated a three-year cost cutting program. Elsewhere, the opening of London's benchmark FTSE 100 shares was delayed nearly two hours by a software problem, the London Stock Exchange said. "London Stock Exchange experienced a technical software issue this morning that affected trading in certain securities, including FTSE 100 and (second-tier) FTSE 250 stocks," said a statement.

The pound meanwhile continued its recovery, "aided by a series of better-than-expected (UK) economic releases in recent days", helping to offset Brexit uncertainty, according to David Cheatham, chief market analyst at XTB trading group. — AFP



NEW YORK: Traders work after the opening bell at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) on Friday. — AFP

Thailand earmarks \$10bn for 'urgent economic stimulus'

BANGKOK: Thailand will pour more than \$10 billion into the economy, the finance ministry said Friday, as a new government looks to kick-start sputtering growth after five years of junta rule.

The once-vibrant Southeast Asian economy sagged after a 2014 coup and growth slowed to 2.8 percent in the first quarter of this year, the first time it dipped under 3 percent since mid-2015, according to the World Bank. The generals who seized power steered a transition to civilian rule after disputed elections in March but are under pressure to ram through ambitious investment schemes and create jobs amid a global slowdown and trade tensions.

A surge in the Thai baht is also hindering recovery by weighing on the competitiveness of exports and tourism. The estimated 316 billion baht (\$10.2 billion) package will be set aside for "urgent economic stimulus measures", the finance ministry said, adding that the proposal needs final approval from the cabinet.

"It is expected that the Thai economy will be driven towards GDP growth of 3 percent," the statement added. The money includes aid for more than 900,000 farmers affected by drought, 1,000 baht (\$30) handouts for tourism-related expenses, loans for small businesses and hikes in state welfare card subsidies.

Tourism remains the kingdom's banker-accounting for a fifth of the economy—and visitors are integral. Visa free exemptions for travellers from some countries are also part of the new proposal. — AFP

Vietnam aims to sell stakes in 100 state firms by end of 2020

HANOI: Vietnam plans to speed up its privatization program by selling stakes in nearly 100 state-owned firms by the end of 2020, including Agribank, the government said late on Thursday.

The Southeast Asian country has been selling stakes in state firms in recent years to improve their performance and to fill the government's coffers, but the pace has been slower

than scheduled recently. The government now plans to sell stakes in 93 firms by the end of next year, it said in a statement. They will include up to 35 percent stakes in Agribank - the country's biggest bank by assets which was formally known as the Vietnam Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development - as well as in Vietnam National Coal-Mineral Industries Holding Corp, the country's largest coal miner, and in Vietnam Northern Food Corp.

Agribank, which has total assets of nearly \$56 billion, said last week it targets pretax profit of 10 trillion dong (\$429 million) this year, up 32.9 percent from last year.

The government said it will also sell up to 50 percent stakes in mobile telecom carrier MobiFone and as well as in Vietnam Posts and Telecommunications Group and Vietnam National Chemical Group.

It also plans to sell up to 100 percent of Vietnam Paper Corp. by the end of next year and two power-generating units of Vietnam Electricity Group, it said. — Reuters



HAI PHONG: Containers are transferred from a truck to cargo ship at the international cargo terminal of a port in Hai Phong city. — AFP

Be among first to own Samsung's most powerful Galaxy Note

KUWAIT: Al-Babtain Turnkey Solutions announced yesterday that the all-new Samsung Galaxy Note10 will be available to pre-order starting from August 8th until August 23rd, 2019. Stocks are limited and pre-orders are fulfilled on a first-come, first-served basis - so don't miss your chance to be among the first in Kuwait to own the new Galaxy Note and enjoy its redesigned S-Pen, an edge-to-edge display, intuitive UI and a powerful camera available amongst other innovative features.

Galaxy Note10 allows users to utilize state-of-the-art tools to capture stunning video and photos—allowing their channels, stories and posts to stand out and make an impact. A new-and-improved version of the S Pen is also packed into the Galaxy Note10, building on the Bluetooth Low Energy-enabled S Pen capabilities with Air Actions, allowing users to control certain aspects of the device using different gestures with the S Pen.

With an almost bezel-less edge-to-edge display - and a small, centered cut-out for the front camera, intuitive UI, and gorgeous color choices, Galaxy Note10's attention to detail leads to a more beautiful device and more immersive experience. In addition to that, a powerful battery, advanced hardware, and gaming-optimized features come together to help users perform at their best.

Additionally, the Galaxy Note10+ lasts through the day with just 30 minutes of charge. It also comes with 256 GB and 512GB of built-in storage, with the ability to add an additional 1TB of external storage. Other ground-breaking capabilities include an expanded Samsung DeX, and partner integrations such as Microsoft all offer productivity solutions which make it easier for users to accomplish their goals.

For the first time ever, the Galaxy Note comes in two sizes, so consumers can choose the device that's best for them. While the Galaxy Note10 packs a 6.3-inch display combining the power of the S Pen and ultimate productivity in a compact form factor, the Galaxy Note10+ features the biggest Note display ever with a 6.8-inch display on a device that's still easy to hold and use.

Mohammed Fawzi Bazzi, General Manager at Al-Babtain Turnkey Solutions, said, "We are always looking to provide our customers with the best devices to suit their unique needs. Samsung Galaxy Note10 is engineered for today's lifestyle, reflecting the need of users to make the most of every moment. We are proud to introduce exclusive offers to customers looking to enhance their routines with the ultimate digital companion."

Tarek Sabbagh, Head of IT & Mobile (IM) Division at Samsung Gulf Electronics, said: "Galaxy Note has always been the power device for power users - enabling millions of people all around the world to pursue new passions, be more productive, and unleash their creativity. We are excited to build on this legacy with the next level power Galaxy Note10 that can do it all and help users obtain their goals."

Customers pre-ordering the Samsung Galaxy Note10 will also receive Galaxy Buds.

Argentina central bank faces peso test ahead of Oct election

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's central bank must toe a politically fraught line between supporting the peso without blasting through the bank's reserves, as policymakers seek to salvage the currency ahead of October's presidential election, analysts said on Friday.

The peso was in free-fall for most of this week after a shock primary election result on Monday, when center-left presidential candidate Alberto Fernandez trounced center-right President Mauricio Macri.

The scale of Fernandez's victory suggested he could win the upcoming ballot in the first round, but potentially be left as leader of a country that has very few foreign reserves left, raising the chances of a debt default. On Friday afternoon, in a fresh headache for Argentine policymakers, Fitch downgraded Argentina's sovereign debt rating from "B" to "CCC," flagging an increased likelihood of a default.

"One strategic element for the government and the opposition is how the current reserves of the central bank are used," consultancy Fundacion Mediterraneo said in a note. "The opposition does not want the current administration to leave the central bank with very few reserves, and it is convenient for the government that the proposals announced by the opposition are reasonable for the markets."

The peso's collapse, which comes amid growing fears of a global recession, forced the central bank to sell dollars and oblige private banks to trim their dollar holdings in order to provide liquidity to the market. The new dollar holdings rule unleashed about \$400 million, traders said, and helped stabilize the peso on Thursday and Friday.

Since Sunday's vote, the central bank has auctioned a total of \$503 million.

The central bank, which is nominally independent but has long been prone to executive interference, has about \$66 billion in reserves, of which about \$20 billion are free resources that can be used to pay debt and stabilize the peso, according to an Argentine government official. — Reuters

Business

KFH announces winner of 'Your KFH Visa Card', key to your house in Europe draw

Winner to purchase a property in any European country

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 7th of August 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al-Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period. The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 as Fouad Ahmed Al-Bashiti.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Hessah A J Al-Balool, Manal Mahye Khalaf, Noura Falah Al-Azmi, Sulaiman Khaled Al-Sabit, Nasser Mohd Al-Sayer, Manal Zuhair Al-Azzazi, Ali Hasan Ali, Adwan Abdullah Al-Mutari, Dwaim Falah Al-Muwaizri, Jacintha Linette Dsouza, Baqer Akbar Abaas, Najeebah Sultan Radhi, Naser Khaled Almamwash, John Joseph Newbert, Ajay Motilal Jain, Amna Fatima Mohammad, Francis Fernandes, Seddiqa Mansoor Al-Ashoor, Khalifa Faisal And Jaffar A Rasool Ali.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000. One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid Ul-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, when the winning customers will receive the eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 21 weekly prizes comprised of a grand prize of KD 10,000 and 20 prizes of KD 1,000 each. In addition to the highly attractive package of the prizes, there will be the annual expected profits on, which makes the Al-Hassad account a useful tool: for family and other savings, both for the short term and for the longer term - a fact which well appreciated by a large multitude of new and old customers.

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with a maximum of 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to annual profits for all participants. Every KD 50 invested for at least 15 days entitles the customer to one chance in the each draw. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the changes of participation in the draw. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan.

AUB offers discounts up to 25% at Atlantis the Palm



KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank has announced the launch of its latest premium offers for enjoying thrilling summer vacations with the family, in cooperation with MasterCard at Atlantis The Palm resort, one of the most famous and luxurious resorts in Dubai. This offer is valid till October 22nd 2019. Bank's Customers; holders of MasterCard credit cards can enjoy discounts up to 25 percent on accommodation at Atlantis The Palm Dubai resort during the offer validity period.

On this occasion, Ranjan Sen, General Manager, Retail Banking at AUB said: "This offer is part of the ongoing cooperation between Ahli United Bank and MasterCard aimed at launching innovative and distinct campaigns that meet customers' aspiration, calling upon the Bank's esteemed customers to benefit from this special offer for summer and enjoy a wonderful breathtaking trip to Atlantis The Palm Dubai.

Commenting on the offer Sen said: "This offer is a new addition to the rewards program we present to our customers to provide more unique features to our customers in the future." All customers holder of the Bank cards (credit, prepaid and ATM cards) are qualified to avail this offer, who can book their accommodation via Atlantis the Palm website.

It is worth mentioning that Ahli United Bank has been able through these special offers and discounts to its customers to achieve great success in maintaining the trust and loyalty of its customers. Additionally, these offers and discounts have a role in encouraging the Bank's customers to use their banking cards instead of cash to book hotels, which promotes using the Bank's credit cards locally and internationally.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) announces Shaikha Adnan Al-Mathkour as the winner of the first draw of "Your KFH Visa card, the key to your house in Europe" Campaign.

This unprecedented campaign aims at differentiating KFH customers by offering them unique experience, where spending 1KD using "KFH" Visa cards could make their dreams of owning a property of their choice in any European countries come true.

That the new campaign is valid till 16th September 2019. 2 more KFH customers will be the winners in the campaign. There will be another 2 draw events that will be held on every month. The winner is eligible to get financial funds to purchase a property of their choice only in any European country. In addition, business class tickets to Europe with a companion and stay in a 5-star hotel for 5 nights will be provided to finalize the deal, with KD 1,000 pocket money to be used."

Customers earn 1 chance for every KD 1 spent

Meet Huawei P30 Pro 128GB new edition

KUWAIT: The Huawei P30 Pro is rightly one of the best phones you can get in 2019. It has won many awards, including the "Best Photo Smartphone" title by TIPA Awards 2019 (The Technical Image Press Association is an international, non-profit association advocating the interests of the photography and imaging magazine-publishing industry). This global success has triggered Huawei to introduce a new variant, the HUAWEI P30 Pro breathing crystal with 128GB storage edition.

In addition to the Leica Quad Camera (never-seen-before 50x digital zoom and gigantic night capabilities thanks to the SuperSpectrum which lets around 40 percent more light into the sensor) and top-of-the-line specifications, Huawei P30 Pro breathing crystal comes with 8GB RAM and a good 128GB internal storage.

As a user-centric brand, Huawei has

thought of having different storage capacities to offer users more choices so ultimately they can choose the phone that suits their needs better. With 128GB, users can store more of their favorite songs and movies, hold massive work documents, spreadsheets or presentations. It is also more than enough to have all your mobile apps that require a sizeable space.

The breathing crystal on the Huawei P30 Pro uses the concept of "Aesthetic Design" to capture the nuances of nature, such as the beauty of a salt flats shimmer, on the rear of the device. It focuses on colors in the lighter end of the spectrum and it is inspired by the sunlight and clouds reflecting across a vast expanse of salt flats, blending into one continuous gradient of hues.

The coating of the Breathing Crystal variant is created through a series of fifteen processes. The gradient shift effect is the result of combining nine optical nano films, as thick as only one hundredth of a standard sheet of paper.

Huawei Consumer Business Group (CBG) is one of Huawei's three business groups, providing a range of products including mobile phones, wearables, tablets and laptops. Huawei's products



and services are available in more than 170 countries and are used by a third of the world's population, ranking second in the world in mobile phone shipments in 2018.

In 2018, Huawei was named number

48 on BrandZ's Top 100 Most Valuable Global Brands and number 79 in Forbes World's Most Valuable Brands. Huawei ranked No.5 globally amongst top spending companies in R&D according to EU Industrial R&D Investment (2018).

Tamannaah opens Malabar Gold & Diamonds' 26th showroom in Karnataka

BENGALURU: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one among the largest jewellery retailers globally with a strong retail network of 250 outlets spread across 10 countries launched its new showroom at Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru on 16th August, 2019. This is the 26th showroom of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in the state of Karnataka, India.

Leading Indian film actress and its brand ambassador Tamannaah Bhatia inaugurated the showroom at Bannerghatta Road situated near Bilekahalli signal, Bengaluru in presence of Chairman MP Ahammed, Managing Director - India Operations, Asher O. Management team members of the group along with the customers, media and well-wishers.

The showroom has an extensive collection of traditional and modern designs in tune with the taste of jewellery lovers. Malabar Group offers exquisite and beautiful jewelry as a part of various brands presented at Malabar Gold & Diamonds' namely Ethnix - Handcrafted Designer Jewellery, Era - Uncut Diamond Jewellery, Mine - Diamonds Unlimited, Divine - Indian Heritage Jewellery, Precia - Gem Jewellery and Starlet - Kids Jewellery. Malabar Gold & Diamonds has a comprehensive product range, fitting to tastes of any age group, giving it an



BENGALURU: Indian Film Actress Tamannaah Bhatia inaugurated the 26th showroom of Malabar Gold & Diamonds in Karnataka, India at Bannerghatta Road, Bengaluru.

upper hand and making it one of the choicest brands in the country.

"We are thankful to the trust reposed by the customers. We are further expanding in Karnataka in the days to come. We are committed to ensuring value for money to the customers by providing with high quality products,

new technology and through sincere trade," said, MP Ahammed, Chairman - Malabar Group.

Apart from world class facilities and products, Malabar Gold & Diamonds also extends life-long maintenance, one-year free insurance, zero deduction for gold exchange and buyback guarantee for all Jewellery.

Wall Street Week Ahead

Lower rates could boost housing stocks, but risks remain

NEW YORK: Lower US interest rates could help support outperforming US homebuilder stocks, even as they raise worries about the economy, while a bonanza of industry data and Federal Reserve speakers next week are likely to help shape the outlook.

After underperforming in 2018, the PHLX Housing Index is up about 30 percent for the year so far, roughly double the year-to-date gain of the benchmark S&P 500 index. Mortgage rates have been declining with US Treasury debt yields, and the outlook for interest rates suggests further easing after the Federal Reserve lowered rates last month and indicated it could cut again this year, depending on data.

This week, US 30-year Treasury yields fell to a record low below 2 percent, while benchmark 10-year yields declined to a three-year trough as trade tensions linger and global economic growth continues to slow. The 30-year fixed mortgage rate has dropped to 3.60 percent from a peak of 4.94 percent in November, according to mortgage finance agency Freddie Mac. Mortgage rates are often tied to the benchmark 10-year

Treasury yield. Strategists said that could bode well for homebuilders and the housing market, which has been struggling because of land and labor shortages. A report on Friday showed US homebuilding fell for a third straight month in July amid a steep decline in the construction of multifamily housing units, even as the data provided a positive sign for housing: a jump in permits to a seven-month high. Next week, the US Commerce Department will release data on July new home sales.

Housing and homebuilding stocks should continue to do well as long as rates remain low, but the potential for slower demand is a risk, said Michael James, managing director of equity trading at Wedbush Securities in Los Angeles. "Lower interest rates lead to lower mortgage rates (which) lead to increased demand for homebuilders," he said. "You counter that with potential concerns that, if a recession is coming, even if rates are at historically low levels, demand for everything is going to be somewhat mitigated."

Eric Marshall, portfolio manager at Hodges Capital Management in Dallas, has seen relatively good traction in housing even with the turbulent markets. Lower rates are a plus, he said, along with an unemployment rate at its lowest level in years. "Consumer savings have come up, household formation continues to grow faster than the supply of housing," Marshall said. "And I think all of those things coming together make for a more stable environment for the publicly traded housing stocks."

Recent results from some top homebuilders were

mostly stronger than analysts expected, but some forecasts disappointed investors, underlining persisting problems in the housing market.

Last month, PulteGroup Inc forecast full-year home sales and gross margins below analyst expectations and cited rising land costs, while in June Lennar Corp forecast current-quarter earnings below Wall Street estimates and noted uncertainty triggered by the trade war.

Multiples for some of the homebuilder stocks have jumped this year, but many remain below long-term averages. The S&P 500 homebuilding index, which includes PulteGroup, D.R. Horton and Lennar, is trading at about 9.5 times forward earnings, up from about 7 at the start of the year but well below a long-term average of 14.6, based on Refinitiv's data. Wedbush analysts in a research note on Thursday said that builders have been reducing square footages as mortgage rates have declined, which has addressed affordability issues. The firm has a bullish bias on homebuilder shares, with an "outperform" rating on William Lyon Homes, Beazer Homes USA, Lennar and others. Investors will pay close attention to comments from Fed Chairman Jerome Powell, who is set to give a speech on rates and policy at the annual Jackson Hole, Wyoming, policy symposium.

"The fact that the Fed has moved to a more dovish position suggests that those rates should remain relatively low compared to what ... we saw in late 2018," said Robert Dietz, chief economist for the National Association of Home Builders. —Reuters

What's On



60th showroom of Grand Hyper inaugurated at Mangaf

Grand Hypermarket Mangaf spanning across an area 20000 sq feet has been inaugurated jointly by Regency Group MD Dr Anvar Ameen and His Excellency Sheikh Dawood Salman Al Sabah in presence Ayuob Kaccheri (Regional Director), Mohammed Suneer PC (CEO), Rahil Bassim (COO), Tahsir Ali (General Manager) and other management representatives.

