



5 Kuwait joins celebrations of 'women humanitarians'



15 Iceland commemorates first glacier lost to climate change



21 High-end rebrand makes life sweet for Japan's 'ice farmers'



28 Lampard denied first win as Leicester draw at Chelsea



Kuwait, Iran discuss means to alleviate regional tensions

Gibraltar rejects US demand to seize Iranian oil tanker

Amir recovers, in good health now

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah has recovered from a setback and is in good health now, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan confirmed yesterday. Mohammad Dhaifallah Sharar said results of medical examinations HH the Amir underwent were positive. Sheikh Mohammad prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow wellbeing upon HH the Amir. — KUNA



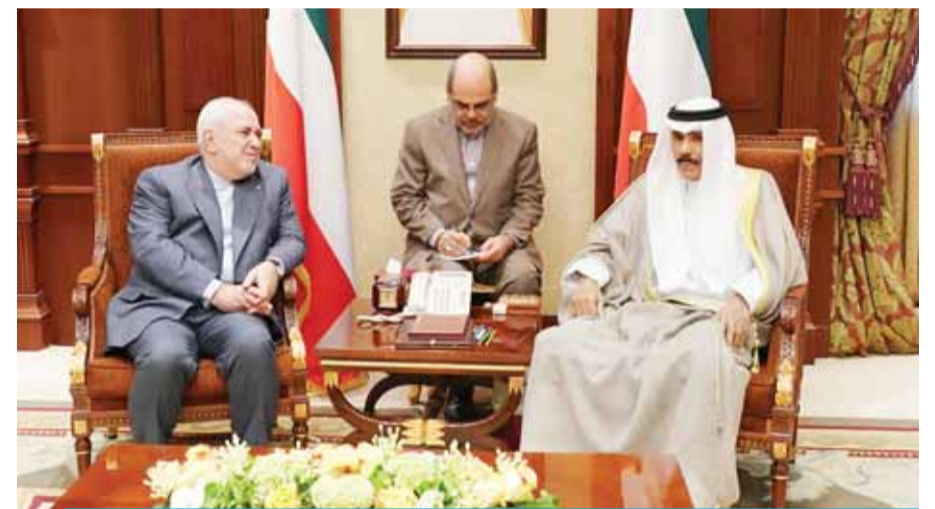
KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held talks yesterday with his Iranian counterpart Mohammad Javad Zarif on a host of issues, including means of reducing tensions in the Gulf region. The discussions between Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled and Zarif dealt with cooperation between the two friendly countries, latest regional events and ways to ease tensions in the Gulf. The talks also addressed means to ensure free navigation in this key region of the world, bilateral ties and matters of mutual concern, in addition to latest happenings around the world. Zarif also met HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

"Good talks with Kuwaiti crown prince and foreign minister. Praying for Emir's speedy recovery," Zarif wrote on Twitter.

Zarif said that during the talks, he stressed that Iran's proposal for a regional dialogue forum and non-aggression pact would eliminate the need to rely on foreign powers. Unlike its strained relations with Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, Iran maintains good ties with Kuwait, which has acted as mediator to improve ties between Tehran and Arab Gulf states.

Meanwhile, Gibraltar yesterday rejected a US demand to seize an Iranian oil tanker at the center of a diplomatic dispute as it prepared to leave the British overseas territory after weeks of detention. Gibraltar's government said it could not seek a court order to detain the supertanker because US sanctions against Iran were not applicable in the European Union.

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif yesterday. — KUNA

Jleeb residents facing eviction, area to be razed

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Official sources said the situation in Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh has received major attention amid an expanded push for a comprehensive redevelopment plan as soon as possible. They said the project's implementation will not wait for the completion of planned labor cities, and practical steps will be taken to evict residents.

The committee dealing with the situation includes seven government agencies - the Municipality, the

interior, electricity and water and public works ministries, and the manpower, environment and food authorities. The Cabinet has asked for quick action and finding a deep-rooted solution to the chaotic situation in Jleeb, considering its proximity to the airport and Shadadiya university.

Sources said among the solutions is a total reclamation of the area and rebuilding it from scratch, either for citizens' housing or transforming the entire area into a commercial district with malls, entertainment and hotel projects due to its strategic location, adding the Cabinet will discuss both proposals.

The sources said razing the area and rebuilding it will be through the private sector via BOT projects or offering it for investment. Sources said the committee decided that the area's reclamation is inevitable, considering its residents number more than 300,000, who face the highest rates of crime in the country.

Recruitment of expats based on local needs: Aqeel

KUWAIT: Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel yesterday said the recruitment of foreign workers to the country is based on labor contracts and according to the needs of the local market. "Figures circulated recently in the media about the entry of large numbers of the Egyptian community monthly to the country are incorrect," Aqeel told reporters at the headquarters of the General Secretariat for Planning.

She stressed statistics show the real monthly rate of entry of this community to Kuwait is between 1,400 and 2,200 people per month in the private sector. Aqeel noted the total work permits for Egyptian workers issued in 2018 amounted to 62,000, while 23,000 were canceled in 2018, pointing out that Egyptians who entered the government sector last year amounted to 577 workers, mostly teachers.



Mariam Al-Aqeel

Continued on Page 24

IS Kabul wedding attack kills 63; Amir sends condolences

KABUL: Joy and celebration turned into horror and carnage when an Islamic State suicide bomber targeted a packed Afghan wedding hall, killing at least 63 people in the deadliest attack to rock Kabul in months, officials and witnesses said yesterday. The massive blast, which took place late Saturday in west Kabul, came as Washington and the Taliban finalize a deal to reduce the US military presence in Afghanistan and hopefully build a roadmap to a ceasefire.

The groom recalled greeting smiling guests in the afternoon, before seeing their bodies being carried out hours later. The attack "changed my happiness to sorrow," the young man, who gave his name as Mirwais, told local TV station Tolo News. "My family, my bride are in shock, they cannot even speak. My bride keeps fainting," he said. "I lost my brother, I lost my friends, I lost my relatives. I will never see happiness in my life

again." Interior ministry spokesman Nasrat Rahimi said a suicide bomber carried out the attack, with at least 63 people killed and 182 injured. "Among the wounded are women and children," Rahimi said.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolence to Afghan President Mohammad Ashraf Ghani over the victims of the terrorist explosion. In the cable, the Amir voiced Kuwait's emphatic denunciation of this odious terrorist act that targeted innocents, while reiterating Kuwait's rejection of all forms and manifestations of terrorism. Sheikh Sabah prayed to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy upon the victims and patience to their families, wishing a swift recovery to those injured in the blast. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables.

Afghan weddings are epic and vibrant affairs, with hundreds or often thousands of guests celebrating for hours inside industrial-scale wedding halls where men are usually segregated from women and children. "The wedding guests were dancing and celebrating the party when the blast happened," recounted Munir Ahmad, 23, who was seriously injured and whose cousin was

Continued on Page 24



KABUL: Afghan men investigate at a wedding hall after a deadly bomb blast yesterday. — AFP

4,000 detained in Kashmir since autonomy stripped

SRINAGAR: Thousands of people have been detained in Indian Kashmir over fears of unrest after New Delhi stripped the region of its autonomy two weeks ago, government sources told AFP. A magistrate speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity said at least 4,000 people were arrested and held under the Public Safety Act (PSA), a controversial law that allows authorities to imprison someone for up to two years without charge or trial.