As part of the inaugural offer, the new hypermarket has announced special prices for various products being Eid Al Adha weekend. The inaugural event saw a huge turnout of guests, who attended the event despite the bad weather and scorching heat. Grand Hypermarket has a strong reputation and trust in Kuwait market as a brand

for providing a wide range of products including food, non food, world-class electronic appliances, home appliances, garments, footwear, health and beauty items at affordable prices.

Now with 18 stores covering all major locations in Kuwait, Grand hyper is a household name serving over 70000 customers daily in Kuwait. The equal acceptance by both Kuwaiti nationals and expats has inspired Group to further expand its reach in Kuwait. The success of Grand Hypermarket is testified by the continuous expansion of the retail chain in various parts of the GCC countries on a daily basis. The benefit of price efficiency that the retailer gains through large-scale procurement of products is transferred onto the end-consumer.



How to check legitimacy of a travel agency

BY PNJ Kumar
Chief Executive Officer, Caesars Travel Group

It is very common these days that a lot of people are duped by travel agencies both conventional and web-based as many of them are stuck at airports without having confirmed tickets and losing their money. The interesting part of this game is that while the passenger purchases the tickets, these agents always give those confirmed tickets and they are convinced all is fine.

The scene changes just hours before the travel or sometimes on reaching the airport to check-in when they discover that neither do they have a confirmed ticket nor a seat on the airplane. Upon checking closely about such reported incidents, it has been noticed that the major culprits are online travel agents, working with a virtual set-up. Like the numerous online cheating scams the passengers has no clue whom to approach as these agents appear only through web sites, without having any other contacts.



Recently in Kuwait, it has been noticed that thousands of passengers were stuck at the airport without seats even though they had confirmed tickets which was issued online. Unfortunately when they reached the airport to travel they did not even have a booking at the check-in counter of airports. First of all, we have to understand on how these web-based travel agents operate by offering unbelievably cheap tickets to passengers. All airlines fix the fares on which they can operate keeping into account their operation costs and other overheads and even if they offer cheaper fares they cannot go below these. The Airline may be able to manage with a dip in fares only with a margin of maybe 10-20% but no 50% or above.

Therefore, if anyone offers you tickets with such heavy discounts then we have to seriously think about it and realize that there is something wrong in these sales strategy followed by these agencies. They must be targeting the instant money which they should be getting from these transactions from passengers and nowhere, they are bothered about your travel once the transaction is completed and get the money from your pockets. In the recent incident the online travel agents booked and issued confirmed tickets to the passengers many months ahead of their travel and as soon as the amount was paid and received into the agents accounts the tickets booking were cancelled and collected the money from the airline as refunds.



The passenger was given confirmation until the tickets were issued and as soon as the amount was deducted from his account the process of cheating had started. These gullible people were stranded in the airport and even the airlines were not able to help as there was records of the tickets being refunded to them.

Here are few tips to help you begin your quest to find the reliable travel agent to suit your needs and avoid the probable complications during your travel.

This is the time that we have to seriously think before planning to visit your local travel agent or book with through an online travel agent, it is important to make sure the agency you use is legitimate. All of you are well aware of the electronic abuses happening in all fields, it is always advisable that we have to take the precautions before entering into any such commercial dealings.

I have to admit that finding a good travel agent might not be as important today as it was in the past, you have plenty of options in front of you, conventional type travel agents and online travel companies but how to choose the right agent, that should be your question at this point in time? The initial step that you have to do is to find out an agent with lots of experience and knowledge working with a travel office-one with personal experience about the industry and who can guide you based on your travel plans. Here, you have to keep in mind that running behind cheap tickets may put you always in trouble but approaching an agent with the above technical knowhow will always guide you to the right direction of your travel. In brief, please try to understand that even in this era of information overload, there are times when a travel agent is almost a necessity, especially with a conventional agent whom you can personally approach.

Another important step that you have to keep in mind is that make sure the company you are booking with is licensed before you make any payment whether it is an agent with a physical office or online. This is a guarantee that passengers are protected by adequate bonding. All travel agents trading in the State of Kuwait are required by law through Directorate General of Civil Aviation to be licensed and bonded to buy or sell trips overseas.

Therefore, having a legitimate license will help you to

approach them in case of any difficulties when you are traveling, as always there is an office or contact details that will help you to easily approach them. Always a trusted travel agent will follow the itinerary of passengers from the beginning to end, to make sure that there should not be any inconveniences to their passengers during their travel and in case of any difficulties faced by the passengers, they will be taking care of them which unfortunately, are not followed by many of the agents during these days.

Your next concern should be the cheapest offers from the online or conventional travel agencies which you should always keep in mind that there should be a catch behind it. None of the commercial travel agencies are working for the welfare of passengers, other than their own benefits. These sorts of agencies often offer incredible deals and discounts; it is worth looking at finer details when you see prices well below the norm. Therefore, it is always advisable to think twice before buying tickets from such agencies offering cheap tickets.

Evaluating the standard of travel agent is another step which you have to keep in mind before approaching anyone. This will provide a first-hand evaluation which is the single best way to get a feel about any travel provider. Here, you can find someone you know who recommend a travel agent or online travel company or perhaps they have used the travel agency you are considering. This may avoid many of your suspicions before approaching an agency as you have already got information from your friend and you can be confident in approaching them.

The final stage is to make sure you have got the right paperwork from the agency you bought the tickets. When you have booked and paid for your tickets with an agency, you should receive a confirmation document immediately along with a receipt for the money you paid which is mandatory as per the Directorate General of Civil Aviation rule in Kuwait. Always make sure that the telephone number or email address mentioned in the ticket is your own and not that of any staff in the travel agency or the online company because if any future changes are to be made to your ticket the airline will contact you on that number or address given by you.

There is no harm in double checking these documents given by the agency whether it is legitimate or not, check once again the company names on the paperwork match with the agency name wherefrom you bought the ticket. It is also suggested to check with the airline closer the date of your travel whether your seats are confirmed or not, this will give you more confidence when reaching the airport.

Travel agents can serve as advisers, planners, and negotiators on whatever levels they are operating. Moreover, the travel business is all about experiences and relationships. The key factor before you plan to buy your ticket is finding someone truly dependent and unbiased in what they sell - someone who will be looking out for your best interest rather than looking for the cheap tickets offer by few online or conventional travel agents which always can put you in trouble in some way or other. Therefore, why don't you decide about giving it in the right hands and make your journey safe and memorable.

Kuwaiti artists partake in China-Arab painting workshop

Hosted by the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism and organized by the China Arts and Entertainment Group, nine eminent artists from six Arab countries including Algeria, Egypt, Kuwait, Morocco, Oman and Tunisia were invited to attend the 11th "Insight of China - Painting Workshop for Well-Known Arab Artists" in China from 25th July to 10th August 2019. Two artists from Kuwait, Ahmed Muqem and Asad Bunashi also participated in this workshop.

During the 18-day trip in China, the Arab artists visited Hong Kong, Macao and Shenzhen, three well-known cities in China's Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area, and participated in a series of activities, featuring tours to museums and galleries, exchange of ideas and experience with representatives from Chinese art institutions, and solo and joint artistic creations with local artists.

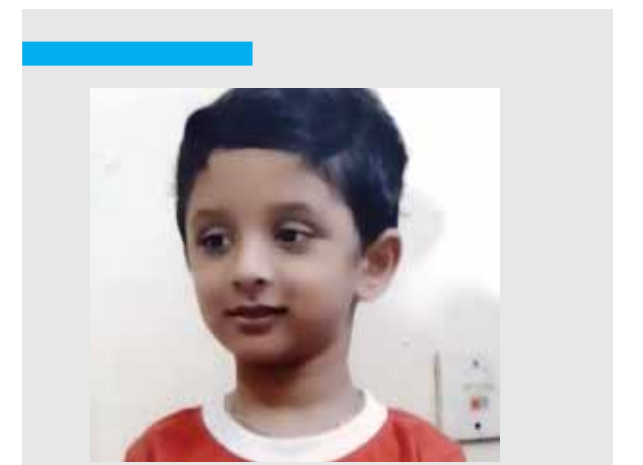
Enlightened by their enriching experience in China, the Kuwaiti artists Ahmed Muqem and Asad Bunashi turned their creative inspiration into reality through their artworks during their stay in China. Asad Bunashi's oil painting "Chinese Dragon" is a vivid illustration of his insights and understandings of Chinese culture from his perspective as a Kuwaiti. Admed Muqem inscribed "In China I live like a lotus leaf sleeping on water...bold, yet simple" in Chinese characters on his work "Lotus Lake", as he couldn't resist the beauty of the lake in Shenzhen, and decided to show people how he perceived through his painting. Besides, the inclusiveness of Shenzhen, especially its fusion of ancient and modern culture, has impressed Ahmed deeply.

On 9th August 2019, a joint exhibition was inaugurated at Shenzhen Fine Art Institute, bringing together 40 artworks created by all participating artists during the workshop. In spite of different painting styles and themes, the participating Arab artists expressed their perception and appreciation of China and the Chinese culture. According to the Chinese organizers, all artworks will be in the collection of the Chinese Ministry of Culture and Tourism as a manifestation of the first successful cultural exchange between the Greater Bay Area and the Arab countries.

The "Insight of China" painting workshop is a high-level cultural exchange program within the frameworks of China-Arab States Cooperation Forum and the Belt and Road Initiative, with a view to strengthening cultural exchange and cooperation between China and the Arab countries. Since its launch in 2009, over 150 artists from 22 Arab countries, including nine Kuwaiti artists, have participated in the painting workshop, which has become an important multilateral exchange platform between China and Arab countries in the fields of culture and art.



Members of the Women's Diplomatic Committee paid a visit to the family of the Prime Minister His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, to congratulate them on the occasion of Eid Al-Adha. The WDC's members were received by the Governor of Ahmadi Sheikh Fawaz Al-Khaled Al-Sabah and his wife Sheikhna Modhi Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. The Ambassador of the Republic of Kyrgyzstan Samar Gul, Ambassador of the Republic of Sarlion Hajji Aisha and the Committee's advisor Narjis Al-Shatti and a group of wives of ambassadors were also present.



Happy Birthday!

To ancient Greeks, the number 5 was a blessed number. To mom and dad - you are a perfect 5-year-old. We wish you a very happy 5th birthday our loving Baboni Riddhimaan Papai, and hope to see you grow up to be the person you always dreamt to be with the blessing of God. Best wishes from relatives and friends.

Health & Science

Beloved baby dugong 'Mariam' dies with plastic in stomach

BANGKOK: A sick baby dugong whose fight for recovery won hearts in Thailand and cast a spotlight on ocean conservation has died from an infection exacerbated by bits of plastic lining her stomach, officials said yesterday. Mariam washed up in shallow waters off southwestern Thailand months ago and photos of her nuzzling playfully next to rescuers quickly went viral.

The discovery soon after of another orphaned dugong brought the sea cows celebrity status, the attention of a Thai princess — who named the second one "Jamil" — and round-the-clock webcasts giving viewers a front-row seat to feedings and treatment. But Mariam died just after midnight after going into shock and efforts to resuscitate her failed, Chaiyapruk Werawong, head of Trang province marine park, told AFP.

"She died from a blood infection and pus in her stomach," he said, adding they found small amounts of plastic waste in her intestinal tract. Footage released by the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) showed vets attempting to revive Mariam using CPR. Several pieces of plastic were found in her intestine, with one measuring up to 20 centimeters. The plastic had caused obstructions in the animal's stomach, lead-

ing to inflammation and gas build-up, veterinarian Nantarika Chansue posted on Facebook.

"We could partially treat the respiratory infection but the obstruction of plastic rubbish... could not be cured," she said in the post, calling for the young animal's death to serve as a lesson. "She taught us how to love and then went away as if saying please tell everyone to look after us and conserve her species." The dugongs are the latest marine creatures to make headlines in Thailand, whose plastic-choked waters are also a threat to habitats.

Both the animals were found in southern Thailand, home to about 250 of the sea cows, which are closely related to the manatee and classified as vulnerable. Jamil, whose name translates to "handsome sea prince", is being cared for separately in Phuket. Mariam's death was also announced on the Facebook page of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources. The post quickly garnered more than 11,000 shares and thousands of comments mourning the loss, while a meme with a picture of Mariam and "RIP" circulated online. "It's a pity for those who fed her milk and collected sea grass for their little daughter that we have to lose Mariam because of plastic waste," one commenter said. — AFP



TRANG: This handout from the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation (DNP) taken and released on August 17, 2019 shows Mariam the dugong lying in a container after she died at the Trang province marine park. — AFP

US teens hospitalized after vaping

WASHINGTON: US health officials are investigating the cases of dozens of people, mainly teens, who were hospitalized with severe lung injuries in recent weeks after vaping, though the precise cause of their illnesses remains a mystery. Health departments in Illinois, Minnesota and Wisconsin have issued statements describing cases involving patients who exhibited coughs, shortness of breath, dizziness and fatigue, symptoms that led them to hospitals where they had to be intubated.

Officials in the three states, which have reported at least 30 confirmed cases and 22 under investigation, said it was too early to say whether the illnesses were connected, but were working with each other and the Centers for Disease and Control and Prevention to investigate further. Some of them involved "dabbing," or vaping marijuana products. US media reported several other states were also reporting cases. Thomas Haupt, a respiratory disease epidemiologist with Wisconsin's Department of Health Services, told AFP on Thursday: "We're in the process of interviewing all of our patients, to try to find out any commonalities. — AFP

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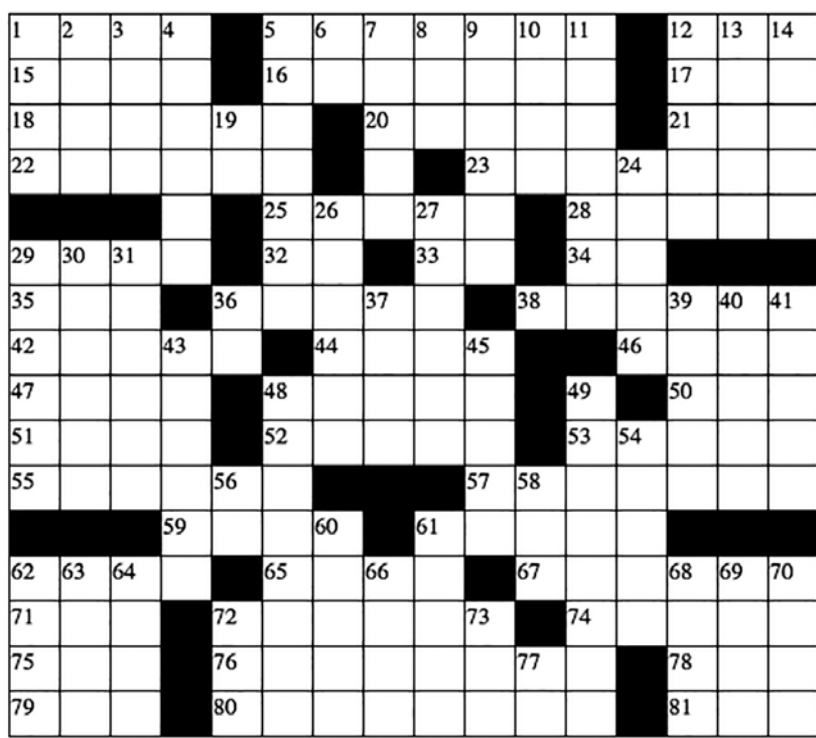
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ACROSS

- An inhabitant of Lappland.
- Tropical American insectivorous bird having a long sharp bill and iridescent green or bronze plumage.
- A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
- Wild sheep of northern Africa.
- The largest island of the central Ryukyu Islands.
- Not in good physical or mental health.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- A council convened to discuss ecclesiastical business.
- A humorous anecdote or remark.
- A parliamentary monarchy in southwestern Europe on the Iberian Peninsula.
- Small genus of perennial herbs or shrubs.
- A simple seat without a back or arms.
- Having winglike extensions.
- A French abbot.
- The fifth day of the week.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- A soft gray malleable metallic element that resembles tin but discolors on exposure to air.
- A room or establishment where alcoholic drinks are served over a counter.
- 40th President of the United States (1911-).
- A popular island resort in the Netherlands Antilles.
- The capital of Western Samoa.
- A member of the Athapaskan people of the Trinity River valley in California.
- (classical architecture) A molding for a cornice.
- A hotel providing overnight lodging for travelers.
- A state in the western United States.
- Genus of erect herbs of the Middle East having showy flowers.
- Having help.
- A deep bow.
- French mime famous for his sad-faced clown (born in 1923).
- Someone who works (or provides work) during a strike.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.
- The language of the nomadic Lapp people in northern Scandinavia and the Kola Peninsula.
- Of or belonging to an acium.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- Region of western Asia Minor colonized by Ancient Greeks.
- A digital display that uses liquid crystal cells that change reflectivity in an applied electric field.
- English literary critic who collaborated with C.K. Ogden and contributed to the development of Basic English (1893-1979).
- 32nd President of the United States.
- The compass point midway between east and southeast.
- A great raja.
- An unabridged dictionary constructed on historical principles.

DOWN

- A cord that is drawn through eyelets or around hooks in order to draw together two edges (as of a shoe or garment).
- A river that rises in northeastern Turkey (near the source of the Euphrates) and flows generally eastward through Armenia to the Caspian Sea.
- Any soft or soggy mass.
- A fee charged for the use of pipes.
- (Greek mythology) Queen of Thebes who unknowingly married her own son Oedipus.
- A state in northwestern North America.
- Cold-water fish caught in Lake Superior and northward.
- One or some or every or all without specification.
- A strong paper or thin cardboard with a smooth light brown finish made from e.g. Manila hemp.
- Absent without permission.
- Send out rays or waves.
- The 18th letter of the Greek alphabet.
- Buildings for carrying on industrial labor.
- Primitive chlorophyll-containing mainly aquatic eukaryotic organisms lacking true stems and roots and leaves.
- An associate degree in nursing.
- Muslim name for God.
- The state of being under the control of another person.
- Force or compel somebody to do something.
- Any of several compounds of barium.
- Characteristic of or relating to winter.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
- An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
- Someone employed to conduct others.
- Transient cessation of respiration.
- Smaller of two tall fast-running flightless birds similar to ostriches but three-toed.
- The dialect of Malay used as the national language of the Republic of Indonesia or of Malaysia.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- Genus of scapose herbs of North and South America having large edible bulbs.
- A city in northwestern Somalia.
- Small tropical American tree bearing edible plumlike fruit.
- A radioactive element of the actinide series.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- All the loaves of bread baked at the same time.
- The basic unit of money in Yemen.
- The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
- A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- A message received and understood that reduces the recipient's uncertainty.
- An officer who acts as military assistant to a more senior officer.
- Soft white semisolid fat obtained by rendering the fatty tissue of the hog v l.
- A human limb.
- A constellation in the southern hemisphere near Telescopium and Norma.
- A person who announces and plays popular recorded music.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You communicate with consummate skill and it is stimulating just being with you. Your high degree of mental concentration makes you an excellent student, able to excel in speaking, writing and all types of communication skills. Today you show your competitive side—even pushiness, perhaps. However, all is fair in love and war and your determination to prove yourself successful is at full steam ahead. Your ambitions go hand-in-hand with communication and using the mind and the two should never be far apart. You are full of suggestions today and you will motivate many through your own winning attitude.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Lovely words and a flair for description—the artistic in all its many forms is where you excel above any other. You have an inner sense of warmth and goodness with the ability to express your talent. Because you are kind and easy to be with, people enjoy being with you. This is a time for imagination and creativity when it comes to ideas and thinking. You may be working on some form of advertising or house design; whatever the case, you will hear praise from all around as they see the results of your ideas. Your key word is responsibility: trustworthiness.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You enjoy socializing with people from different backgrounds. If you are working this Sunday, you may be very popular when you are trying new things—you are so eager. With an open mind to what others have to say, you could feel great support. You are able to enjoy long relationships with friends from all over the world. You can be a positive influence. Think adventurously but be careful that your enthusiasm is not so strong that it makes others uncomfortable. Remember, others have to work and achieve at their own level. You will lead others in some group activity this afternoon. You are a natural group leader or trainer—your vitality and drive is communicated to everyone you see, especially the young people in your life.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You are always out front and manage to spend a lot of time in the spotlight and today is no exception. Others find it easy to watch and learn from you. Your mind is on cutting through the nonessentials and penetrating to the core of issues—you want to know who, or what, pulls the strings. Sex, taxes, investments and other subjects of life's most compelling phenomena may captivate your interest. You are very animated and may find communicating your ideas is a particularly easy thing to do at this time. Political, lecturing or teaching concerns could be involved with this need to communicate.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Strong beliefs are keynotes to your power—the power of ideas and the power they wield over people. Religious, cultural or philosophical controversies and crusades have a way of stirring your blood. You like to work with words and ideas and you have a natural appreciation for anything that is artistic. Ideas come quickly. Creative writing is an excellent outlet of expression. Put some thoughts down on paper for future use. You may find yourself editing or proofing work to be published. As you relax this evening, you could write some form of prose.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You could find yourself working longer at some project—you may be sought after as just the person for a particular chore. You are open-minded and democratic, enthusiastic and have a definite sense of mission. You are at home with different cultures, peoples and lands and may lend yourself to others for teaching reading, technical applications, math, etc. You love to work with and in groups and will find your day full of interaction with all different types of people. Your sense of responsibility will be what guides you and proves successful.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Your energies are up and there are lots of new projects that are up for grabs in your place of business. Outer circumstances make it easy for you to make clear decisions, as usual. Things seem to fall in place and progress is easy. Be careful not to overextend your energies—plan ahead. You want to get things organized—you have the initiative to do it. This is a time of ambition—a time to keep your cool and pace yourself. Working hard is smart, but working smart is better. Obtaining and exchanging information takes on a good deal of importance.



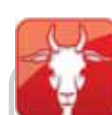
Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You have a lot of energy and drive—perfect for starting something or for taking care of old business. Communications may tend to be short and to the point this morning. You are very determined and deliberate at whatever you choose to do. This is a great time to get things accomplished. Emotional beginnings, a fresh start, perhaps the establishment of new habit patterns is also in the making. This afternoon is a good time to broaden your horizons both intellectually and spiritually. A strong urge for the social life may find you out and about later this day. Very physical too—exercise or romance is in order this evening.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

People that depend on you for support, particularly over the weekends, have agendas for you to work through. Golly! Sounds like you may not get anything accomplished on your own agenda list! You might compare lists . . . You may find you can accomplish a few things on your list while working through your loved one's list. A willingness to help others, relieve the rigidity of stress all around. At a neighbor's house this afternoon you and your neighbor may have all sorts of ideas to talk over that will eventually lead to all types of improvements around the neighborhood.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This may be a slow day. You are happiest when lots of activity is around you. While the energies will pick back up soon, it is not the end of the world. You should take advantage of the slow-moving day by planning your next professional objective. It goes well for you when you offer to help another co-worker complete a project. The planetary influences at this time make it possible for you to see things clearly and to make successful plans. You are ready for a fresh start with regard to some personal routine—perhaps the establishment of new habit patterns would be beneficial.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

At work, you may want to take charge of the most important issues first. You may have plans to leave work a little early today so you will busy yourself quickly and with purpose. This is also a time of ambition and responsibility as well as a time to be considered in some promotion. There are good results for your efforts. You have the opportunity to show off your unique and unusual qualities all day long. Communication is at a high. There is time this afternoon to run a few errands, perhaps the cleaners, a florist, etc. On the home front there is an urge to do a little decorating. Enjoy dinner out this evening.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You value independence, as well as anything unusual or different. You are expressive and creative and find ways to solve problems and accomplish projects very quickly. Someone near you, a neighbor, friend or relative may have added responsibilities this weekend. Volunteer some of your time to walk the dog, bring in the mail, etc. Your offer will be appreciated and then the group of you can relax and visit later next week. When it comes to finances, you seem to have an angel watching over you. Of course, this does not mean you can throw caution to the wind and take risks. If you want to shop for a new winter coat or begin to purchase gifts for the next family celebration—after the chores today would be a good time to decorate.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Cheerleading

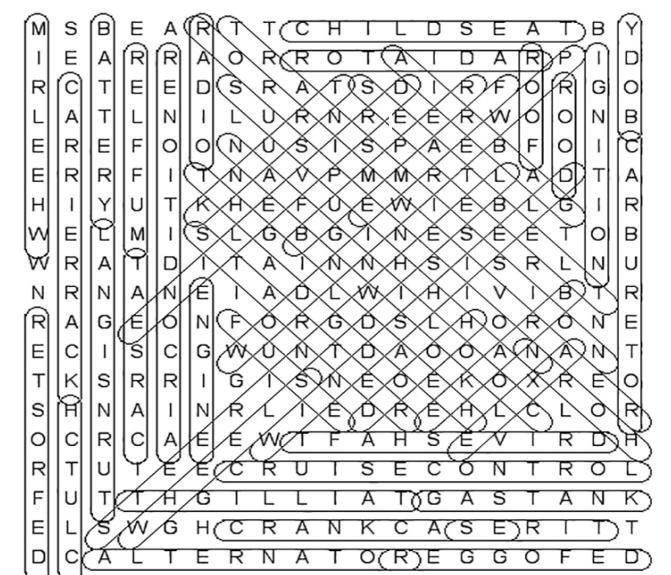
Find and circle all of the Cheerleading words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a secret message.



- | | | | |
|---------------|--------------|-----------|-----------|
| AERIAL | DISMOUNT | JUMPS | SPOTTER |
| ARABESQUE | ELEVATOR | K MOTION | SQUAD |
| AWESOME | EXECUTION | LIBERTY | STUNT |
| BASE | EXTENSION | L MOTION | TABLE TOP |
| BASKET TOSS | FACIALS | MASCOT | T MOTION |
| BUCKET | FLYER | MEGAPHONE | TOE TOUCH |
| CANDLE STICKS | HANDSPRING | PEEL OFF | TUCK |
| CHANT | HEEL STRETCH | POMPONS | TUMBLING |
| CHEER | HERKIE | PYRAMID | UNIFORM |
| CHOREOGRAPHY | HIGH V | ROUTINE | VARSITY |
| COACH | HURDLER | SELL IT | V MOTION |
| CRADLE CATCH | | | |

Friday's Solution

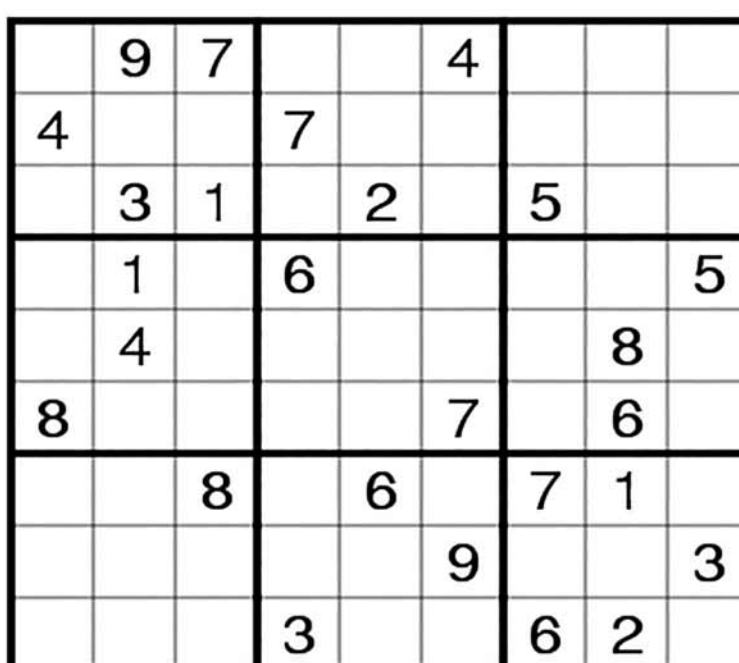
Car Parts



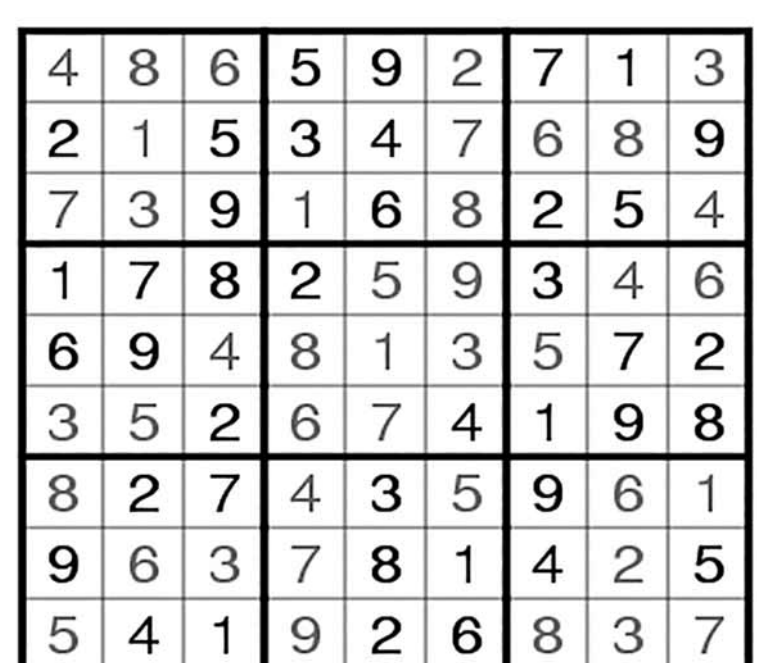
- | | | | |
|-----------------|----------------|------------------|----------------|
| AIR BAG | CLUTCH | GAS TANK | STARTER |
| AIR CONDITIONER | COOLING FAN | HEADLIGHT | STEERING WHEEL |
| ALTERNATOR | CRANKCASE | HOOD | SUSPENSION |
| AXLE | CRUISE CONTROL | HORN | TAIL LIGHT |
| BATTERY | DEFOGGER | IGNITION | TIRES |
| BODY | DEFROSTER | MUFFLER | TRANSMISSION |
| BRAKE | DOOR | POWER WINDOW | TRUNK |
| BUMPER | DRIVE LINE | RADIATOR | TURN SIGNAL |
| CAR SEAT | DRIVESHAF | RADIO | WHEEL RIM |
| CARBURETOR | ENGINE | REAR VIEW MIRROR | WHEELS |
| CARRIER RACK | FRAME | ROOF | WINDSHIELD |
| CHILD SEAT | FUSE | SEAT BELT | |

The hidden item is: SEAT BELT WARNING LIGHT

Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18, 2019



Participants climb greasy poles at a beach in Jakarta yesterday, during Panjat Pinang, a pole climbing contest to celebrate Indonesia's 74th anniversary of independence from Dutch rule. — AFP

Gotta catch-and keep-'em all: Pokemon's enduring legacy

Pokemon—the small, adorable creatures with special fighting abilities—have been around for more than two decades, and they're as popular as ever, mainly due to families sharing the legacy. More than 7,500 people from 49 different countries are expected to attend the annual Pokemon World Championships in Washington this weekend. On Friday, as the event kicked off, most of the attendees appeared to be in their twenties or older. "I'm 24, but I know I look young," joked Amanda Gunkle, who was decked head-to-toe in the gear of Pikachu, the iconic yellow Pokemon.

She came in from Pittsburg with her twin brother to watch the tournament. "I've been a fan (of Pokemon) since my early childhood," she said. It's clear why Pokemon appeal to younger children. But for many of the older fans, Pokemon simultaneously represent nostalgia and novelty. The Pokemon franchise launched in Japan in 1996 but didn't take off in the United States until the early 2000s. The brand, which is currently estimated to be the highest-grossing media franchise ever, produces video games released in pairs every one to two years, alongside a new batch of Pokemon species.

It also makes trading cards that players use to battle each other, an animated television series and several movies. "We're definitely seeing some intergenerational fans," said Elvin Gee, a spokesman for the Pokemon Company, who was a big fan of Pokemon himself growing up. "It's amazing to see par-



A man takes a selfie with a Pikachu during the first day of the 2019 Pokemon World Championships at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC. — AFP photos

ents pass on their cards or pass on their video games to their children," he said.

'Something for everyone'

The franchise's popularity is also due to the recent success of smartphone app Pokemon Go, a game that lets players walking the real world hunt virtual Pokemon, as well as the film "Detective Pikachu," which opened in May and has made more than \$430 million worldwide. "There's something for everyone," Gee said. New Jersey native John Kim drove down with his family so his two older sons, ages 11 and eight, could compete in the tournament.

"I really like it for (my sons), because... they have to learn to lose gracefully, to win

gracefully. They learn rules, they learn to accept outcomes," the 40-year-old said. For the Kim family, Pokemon's legacy moved in the opposite direction: John became interested when his sons started playing. Now, the whole family plays together, even the youngest boy, who at four years old plays alongside his brothers—albeit with a simpler deck. "They have to sit with an opponent" and engage with others, Kim said. That engagement is a staple of the Pokemon community, with many players developing close friendships, despite only seeing each other at the World Championships once a year.

The Championships prize money—which runs up to \$25,000 for the card game tournament—is mainly offered in the form of scholarships or travel certificates, particularly for players under 18 years old. The goal is to encourage education and strong principles among the participants, many of whom are minors.

"It's about sportsmanship, it's about great characters, it's about a great game," said Gee. Like the Kims, Yannick Daunais' interest in Pokemon was sparked when his daughters started playing. The 38-year-old from Joliette, Quebec drove to Washington so his 11-year-old son could compete in the Championships. "We're like a huge family," said his daughter Mya, 14. She and her sister Lidya, 12, were dressed as Pikachu and Eevee, another Pokemon. "Exactly," her father agreed. "We're part of a huge Pokemon family." — AFP



This handout picture released by Stiftung fur Kunst, Kultur und Geschichte, Winterthur, the Foundation for Art, Culture and History of the city of Winterthur shows sketches of "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery which were found in storage in northern Switzerland, where they had been stored by a Zurich real estate tycoon in the middle of tens of thousands of works of art. — AFP photos

'The Little Prince' sketches found in Switzerland

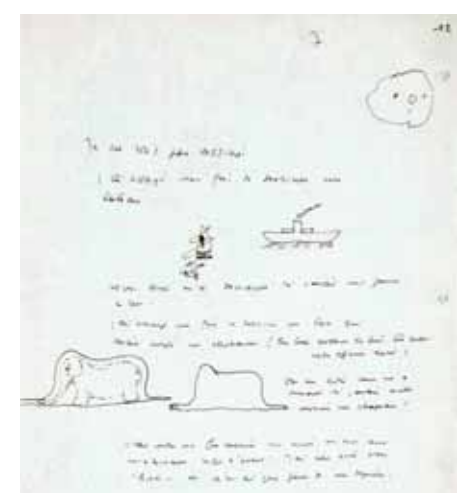
Early sketches of "The Little Prince," the world famous creation of French writer Antoine de Saint-Exupery, have been found in storage in northern Switzerland, local media and an art expert said Thursday. The drawings were purchased at auction some three decades ago by Bruno Stefanini, a real estate magnate and major collector who died last year, said Elisabeth Grossmann, curator of the Cultural Foundation of Winterthur. She said "The Little Prince" sketches were found in good condition in a folder with other works in a building in Winterthur.

"The Little Prince" ("Le Petit Prince"), a novella charting the fantastical interstellar voyage undertaken by the eponymous hero, has sold 145 million copies worldwide and been translated into 270 languages. Saint-Exupery escaped to the US after Germany's invasion of France and it was during his exile there in 1942 that he wrote his famous book. It was first published in 1943.

The author also lived in Switzerland from 1915 to 1917 while attending boarding school in the central canton of Fribourg. Stefanini, one of Switzerland's largest collectors who assembled tens of thousands of works before his death, set up the Winterthur to manage his artistic holdings. He bought the Saint-Exupery sketches at an auction in 1986 in the town of Bevaix, according to the Landbote newspaper, which first reported the discovery on

Thursday. The sketches include an image of The Little Prince talking to a fox. "The Tippler" sitting on his planet, and the iconic image of a boa constrictor that has just eaten an elephant.

Grossmann said the Winterthur museum would contact New York's Morgan Library, where Saint-Exupery's original sketches are held, to inform them of the discovery. Saint-Exupery, a pilot, mysteriously disappeared over the Mediterranean on July 31, 1944 shortly after taking off on a wartime mission. — AFP



This handout picture shows a sketch of "The Little Prince" by Antoine de Saint-Exupery.



Competitors begin a round of play during the first day of the 2019 Pokemon World Championships.



Competitors play a video game during the first day of the 2019 Pokemon World Championships.