"Most of them were flown out of Kashmir because prisons here have run out of capacity," the magistrate said, adding that he had used a satellite phone allocated to him to collate the figures from colleagues across the Himalayan territory amid a communications blackout and lockdown imposed by authorities. The revelations came as the family of a timber trader alleged he died after suffocating from tear gas fired by security forces.

"They (security forces) first damaged the property and when he went out to check, they fired tear gas shells and because of the smoke, he suffocated and died," Muddasir

Continued on Page 24



MUZAFFARABAD: Kashmiri refugees in Pakistan-administered Kashmir take part in a protest rally yesterday. — AFP

Is Trump's love affair with Fox News fading?

WASHINGTON: Last month after Donald Trump watched Fox News lob what he called "softball questions" at a Democratic lawmaker, the US president delivered a crisp smackdown of his favorite network: "Fox sure ain't what it used to be."

After years of often fawning coverage by Fox, particularly from its pro-Trump anchors like Sean Hannity, the commander in chief appears to be tilting his media gaze toward a younger, more right-wing rival, cable outfit One America News Network (OANN). The small upstart broadcaster was launched only recently, in 2013, by technology millionaire Robert Herring, who sought a more conservative alternative to mainstream media behemoths like CNN.

Today it seeks to outfox Fox by drawing extra attention from Trump, who has been voicing his displeasure with the ratings leader over everything from presidential polling to its hosting of Democratic candidate town

Continued on Page 24

Local

Humidity to increase in the coming days, says veteran meteorologist

Efforts to increase Kuwaitis' jobs in oil sector

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Veteran Kuwaiti meteorologist Essa Ramadan said humidity is set to increase in the coming days before and after the appearance of the Suhail star (Canopus) due to the weak Indian seasonal low pressure. Land and sea breezes will have an effect in the afternoon and evening, and coastal



School admins check on preparations

humidity will rise. Ramadan noted that climate change is clear, with the advancement of seasons from two to three weeks clear in recent years. Furthermore, Ramadan indicated that neither Suhail nor anything else can control the weather, "so we

must adapt and get ready for the weather by changing the infrastructure and increasing agriculture".

Oil sector jobs

Public Authority for Applied Education and Training said it started registration of those desiring to join training institutes for the first term of the 2019-2020 academic year for oil well diggers and oil facility mechanics, starting from today until Sept 1 through the authority's website. Informed sources said the oil sector has completed coordination with all concerned authorities to direct educational graduates to accept the largest number of Kuwaiti youth to work in the oil sector, and invest in Kuwaiti capacities in oil specialties and develop them through specialized educational institutions.

School preparations

School administrators began the new year yesterday by checking on their schools and report any malfunctions in air conditioners, and shortages in power, furniture, maintenance or other school requirements. An educational source said that the education ministry's supplies department began to furnish new schools on Wednesday on gradual basis.



KUWAIT: The sun sets over Kuwait City's skyline in this file photo. —KUNA

News in brief

Quota on expat labor expected

KUWAIT: Informed sources said the higher committee for resolving the demographic structure imbalance is expected soon to issue a ministerial decree to implement one of the committee's recommendations on quotas deciding the percentages of expat labor. The sources said this move comes after an increased demand for workers of certain nationalities in particular, which led to the increase of these communities' numbers compared to the rest. They said this system will contribute to organizing the marketplace and maintain the demographic structure. The sources said there will be no exceptions to bringing workers from certain nationalities rather than others, and this will be according to the quota system. — Al-Qabas

Transfer restrictions

KUWAIT: Informed sources at the Public Authority for Manpower said a meeting will be held soon by the authority's board and several decisions will be made regarding the organization of the marketplace, most notably by banning transfers from several technical activities and limiting transfers only within the activity itself. They added the decisions will include competency tests for technicians before allowing them to work in these sectors. — Al-Anbaa

'Random ads' removed

KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and State Minister for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Shula handed the task of coordination with the co-op societies union to the concerned department at the municipality to allow co-ops to play their social role to place street ads related to weddings and events in front of their main and branch buildings. An official source at the municipality said the ads are limited to the social aspect after designating certain areas in front of co-ops. He said the goal is to remove random ads that are on the rise in residential areas and avoid eyesores, in addition to organizing the process. The source added Shula directed the immediate removal of violating ads. — Al-Rai

Councilmember inquires about Kuwait City's structural plan

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Municipal Councilmember Hassan Kamal submitted several questions about Kuwait City's structural plan, adding that its importance is in its direct link to people's lives, because it decides construction policies and goals which reflect the state's future vision and plans for the next 25 years. Kamal said the state's third structural plan was issued by a decree in 2008, and it was expected to be completed in 2019, but was delayed for certain reasons. He said the Capital's fourth structural plan is ready, but before submitting it to the Municipal Council, answers are needed for the following questions:

1- With regards to the detailed plan of the Capital, what is the percentage of compliance with the third structural plan of the state from 2008 to 2019?
2- Is there any difference in the fourth structural plan of the Capital compared with the third? Mention the projects and new uses and changes



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows a general view of the Arabian Gulf Road leading to Kuwait City. — KUNA

from the third plan.

3- What is the estimated date for the approval of the fourth structural plan?

4- Are the projects approved in the fourth structural plan agreeable with the state's development projects and Kuwait 2035 vision?



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) teams were present at Terminal 4 (T4) of Kuwait International Airport to welcome pilgrims returning from Saudi Arabia where they performed hajj.



KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) visited Hawally Governorate's elderly care home to celebrate Eid Al-Adha with senior citizens.

Woman dead in Sulaibiya fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A woman died in a fire reported in Sulaibiya's residential area yesterday. Sulaibikhat and Jleeb Al-Shuyoukh fire station men rushed to the scene in response to an emergency call. They put out the blaze after evacuating the building, but one woman had succumbed to her injuries. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire.

Smuggling foiled

Customs officers at Kuwait International Airport's Terminal 1 (T1), Terminal 4 (T4) and Terminal 5 (T5) foiled attempts by four persons to smuggle drugs into the country - two European women, an Arab man and an Asian man. The suspects were sent to the proper authorities for further action.

Reckless drivers arrested

The Relations and Security Information Department at the Interior Ministry said two persons seen driving recklessly in a social media video clip were arrested and their vehicles impounded.



KUWAIT: Some of the drugs found with passengers arrested at Kuwait International Airport terminals.

Local

Crown Prince receives senior officials at Bayan Palace



KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



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



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince also received Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh. — KUNA

Kuwait condemns attack targeting Saudi oil field

KUWAIT: Kuwait on Saturday denounced the drone attack which targeted the Shaybah Oil Field in the southeast of Saudi Arabia. This action aimed at destabilizing the security and stability of the Kingdom and the global energy supply, and requires an international effort to avoid crises and conflicts, and more tension in the region, said an official source in Kuwait Foreign Ministry in a statement. The source affirmed Kuwait's full support to Saudi Arabia and to all measures taken to maintain its security and stability. In the meantime, Secretary-General of Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) Dr Abdullah Al-Zayani strongly condemned the terrorist drone attack, car-

ried out recently by Houthi militia on Shaybah Oil Field in southwestern Saudi Arabia. The nonstop Houthi attacks targeting oil facilities in the Kingdom reveal their malicious goals in endangering global energy supplies, Dr Zayani said in a press statement. He called on the international community to condemn these attacks and take strong measures to stop them. Zayani described the attack on the field as a cowardly terrorist act that threatens security and stability in the region. Saudi Minister of Energy, Industry and Mineral Resources Khalid Al-Falih said on Saturday that unmanned drones attacked one of the units of a natural gas plant in Shaybah field, causing minor damages.