'Easy Rider' star Peter Fonda dead at 79

US actor Peter Fonda, whose starring role in classic road movie "Easy Rider" made him a symbol of 1960s counterculture, died Friday aged 79 at his Los Angeles home following a battle with lung cancer, his family said. Fonda was the son of famed Hollywood actor Henry, and the brother of activist and actress Jane, who described him as "my sweet-hearted baby brother" in a statement sent to AFP. "I am very sad ... I have had beautiful alone time with him these last days. He went out laughing," she said. Fonda co-wrote and produced 1969's "Easy Rider," in which he appeared alongside its director Dennis Hopper and a young Jack Nicholson.

The wildly successful film about two bikers travelling through the great outdoors of the American Southwest in a quest for freedom became an anti-establishment cult classic. It earned Fonda an Academy Award nomination for Best Original Screenplay, and is credited with ushering in an era of counterculture, independent filmmaking. "EASY RIDER depicted the rise of hippie culture, condemned the establishment, and celebrated freedom. Peter Fonda embodied those values and instilled them in a generation," wrote "Goodfellas" actress Illeana Douglas on Twitter. "Independent cinema begins with EASY RIDER."

The image of Fonda with his legs stretched out on his Harley-Davidson chopper painted in the colors of the American flag became emblematic of the era—one of two bikes used in the film sold at auction for \$1.35 million in 2014. Fonda would play anti-hero biker roles many times in his career. He enjoyed a renaissance almost three decades later when he was nominated for the best actor



In this file photo Actor Peter Fonda attends a ceremony honoring him with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame in Hollywood, California. — AFP photos



In this file photo taken on January 18, 1998 Actors Jack Nicholson (left) and Peter Fonda (right) hold their Golden Globe awards for Best Actor at the 55th Annual Golden Globe Awards in Beverly Hills.



In this file photo Actress Jane Fonda (right) and her brother actor Peter Fonda (left) arrive in Avery Fisher Hall at Lincoln Center in New York.

Oscar for "Ulee's Gold" (1997), but lost out to Nicholson. Fonda began his career as a stage actor on Broadway in his native New York. He was also a keen environmentalist, co-producing the 2012 film "The Big Fix" which centered on the explosion of the BP oil rig Deepwater Horizon, the ensuing spill and its consequences. He had been planning a 50th anniversary screening and concert

of "Easy Rider" in New York next month, to be shown in sync with live performances of the famed soundtrack including "Born to be Wild" and "Ballad of Easy Rider." Fonda married three times, and leaves behind two children including actress Bridget.

He passed away peacefully due to respiratory failure while surrounded by his relatives, they said in a separate

statement. "While we mourn the loss of this sweet and gracious man, we also wish for all to celebrate his indomitable spirit and love of life," they said. "In honor of Peter, please raise a glass to freedom." — AFP



Music mogul Yang Hyun-suk

Police raid K-pop agency over alleged illegal gambling

South Korean police raided one of the biggest K-pop management firms yesterday as part of an investigation into music mogul Yang Hyun-suk's alleged illicit gambling. Yang, founder and ex-chief producer of YG Entertainment, resigned from his post in June after drug and sex scandals rocked the company since March. He was placed under formal investigation by police earlier this week over allegations of gambling involving illicit cash exchange along with Seungri, a former member of YG's highly popular band BIGBANG.

"We are trying to gather evidence on how (Yang) secured funds for gambling, and how many times the alleged gambling took place," a Seoul police officer told AFP. Local news reports said Yang was alleged to have engaged in "habitual and illegal gambling", in locations including Macau and Las Vegas since the early 2000s. Yang was also separately placed under investigation by police last month for allegedly arranging sex services for foreign investors back in 2014. — AFP

SARAJEVO FILM FESTIVAL OPENS WITH HONORS FOR MEXICAN, POLISH DIRECTORS

The Sarajevo Film Festival launched its 25th annual edition Friday by bestowing its top honor on Mexican director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu and Polish counterpart Pawel Pawlikowski for their "exceptional contribution" to the art form. Started as an "act of resistance" while the Bosnian capital was under siege during its 1990s civil war, today the Sarajevo Film Festival is one of the premiere cinema events in southeastern Europe. It focuses on promoting films from the region and over the years has featured big names, such as Robert De Niro, Angelina Jolie, Brad Pitt and Jeremy Irons. Friday's opening ceremony at the national theatre, kicked off with the projection of images of the bombardment of Sarajevo during the 1992-95 siege of the city in which more than 10,000 people died.

Festival director Mirsad Purivatra said: "We are cele-

brating 25 years of the end of the siege of Sarajevo and of the war in our country," alongside the quarter-century anniversary of the film event itself. Pawlikowski, whose "Ida" won an Oscar for best foreign-language film in 2015, received the Honorary Heart of Sarajevo award for his "exceptional contribution" to film, organizers said. "I've seen it (Sarajevo) through different stages, before the war, during the war, after the war," Pawlikowski said, adding he experienced "great emotion" to be back in the city with its "very complicated (heart), full of paradoxes, full of contradictions, but a very strong heart, a heart that's stronger than ideologies, nationalism."

His co-recipient Inarritu, famed for his back-to-back Oscars for "The Revenant" and "Birdman", thanked organizers for the honor. "I appreciate it especially when yesterday I turned 56 years, so it's the best birthday gift

that I have received." French actress Isabelle Huppert and acclaimed Mexican actor and director Gael Garcia Bernal were among the invited guests. During the week-long festival nine feature films produced in the region will compete for the top award, while around 40 other movies have been selected for other competitions.

The jury for the main competition will be chaired by Swedish film-maker Ruben Ostlund, whose film "The Square" took home Cannes' Palme d'Or in 2017. "We have a dynamic and varied program, but perhaps what is common to all these films is that they have as their theme the contemporary life of particularly strong characters," said organizer Elma Tataragic, quoted by Bosnia's Fena agency. — AFP



Mexican movie director Alejandro Gonzalez Inarritu speaks on stage, after receiving the "Honorary Heart of Sarajevo" award, during the opening night of the 25th Sarajevo Film Festival. — AFP photos



Polish movie maker Pawel Pawlikowski poses after receiving the "Honorary Heart of Sarajevo" award.

Aging hippies flash back to Woodstock site, fifty years on

Fifty years ago Thursday Les Poinelli was hitchhiking to the now storied Woodstock music festival he'd heard about on the radio—and hopped in the car where he would meet his wife. Today he's returned to the bucolic town of Bethel in New York's Catskill Mountains where his life changed forever, joining droves of aging hippies donning tie-dye, flower crowns and fringed suede vests hearkening back to the golden age of peace, love and music. "You couldn't help but be overwhelmed by the crowd and overwhelmed by the generosity of the people," Poinelli, then 19, told AFP, standing near the site of the stage where rock legends including Jimi Hendrix, Janis Joplin and Santana jammed before nearly half a million youth under a tremendous downpour.



Maria Alger of Brazil and Bob Alger of the US arrive at the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, the original site of the Woodstock Festival on its 50th anniversary in Woodstock, New York. — AFP

After spending the weekend with his new sweetheart Gail, the teenagers walked around the back of the stage, as Joe Cocker began to play, to say goodbye before she headed back to Long Island, New York and he returned to Connecticut. "I gave her a peck on the cheek, and that was our sex for the weekend," the soft-spoken 69-year-old said with a wide smile, his framed original tickets in hand. Two years after falling for each other as they swayed to classic acts including Creedence Clearwater Revival and Canned Heat, the pair married and had five kids and 12 grandchildren. "I remember every moment, it was special," he said.

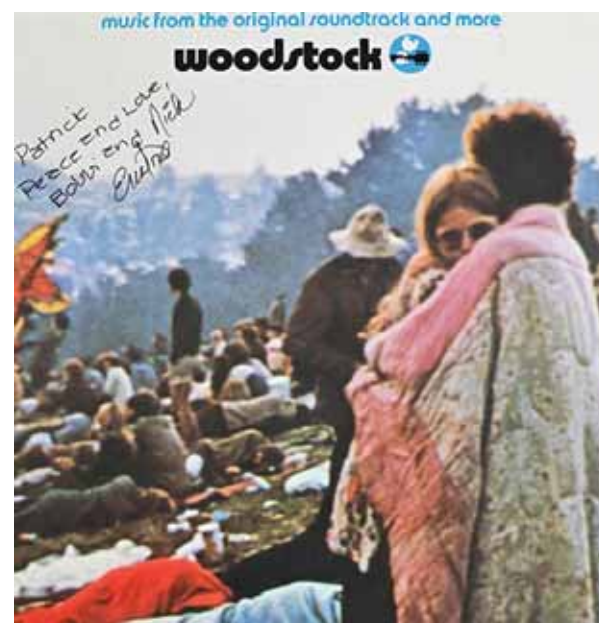
Kissing Janis Joplin

Revered by many as the cultural touchstone of a generation, the 1969 Woodstock festival saw hundreds of thousands of people descend on Max Yasgur's alfalfa fields in upstate New York that August 15-18, partying to rock's greats and imbibing in psychedelics as torrential rains swept in. Despite the mud and warnings of bad acid, the symbol of Woodstock lives—the festival is venerated as a beacon of hope that emerged out of the tumultuous 1960s, rife with assassinations and riots as the Vietnam War raged. The historic site is now operated by the nonprofit Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, which holds regular concerts and runs a museum to memorialize the Woodstock legend.

Its 50th anniversary commemoration kicks off Thursday with a peace-symbol lighting, after which folk mainstay Arlo Guthrie, who played in 1969 as a baby-faced 22-year-old, will perform for the masses flashing back to their youth. The concert series will continue throughout the weekend with performances from Ringo Starr, Santana and John Fogerty of Creedence Clearwater Revival. RJ Pinto makes pilgrimages to Bethel most years, where he says he can feel the aura of camaraderie he felt half-a-century ago. "Peace, music and love; it's really here," the biker said emphatically. "It was a world phenomenon." Pinto says he saw it all amid the chaos—but stealing a kiss from Joplin stands out. "She could grab your heart," he said from his motorcycle. "Janis was the most incredible gal... we surrounded her until I had a chance to hold her hand and give a kiss on the cheek." — AFP

Meet the Ercolines, the Woodstock lovebirds whose hug made history

Nick and Bobbi Ercoline had only been dating three months when they joined flocks of their peers for the 1969 Woodstock blow-out that would become emblematic of their generation. Months later and still falling for each other, the lovers realized they too had become symbols: their heartstring-tugging image had gone down in history on the cover of the live album compiling highlights of the milestone music festival. "We were like, are you kidding us? It was total shock," Nick said, recalling the moment the couple saw themselves embracing on the now iconic album art, wrapped in a blanket amid the sea of humanity flowing over the alfalfa fields of Max Yasgur's farm in upstate New York.



Fifty years on they're regulars—rock stars even—at the Bethel Woods Center of the Arts that today runs the grounds where greats like Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin jammed in torrential rain. "We did not realize what we had really witnessed or had been part of until we got quite a distance from it," Bobbi told AFP at the opening night of Woodstock's 50th anniversary commemorations at Bethel. "Every year further from it you look back and you realize—that was really something pretty phenomenal," she said, as a fellow aging hippie donning frayed denim shorts, a fringed midriff halter top and long blonde pigtails frolicked nearby.

The pair nuzzle and smooch like honeymooners despite being married 48 years this month, and accommodate the many gawkers—many of whom have copies of the album in tow—eager for selfies and autographs. Their place in pop culture lore "hasn't changed our lives, but it certainly has enhanced it," Bobbi said. "I'm very thankful to have been a little part of this whole Woodstock experience," she said, before giving Nick a loving glance. "And that I get to share it with the man that I've known for 50 years." — AFP



This combination of pictures created on August 16, 2019 shows live album (left) of "Woodstock: Music from the Original Soundtrack and More" features couple Bobbi and Nick Ercoline on the cover and the same Bobbi and Nick Ercoline, posing 50 years later at Bethel Woods Center for the Arts on August 15, 2019 in Bethel, New York. — AFP



A deejay (DJ) mixes tracks as youths attend an electronic dance music event, during the annual Baghdad Summer Festival at the People's Hall in the Iraqi capital. — AFP photos



A deejay (DJ) mixes tracks as youths attend an electronic dance music event, during the annual Baghdad Summer Festival.

BEATS REPLACE BOMBS: YOUNG IRAQIS REVEL AT SUMMER FESTIVAL



A deejay (DJ) mixes tracks as youths attend an electronic dance music event.

Hundreds of Iraqi teenagers clapped along exuberantly to techno beats pumping across a makeshift dance hall on Friday night, a scene their capital had not witnessed in decades. Neon red, yellow and white stage lights helped transform the basketball court in the People's Stadium in central Baghdad into a club for the "Summer Festival", the first celebration of its kind in the city. The party started at noon with a car show: classic cars, souped-up four-wheelers and motorcycles with proud owners revving their engines. As the DJ took the stage, boys and girls alike swayed and sang along to Western tunes, alternated with popular Iraqi hits.

Though there were only a few young women among the 1,000 or so revelers, their presence was notable in a country where public spaces remain conservative. "I love this type of music," said Layan, a 19-year-old woman in a leather black top and full makeup. "I hear a lot of people say that we're influenced by the West. Fine, there's no difference to me—the important thing is I don't have to listen to this music at home in secret anymore," she said, pumping her fist into the air. Just a few years ago, the sound of staccato gunfire or the echo of car bombs was more common in Baghdad than the resounding bass of electronic music.

Iraq has been hit by nearly four decades of conflict, from a devastating war with Iran in the 1980s to the US-led invasion that toppled Saddam Hussein in 2003. Sectarian warfare followed, then the onslaught of the Islamic State group in 2014, only defeated territorially in late 2017. Friday's festival was the latest indication that Iraq is enter-



ing a phase of relative stability, with blast walls and checkpoints coming down across the capital. Restaurants are again abuzz with families and coffee shops full of young people watching cover bands late into the night, something that not so long ago was considered too dangerous because of the risk of suicide bombers. — AFP

A member of a biker gang rides a Harley Davidson motorcycle as others show off their machines during the annual Baghdad Summer Festival.



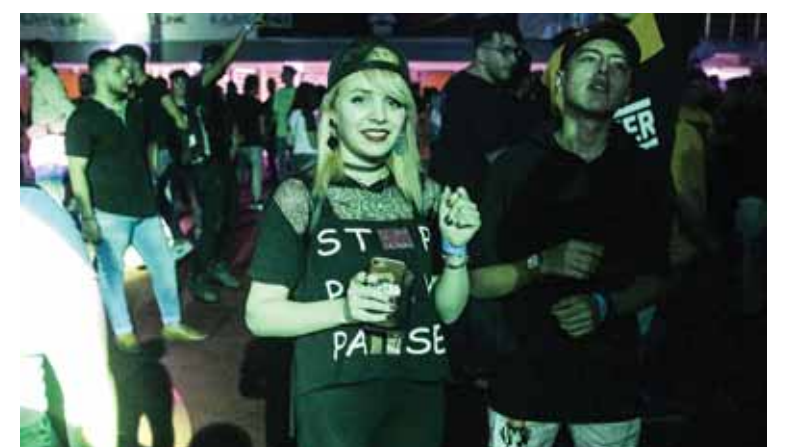
Youths attend an electronic dance music event.



Youths attend an electronic dance music event.



A deejay (DJ) mixes tracks as youths attend an electronic dance music event.



Youths dance during an electronic dance music event.



Dressed-up Iraqi women stand alongside a Volkswagen Beetle classic car during the annual Baghdad Summer Festival.



The Rocinha favela and the Dois Irmaos hill are seen from a hiking trail - part of a projected 8,000-kilometer trail across Brazil, which will be one of the longest in the Americas - in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos



People look at the view from Vista Chinaesa belvedere on the way of a hiking trail - part of a projected 8,000-kilometer trail across Brazil.

TRANS-BRAZIL TRAIL RAISES HOPES FOR FUTURE OF ATLANTIC FOREST

L uiz Pedreira walks with other hikers beneath the Atlantic Forest's thick canopy in Brazil, where an 8,000-kilometre (5,000-mile) trail stretching the full length of the country is being opened up. He says he hopes that the creation of the trail, one of the world's longest, will raise awareness about the fragility of the forest—long devastated by loggers and farmers, and now facing a renewed threat under President Jair Bolsonaro. "If you don't know something, you don't value it," says Pedreira.

Tourist draw
Ranked by WWF as the second most diverse ecosystem on the planet after the Amazon, the Atlantic Forest—or Mata Atlantica in Portuguese—is teeming with thousands of plant and animal species. When the Portuguese first arrived in Brazil in the early 16th century, the forest covered more than 1.3 million square kilometers (500,000 square miles) — an area roughly twice the size of France. Since then, however, nearly 90 percent of it has disappeared—destroyed over

good for the environment," French businessman and long-time Rio resident Yves Lahure told AFP after finishing a six-hour hike on a trail that will form part of the coastal track. But history shows the forest can be revived. Much of the Atlantic Forest that envelops Rio was felled for coffee plantations in the 19th century, says Horacio Ragucci, president of the Brazilian Excursionist Center, as he leads a group along a dirt path made by slaves.

A water crisis forced then Brazilian emperor Dom Pedro II to seize the land and reforest it, creating what is today Tijuca National Park. Ragucci says the number of people visiting the forest has increased over the past 10 years, many motivated to find a scenic spot to snap a selfie. "Today, groups meet on Facebook and gather 50 people to do a trail," Ragucci tells AFP. Brazil's authorities hope the long-distance track will draw more foreign travellers to the country—already a tourist hotspot—to generate much-needed revenue and jobs.

"While the US receives 307 million visitors to its parks every year, earning \$17 billion, Brazil receives just over 10 million visitors and makes two billion reais (\$500 million)," former tourism minister Vinicius Lummertz has lamented. "This data makes no sense—we need to take action." The trajectory of the trail is still being finalized, as authorities try to persuade private landholders in the forest to allow hikers, runners and mountain bikers to pass through their properties.

'Delight itself'

"If I could do it every week, I would," says Andreza Albuquerque, as she and a group of hikers take a break during their walk, their sweaty backs to the trees as they gaze over the sprawling city and Atlantic Ocean below. "When Monday comes around, you start work with a totally different energy."

Nearly 200 years ago, British naturalist Charles Darwin expressed similar sentiments after visiting the Atlantic Forest for the first time. "Delight itself, however, is a weak term to express the feelings of a naturalist who, for the first time, has wandered by himself in a Brazilian forest," Darwin wrote in his diary in 1832. Lahure says he supports the idea of a trans-Brazil trail, though he worries the forest could one day attract too many nature lovers. "We have a city of six million people," Lahure says, referring to Rio. "If everyone comes to Tijuca forest, it will be finished." — AFP



The Christ Redeemer statue and the Sugar Loaf hill are seen from a hiking trail - part of a projected 8,000-kilometer trail across Brazil.