Kuwait supports efforts contributing to Sudan's stability

KHARTOUM: Kuwait on Saturday stressed support to all efforts that contribute to achieving security and stability in Sudan. "We hope that the transitional period will be a platform to move Sudan to stability and prosperity," Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said after his participation in the signing ceremony of the transitional arrangements' accord in Sudan. Saleh expressed Kuwait's support for all efforts that contribute to achieving security and stability in Sudan. Earlier on Saturday, the military council in Sudan and the forces for freedom and change officially signed the transitional accord to create a sovereign council consisting of 11 members in a ceremony attended by regional and international officials.

tion of the civilian structures of the authority began with the final signing of the agreement between the forces of freedom and the transitional military council before the latter is dissolved the next day and the nomination of the members of the 11-member sovereign council in which civilians hold a majority of six seats. According to the timetable agreed between the two sides, the announcement of the new cabinet will be on August 28, preceded by the nomination of the prime minister and members of the sovereign council. — KUNA



KHARTOUM: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister Anas Al-Saleh participates in the signing ceremony of the transitional arrangements' accord in Sudan. — KUNA

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Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: Seaside of the Scientific Centre during sunset. — Photo by Athary Al-Sabti (KUNA)

Yemenis grateful for 'Kuwait by Your Side' humanitarian campaign

Kuwait donated \$750 million to UN organizations aiding Yemen



ADEN: Kuwait continues to ease the suffering of Yemeni cities affected by war, as part of the generous \$100 million grant of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to Yemen. The 'Kuwait by Your Side' campaign to improve the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in Yemen is part of decades of Kuwaiti efforts to aid the country and develop its infrastructure in different fields. As the globe is set to celebrate the 'World Humanitarian Day' today, a number of Yemeni activists and officials hailed Kuwait's prominent role in aiding those in

need in the war-torn country. The Kuwaiti grant played a huge role in improving the humanitarian conditions for Yemeni people, Yemen's Minister of Local Administration Abed Araqib Fateh said yesterday.

Kuwait also donated a total of \$750 million to UN organizations in charge of aiding Yemen during the past three years, Fateh, who is also Chairman of the Higher Human Relief Committee added. Meanwhile, he noted that 309,000 Yemenis in over six governorates benefitted from health and food projects executed by Kuwait Red



Crescent Society (KRCS) in the first half of 2019. Moreover, Kuwait's Humanitarian Relief Society executed projects worth about \$3.3 million in the same time-period in eight governorates. The society is also planning to execute upcoming projects in education, food and water, with a cost of about \$2.3 million, said Fateh.

In the meantime, Yemen's Minister of Information Muammar Al-Aryani hailed the Kuwaiti donations and humanitarian aid that eased the suffering of Yemenis affected by war. He added that Kuwaiti projects in differ-

ent fields in Yemen spread across all governorates in the country. Taiz Governorate's first undersecretary Abdulqawi Al-Mekhlafi also applauded Kuwait's generous donations for Yemen, especially in Taiz. He noted that Kuwait funded projects related to the environment and health in the governorate, during five years of siege by Houthi militias. Mekhlafi said that water-related projects were especially of great impact on the lives of Yemeni people, as it resolved the lack of water issue before it turned into a disaster in the country. — KUNA



ABK takes part in UNHCR campaign to support refugees

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) is participating in UNHCR's '2 Billion Kilometers to Safety' campaign, which calls on people all over the world to cover the distance travelled by refugees each year, championing individual acts of solidarity. ABK's participation falls in line with World Humanitarian Day, which is marked universally on August 19th through initiatives and projects committed to recognizing humanitarian personnel.

ABK is encouraging both staff and customers to take part in the campaign, with the Bank targeting a total distance of 5,000 kilometers by the end of the year. People interested in participating in the campaign can find all the information on: <https://stepwithrefugees.org/en-ae/abk>.

According to UNHCR, refugees around the world are forced to travel a total of approximately two billion kilometers every year to reach the first point of safety. The '2 Billion Kilometers to Safety' campaign invites people to act in



solidarity and run, walk or cycle to achieve a cumulative total of two billion kilometers.

ABK is participating in the campaign to make a difference in the communities in which it operates. Through its CSR initiatives, ABK advocates inclusive, social and sustainable development and the creation of a more equitable society.

Local

Kuwait joins World Humanitarian Day's celebrations of 'women humanitarians'

Kuwaiti women excelled in humanitarian work, following Amir's directives

KUWAIT: As the international community marks the United Nations' World Humanitarian Day today, the State of Kuwait celebrates the role of their women activists in honor of this year's theme 'Women Humanitarians.' In recent history, Kuwait had played an integral part in launching several humanitarian initiatives to make sure that the suffering and the pain felt by the disadvantaged and the needy worldwide would be lessened. Since the ascension of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the leadership in 2006, Kuwait launched various humanitarian initiatives, which led to a UN honoring of Kuwait as a global humanitarian center in 2014. The UN also named His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah as a world humanitarian leader. Kuwait, through His Highness the Amir, also contributed to international humanitarian conferences. In line with the leadership's guidelines, Kuwaiti women followed the directives of His Highness the Amir and decided to excel in the field of humanitarian work.



Maha Al-Barjas



Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah

Sheikha Intisar who stressed that the foundation provided this treatment with utter conviction of its necessity.

Humanitarian arm

Meanwhile, Secretary General of Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) Maha Al-Barjas revealed that the society is the humanitarian arm of the State of Kuwait,

forward when it came to humanitarian relief aid matters both regionally and globally.

Strong role

In the meantime, the head of a charity project at the 1987-founded International Islamic Charity Organization (IICO) Sumaiya Al-Maimani stressed the strong role played by women in Kuwait within the humanitarian field, revealing that the organization had launched various projects around the world to help the needy. One of the major projects involved some 6,606 students supporting educational projects in eight countries, added Maimani. Around 80 percent of those involved in voluntarily humanitarian work are women from age 18 to 34 and that is evident of the role of Kuwaiti women role in helping their fellow human beings, affirmed the official. Based on a Swedish-proposed resolution, the World Humanitarian Day is dedicated to the memory of Special Representative of the Secretary-General to Iraq, Sergio Vieira de Mello and 21 of his colleagues who were killed in the bombing of the UN Headquarters in Baghdad on August 19, 2003 while attending to their humanitarian duties. — KUNA



Sumaiya Al-Maimani

Helping people worldwide

Speaking on this occasion, head and founder of 'Al-Nowair' positivity initiative Sheikha Intisar Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah said that Kuwaitis, especially women, were keen on contributing solutions to world humanitarian woes, revealing that her non-profit entity had launched the Intisars Charity Foundation as part of the collective Kuwaiti effort to help people around the globe. She revealed that the foundation has been working in Lebanon launching three projects for refugees there, adding that the current target was Jordan with programs in September and October. In regards to the one of the major programs provided by the foundation, Sheikha Intisar said that her entity provided drama psychotherapy, a method of treatment very rare in the Arab world. This type of treatment mainly targets those affected by war and conflict, indicated



Psychotherapy for those affected by war

distributing necessities for those who are in need. Kuwaiti men and women alike strongly contribute to the state humanitarian efforts worldwide under the guidelines set by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, she affirmed, adding that His Highness the Amir would always march

EU's trade with Kuwait slows this year

BRUSSELS: Imports and exports of goods between the European Union (EU) and Kuwait declined in the first six months of 2019, as compared to the previous year, according to the single currency bloc's statistical office, the Eurostat. EU imports from Kuwait totaled 1.42 billion euros (\$1.57 billion) in January to June of 2018, while it was valued at 1.25 billion euros (\$1.38 billion) for the same period a year earlier. EU exports to Kuwait in January to

June of 2018 totaled 2.86 billion euros (\$3.1 billion), while for the same period in 2019, it was worth 2.59 billion euros (\$2.8 billion). Meanwhile, the EU's imports from Kuwait in January to June of 2018 totaled 1.14 billion euros (\$1.26 billion), while in the first half of this year, European imports from Kuwait reached 735.4 million euros (\$815.4 billion). The EU's exports to Kuwait in the first six months of 2018 totaled 2.7 billion euros (\$2.9 billion), while for the same period in 2019, it reached 2.1 billion euros (\$2.3 billion). Mineral fuels, lubricants and related materials are the bulk of the EU's imports from Kuwait, statistics showed, while machinery, transport equipment, chemicals and related products are its main export items to the Gulf state. — KUNA

KRCS extols Kuwaiti women's voluntarism

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) said yesterday that Kuwaiti women are eager to adopt voluntary humanitarian initiatives that effectively contribute to social welfare. "Time is now ripe for women to have their normal status just alongside men, thus playing a great part in charitable action," KRCS Chairman Hilal Al-Sayer said. Sayer made the remark during a ceremony thrown by the Cabinet's Social Development Office at the KRCS headquarters to mark the World Humanitarian Day (WHD), which falls today. All potential has been put at the disposal of

women in order to unleash their energies and capitalize on their intellectual capabilities and social presence to prop up altruism nationwide, he emphasized. He added that his charity is interested in aiding women living in disaster-hit countries, whether by offering them money or rebuilding their damaged homes. Meanwhile, KRCS Secretary-General Maha Al-Barjas believed that involvement in the humanitarian sphere has undoubtedly boosted aid workers' positive orientations. The Kuwaiti charity's female workers have managed confidently and amazingly to run humanitarian projects in different world countries, mainly aiming at easing out the woes and anguish of the have-nots, she said. However, she said, there is a pressing need for women to get more engaged in disaster response teams, especially as far as cultural and social aspects are concerned. — KUNA



A scene from the awarding ceremony.



KRCS Secretary-General Maha Al-Barjas delivers a speech at the event.



KUWAIT: A group picture of women volunteers honored during a ceremony held at the Kuwait Red Crescent Society yesterday. — KUNA photos

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Houthi rebels appoint Tehran 'ambassador'

UK faces food, fuel and drug shortages: 'Leaked document'

Page 7

Page 9



KABUL: A wounded man receives treatment at the Wazir Akbar Khan hospital after a deadly bomb blast in a wedding hall in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

Peace with whom? Enraged Afghans question

Suicide bomber blows himself up in a packed wedding hall

KABUL: Outraged Afghans questioned yesterday the point of negotiations with the Taliban aimed at getting US troops to leave and ending the war, after 63 people were killed in a suicide bomb attack on a wedding reception in the capital, Kabul. A suicide bomber blew himself up late on Saturday in a packed wedding hall, bringing new carnage to a country plagued by decades of violence. Many women and children were among the dead and 182 wounded, officials said.

"Peace with whom? With those who bomb our weddings, schools, universities, offices and houses?" Twitter user Rada Akba wrote on the social media platform. "Selling out this land and its people to those killers is sick and inhuman. History won't forget this," she wrote. The Taliban denied responsibility for the blast at a west Kabul wedding hall in a minority Shiite neighborhood, and condemned it. Islamic State militants also operate in Afghanistan and have carried out bloody attacks in towns and cities, some against Shiites.

Journalist Sana Safi said she doubted the Taliban denial. "Who else is capable of carrying out such brutality?" she asked. "So 'peace agreement' with the Taliban isn't going to end the

bloodshed for ordinary Afghans?" Tawab Ghorzang, an adviser at the ministry of transport, said negotiations with the Taliban gave them legitimacy. "If thousands of times the Taliban are given legitimacy on the platform of peace talks, their war crimes and crime against the humanity will go on," he wrote on Facebook.

The Taliban and the United States are trying to



New carnage to a country plagued by decades of violence

negotiate an agreement on the withdrawal of US forces in exchange for a Taliban commitment on security and peace talks with Afghanistan's US-backed government. Both sides have reported progress after eight rounds of talks since late last

year. Under the expected deal on a staggered withdrawal of US troops, the Taliban would guarantee Afghanistan would not be a sanctuary for militants to expand and plot new attacks, both sides have said.

The government has not been involved in the negotiations - the Taliban refuse to talk to administration they see as a US puppet - but the militants are expected to make a commitment to open power-sharing talks and agree to a ceasefire. The government insists a ceasefire must be part of any deal. Tabish Forugh, an Afghan journalist, also questioned the Taliban denial of responsibility for the Saturday's blast.

"They are responsible in the eyes of Afghans. They have turned a country of 30 million people into a slaughterhouse," Forugh wrote. "We should not surrender to Taliban terror." The European Union mission in Afghanistan condemned the blast saying those behind it were "enemies of humanity". The Kabul blast followed a bomb attack on a mosque in Pakistan on Friday that killed four people, including a brother of Taliban leader Haibatullah Akhundzada, and wounded about 20. No group has claimed responsibility. —Reuters



KABUL: Chairs covered with the blood of victims are seen outside a wedding hall after a deadly bomb blast in Kabul yesterday. —AFP

Sudan's timeline: From protests to transition accord

PARIS: The launch of a historic transition to civilian rule in Sudan comes eight months after the start of popular protests, in which more than 250 were killed. A timeline:

Bread prices

Protests erupt on December 19, 2018, against a government decision to triple bread prices. They quickly spread in the form of weekly demonstrations, and morph into demands for President Omar Al-Bashir to quit after three decades of iron-fisted rule. In the capital Khartoum on December 20, demonstrators take to the streets chanting "freedom, peace, justice".

On April 6, 2019, thousands gather outside army headquarters in Khartoum, staying there for six days to plead for the military's support. On April 11, military authorities announce they have removed Bashir from power and that a transitional military

council will govern for two years. Defying a month-long curfew, thousands of demonstrators remain camped in front of army headquarters as the protest movement demands power be handed to a civilian government.

Talks between ruling generals and protest leaders end abruptly on May 20 without an accord on the make-up of a joint civilian-military council to govern during a transition. Thousands of public and private sector workers strike on May 28 and 29 to pressure the military leaders. In late May, military council chief Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan visits Saudi Arabia, Egypt and the United Arab Emirates, countries wary of popular uprisings in the region.