Inspired by long-distance tracks such as Canada's 24,000-kilometer Great Trail, the project will connect paths from the southern town of Chui on Brazil's border with Uruguay, to Oiapoque on its northern frontier with French Guiana. The result will be a continuous coastal corridor for humans and animals. Work is already under way on the trail, which has the backing of Brazil's environment and tourism ministries, but it could take years to complete. "If you know something, if you are always in the forest, you will value it more," Pedreira tells AFP as he stands near a cliff offering 180-degree views of the heavily forested mountains and granite monoliths that divide Rio de Janeiro's neighborhoods. "It allows people to connect to the forest."

centuries to make way for coffee plantations, sugar cane fields, mining, cattle grazing or cities.

While the rate of deforestation has slowed in recent years, according to SOS Mata Atlantica Foundation, there are fears that Bolsonaro's anti-environment rhetoric will reverse that trend. Deforestation in the Amazon—a rainforest seen as crucial to keeping climate change in check—soared 278 percent year-on-year in July, according to the National Institute for Space Research (INPE). That follows a 90 percent increase in June compared to the year prior—figures Bolsonaro has called "lies" and which prompted the recent sacking of INPE chief Ricardo Galvao. "Unfortunately, this government isn't very



People walk along a hiking trail - part of a projected 8,000-kilometer trail across Brazil.



People take photos at Mirante da Freira belvedere.



People take photos as they walk along a hiking trail - part of a projected 8,000-kilometer trail across Brazil.

Gentle giraffes threatened with 'silent extinction'

F or most of his life as a Samburu warrior, Lesaiton Lengoloni thought nothing of hunting giraffes, the graceful giants so common a feature of the Kenyan plains where he roamed. "There was no particular pride in killing a giraffe, not like a lion... (But) a single giraffe could feed the village for more than a week," the community elder told AFP, leaning on a walking stick and gazing out to the broad plateau of Laikipia. But fewer amble across his path these days: in Kenya, as across Africa, populations of the world's tallest mammals are quietly, yet sharply, in decline.

Giraffe numbers across the continent fell 40 percent between 1985 and 2015, to just under 100,000 animals, according to the best figures available to the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). But unlike the clarion calls sounded over the catastrophic collapse of elephant, lion and rhino populations, less attention was paid to the giraffe's private crisis. "The giraffe is a big animal, and you can see it pretty easily in parks and reserves. This may have created a false impression that the species was doing well," said Julian Fennessy, co-chair of the IUCN's specialist group for giraffes and okapis.

The rate of decline is much higher in central and eastern regions, with poaching, habitat destruction and conflict the main drivers blamed for thinning herds of these gentle creatures. In Kenya, Somalia and Ethiopia, reticulated giraffe numbers fell 60 percent in the roughly three decades to 2018, the IUCN says. The Nubian giraffe meanwhile has suffered a tragic decline of 97 percent, pushing this rarer variety toward total extinction.

Further afield in Central Africa, the Kordofan giraffe, another of the multitude subspecies, has witnessed an 85 percent decrease. In 2010, giraffes were a species of "least concern" on the IUCN red list. But six years later they leapt to "vulnerable", one step down from critical, catching many by surprise. "This is why the giraffe we speak of the threat of a silent extinction," said Jenna Stacy-Dawes, research coordinator at the San Diego Zoo Institute for Conservation Research.



This file photo shows reticulated sub-species of Giraffe at Loisaba conservancy in Laikipia. — AFP

Mysterious giants

Despite this, an international effort under way to put giraffes squarely on the global conservation agenda has divided professional opinion. Six African nations are pushing to regulate the international trade in giraffes under the UN Convention on Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), which meets from August 17 to 28 in Geneva. Those advocating for the change, including Kenya, want the giraffe classified as "a species that, although not necessarily currently threatened with extinction, could become so if trade in their specimens were not closely controlled".

Critics however say there is little evidence the international wildlife trade is responsible for dwindling giraffe numbers. A lack of reliable data has long hindered efforts to protect them. "Compared to other charismatic species like elephants, lions and rhinos, we know very little about giraffes," said Symon Masiaine, a coordinator in the Twiga Walinzi giraffe study and protection program, which began in Kenya in 2016. "Nowadays, we are still far behind, but we are making progress."

Almost nothing is reliably known about giraffe populations in Somalia, South Sudan and eastern parts of Democratic Republic of Congo, where collecting such information is perilously difficult. But even research outside conflict zones has been patchy. Arthur Muneza, from the Giraffe Preservation Foundation, said the first long-term study of giraffes was not carried out until 2004. Data on giraffes is often gathered as an afterthought by researchers focusing on other wildlife, he added.

"Without reliable data, it is more difficult to take appropriate conservation measures," Muneza said. It was not until 2018 that the IUCN had enough statistics to be able to differentiate the threat levels facing many giraffe subspecies. The reticulated and Masai giraffes, for examples, were classified as "endangered" while the Nubian and Kordofan were "critically endangered".

Trophy hunting

Under the proposal before CITES, the legal trade in giraffe parts, including those obtained by trophy hunters on Africa's legal game reserves, would be globally regulated. Member countries would be required to record the export of giraffe parts or artefacts, something only the United States currently does, and permits would be required for their trade. But observers say the limited information available suggests most of this trade originates from places where giraffe numbers are actually rebounding, like South Africa and Namibia, where game hunting is legal.

Muneza says there isn't a clear enough picture that the legal trade is linked to declining giraffe numbers. "The first step should be to conduct a study to find out the extent of international trade and its influence on giraffe populations," he said. Those supporting the proposal before Geneva talk of a "precautionary principle"—doing something now before it is too late. For Masiaine, the Kenyan giraffe researcher, any publicity is good publicity for these poorly-understood long-necked herbivores. "It means that people are talking about the giraffe," he said. "And the species really needs that." — AFP

Classifieds

Sunday, August 18, 2019



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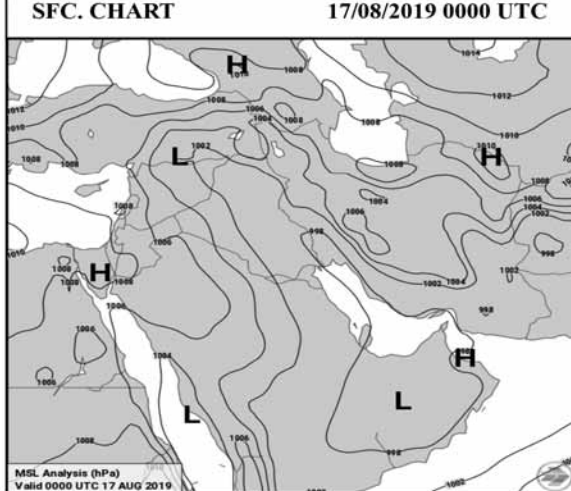
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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Hot with light to moderate freshening gradually north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 38 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 17/08/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	33 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	46 °C	30 °C			
ABDALY	46 °C	30 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	46 °C	32 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	47 °C	30 °C			
SALMIYAH	43 °C	33 °C			
AHMADI	45 °C	33 °C			
NUWASIB	46 °C	32 °C			
WAFRA	46 °C	30 °C			
SALMY	44 °C	27 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	08/18	Hot	45 °C	30 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Monday	08/19	Very hot	48 °C	32 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 32 km/h
Tuesday	08/20	Very hot	49 °C	32 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 35 km/h
Wednesday	08/21	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas and some high clouds will appear	49 °C	33 °C	NW-VRB	06 - 28 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:52
Sunrise	05:17
Zuhr	11:52
Asr	15:27
Sunset	18:27
Isha	19:49

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	34 °C
MAX. RH	14 %
MIN. RH	06 %
MAX. Wind	NW 53 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sajjad Husain Mukadam Hakimuddin hereby declare that I have changed my name to Hakimuddin Mukadam henceforth, I shall be known as Hakimuddin Mukadam for all future purposes. Address: Bohra Street Mandsaur Madhya Pradesh. (C 5577)

I, VINCENT SIRE JOAQUIM ANTONIO RODRIGUES holder of Indian Passport No. L0080611 having permanent address: House No. 869, Varik Vaddo, Curtorim, Salcette, Goa, 403709, India residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as: Given name: VINCENT SIRE and Surname: RODRIGUES (C 5578)

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HR-Admin Executive 10 years + experience in GCC with accounting background looking for a suitable job. Email: mazen_bh@yahoo.com Mob: +965 50687025 (C 5576) 18-8-2019

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complete the online application form and upload a CV and a covering letter by the Closing date: **29/08/2019**

Please note that only those selected for further consideration will be contacted.

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

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

Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 18/8/2019				Departure Flights on Sunday 18/8/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:10	JZR	309	BJV	11:45
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MEGA	405	Beirut	11:55
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	BBC	044	Dhaka	12:00
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
JZR	130	Dubai	00:20	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	735	Cairo	12:30
AHY	119	Baku	00:55	IGO	1756	CNN	12:30
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	KAC	115	Doha	13:30
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	ETH	3621	Tehran	13:30
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	515	Kochi	13:55
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
JZR	726	Alexandria	01:55	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
JZR	262	Beirut	02:05	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	UAE	878	Dubai	15:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
MEA	400	Beirut	02:50	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
THY	768	Istanbul	02:55	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	JZR	405	Bahrain	16:00
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	QTR	1087	Doha	16:15
PGT	856	Istanbul	03:10	MSR	613	Cairo	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	PGT	861	Istanbul	16:20
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	PGT	857	Istanbul	16:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	1735	Cairo	16:25
PJT	742	Istanbul	04:00	QTR	1077	Doha	16:55
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	LMU	511	Cairo	17:00
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	OHY	351	Istanbul	17:10
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	IGO	1752	Chennai	17:25
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	303	Mumbai	17:35
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC	103	London	17:40
JZR	1738	Cairo	04:45	KAC	215	Jeddah	17:45
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	PGT	7433	Istanbul	17:50
THY	1414	Trabzon	05:05	ETD	306	Cairo	17:50
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	FDB	070	Dubai	17:55
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	THY	1465	Istanbul	18:00
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	THY	771	Istanbul	18:00
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	GFA	212	Bahrain	18:10
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	RJA	649	Amman	18:20
KAC	112	Doha	05:50	JZR	251	Amman	18:25
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR	121	Dubai	18:35
BAW	157	London	06:10	JZR	113	Doha	18:35
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	RBG	550	Alexandria	18:35
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	KAC	171	Frankfurt	19:10
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	JZR	211	Jeddah	19:10
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	KAC	165	Rome	19:20
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	BAW	156	London	19:20
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	IGO	1767	Mumbai	19:30
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	177	Vienna	19:45
IGO	1766	Mumbai	07:10	KAC	545	Cairo	19:50
QTR	8511	Doha	07:10	KAC	501	Beirut	20:00
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	KAC	561	Amman	20:05
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	KAC	117	New York	20:20
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC	791	Madinah	20:30
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	QTR	8512	Doha	20:35
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	QTR	1085	Doha	20:45
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC	787	Jeddah	20:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	671	Dubai	20:55
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	161	Geneva	21:05
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	691	Muscat	21:05
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	JZR	601	Baku	21:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	KAC	773	Riyadh	21:25
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	741	Dammam	21:50
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	ABY	126	Sharjah	21:50
SAW	703	Damascus	10:00	JZR	731	Cairo	22:00
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	UAE	856	Dubai	22:10
BBC	043	Dhaka	10:20	JZR	301	Istanbul	22:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	22:20
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	OMA	642	Muscat	22:25
JZR	216	Jeddah	10:55	KAC	101	London	22:25
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	197	Baku	22:35
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	QTR	1071	Doha	22:50
JZR	1736	Cairo	11:05	KAC	155	Istanbul	22:55
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	KAC	617	Doha	23:00
IGO	1755	CNN	11:30	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	23:00
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	FDB	056	Dubai	23:05
MSR	610	Cairo	12:15	SVA	513	Riyadh	23:20
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	SAW	704	Damascus	23:45
JZR	738	Cairo	12:20	JZR	221	Riyadh	23:55
ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	12:30	KAC	157	Istanbul	23:55
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30				



A resident carts water in the town of Kulusuk, Greenland on Friday. — AFP

Greenland is not for sale, but valuable

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's reported wish to buy Greenland may have been rejected by Denmark, but it underscores the rapidly rising value of the massive, ice-covered island due to global warming and to China's drive for an Arctic presence. The accelerating polar ice melt has left sparsely populated Greenland, a self-governing part of Denmark, astride what are potentially major shipping routes and in the crosshairs of intensifying geopolitical competition between superpowers.

It also has untapped natural resources like oil, minerals and valuable rare earth elements that China, the United States and other major tech economies covet. A Chinese government-backed group's offer last year to build three new international airports on Greenland sparked alarms in Copenhagen and Washington. The Chinese plan was finally nixed in exchange for Danish funding and a pledge of support from the Pentagon.

Greenland's ministry of foreign affairs insisted the island was ready to talk business, but was not for sale. "#Greenland is rich in valuable resources such as minerals, the purest water and ice, fish stocks, seafood, renewable energy and is a new frontier for adventure tourism," it tweeted. "We're open for business, not for sale," it added.

A former premier, Lars Lokke Rasmussen, tweeted: "It must be an April Fool's Day joke... but totally out of season!" Greenland locals were similarly bemused by the report. "If you look at the social media, people see it as a big joke," Jakob Ipsen, owner of a hotel in Kulusuk in eastern Greenland, told AFP. "In my own opinion, it's never going to happen. People are laughing at the moment."

Trump's idea to buy Greenland, reported by the Wall Street Journal on Friday, "is not a serious proposal," said

Heather Conley, a specialist at the Center for Strategic and International Studies in Washington. But, "The administration has awoken to the Arctic as a geostrategic issue," she said. Greenland has been essential to US defense since World War II when it was a base for monitoring Nazi ships and submarines passing through the "Arctic Avenue", the sea gateway to the north Atlantic.

In 1943 the US Air Force built its farthest-north air base at Thule, Greenland. Thule was crucial in the Cold War, a first line of monitoring against a potential Russian attack. With a population of 600, the base today is part of the NATO mission, operating satellite monitoring and strategic missile detection systems and handling thousands of flights a year. "The early warning radar system in northern Greenland helps protect North America and is a key part of our missile defense apparatus," said Luke Coffey of The Heritage Foundation. "Luckily the US is able to ensure and meet its security interests by maintaining this air base in northern Greenland. There's no requirement to buy Greenland to keep America safe."

Conley said that after the Cold War ebbed in the 1990s, Washington stopped thinking about the Arctic. Yet as the polar ice sheet began to shrink, the Russians became more active and China has moved to establish itself in the region. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo underscored the revived US interest in a speech in May in Finland, where he slammed China and Russia for "aggressive behavior" in the Arctic. "The region has become an arena of global power and competition" owing to vast reserves of oil, gas, minerals and fish stocks, he warned. "Just because the Arctic is a place of wilderness does not mean it should become a place of

lawlessness," he said.

But Washington has not taken many concrete actions, Conley said. Pompeo only offered that the State Department would position a diplomat in Greenland's capital Nuuk for six months of the year. "The rhetoric and the reaction - there is a very big gap," she said. With no geographical claim to the region, but whose massive commercial shipping industry would benefit from new polar routes as the ice melts, China is the newcomer whose presence could shift the balance.

It began sending scientific missions in 2004. In the

past several years, a Chinese company has gained mining rights for rare earths, partnering with an Australian company in the Kvanefield project. In Jan 2018 Beijing unveiled its "Polar Silk Road" strategy to extend its economic footprint through the Arctic. To gain favor in Nuuk, the Chinese have wined and dined government officials, said Coffey. "China's role in the Arctic has been more about expanding its economic influence, soft power," said Coffey. "Ice melting is part of the interest, it is opening up new economic opportunities, but it's also opening up challenges. The US is aware of that," he said. — AFP

Tlaib scraps trip; grandma...

Continued from Page 1

bow down to their oppressive & racist policies," she said, referring to her grandmother. "Silencing me & treating me like a criminal is not what she wants for me. It would kill a piece of me."

On Friday, Palestinian activists had been urging Tlaib on social media not to visit her grandmother under the Israeli terms. Trump weighed in late Friday, calling Tlaib's turnaround "a complete setup". "Rep Tlaib wrote a letter to Israeli officials desperately wanting to visit her grandmother. Permission was quickly granted, whereupon Tlaib obnoxiously turned the approval down, a complete setup." He added: "The only real winner here is Tlaib's grandmother. She doesn't have to see her now!"

Ninety-year-old Muftia Tlaib, sitting under an olive tree in her garden yesterday in the village of Beit Ur Al-Fauqa, was not impressed. "Trump tells me I should be happy Rashida is not coming," she said. "May God ruin him." Her son, Rashida's uncle Bassam Tlaib, said the women had not seen each other since 2006: "She was going to slaughter a sheep when Rashida arrived and prepare her favorite food, stuffed vine leaves. Rashida sees her granny as a second mother, she has always supported her. Rashida says she owes her success to her grandmother."

"I see her coming to the village in traditional (Palestinian) dress," Muftia Tlaib told AFP on Thursday, before the latest development. "Trump has told Rashida and Ilhan to go back to their home countries. What a contradiction, yesterday he asked them to leave and today he asks that they aren't let in," said Bassam Tlaib. Still, the grandmother is hopeful: "My heart tells me that she will come."

Iran tanker in limbo as US...

Continued from Page 1

Gibraltar seized the ship on July 4 on suspicion it was transporting oil to Syria in breach of European Union sanctions, triggering a sharp deterioration in relations between Tehran and London. Iran has repeatedly denied this. Iran subsequently detained the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in what was seen as a tit-for-tat move. On Thursday, Gibraltar's Supreme Court ordered the tanker released after the British overseas territory said it had received assurances from Iran that the Grace 1 would not head to any country subject to EU sanctions.

But in a last-minute twist on Friday, the United States, which is at loggerheads with Iran, issued the warrant. It says the vessel and all the oil aboard are subject to forfeiture based on violations of US sanctions. It also cites violations of bank fraud, money laundering and terrorism statutes. The US State Department has also threatened to issue a visa ban on anyone working on the ship.