Bloody crackdown

On June 3, armed men in military fatigues move in on the protest camp outside army headquarters and disperse thousands still gathered there. It is the start of a crackdown that lasts several days, in which 127 people are killed, according to doctors close to the demonstrators. The Rapid Support Forces (RSF), a feared paramilitary which sprang from the notorious Janjaweed militia accused by rights groups of committing war crimes in Darfur,

is blamed for the violence. The military rulers announce a probe. The military scraps all previous agreements with protest leaders for a transition and calls for elections within nine months.

Protesters denounce a putsch. On June 9, protest leaders launch a nationwide campaign of civil disobedience that paralyzes the country for two days, hitting the economy hard. After both sides signal they are ready to talk again, Ethiopia and African Union mediators in late June present new proposals for a transition. On June 30, tens of thousands of protesters again rally. Security forces are deployed en masse and police fire tear gas at crowds. Several are killed.

Power deal agreed

On July 5, after two days of negotiations, the two sides agree in principle on an accord providing for power-sharing before transition to civilian rule. Crowds take to the streets of Khartoum to celebrate. On July 29, six demonstrators, including four school students, are shot dead during a rally in the central town of Al-Obeid against shortages of bread and fuel. Negotiations are suspended, before resuming on August 1.



KHARTOUM: Sudanese children wave small national flags as people celebrate outside the Friendship Hall in the capital Khartoum where generals and protest leaders signed a historic transitional constitution meant to pave the way for civilian rule in Sudan. —AFP

On August 4, the military and protest leaders sign a declaration, under which a joint civilian-military ruling body will govern for a 39-month transition period, overseeing the formation of a civilian government and parliament. On August 15, veter-

an economist Abdalla Hamdok is nominated as prime minister of the future transition government. The next day, Qatari broadcaster Al-Jazeera says it has been allowed to reopen its Khartoum office, which had been shut down in May. —AFP

International

UK faces food, fuel and drug shortages: 'Leaked document'

Minister says document is 'worst case' plan

LONDON: Britain will face shortages of fuel, food and medicine if it leaves the European Union without a transition deal, according to leaked official documents reported by the Sunday Times, but whose interpretation was contested by ministers. Setting out a vision of jammed ports, public protests and widespread disruption, the Times said the forecasts compiled by the Cabinet Office set out the most likely aftermaths of a no-deal Brexit rather than the worst case scenarios.

But Michael Gove, the minister in charge of coordinating no-deal preparations, challenged that, saying that the documents did set out a worst case scenario and that planning had been accelerated in the last three weeks. The Times said up to 85% of lorries using the main channel crossings "may not be ready" for French customs, meaning disruption at ports would potentially last up to three months before the flow of traffic improves.

The government also believes a hard border between the British province of Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, an EU member, will be likely as current plans to avoid widespread checks will prove unsustainable, the Times said. "Compiled this month by the Cabinet Office under the codename Operation Yellowhammer, the dossier offers a rare glimpse into the covert planning being carried out by the government to avert a catastrophic collapse in the nation's infrastructure," the Times reported.

Responding to one of the authors of the Sunday Times article on Twitter, Gove said: "Yellowhammer is a worst-case scenario - v significant steps have been taken in the last 3 weeks to accelerate Brexit planning." Prime Minister Boris Johnson's office said it did not comment on leaked documents. A government source blamed the leak on an unnamed former minister who wanted to influence negotiations with the EU.

"This document is from when ministers were blocking

what needed to be done to get ready to leave and the funds were not available. It has been deliberately leaked by a former minister in an attempt to influence discussions with EU leaders," said the source, who declined to be named. Earlier, asked about the Yellowhammer documents, energy minister Kwasi Kwarteng told Sky News there was "a lot of scare-mongering around" and that Britain would be fully prepared for an Oct 31 no-deal exit.

No turning back

The United Kingdom is heading towards a constitutional crisis at home and a showdown with the EU as Johnson has repeatedly vowed to leave the bloc on Oct 31 without a deal unless it agrees to renegotiate the Brexit divorce. After more than three years of Brexit dominating EU affairs, the bloc has repeatedly refused to reopen the Withdrawal Agreement which includes an Irish border insurance policy that Johnson's predecessor, Theresa May, agreed in November.

Brexit minister Stephen Barclay said on Twitter he had signed a piece of legislation which set in stone the repeal of the 1972 European Communities act - the laws which made Britain a member of the organization now known as the EU. Though his move was largely procedural, in line with previously approved laws, Barclay said in a statement: "This is a clear signal to the people of this country that there is no turning back (from Brexit)."

A group of more than 100 lawmakers wrote to Johnson calling for an emergency recall of parliament to discuss the situation. "We face a national emergency, and parliament must now be recalled in August and sit permanently until October 31 so that the voices of the people can be heard, and that there can be proper scrutiny of your government," the letter said. Johnson will this week tell French President Emmanuel Macron and German Chancellor Angela Merkel that the Westminster parliament cannot

summit on Aug 24-26 in Biarritz, France. He will say that Britain is leaving the European Union on Oct 31, with or without a deal, and that the British parliament cannot block that, according to a Downing Street source.

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since Orban clashed with the views of Chancellor Angela Merkel, who initially threw the gates open to migrants, Orban and Merkel will mark the fall of the Iron Curtain together in Sopron today.

In Europe, opinions are divided on these new barriers. For some of those whose lives were changed forever by their chance to flee to the West, they are a calamity. They remember fondly the so-called Pan-European Picnic, where hundreds of East Germans broke through to Austria as border guards stood aside. "That was our second birthday," said Hermann Pfitzenreiter, who took his wife and small children across the border that day and came back to the border town Sopron to mark the anniversary and meet old Hungarian friends.

"Erecting these walls and fences, it's catastrophic," added his wife Margarete. "As Germans we belonged in Germany, but we had experienced the same unliveable life (as today's immigrants). I'd love to drop Viktor Orban on the other side so he feels what that is like." "High as these walls may be, they will never deter people," Hermann Pfitzenreiter said. "What you see in the pictures (of us crossing) can't be put into words. We could not believe it was happening, it was total ecstasy, it had been unthinkable." The Pfitzenreiters, interviewed by Reuters in Sopron, now live in Germany, near Mannheim.

and says its members are young, "Western chauvinist" men. The Southern Poverty Law Center, a major civil rights organization, has classified the Proud Boys as a hate group.

Its leaders say the goal of the Portland rally was to have the so-called antifa movement declared a domestic terror organization, news reports said. Antifa stands for anti-fascist and refers to a loose international coalition of activists and protesters who oppose far-right ideology. There have been scattered incidents of violence purportedly involving antifa members. Trump tweeted that "Major consideration is being given to naming ANTIFA an 'ORGANIZATION OF TERROR.'" He did not elaborate.

Portland, one of the most liberal US cities, is an antifa stronghold and the local Rose City Antifa had urged people "to defend Portland against far-right attack." More than 1,000 people gathered in downtown Portland for the rally and counter-demonstration, according to police. Authorities shut down downtown streets. Scores of riot police kept a close watch over the events as boats patrolled the Willamette River dividing the city.

Right-wing activists including the



SOPRON: A visitor taking pictures of a removed piece of the 'Iron Curtain' at an exhibition held near the border fence of the late Communist regime and dedicated to the 20th anniversary of the 'Pan-European picnic', in Sopron. —AFP

This fence is not that fence

Hungarians who helped bring down the Iron Curtain resent any parallels with Hungary's current southern border fortifications or its practice of keeping immigration next to zero, saying such practice is necessary to preserve the Europe that the events of 1989 created. Arpad Bella, who headed up the border station unit posted at the Sopron crossing in August 1989, said he had his hands full with the Pan-European Picnic, a political jamboree packed with hundreds of

"Ossies", or east Germans. "I could confront them and risk violence, or let them through and face the consequences," he said at the memorial park now on that spot. He chose the latter. "Every border guard was sick of the task... We just wanted them gone." Eventually he evaded consequences as his chief waited on the national chief, who waited on the interior minister, who waited on then prime minister Miklos Nemeth, who waited on Soviet General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev. —Reuters



PORTLAND: Hundreds of members of far-right groups march during 'The End Domestic Terrorism' rally at Tom McCall Waterfront Park in Portland, Oregon. —AFP

Proud Boys brandished American flags, while others sported red caps with Trump's "Make America Great Again" slogan from his 2016 presidential campaign. Meanwhile, the counter-demonstration included antifa members dressed

all in black, many wearing masks. They were joined by ordinary citizens of Portland protesting the far-right demonstrators in their city, including one wearing a unicorn costume and a marching band dressed as bananas. —AFP



BRIDGE END: In this file photo, protesters against Brexit and the possible imposition of any hard border between Northern Ireland and Ireland gather with a banner at the border between Derry (Londonderry) in Northern Ireland and County Donegal in the Republic of Ireland near the Irish village of Bridge End. —AFP

stop Brexit and a new deal must be agreed if Britain is to avoid leaving the EU without one.

The prime minister is coming under pressure from politicians across the political spectrum to prevent a disorderly departure, with opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn vowing this week to bring down Johnson's government in early September to delay Brexit. It is, however, unclear if lawmakers have the unity or power to use the British parliament to prevent a no-deal departure - likely to be the United Kingdom's most significant move since World War Two.

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Opponents of no deal say it would be a disaster for what was once one of the West's most stable democracies. A disorderly divorce, they say, would hurt global growth, send shockwaves through financial markets and weaken London's claim to be the world's preeminent financial centre. Brexit supporters say there may be short-term disruption from a no-deal exit but that the economy will thrive if cut free from what they cast as a doomed experiment in integration that has led to Europe falling behind China and the United States. —Reuters

News in brief

Albino found dismembered

NAIROBI: A 15-year-old albino boy has been found dismembered in Burundi a week after going missing, the first such killing in the country in three years, a local albino group said yesterday. Albinos, who have white skin and yellow hair as a result of a genetic disorder that causes the absence of pigmentation, are killed regularly in some African countries for their body parts, which are used in witchcraft rituals. The teenager was found dead late Saturday in the northwest of the country along the Rusizi river separating Burundi from the DR Congo, not far from his home village. "The young albino was killed atrociously... His murderers cut his right leg off at the knee, his right arm and his tongue," said Kassim Kazungu, the head of the local association Albinos Without Borders. More than 20 albinos have been killed in Burundi since 2008. —AFP

Police shoot suspect

JAKARTA: Indonesian authorities said yesterday they shot and arrested a suspected militant who attacked police officers at a station in the country's second-biggest city. The incident in Surabaya on Saturday-Indonesia's independence day-came as the world's most populous Muslim-majority nation is on high alert for attacks by local groups sympathetic to the Islamic State. A 30-year-old man walked into the station and said that he wanted to make a report, according to police. "Then he suddenly took out a sickle and started slashing the officer on duty," East Java police spokesman Frans Barung Mangera said yesterday. The officer, who sustained wounds to his head, face and hand, was recovering in hospital while another who intervened was lightly injured, police said. The wounded suspect was an "IS sympathizer", they added. —AFP

4 dead in hospital attack

BUCHAREST: Four people have died and nine were injured after being attacked by a patient in a psychiatric hospital, Romanian press reports said yesterday. They said a 38-year-old man who had admitted himself to the hospital in Sapoca, northeast of the capital Bucharest, entered a treatment room and attacked other patients with a transfusion stand. Three of the patients suffered head injuries and died at the scene while a fourth died later in hospital, the reports said. Among the nine injured in the attack, two were in a coma, they added. "Everything happened in less than a minute," hospital director Viorica Mihalascu was quoted as saying. "This patient was admitted on a normal surveillance level. His symptoms did not give an indication that a tragedy was imminent," she told Antena 3 television station. —AFP

Cocaine in banana shipment

SOFIA: A warehouse worker has discovered 75 kilograms of cocaine hidden among bananas shipped from Ecuador to Bulgaria's Black Sea port of Burgas, prosecutors and police said yesterday. The drugs were packed in bricks wrapped up in metal foil and hidden inside the shipment of 20,626 boxes of bananas, Burgas regional prosecutor Georgy Chinev told journalists outside the Burgas warehouse of the InterCitrus fruit distribution company. A warehouse worker came upon the 2.5-kilogramme packages on Saturday morning and alerted police, Burgas police chief Kaloyan Kaloyanov said. Officials said the fruit arrived at Burgas on July 27 on a ship from Ecuador that also made a stopover in Italy. Authorities will be checking other warehouses of the same fruit company in Sofia, Varna and Plovdiv in the coming days, they said, adding that some of the bananas had already been exported to Romania. —AFP

International

Israel fires on armed Gazans after rocket attack; 3 killed

Latest in a series of incidents along the tense barrier

GAZA: Israel said it opened fire on armed Palestinians on Gaza's border overnight and Hamas's health ministry reported three dead yesterday, the latest in a series of incidents along the tense barrier. Israel's tank and helicopter fire came after Palestinian militants in the Gaza Strip fired three rockets at Israel late Saturday, the army said, the second such attack in 24 hours.

Two rockets were intercepted by Israel's air defense systems, it said, without specifying what happened to the third. Police reported no casualties in Israel, but said a rocket fragment fell on a house in the southern Israeli town of Sderot. Israeli medics said they had treated six people, including two with minor injuries sustained while running to bomb shelters and four others with panic attacks.

Hours later, Israel's army said "troops spotted a number of armed suspects adjacent to the security fence in the northern Gaza Strip". It added that an "attack helicopter and a tank fired towards them". The health ministry in the Palestinian enclave run by Islamist movement Hamas reported three dead and said another Palestinian was hospitalised following the incident north of Beit Lahia. It identified those killed as Mahmoud Al-Walayda, 24, Mohammed Abu Namus, 27, and Mohammed Samir Al-Taramsi, 26.

Hamas in a statement called their deaths "another crime by the Israeli occupation to be added to its grim toll against the Palestinian people's rights, land and holy sites." Palestinian militant group Islamic Jihad issued a statement mourning their deaths, but did not claim them as members. "We affirm the right of our people to resist and confront all forms of Zionist aggression," it said. A series of incidents along the Gaza border has tested a fragile truce between Hamas and Israel in recent days.

On Friday night, a rocket was fired from Gaza into Israel and was intercepted by missile defense systems. Israel said in response it carried out strikes on two

Hamas "underground targets" in the northern and central Gaza Strip, without providing further details. A Gaza security source reported three Israeli strikes on a Hamas observation post, an unidentified target near Gaza City and one that hit open ground in the central part of the enclave. No casualties were reported.