The US move comes after it tried - and failed - to

The United States, particularly under Trump, is Israel's strongest ally. But the two congresswomen are seen by many as enemies of Israel because of their support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Israel sees the movement as a strategic threat and accuses it of anti-Semitism - a claim activists deny - and in 2017 passed a law banning entry to foreigners supporting a boycott. Israel occupied the West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and has for decades built settlements considered illegal under international law.

Settlement growth has accelerated under Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, a close Trump ally who is seeking re-election next month. More than 600,000 Israelis live in the settlements, alongside nearly three million Palestinians, in uneasy proximity throughout the West Bank and occupied east Jerusalem. Israel's initial refusal to allow Tlaib and Omar to transit the Jewish state on their way to the West Bank sparked outrage among Palestinians and debate about the intimate ties between Netanyahu and Trump.

Despite fierce criticism of Tlaib and BDS on the Israeli side, the country's media largely slammed Netanyahu over the affair. The premier was accused of putting loyalty to Trump and the Republican Party ahead of Israel's clear interest in maintaining bipartisan US support. "After countless zigzags between what is right for Israel and what is right for Trump, Netanyahu chose Trump," analyst Shimrit Meir wrote in the top-selling Israeli daily Yediot Aharonot.

The affair could cause US Democrats to rally around the two Muslim congresswomen, commentators said, in a way which could prove detrimental to Israel. Ben Caspit, a journalist with the Maariv newspaper, said Thursday's decision to block the politicians' entry "set new records for shortsightedness and wretchedness". "It will turn them into martyrs, it will turn Israel into a threshold dictatorship lacking self-confidence that is closed onto itself, that bans elected American officials, critical as they may be," he said. — Agencies

block the tanker's release on Thursday. The July 4 seizure came amid surging tensions in the Gulf after several alleged Iranian attacks on smaller tankers. The US - citing Tehran's threat to American allies - expanded its military presence in the region with a new aircraft carrier task force, missile batteries and strategic bombers. Iran called the detention of the Grace 1 an "illegal interception" staged by the United States, while Washington cheered it as "excellent news".

Ties between Tehran and Washington are at a low point since US President Donald Trump withdrew last year from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Iran, reimposing crippling unilateral sanctions. On Friday, Iranian officials said the tanker was preparing to set sail under an Iranian flag and would be renamed the Adrian Darya for the voyage. Tehran also denied it had made any promises about the ship's destination to secure the release.

"Iran has given no assurances over the Grace 1 not going to Syria to secure its release," a state media website quoted foreign ministry spokesman Abbas Mousavi as saying. "The tanker's destination was not Syria... and even if it was, it did not concern anyone else." But Gibraltar insisted it was. Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said Gibraltar had deprived the Syrian regime of Bashar Al-Assad of around \$140 million worth of crude oil, according to a government statement. — AFP

Syria regime strikes kill...

Continued from Page 1

The attack came a day after Russian air raids killed 15 civilians, including six children in a nearby displacement camp in the town of Hass, according to the war monitor. Two other children were killed by Syrian regime air strikes in different parts of southern Idlib on Friday, it said. A French foreign ministry statement released after those attacks condemned "indiscriminate air strikes by the regime and its allies in Idlib". It specifically mentioned the air strikes on the displacement camp and called "for an immediate cessation of hostilities".

Over the past week, regime forces have advanced on the southern edges of Idlib province, with the aim of capturing the town of Khan Sheikhoun, which lies on a key highway coveted by the regime. The highway runs

through Idlib, connecting government-held Damascus with the northern city of Aleppo, which was retaken by regime forces from rebels in Dec 2016. Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has since January controlled most of Idlib province as well as parts of neighboring Hama, Aleppo and Latakia provinces. Other rebel groups are also present in the area.

A buffer zone deal brokered by Russia and Turkey last year was supposed to protect the region's three million inhabitants from an all-out regime offensive, but it was never fully implemented. Regime and Russian air strikes and shelling since late April have killed more than 850 civilians, according to the Observatory. The United Nations says the violence has displaced more than 400,000 people.

AFP correspondents have reported seeing dozens of families flee fighting over the past few days, heading north in trucks stacked high with belongings. Syria's conflict has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions at home and abroad since starting with the brutal repression of anti-regime protests in 2011. — AFP

modest selection of vegetables at the market. But many Sudanese are already questioning the ability of the transitional institutions to rein in the military elite's powers during the three-year period leading to planned elections.

The country of 40 million people will be ruled by an 11-member sovereign council and a government, which under the deal must be dominated by civilians. However, the interior and defense ministers are to be chosen by military members of the council. Observers have warned that the transitional government will have little leverage to counter any attempt by the military to roll back the uprising's achievements and seize back power.

Security forces deployed across Khartoum yesterday for the biggest international event in years in Sudan, which had become something of a pariah country under Bashir's rule. One of the most immediate diplomatic consequences of the compromise reached this month could be Sudan's return to the African Union, which suspended the country's membership in June. Bashir, who took power in a 1989 coup and is wanted by the International Criminal Court on charges of genocide in the Darfur region, had been slated to appear in court yesterday on corruption charges. But his trial has been postponed to an as yet undetermined date. — Agencies

Sudan generals and protest leaders...

Continued from Page 1

At Khartoum's central market early yesterday, shoppers and stallholders interviewed by AFP all said they hoped a civilian government would help them put food on the table. "Everybody is happy now," said Ali Yusef, a 19-year-old university student who works in the market to get by. "We were under the control of the military for 30 years but today we are leaving this behind us and moving towards civilian rule," he said, sitting next to tomatoes piled directly on the ground. "All these vegetables around are very expensive but now I'm sure they will become cheaper."

While it remains to be seen how the transition will change people's daily lives, residents old and young were eager to exercise their newfound freedom of expression. "I'm 72 and for 30 years under Bashir, I had nothing to feel good about. Now, thanks to God, I am starting to breathe," said Ali Issa Abdel Momen, sitting in front of his

Sports

Yastrzemski hits three homers as Giants edge D-backs in 11-inning

McCann belts slam to power White Sox past Angels

PHOENIX: Mike Yastrzemski hit three home runs, including a solo shot on the first pitch of the 11th inning, as the San Francisco Giants outlasted the Arizona Diamondbacks 10-9 Friday night in Phoenix in a wild game that featured 12 homers. It was the first career multi-home run game for Yastrzemski, a 28-year-old rookie who has five homers in his past four games and 11 since the All-Star break. He has 16 on the season. Each team went deep six times to set a Chase Field record for combined home runs. The Diamondbacks hit five homers from the eighth inning on, establishing a team record, but still came up short. Yastrzemski's third shot came off Yoan Lopez (1-5). Closer Will Smith (5-0) got the win, despite giving up two blasts in the 10th to cough up a 9-7 lead. Kevin Pillar went deep twice for San Francisco, as Wilmer Flores did the same for Arizona.

A's 3, Astros 2 (13 innings)

Robbie Grossman grounded a two-out single up the middle in the 13th inning, scoring Corban Joseph from second base with the winning run as host Oakland outlasted Houston. After Oakland used solo home runs by Mark Canha and Marcus Semien off Astros starter Justin Verlander to account for all their scoring through 12 innings, Oakland resorted to small-ball to record its ninth walk-off win of the season. Joseph led off the 13th against Cy Sneed (0-1) with an opposite-field single to left. He was then sacrificed to second by Chris Herrmann before scoring an out later on Grossman's game-winner. Lou Trivino (4-5), who worked three scoreless innings, got credit for the win.

Yankees 3, Indians 2

Masahiro Tanaka pitched effectively into the seventh inning as New York beat visiting Cleveland. The Yankees rebounded nicely from a 19-5 pummeling by the Indians on Thursday and won for the 15th time in their past 18 games. New York also improved to 10-1 in its last 11 home games. Tanaka (9-6) allowed two runs on four hits in 6 1/3 innings. Slumping Yankees slugger Aaron Judge produced his first multi-hit game since Aug. 3 and scored two runs.

Pirates 3, Cubs 2

Kevin Newman hit a two-out, walk-off single as Pittsburgh edged visiting Chicago. The Pirates entered the ninth trailing 2-1, but Cole Tucker's bases-loaded walk tied the game. Pittsburgh starter Joe Musgrove matched a career high with nine strikeouts, walked none and pitched seven shutout innings before he was charged with two runs in the eighth.

Twins 4, Rangers 3

Jonathan Schoop hit a two-run, go-ahead home run in the seventh inning, and Max Kepler also homered to lead Minnesota to a victory in Arlington, Texas. Marwin Gonzalez went 3-for-4 with a run, and Ehire Adrianza had a single and a double for Minnesota, which increased its lead in the American League Central to 1 1/2 games over Cleveland. Kepler, a native of Berlin, Germany, hit his 33rd homer of the season, passing

Bobby Thomson (Scotland) for most in a season by European-born player in major league history.

Nationals 2, Brewers 1

Anthony Rendon doubled home the go-ahead run in the eighth inning to lead streaking Washington past visiting Milwaukee for its fifth straight win. Sean Doolittle retired Yelich, Ryan Braun and Yasmani Grandal in the ninth for his 28th save. Rendon stroked two doubles and has 61 extra-base hits. Victor Robles' single was the Nationals' only other hit, and Trea Turner scored both runs and stole a base.

Royals 4, Mets 1

Mike Montgomery and four relievers limited New York to one run as Kansas City prevailed at home. Ian Kennedy loaded the bases in the ninth but escaped with his 21st save in 24 chances. Montgomery (3-5) allowed one run on five hits in six innings, with two walks and three strikeouts. Noah Syndergaard (8-6), who had pitched at least seven innings in six straight starts, saw that streak snapped. He allowed two runs on five hits and two walks in six innings. He struck out six.

Dodgers 8, Braves 3

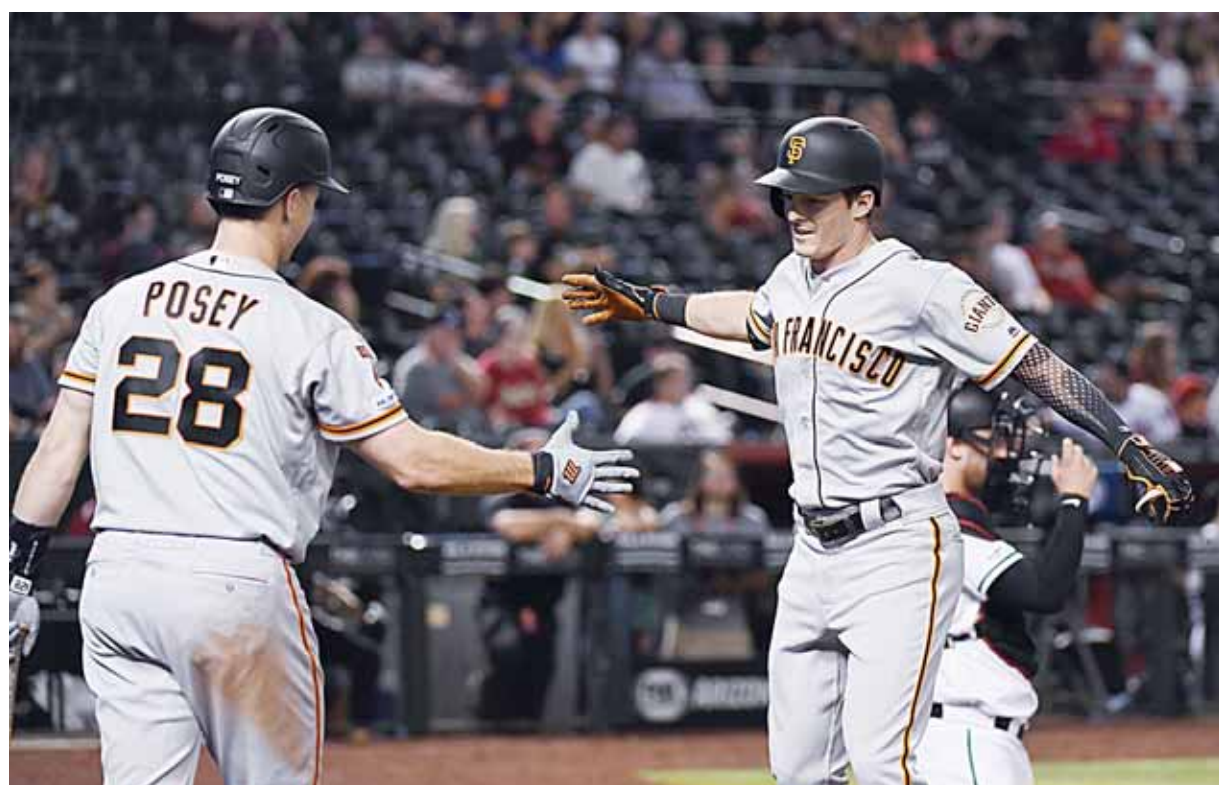
Max Muncy and Justin Turner hit back-to-back home runs in the seventh inning to produce a four-run rally and send visiting Los Angeles on its way to a win over Atlanta. The Dodgers trailed 3-2 to start the seventh but took the lead when Muncy delivered a towering three-run shot against reliever Sean Newcomb. Turner followed with his long ball. Combined with Cody Bellinger's second-inning solo homer and Will Smith's two-run homer in the eighth, the Dodgers set a major league record by hitting at least four home runs in their fifth straight game. They have hit 22 homers during that stretch.

Cardinals 13, Reds 4

Dexter Fowler homered to highlight his three-hit, four-RBI performance, and Paul Goldschmidt, Paul DeJong and Koltan Wong also went deep as visiting St. Louis cruised past Cincinnati. Long collected four hits and scored three runs, and Goldschmidt added an RBI single for the Cardinals, who totaled 18 hits en route to their sixth victory in seven contests. Cincinnati rookie Aristides Aquino launched a two-run shot in the sixth inning to set a major league record with his 10th homer in his first 15 career games. The 25-year-old's blast off Adam Wainwright (9-8) broke the mark set by Philadelphia's Rhys Hoskins, who had 10 homers in the first 17 contests in 2017.

White Sox 7, Angels 2

James McCann went 3-for-4 with a grand slam to help Chicago post a victory over Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. The 446-foot blast was McCann's second slam in three games and the fifth of his career. The eighth-inning homer turned a 3-2 lead into a five-run advantage. White Sox right-hander Lucas Giolito struck out 11 in six innings, and Leury Garcia and Tim Anderson each went 2-for-5 with two runs. Mike Trout smacked his career-high-tying 41st homer for the



PHOENIX: Mike Yastrzemski #5 of the San Francisco Giants celebrates with Buster Posey #28 after hitting a solo home run during the eleventh inning against the Arizona Diamondbacks to take the lead at Chase Field in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP

Angels. He also is even with Cody Bellinger of the Dodgers for most blasts in the majors.

Rockies 3, Marlins 0

Ryan McMahon and Nolan Arenado homered to back a strong outing from starter Jon Gray, and Colorado beat Miami in Denver. Gray (11-8) went eight innings and gave up five hits in the opener of a three-game series. He struck out seven without issuing a walk. It was the second time he has pitched eight innings in his past four outings and the third time this year he didn't give up a run in a start. Scott Oberg pitched the ninth for his fifth save in eight opportunities.

Red Sox 9, Orioles 1

Rick Porcello pitched six strong innings, and Chris Owings put the game away with a pinch-hit, two-run double as Boston beat visiting Baltimore. Porcello (11-9) gave up one run on four hits with two walks and two strikeouts. Andrew Benintendi had three hits and fell a home run short of the cycle as the Red Sox won their third straight game. Jonathan Villar and Chance Sisco had two hits apiece for the Orioles, who fell for the 10th time in their past 11 games.

Tigers 2, Rays 0

Drew VerHagen tossed five innings of scoreless relief, rookie Travis Demeritte had two hits and scored a run, and Detroit edged Tampa Bay in St Petersburg,

Fla. VerHagen (3-2) allowed three hits and a walk while striking out three. Joe Jimenez replaced him and got the last three outs for his third save. Tampa Bay had runners on the corners with two outs in the ninth, but Jimenez struck out Eric Sogard to end the game. Tigers starter Daniel Norris pitched three innings, allowing one hit and two walks and striking out three before a blister issue flared up.

Blue Jays 7, Mariners 3

Vladimir Guerrero Jr. and Derek Fisher each hit two-run homers, and Randal Grichuk and Danny Jansen added solo shots as Toronto defeated visiting Seattle. Jacob Waguespack (4-1) allowed two runs, five hits and one walk with five strikeouts over 5 1/3 innings in the opener of a three-game series. Mariners lefty Wade LeBlanc, who entered with a 2-0 lead in the second inning, gave up seven runs on 11 hits in seven innings.

Phillies 8, Padres 4

Bryce Harper homered for the fourth time in three games, leading host Philadelphia past San Diego. Philadelphia's Roman Quinn homered, and J.T. Realmuto had a home run and a double among his three hits. Harper, Logan Morrison and Jean Segura added two hits each for the Phillies, who won their fourth in a row. Phillies starter Vince Velasquez (5-7) lasted 5 1/3 innings and allowed five hits and three runs. He walked two and struck out five. —Reuters

All Blacks whip Wallabies to send out WCup message

AUCKLAND: The All Blacks sent out an emphatic message that they are not to be underestimated at the World Cup as they bounced back from last week's hiding to thrash the Wallabies 36-0 in Auckland yesterday.

Having been mocked in the media sparring before the Test as the "Old Blacks" and "over the hill", the All Blacks dug deep into their wealth of experience to outscore the Wallabies five tries to nil.

It is the first time since 2012 and the eighth time overall that Australia have failed to score in a Test against New Zealand. Coach Steve Hansen's bold move to drop the experienced Ben Smith and Rieko Ioane was rewarded with the two fledgling replacements, George Bridge and Sevu Reece, both scoring tries.

The overwhelming victory, just seven days after suffering a record loss to the Australians, saw the All Blacks retain the Bledisloe Cup for a 17th straight year. It also meant the Wallabies, who arrived confident they could end years of misery at the All Blacks' Eden Park fortress, go home still winless in Auckland in 19 Tests stretching back to 1986.

A week after the Wallabies bullied the All Blacks up front and around the fringes, this time it was the New Zealand tight five who had control and the loose trio of Kieran Read, Ardie Savea and Sam Cane commanded the breakdown.

The All Blacks may be notoriously slow starters but they opened up this time bristling with determination and had an immediate injection of confidence when Christian Lealiifano's kick-off went out on the full.

Within minutes they had pushed the Wallabies deep into their own territory where Richie Mo'unga opened the scoring with a penalty. The Wallabies had their moments midway through the half with Samu Kerevi and Marika Koroibete finding space that had the All Blacks scrambling.