Netanyahu under pressure

The rocket fire and retaliation came after a series of other incidents along the Gaza border since the start of the month. A week ago, a Palestinian shot at Israeli soldiers along the frontier and was killed when troops returned fire, the army and Hamas's health ministry said.

A day before that, Israel's army said its troops shot dead four heavily armed Palestinians on the border, adding one had managed to cross and throw a grenade at soldiers. Earlier on August 1, a Palestinian seeking to avenge his brother's death by Israeli fire entered Israel from Gaza and opened fire on soldiers, the army said. Three Israeli soldiers were wounded and the Palestinian was killed, the army said. Regular protests and clashes erupted along the border of the blockaded Gaza Strip in March 2018. At least 305 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli fire in Gaza or the border area since then, the majority during demonstrations and clashes. Seven Israelis have also been killed in Gaza-related violence over the same period. Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is widely seen as wanting to avoid an escalation in the Gaza Strip before September 17 elections, but he also faces heavy political pressure to respond firmly.

Israel and Palestinian militants in Gaza, including Hamas, have fought three wars since 2008. Beyond the Gaza incidents, there has also been an uptick in tension in Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank. On Friday, two Israelis were wounded in a Palestinian car-ramming near a Jewish settlement in the West Bank and the



BEIT LAHIA: Relatives of 28-year-old Palestinian Mohammed Samir Al-Taramsi, one of three armed Palestinians killed overnight in Israeli fire along the border with the Gaza Strip, mourn by his body at the morgue of the hospital in Beit Lahya in northern Gaza strip yesterday. —AFP

assailant was shot dead, authorities said. That followed an incident on Thursday when two Palestinian youths attacked police officers with knives in east Jerusalem's Old City.

One officer was moderately wounded, while police shot both of the Palestinians. One was killed and the second was in critical condition. Israel occupied the

West Bank and east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War. It later annexed east Jerusalem in a move never recognized by the international community. It views the entire city as its capital, while the Palestinians see the eastern sector, where key holy sites are located for Christians, Muslims and Jews, as the capital of their future state. —AFP

UK revokes 'Jihadi Jack's' citizenship

LONDON: Britain has revoked the citizenship of a dual national Muslim convert to the Islamic State group dubbed "Jihadi Jack" being held in northern Syria, according to reports yesterday. The move targeting Jack Letts, 24, who was a dual UK-Canadian national, has prompted a diplomatic row with Ottawa, Britain's Mail yesterday reported.

Former Prime Minister Theresa May approved the decision - which had been made by then-interior minister Sajid Javid - in one of her last actions before leaving office in early July, the newspaper said. A spokesperson for Britain's interior ministry declined to confirm the report, noting it does not routinely comment on individual cases. "Decisions on depriving a dual national of citizenship are based on substantial advice from officials, lawyers and the intelligence agencies and all available information," the spokesperson said.

"This power is one way we can counter the terrorist threat posed by some of the most dangerous individuals and keep our country safe." Letts was captured by Kurdish forces in Syria and is languishing in jail there, despite saying in a media interview earlier this year he would like to return to Britain. "I'm not innocent," he told ITV News. "I deserve what comes to me. But I just want it to be... appropriate... not just haphazard, freestyle punishment in Syria."

Letts converted to Islam at the age of 16 and fled his home in Oxfordshire, central England, two years later to join IS. His Canadian father and British mother were convicted in a UK court in June of funding terrorism by sending him a small amount of money during his time in Syria, but were spared jail. The Mail yesterday said revoking Letts citizenship had "sparked fury" in Ottawa, which believes he has little connection to the country.

The newspaper added there were fears the spat could overshadow a meeting between Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and British leader Boris Johnson at the G7 summit in France next weekend. The decision is the latest instance of Britain revoking the citizenship of its nationals who went to join the Islamic State group's self-proclaimed caliphate. In February it faced criticism after stripping Shamima Begum, a teenager who traveled to Syria to marry an IS fighter, of her British citizenship. —AFP

Civilian death toll mounts as Syrian offensive widens

BEIRUT: Air strikes have killed more than two dozen civilians in northwestern Syria in the last two days in an escalation of a Russian-backed offensive against the last major rebel stronghold, a war monitor and local activists said. An air strike in the village of Deir Sharki killed seven members of one family, most of them children, on Saturday, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

Yemen's war cut off dad's route to work, now toddler starves

HAJJAH PROVINCE: Before Yemen's war broke out four years ago Ali Muhammad used to cross the border into Saudi Arabia to work, joining thousands of other Yemenis from his poor, mountainous region. But fighting in the border areas left him unemployed in his remote village, watching acute malnutrition turn his two-year-old son Muath into skin and bones.

Yemen's conflict, which the United Nations has described as the world's worst humanitarian disaster, has pushed what was already one of the poorest Arab states to the brink of famine. War has cut transport routes for aid, fuel and food, reduced imports and caused severe inflation. Households lost their incomes because public sector wages were not paid and conflict forced people from their homes and jobs.

Informal cross-border routes to work in Saudi Arabia, the Arab world's largest economy, have been cut, and thousands

of Yemenis have left the kingdom in recent years as the government seeks to boost citizen employment, the UN has said. Around 80 percent of Yemen's population now needs some form of humanitarian assistance, according to the UN.

In a story repeated across Yemen's villages, Muath's lack of access to good food, healthcare and clean water has left him severely malnourished and weighing just 5.5 kg (12.13 lb). "There is no work, I just sit at home," Ali Muhammad said from his village in the northwestern province of Hajjah. "Things were ok, thank God, but after the war we were not able to (go to Saudi) ... As long as this situation continues there will be no work."

With a poorly resourced local clinic unable to take him in, a health worker drove the toddler to another centre where he was weighed and fed as the parents could not afford transport. "The child does not have medical conditions that would prevent him from absorbing nutrition. The state he is in is a sign of severe nutritional deficiency," said Makiah Al-Aslami, a nurse and head of an acute malnutrition clinic in Aslam.

Her clinic is overwhelmed by extreme cases of malnutrition brought in from the

Spain offers port to stranded migrants as Salvini claims victory

MADRID: Spain yesterday offered Algeciras as a port to disembark more than a hundred migrants on a charity rescue ship stranded off the coast of Italy after the vessel had spent more than two weeks waiting for a safe port to be made available. The migrants, most of whom are African, were picked up by the Open Arms boat off the coast of Libya and have been waiting to disembark on the southern Italian island of Lampedusa.

Italy's far-right Interior Minister Matteo Salvini has ordered his officials not to let them land, though he made a partial concession on Saturday by allowing 27 minors to leave the boat. He added that he had only agreed to this at the insistence of Prime Minister Giuseppe Conte. "Spain always acts on humanitarian emergencies. It is necessary to establish an orderly and supportive European solution, leading the migration challenge with the EU's values of progress and humanism," Spanish acting prime minister Pedro Sanchez said on Twitter.

France, Germany, Romania, Portugal, Spain and Luxembourg said earlier this week they would help relocate the

migrants. Once the boat disembarks in Algeciras, the agreed distribution will take place, the Spanish government said in a statement yesterday. Sanchez took the decision to offer Algeciras as a port to dock the Open Arms because of the "emergency situation" onboard, the statement added. It also criticized the "inconceivable response of Italian authorities", especially Salvini's. Salvini said triumphantly on Facebook that Spain's decision vindicated his hard-line stance. "Those who stick it out are the ones who win," he said, adding that "probably any other minister would have given in."