But a sustained period of drives at the line were repulsed by a watertight All Blacks defence, while two penalty attempts by Lealiifano went wide. The All Blacks took control with a 60-metre try to Mo'unga from an inter-



AUCKLAND: Australia's Marika Koroibete (L) and Allan Alaalatoa tackle New Zealand's Sam Cane (C) during the Rugby Championship Bledisloe Cup Test match between the New Zealand All Blacks and Australia in Auckland yesterday. —AFP

cept pass, and then Bridge, making the most of his first Test start with a series of raids down the left wing, put Aaron Smith in for a try.

All Blacks skipper Kieran Read's plea for better discipline from his troops was largely successful, although there will be concerns over Dane Coles' sinbining just before half-time for a dangerous clear-out.

But despite his absence, a seven-man All Blacks pack marched the Wallabies eight backwards in two scrums. As soon as Coles

returned to the fray, five minutes into the second half, Sonny Bill Williams crashed through two tackles to score by the posts and extend the lead to 24-0.

Reece, who had a quiet first half, fired up in the second when play swung his way and was rewarded with a try when he toed the ball passed Hodge and then outsprinted Kurtley Beale to score. Bridge slid in for a try in the corner just before full-time to round off a one-sided victory. —AFP

Matsuyama fires 63 to seize Medinah lead, Tiger stumbles again

WASHINGTON: Japan's Hideki Matsuyama shattered the course record at Medinah with a nine-under par 63 Friday to seize the early second-round lead at the US PGA BMW Championship while Tiger Woods struggled again.

Matsuyama, a 2017 US Open runner-up seeking his sixth US tour title, birdied five of the first eight holes and four of the final seven in a bogey-free round to stand on 12-under 132 after 36 holes at the famed suburban Chicago layout.

"It seemed like every birdie chance I had today I made the putt," Matsuyama said. "Add it up, that's what I got!" His total was two strokes under the old course mark of 65 shared by first-round co-leaders Justin Thomas and Jason Kokrak and previously held by Woods, Skip Kendall and Canada's Mike Weir.

Americans Tony Finau and Patrick Cantlay shared second in the clubhouse on 133, one stroke off Matsuyama's pace. Thomas carded a 69 and was alone on 134 with a fifth-place pack in the clubhouse on 135 that included Canadians Adam Hadwin and Corey Conners, Slovakia's Rory Sabbatini and Americans Lucas Glover, Chez Reavie and Xander Schauffele.

Woods, a 15-time major champion who won his first major since 2008 at this year's Masters, sank birdie putts from 13 and 20 feet at the 14th and 15th holes but made bogeys at 16 and 17 to fire his second consecutive 71, 10 adrift of leader Matsuyama.

"I left quite a few shots out there," Woods said. "I hit the ball a lot better today, which is great, and didn't really make anything until 14, 15." Woods slid even further from his goal of cracking the top 30 on the PGA playoff season points list to earn a chance to defend his Tour Championship title next week in Atlanta.

"I'm going to have to have a great weekend and make a lot of birdies this week and post some rounds in the mid-60s to give myself a chance," he said. Woods, who has complained about lack of practice after pulling out last week at Liberty National with an oblique strain, won the 1999 and 2006 PGA Championship titles at Medinah.

"My feel has not been where I want it," Woods said. "Hit the ball pin high every time... I certainly have not made many putts. Putt well and I'll shoot good scores. I haven't done that." Matsuyama, also needing a strong result this week to advance, sank a 28-foot birdie putt on the first hole, a 10-footer for birdie at four and two-putted from 30 feet to birdie the par-5 fifth. —AFP

Sports

Brave Smith out for 92 after being hit in head by bouncer

Smith, first batsman to post seven consecutive Ashes scores of fifty

LONDON: Australia batsman Steve Smith just missed his third Ashes hundred in as many innings after returning following a sickening blow to the neck from a Jofra Archer bouncer on the fourth day of the second Test against England at Lord's yesterday.

Smith left the field during the day's second session. He came back and was eventually out leg before wicket for 92, the first time this series he had failed to make three figures. The star batsman was on 80 when he turned away from an express delivery from England fast bowler Archer timed at 92.4 mph. The ball struck him on the side of the neck and head. Smith, fell face forward onto the ground. He was wearing a helmet without the additional neck protection that was introduced following the death of Phillip Hughes after his former Australia team-mate died after being hit by a bouncer in a 2014 domestic Sheffield Shield match in Sydney.

Smith received several minutes of on-field treatment involving both Australian and English medical staff. He got to his feet but, after a prolonged conversation with Australia team doctor Richard Saw, decided to retire hurt.

Smith received a generous round of applause as he walked back into the pavilion. Australia were then 203-6, 55 runs behind England's first-innings 258. World Cup-winner Archer, making his Test debut, had previously struck Smith on his unprotected forearm with another bouncer during a fiery eight-over spell that cost 31 runs.

Smith resumed his innings as soon as he could. After 46 minutes off the field, he came back in when Peter Siddie was caught behind off Chris Woakes to leave Australia 218-7. From the second and third balls he faced on his return, Smith hit two fours off Woakes: a slammed shot over mid-on followed by a backfoot drive through the cov-

ers. But on 92, facing his ninth ball after resuming, Smith shouldered arms to a Woakes delivery that nipped back and was plumb lbw to leave Australia 234-8. Smith turned towards the pavilion, signalling that he was reviewing umpire Chris Gaffaney's decision almost as an after-thought. Replays confirmed his dismissal, with Smith receiving more applause from the MCC members in the pavilion as he walked back in.

'ONGOING MONITORING'

A Cricket Australia spokesman, explaining how Smith had been allowed to resume his innings, said: "Steve was hit on the neck below the left ear. "He was assessed lying on the pitch at the instructions of team doctor Richard Saw. "Dr Saw made the precautionary decision to remove Steve from the field of play to have him further assessed under Cricket Australia's head impact protocol. Steve then passed his assessments and will now be monitored on an ongoing basis, as is routine."

As for Smith's arm injury, the spokesman added: "Prior to the blow to his neck, Steve suffered a bruised left arm. "He was given a compression bandage on the field of play to reduce the swelling and he took a painkiller."

"The arm was then iced in the dressing room before he returned to bat following the blow to his neck. It'll be assessed on an ongoing basis." Only England's Herbert Sutcliffe (1924/25) and Australia's Charlie Macartney (1926) and Arthur Morris (1946/47) have scored hundreds in three successive Ashes innings.

But this innings saw Smith become the first batsman to post seven consecutive Ashes scores of fifty or more. His half-century at Lord's followed the 30-year-old Smith's superb scores of 144 and 142 in Australia's 251-run win in



LONDON: Australia's Pat Cummins (R) celebrates taking the wicket of England's captain Joe Root (unseen) for no runs during play on the fourth day of the second Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Lord's Cricket Ground in London yesterday. — AFP

the series opener at Edgbaston last week — his first Test since he completed a 12-month ban for his role in a ball-

tampering scandal in South Africa that cost him the Australia captaincy. — AFP

Domingo named new Bangladesh cricket coach

DHAKA: The Bangladesh Cricket Board on Saturday named South Africa's Russell Domingo as the new head coach of the national team, replacing Englishman Steve Rhodes. The 44-year-old has agreed to a two-year term with the BCB and is expected to arrive in Dhaka on Wednesday to take charge.

"He has a wealth of experience and we have been very impressed with his passion and coaching philosophy," BCB president Nazmul Hassan said. Bangladesh were struggling to appoint a head coach ahead of hosting Afghanistan for a one Test series in early September and a tri-nation tournament with the visitors and Zimbabwe.

The Tigers had no coach for over a month after the BCB parted ways with Rhodes following the team's eighth-place finish in the league stage of the World Cup. BCB Director and former skipper Khaled Mahmud took temporary charge during an 0-3 defeat to Sri Lanka in a three-match one-day international series in late July.

Hassan said they chose Domingo ahead of other candidates because of his availability. "We also sought a full-time coach... (Domingo) said he was very keen to work with the boys and didn't want any holiday breaks. These are the reasons why we found him suitable," he added.

Domingo, the lone candidate to face an interview for



Russell Domingo

the post when he arrived in Dhaka on August 7, said he was eagerly looking ahead to his new challenge. "I have followed Bangladesh's progress with keen interest and I am extremely excited to assist the team in reaching the goals that they are capable of," a BCB statement quoted him as saying.

Domingo was the assistant coach of South Africa in 2011. He replaced Gary Kirsten as national team head coach of the Proteas in 2013 and remained there 2017. He led South Africa to semifinals of the 2014 World Twenty20 in Bangladesh.

Domingo will have compatriots Charl Langeveldt and Neil McKenzie among his support staff. Bangladesh last month appointed Langeveldt as the pace bowling coach and retained McKenzie as batting coach.

Former New Zealand captain Daniel Vettori has also been appointed as new spin bowling coach up to ICC World Twenty20 in Australia next year.

Meanwhile, Bangladesh Cricket Board have decided to rest out-of-form opener Tamim Iqbal for next month's one-off Test against Afghanistan following a request from the player, an official said yesterday.

Afghanistan arrive later in August for their maiden Test against Bangladesh in Chittagong from September 5. Chief selector Minhajul Abedin said Tamim would also be rested during a tri-nation Twenty20 tournament from September 13 which will also involve Zimbabwe.

Abedin said the board had accepted Tamim's request for a break. "He will now rest both in the Test match against Afghanistan and also the tri-nation tournament," he told AFP. Bangladesh's top run scorer in all formats, Tamim struggled in the recent World Cup where he scored only 235 in eight innings at 29.37 average.

He was later made interim captain for a three-match one-day international series in Sri Lanka in the absence of injured skipper Mashrafe Mortaza. But the leadership role failed to bring out his best as Tamim made only 21 runs in three matches and Bangladesh lost the series 0-3.

Team-mate Shakib Al Hasan, who did not play the Sri Lanka series, advised Tamim to take some time off to regain form. Tamim is now expected to return during the November tour in India when Bangladesh are scheduled to play two Tests and three Twenty20 internationals. — AFP

US NBA squad off to Australia before making last cuts

LOS ANGELES: United States coach Gregg Popovich has decided to take 14 NBA players to Australia for workouts before the Basketball World Cup in China, knowing only 12 will make the final roster.

The Americans will try to capture a third consecutive World Cup crown next month with a lineup that lacks many of the league's superstars but boasts top young talent guided by the veteran San Antonio Spurs mastermind.

After the weekend trek to Australia, the US squad will have more time to analyze talent and chemistry while players can make a final case to be included on the World Cup squad.

"It seemed like the right thing to do," Popovich said. It's also a safeguard against injuries as US guard Marcus Smart of the Boston Celtics missed Friday's 90-81 exhibition triumph over Spain at Anaheim with a calf strain.

"The wins and losses are pretty unimportant at this time," Popovich said. "It's more about getting better, getting together, a group learning to execute together."

Sacramento's Harrison Barnes, a member of the 2016 Rio Olympic gold medal squad, and Boston's Kemba Walker, the only one of 11 US players voted onto one of the three All-NBA third team this past season on the roster, are among those joining Smart on the trip to Australia.

The other squad members are Boston's Jaylen Brown and Jayson Tatum; Milwaukee's Brook Lopez and Khriston Middleton; Sacramento's De'Aaron Fox, Brooklyn's Joe Harris, Utah's Donovan Mitchell, Indiana's Myles Turner, Denver's Mason Plumlee, San Antonio's Derrick White and Kyle Kuzma of the Los Angeles Lakers.

The Americans will work August 19-24 in Melbourne, with exhibition games there against Australia on Thursday and Saturday, then work August 25-28 at Sydney with an August 26 matchup there against Canada. — AFP

Diaz set to return to spotlight at UFC 241

CALIFORNIA: The heavyweight title fight between Daniel Cormier and Stipe Miocic has top billing at UFC 241 in California on Saturday, but all eyes will be on the comeback of Nate Diaz, conqueror of Conor McGregor, after over a thousand days in the wilderness.

Always a favourite with hardcore fight fans, Diaz shot to wider fame when he humbled superstar McGregor, handing him his first UFC defeat in March 2016. The rematch in August of the same year was an instant classic and a huge pay-per-view draw in which McGregor won a narrow decision victory.

But instead of making the most of his new-found fame, Diaz has not fought since, blaming the UFC for his three-year absence from the octagon. "I beat the best guy, and you guys (the UFC) are just treating me like, vanished," Diaz said in a recent interview with ESPN. Having banked millions for the two McGregor fights, the 34-year-old claims that the UFC never offered him the right money or opponent to entice him to get back in the cage.

Diaz has kept busy by competing in triathlons and opening a business selling cannabidiol (CBD) products with his older brother and fellow UFC fighter Nick, before finally finding a worthy comeback opponent in Anthony "Showtime" Pettis.

"They (the UFC) have been trying to degrade me the whole time I've been out, they're trying to put me low on the card against not very big names," he explained at a recent open workout. "It don't matter. I believe I'm the main event in any even they got," he added.

That is true of Saturday night's card, where the heavyweight title rematch between Cormier and Miocic is barely causing a ripple on social media in comparison to the return of Diaz in a welterweight bout against Pettis in the co-main event. "I'm here as a businessman and a natural-born killer."

I'm here to get the job done, and he (Pettis) is the guy to do it on," he said. Like Diaz, Pettis has had some epic and bloody battles in the past, and with both men keen to fight off the front foot, the crowd at the Honda Arena in Anaheim will be expecting some fireworks.

The possibility of a trilogy fight against former two-weight champ McGregor, who hasn't fought since losing his lightweight belt to Khabib Nurmagomedov in October last year, still looms large over Diaz's career, but the Californian is remaining tight-lipped. "I'm gonna fight this weekend, and time will tell on all that stuff," he said. — Reuters



MASON: Sofia Kenin plays Naomi Osaka of Japan during the Western & Southern Open at Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason, Ohio. — AFP

Barty reaches Cincy semis, Osaka retires with knee injury

CINCINNATI: Ashleigh Barty edged closer to a return to the top WTA ranking on Friday, reaching the WTA semifinals as current number one Naomi Osaka retired with a knee injury. Barty, the Australian top seed, engineered her second comeback in as many days, overhauling Maria Sakkari 5-7, 6-2, 6-0. But the US Open alarm bells were ringing for Osaka less than two weeks before the start of her title defense at Flushing Meadows after a left knee injury saw her retire against Sofia Kenin — sending the American into the semis with a 6-4, 1-6, 2-0 victory.

Men's top seed Novak Djokovic also had the trainer on during his 7-6 (7/2), 6-1 victory over Lucas Pouille, but hoped discomfort in his right elbow wouldn't linger.

"I managed to finish the match, there was a little bit of tightness in there," Djokovic said. "Hopefully all will be fine for tomorrow." The 16-time Grand Slam champion will next face Daniil Medvedev, who beat Russian compatriot Andrey Rublev, conquer this week of Roger Federer, 6-2, 6-3.

Osaka's left knee trouble was more of a concern, the Japanese star admitting it put a cloud over her upcoming US Open title defense.

"Last year I won the US Open and this year I'm trying to play the US Open," she said. "I don't even really think about winning the tournament. I just want to have the chance to play it, now. "If there is a 1 percent chance of me

not playing it, that's what's concerning me." Osaka had won the second set to level the match when she first complained of apparent knee pain and after one game of the third set called for the physio. With the knee heavily taped Osaka played one more game before packing it in and sending Kenin to the semis. "This is not the way I wanted to win," said Kenin, who will next play fellow American Madison Keys, a 6-2, 6-3 winner over Venus Williams.

French Open champion Barty will play for a place in the final against Russian veteran Svetlana Kuznetsova, who beat third seed Karolina Pliskova 3-6, 7-6 (7/2), 6-3 to end the Czech's chances of claiming the number one ranking next week. Serving for the match at 5-4 in the second set, Pliskova was broken. Kuznetsova dominated the ensuing tiebreaker and took charge in the third set as Pliskova began to fade. "I tried to play every point and stay in there," Kuznetsova said. "She served amazing. She aces me almost every time I had a break point."

Barty said a potential return to number one wouldn't be her focus this weekend. "I'm in the semis for the first time here," she said. "I'm not thinking of the ranking at all."

"I'm playing one match at a time. If I can win matches, the ranking will take care of itself." Elsewhere in the men's draw, France's Richard Gasquet earned his first Masters 1000 quarter-final victory in six years, defeating Roberto Bautista Agut 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-2.

Gasquet won his last contest at this level in Miami in 2013 and had since lost seven Masters quarter-finals.

He will play for a place in the final against 16th seed David Goffin, who advanced in a walkover against Japanese qualifier Yoshihito Nishioka, who could not take the court due to illness. "It's crazy for me to reach my first semi-final at this age," added Gasquet, who at 33 finally made it to the Cincy semis in his 13th appearance. — AFP

Karunaratne leads Sri Lanka victory push in Galle

GALLE: Sri Lanka got off to a strong start in their chase for a 268-run victory target after skipper Dimuth Karunaratne and Lahiru Thirimanne frustrated New Zealand with a 133-run opening stand on the penultimate day of the opening Test yesterday.

After New Zealand made 285 all out to leave the hosts with a tricky fourth-innings target, Karunaratne and Thirimanne batted sensibly through the last two sessions to swing momentum their way.

Karunaratne hit only two boundaries in his patient 71, while Thirimanne stroked four of them in his sedate 57 before bad light stopped play with the hosts needing 135 to go 1-0 up in the two-test series.

The home captain needed luck to reach the 50-mark, which he did when BJ Watling, who had an outstanding match with the bat, could not hold on to a catch after Karunaratne had edged spinner William Somerville.

Earlier, Watling and Somerville batted resolutely to frustrate Sri Lanka after New Zealand resumed on 195-7 at the Galle International Stadium. Watling, who had completed his fifty on Friday, fell for 77 which is the highest test score by a New Zealand wicketkeeper in Sri Lanka.

Trent Boult chipped in with 26 useful runs while Somerville remained not out on 40 after facing 118 balls. For the hosts, spinners Lasith Embuldeniya (4-99) and Dhananjaya de Silva (3-25) shared seven wickets between them. — Reuters

Sports

Aubameyang sinks Burnley to maintain Arsenal's winning start

Emery's team continues to bounce back from their dismal end to last season

LONDON: Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang was Arsenal's match-winner again as the Gabon forward sealed a 2-1 victory against Burnley to extend his side's perfect start to the Premier League season yesterday.

Aubameyang had netted the only goal in last weekend's win at Newcastle and he emulated that crucial contribution with another decisive strike at the Emirates Stadium. Alexandre Lacazette's first goal of the season had given Arsenal the lead before Ashley Barnes equalised for Burnley just before half-time.

It was an encouraging afternoon for Arsenal manager Unai Emery as his widely written-off team continued to bounce back from their dismal end to last season. Failing to finish in the top four and losing the Europa League final against Chelsea robbed Arsenal of a Champions League place and led to a summer of recriminations as fans vented their frustrations.

But Emery has quietly assembled a more vibrant squad than he had in his troubled first campaign. With two successive wins to start the season for the first time in 10 years, the early signs are promising for Arsenal ahead of sterner tests against Liverpool and Tottenham in their next two games.

As well as goals for Arsenal's two main strikers, there was a virtuoso performance from on-loan Real Madrid midfielder Dani Ceballos, who had two assists in his first start.

Club record signing Nicolas Pepe impressed after coming off the bench as half-time and although former Chelsea defender David Luiz was hardly rock solid on his debut, Emery's back four did enough to keep Burnley at bay.

Mesut Ozil was again absent from the Gunners squad after the German midfielder was ill earlier this week. Ozil missed the Newcastle match because of

"further security fears" after being involved in a car-jacking incident with team-mate Sead Kolasinac in July.

But Ozil's absence wasn't a hindrance against a Burnley team who suffered their eighth successive loss at the Emirates. Lacazette, back from an ankle injury that meant he was only a substitute at Newcastle, came close to putting Arsenal in front when he met a Sokratis flick with a close-range header that Nick Pope tipped over.

It was only a temporary reprieve for Burnley as Emery's side took the lead from the resulting corner in the 13th minute. Ceballos's corner reached Lacazette at the near post and he showed impressive strength to hold off Erik Pieters as he turned away from a gaggle of Burnley defenders, his determined effort sending him slipping to the turf but not before he guided his shot through Pope's legs.

Ceballos showed a deft touch and quick feet to escape the attentions of his marker, drawing a huge cheer from the Arsenal fans who are already comparing him to Gunners great Cesc Fabregas.

Reiss Nelson squandered a chance to double Arsenal's lead when he fired too close to Pope, who also denied Matteo Guendouzi after another attack sliced through the Burnley defence.

But Burnley drew level in the 43rd minute when Dwight McNeil's shot deflected to Barnes and he took advantage of Arsenal's sloppy marking to poke home from close range for his third goal of the season.

Nelson had a goal ruled out for offside against Nacho Monreal moments later in what proved to be the young winger's last contribution before he was replaced by Pepe at half-time.

Pope was in fine form and he pushed away Ceballos's shot from the edge of the area, but even the



LONDON: Burnley's English midfielder Jack Cork (C) vies with Arsenal's English midfielder Ainsley Maitland-Niles (2nd R) and Arsenal's French striker Alexandre Lacazette (2nd L) during the English Premier League football match between Arsenal and Burnley at the Emirates Stadium in London yesterday. — AFP

Burnley keeper couldn't stem the tide forever.

In the 64th minute, Ceballos tenaciously won possession and found Aubameyang, who accelerated towards the Burnley area. With Burnley's defenders

backing off, Aubameyang had time and space to drill a blistering strike past Pope, sparking a fevered touchline celebration from Emery as Arsenal's early-season momentum gathered pace. — AFP

Sancho scores as Dortmund run riot against Augsburg

BERLIN: Jadon Sancho helped Borussia Dortmund to a 5-1 win over Augsburg in their first game of the new Bundesliga season yesterday, scoring in the second half to pick up his second goal of the new campaign.

England international Sancho, who claimed his first of the term in Dortmund's Supercup victory over Bayern Munich two weeks ago, found the net just after half-time as Dortmund ran riot to go top of the table.

Having thrown away a nine-point lead and narrowly missed out on the title last season, Dortmund had promised another attack on Bayern's hegemony in 2019/20.

They were given an early boost when the champions dropped two points against Hertha Berlin in Friday's season opener, before romping to victory in front of their own fans on Saturday. Florian Niederlechner's first-minute opener for Augsburg left Dortmund stunned, but it took the hosts all of two minutes to draw level, as Paco Alcacer gratefully pounced on a mistake from Augsburg keeper Tomas Koubek.

Koubek was at fault once again when Sancho put Dortmund ahead after the break, flapping at a low cross before the Englishman smashed the ball in at the far post. The Czech keeper then crowned a miserable Bundesliga debut as he dropped the ball at the feet of Marco Reus to gift Dortmund a third goal.

A curling long-range strike from Alcacer and a debut goal for new signing Julian



DORTMUND: Dortmund's German midfielder Mario Goetze runs in to the Augsburg box during the German first division Bundesliga football match BVB Borussia Dortmund v Augsburg in Dortmund, western Germany yesterday. — AFP

Brandt completed the rout for Dortmund.

LEVERKUSEN WIN LATE-ON

Elsewhere, Former Dortmund boss Peter Bosz watched his Bayer Leverkusen side stumble their way to a 3-2 victory over promoted minnows Paderborn.

Leon Bailey deflected in Kevin Volland's long-range shot to give Leverkusen the lead on 10 minutes, but underdogs Paderborn responded almost immediately through Sven Michel. A nonchalant chip from Kai Havertz quickly restored the lead, but Strelci Mamba prodded Paderborn level from a goalmouth scramble just a few minutes later.

Kevin Volland slotted home the winner 20 minutes from time to give Leverkusen a hard-

earned winning start.

Werder Bremen, widely tipped as dark horses in this year's race for Europe, got their season off to the worst possible start with a 3-1 home defeat to Fortuna Duesseldorf.

Bremen's Johannes Eggestein cancelled out Rouwen Hennings' first-half opener just after the break, but goals from Kenan Karaman and Kaan Ayhan ensured a perfect afternoon for Duesseldorf.

A sweetly timed volley from Maximilian Arnold and a simple finish for Wout Weghorst saw Wolfsburg edge a 2-1 win over promoted side Cologne, while late goals from Lucas Hoeler, Jonathan Schmid and Luca Waldschmidt snatched a 3-0 win for Freiburg over Mainz. — AFP

Pukki hat-trick gives Norwich win over Newcastle

NORWICH: Norwich City's Finland striker Teemu Pukki grabbed a hat-trick, including a thunderous volley, as they beat Newcastle United 3-1 in their first home game back in the Premier League after a three-year absence at a sunny Carrow Road yesterday.

Last season's Championship top scorer and Player of the Season showed his class as the Canaries handed Newcastle's new manager Steve Bruce his second league defeat of the season on an unhappy return to a club he captained in the mid-1980s.

"Three points was what we wanted today. The first hat-trick in England so I'm really happy. Good, good victory especially after the display last week," said 29-year-old Pukki, who also got on the scoresheet in Norwich's opening 4-1 loss at Anfield.

"There are better players than in the Championship, but we are playing better football and the guys are creating chances - I could have scored more. My daughter will probably play with the match-ball. It will have a special place."

Norwich, who had dominated the

opening exchanges, took the lead just past the half hour when Pukki gave goalkeeper Martin Dubravka no chance with a stunning strike from 15 metres after a cross from Emiliano Buendia was headed out by the defence.

The Finn got his second after 63 minutes when Todd Cantwell rolled the ball to him and Pukki cut inside before striking a low shot into the bottom corner from just inside the area.

The striker wrapped up the points with his third goal in the 75th, after being set up by Cantwell again, before Jonjo Shelvey's late consolation for the visitors as Daniel Farke's Norwich put their opening league defeat behind them.

Pukki is the first Norwich player to score a Premier League hat-trick since Efan Ekoku against Everton in 1993. "It was a brilliant performance by Teemu today not just because of his goals but his workload," said the Norwich boss. "I was especially pleased with the defence. Grant Hanley had an unlucky time at Liverpool but a great performance today."

Norwich captain Hanley put Liverpool ahead last week with an early own goal but he marshalled the defence superbly against his old team, who rarely threatened and wasted the few chances they created including a glaring headed miss by Joelinton.

"It was hugely disappointing in the manner of it (the defeat)," said Bruce. "We certainly didn't do enough with or without the ball and we'll have to put that right for sure." — Reuters

No home joy for Villa as Bournemouth earn first victory

LONDON: Two early goals were enough for Bournemouth to earn a 2-1 win over Aston Villa yesterday to leave the newly-promoted hosts pointless after two games of the new Premier League season.

Villa got off to the worst possible start as Tom Heaton, making his home debut, brought down Callum Wilson in the penalty area inside 40 seconds, with Josh King sending the goalkeeper the wrong way from the spot.

Things went from bad to worse in the 12th minute as a mistake from Douglas Luiz, another close season signing, was seized upon by Bournemouth midfielder Harry Wilson who fired into the net, via a deflection off Tyrone Mings.

Aaron Ramsdale was forced into a fine save in the Bournemouth goal to deny John McGinn as Villa pressed for an equaliser, but the visitors got to halftime in a relatively comfortable position.

After the break, chance after chance went begging for Villa before Douglas

Luiz scored a stunning goal in the 71st minute to give his side hope.

That 30-yard curler proved to be in vain though, as Villa's first home match back in the top flight ended in defeat, with Bournemouth making it four points from their opening two matches.

Meanwhile, an early goal from Bernard was enough for a nervy Everton to beat Watford 1-0 at Goodison Park yesterday to secure their first Premier League win of the season.

Everton got off to the perfect start as the ever-impressive Lucas Digne picked out Bernard on the left, the Brazilian cut inside before firing home in just the 10th minute — his first Premier League goal at Goodison Park.

In response, Watford came close to an equaliser in the 24th minute but Craig Dawson saw his header bounce off the crossbar.

The Video Assistant Referee was then called into action as Watford looked for a penalty, but Yerry Mina's challenge on Gerard Deulofeu was deemed to be fair.

After the break, Everton continued to be careless in possession, with Jordan Pickford making a fine save with his face to deny Troy Deeney following a swift Watford counter.

Watford pressed for an equaliser but Everton stood firm to pick up their 10th clean sheet in their last 13 league games and earn Marco Silva a victory against his former club. — Reuters

Trossard shines on debut as Brighton draw with West Ham

LONDON: Brighton & Hove Albion debutant Leandro Trossard's superb strike cancelled out a second-half goal by West Ham's Javier Hernandez in an entertaining 1-1 Premier League draw at the Amex Stadium yesterday.

West Ham went in front in the 61st minute through Mexican striker Hernandez who ran onto a pass by Manuel Lanzini and tucked the ball past Brighton goalkeeper Mat Ryan.

New signing Trossard had a goal disallowed by the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) in the first half and missed another chance but the Belgian was not to be denied four minutes later as he blasted home from distance after West Ham failed to clear.

Brighton substitute Neal Maupay, who scored on debut in last weekend's 3-0 win at Watford, had a chance to win it but fired over in the 72nd minute with only West Ham goalkeeper Lukasz Fabianski to beat after a perfect assist by Glenn Murray.

"I thought the performance was really

good. We played better than we did last week but now we go forwards," Brighton manager Graham Potter said.

"We were the better team after the first 10 minutes. The level of football was good but we know we can improve as well."

Trossard thought he had put Brighton ahead when he volleyed in from close range in the 27th minute but the goal was disallowed after defender Dan Burn was ruled offside before providing the assist.

"The players really responded to the goal being ruled out and then going behind. It was slightly against the run of play to go behind, but the great thing about these players is we always keep fighting," Potter added.

"There's a long way to go but the signs are good. The points return looks good. Performances are the things we want to focus on and we'll look to do that next week and going forwards."

West Ham, who looked more settled after Michael Antonio was introduced at halftime, also had their opportunities to take all three points as the match wore on but Brighton held on firmly to remain unbeaten after two games.

"A draw is a fair result. In the second half both teams played better," West Ham boss Manuel Pellegrini said. "We know Hernandez can score... it was important not to lose a second game in a row."

Brighton next host Southampton on Aug. 24 while West Ham travel to Watford on the same day. — Reuters



Matches on TV (Local Timings)

ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE	
Sheffield United v Crystal Palace	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
Chelsea v Leicester City	18:30
beIN SPORTS HD 2	
SPANISH LEAGUE	
Deportivo Alaves v Levante	18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
RCD Espanyol v Sevilla	20:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
Real Betis v Real Valladolid	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 4	
Atletico de Madrid v Getafe CF	23:00
beIN SPORTS HD 3	
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA	
Eintracht Frankfurt v TSG 1899 Hoffenheim	6:30
beIN SPORTS HD 5	
FC Union Berlin v RB Leipzig	19:00
beIN SPORTS HD 5	
FRENCH LEAGUE	
Saint Etienne v Stade Brest 29	16:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6	
Stade Reims v RC Strasbourg	18:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1 FR	
Stade Rennais v Paris Saint-Germain	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 6	

25 All Blacks whip Wallabies to send out WCup message

26 Brave Smith out for 92 after being hit in head by bouncer

27 Aubameyang sinks Burnley to maintain Arsenal's winning start



Mane, Firmino shoot Liverpool to victory

Klopp's team showed enough mental strength to come away with three points



SOUTHAMPTON: Southampton's Malian midfielder Moussa Djenepo (L) vies with Liverpool's English midfielder Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain (R) during the English Premier League football match between Southampton and Liverpool at St Mary's Stadium in Southampton, southern England yesterday. —AFP

SOUTHAMPTON: Liverpool made it two successive wins to start their Premier League title bid as goals from Sadio Mane and Roberto Firmino clinched a hard-fought 2-1 victory over Southampton yesterday.

Jürgen Klopp's tired team were ragged in their passing and lacked organisation in defence, but still showed enough mental strength to come away with three points. It was completely against the run of play when Senegal winger Mane put Liverpool ahead against his former club just before half time at St Mary's.

Brazil forward Firmino scored a clinical second but a dreadful error by Reds goalkeeper Adrian gifted a goal to Danny Ings that set up a tense finish. Former Liverpool

forward Ings should really have equalised to give Southampton what would have been a well-deserved point.

The reason for the Champions League winners' lacklustre display was not hard to find. While Southampton were recovering from their defeat at Burnley on the opening weekend of the season, Klopp's men were in Istanbul, playing extra-time against Chelsea in Wednesday's European Super Cup victory. That gruelling trip seemed to take its toll against Southampton and Liverpool, who also faced Manchester City at Wembley in the Community Shield 13 days ago, looked out on their feet at times.

Liverpool soon began to struggle against a lively home side, who should have gone

ahead after 21 minutes when Maya Yoshida got above Virgil Van Dijk to reach a corner from James Ward-Prowse, only to see Adrian parry his header to safety.

The Spanish goalkeeper was in action again just short of the half-hour, pushing out a low cross from Ryan Bertrand and for a few seconds all was chaos in the Liverpool penalty area as defenders tried in vain to clear the ball.

And neither Joel Matip nor Van Dijk dealt with a first-time cross by Ward-Prowse from the right. Che Adams getting between them to nod the ball over the crossbar.

Mane gave Liverpool the lead in first half stoppage-time when he took a pass inside from James Milner before sidestepping a defender and curling a shot inside the far

post. That and the interval seemed to give Liverpool their second wind. Mohamed Salah had an excellent chance to double their lead 10 minutes after half-time when he raced clear of defenders, but the Egypt striker failed to disguise his shot, allowing Angus Gunn to spread himself and save.

Firmino sliced the ball wide of goal after Mane had outpaced the defence and swept the ball in low from the left. Southampton sent on Ings and he faded a shot just over the crossbar from distance.

But after 70 minutes Liverpool showed again how deadly they can be when teams relax against them even for a second.

Mane won the ball from Southampton's own throw-in and found Firmino, who

danced inside along the edge of the penalty area, waited his moment and shot low past Gunn. Andrew Robertson was denied a goal-of-the-month contender when Gunn dived to his right to block the Scotland left-back's volley after a quick exchange of passes with Mane.

Adrian had to save well when Matip deflected Stuart Armstrong's cross towards the corner of his own net. But the goalkeeper blundered badly with seven minutes left, hitting an attempted clearance against Ings' right foot and back into goal under no pressure at all. And Ings miskicked from six yards when any sort of contact would have produced an equaliser in the closing moments. —AFP

Man City held by Spurs amid new VAR controversy

MANCHESTER: Manchester City had a late goal from Gabriel Jesus ruled out by VAR video review as they drew 2-2 at home to Tottenham Hotspur yesterday — their first league home game without victory in nearly eight months.

The Brazilian drove in what looked like the winner in added time but while City were celebrating, the VAR review had spotted a handball by City defender Aymeric Laporte before Jesus struck home. City exited the Champions League in April to Spurs when they had a late 'winner' ruled out by VAR.

Pep Guardiola's side had taken the lead in the 20th minute when Kevin De Bruyne swung in a cross from the right which Raheem Sterling met at the back post with a textbook header.

But City's advantage lasted less than three minutes with Erik Lamela firing them level after he was expertly picked out by Tanguy Ndombele. The setback didn't however knock Pep Guardiola's side out of their stride and it was no surprise when Sergio Aguero restored their lead in the 35th minute, with De Bruyne once again the provider with a low ball superbly turned in at



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

the near post by the Argentine.

Again, City camped in the Spurs half peppering Hugo Loris's goal but once more the visitors fought back. Mauricio Pochettino sent on Lucas Moura as a

substitute and the Brazilian scored with his first touch, beating Kyle Walker to head in a Lamela corner. Then came the late drama and controversy as VAR once again stole the headlines. — Reuters

Kroos piledriver helps Madrid win at Celta

VIGO: Real Madrid got off to a flying start in La Liga by beating Celta Vigo 3-1 away from home yesterday with the help of a magnificent long range strike from Toni Kroos, although they had Ballon d'Or winner Luka Modric sent off for a straight red card.

Karim Benzema put Madrid ahead in the 12th minute after a superb piece of wing play from Gareth Bale, who had earned a surprise starting berth due to injury to Eden Hazard after a close season period of uncertainty over his future.

Celta had an equaliser ruled out on the stroke of half-time for offside after a video review but they benefitted from the use of the technology in the 56th minute when Modric was punished for raking his studs against the heel of Denis Suarez.

The hosts could not make the most of the extra man as German midfielder Kroos doubled Madrid's lead five minutes later with an unstoppable distance strike, while substitute Lucas Vazquez added a third in the 80th after a pass from Benzema.

Celta finally managed to get a goal back in stoppage time when 18-year-old Iker Losada scored two minutes after coming off the bench to make his first team debut. — Reuters