He renewed his constant attacks of recent days on Open Arms, accusing it of lying about the condition of the migrants. He said a medical inspection on the boat by Italian authorities on Saturday had shown there was no sanitary emergency on board as the charity had claimed. "They tell us to let the sick off the boat and they turn out not to be sick, they say let the minors off and a lot of them turn out not to be minors, we check the medical emergency and there is no emergency," he said.

"There are presumed minors and presumed refugees fleeing from presumed wars." Open Arms said a few migrants had jumped off the boat and tweeted a video of them trying to swim to shore before being caught up by faster-swimming rescuers



ABS: A child dips his hands into a plastic food container while seated next to a man and other children at a make-shift camp for displaced Yemenis who fled fighting between the Houthis rebels and the Saudi-backed government. —AFP

surrounding region, which also hosts hundreds of thousands of people displaced from their homes by war and poverty. The UN has not declared a famine in Yemen but says around 10 million there are "one step away". Saudi

Arabia leads a coalition that intervened militarily in Yemen in March 2015 against the Iran-aligned Houthi movement after it ousted the government of President Abd-Rabbu Mansour Hadi from power in the capital Sanaa in late 2014. —Reuters



LAMPEDUSA: The Spanish migrant rescue NGO ship Open Arms is seen off the coast of the Italian island of Lampedusa. Twenty-seven unaccompanied minors have been authorized to leave a migrant rescue vessel in limbo off Italy, the Spanish charity operating the ship said. —AFP

who jumped in after them. "We have been warning for days, there is a limit to people's desperation," tweeted Oscar Camps, the charity's director and founder. "What more does Matteo Salvini need for his political campaign - deaths?"

Salvini, leader of the ruling League party, has built his popularity on a vigorous campaign against illegal immigration. He

issued a statement on Saturday reiterating that Open Arms could have taken the migrants to Spain and that the non-governmental organization was to blame for their plight. Open Arms said on Saturday it could not guarantee the security of the migrants and Camps said there were constant fights on board and the tension was unsustainable. —Reuters

Another seven people were killed by bombardments in other areas, it said.

On Friday, air strikes in the village of al-Haas killed 13 people. The dead included a pregnant woman and her unborn baby, local activists and the Observatory said. They had been seeking shelter after fleeing another area. The bombardment forced a wave of people to flee northwards from the targeted areas, the Observatory and local activists said. "They are bombing the towns and their outskirts to push people to flee," Observatory Director Rami Abdulrahman said, adding that hundreds of families had been uprooted from areas that had so far largely been spared in the almost four-month offensive.

The Syrian state news agency SANA said the army was continuing operations against "the terrorist organiza-

tions in rural Idlib" and had widened its area of control around the rebel-held town of Khan Sheikhoun, currently a focal point of the offensive. Russia and Syria have said their forces are not targeting civilians but militants including the Nusra Front, a jihadist group known today as Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham.

Ahmad Al-Dbis, safety and security manager for the US-based Union of Medical Care and Relief Organizations (UOSSM), which supports medical facilities in the northwest, said the bombardment had widened into populated areas where there were no military positions. "They are being targeted to drive the people towards forced displacement," he told Reuters. Dbis said the number of civilians killed by government or Russian forces stood at more than 730 since late April. —Reuters



QAMISHLI: People and security forces gather at the scene of a car bomb explosion in the Kurdish-majority city of Qamishli in northeastern Syria's Hasakeh province yesterday. —AFP

International

India reimposes some curbs on movement, phones in Kashmir

Authorities reverse decision as online rumors spread

SRINAGAR: Indian authorities reimposed restrictions on movement in major parts of Kashmir's biggest city, Srinagar, yesterday after violent overnight clashes between residents and police in which dozens were injured, two senior officials and eyewitnesses said. They also reversed a decision to allow internet and mobile phone use in parts of the Jammu region, according to one official, amid concerns about the spread of rumors online.

In the past 24 hours, there has been a series of protests against New Delhi's Aug 5 revocation of Jammu and Kashmir state's autonomy. This followed an easing in curbs on movement and phone use on Saturday morning. The state government has said that it has not imposed a curfew over the past two weeks, but yesterday people were being turned back at multiple roadblocks set up in the city in the past few hours.

Security forces at some roadblocks have told residents there is a curfew. Two senior government officials told Reuters that at least two dozen people were admitted to hospitals with pellet injuries after violent clashes broke out in the old city on Saturday night.

Representatives in the Jammu and Kashmir government in Srinagar and the federal government in New Delhi did not immediately return calls asking about the latest clampdown or seeking an assessment of the number of injuries and clashes. One of the official sources said that people pelted security forces with stones in around two dozen places across Srinagar. He

said that the intensity of the stone pelting protests has increased over past few days.

Chilli grenades

The heavy overnight clashes took place mostly in Rainawari, Nowhetta and Gojwara areas of the old city where Indian troops fired tear smoke, chilly grenades and pellets to disperse protesters, eyewitnesses and officials said. Chilly grenades contain very spicy chili pepper, and produce a major eye and skin irritant, as well as a pungent smell, when they are unleashed. The officials, who declined to be identified because they aren't supposed to talk to the media, said clashes also took place in other parts of the city including Soura, a hotbed of protests in the past two weeks.

A senior government official and hospital authorities at Srinagar's main hospital said that at least 17 people came there with pellet injuries. They said 12 were discharged while five with grievous injuries were admitted. The hospital officials and a police officer told Reuters that a 65-year-old man, Mohammad Ayub of Braripora, was admitted to the hospital after he had major breathing difficulties when tear gas and chilly grenades were fired in old city area on Saturday afternoon. He died in the hospital on Saturday night and has already been buried, they said.

Blocking the way

Javed Ahmad, aged 35, and from the wealthy Rajbagh area of Srinagar, was pre-

vented from going to the old city yesterday morning by paramilitary police at a barricade near the city centre. "I had to visit my parents there. Troops had blocked the road with concertina wire. They asked me to go back as there was curfew in the area," he said.

Telephone landlines were restored in parts of the city on Saturday after a 12-day blackout, and remained open yesterday. The state government has said that most telephone exchanges in the region would start working today. The internet and cell phones remain blocked in Kashmir. More than 500 political or community leaders and activists remained in detention, and some have been flown to prisons outside the state.

For 30 years in the part of Kashmir that it controls, India has been fighting a revolt in which at least 50,000 people have been killed. Critics say the decision to revoke autonomy will cause further alienation and fuel the armed resistance. The change will allow non-residents to buy property in Jammu and Kashmir, and end the practice of reserving state government jobs for local residents. Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government has said the measure is necessary to integrate Kashmir fully into India and speed up its development.

4,000 detained

Meanwhile, thousands of people have been detained in Indian Kashmir over fears of outbreaks of unrest after New Delhi stripped the restive region of its autonomy two weeks ago,



KASHMIR: Indian Kashmiri people travel in Shikara boats at Dal Lake in Srinagar yesterday. Thousands of people have been detained in Indian Kashmir over fears of unrest since New Delhi stripped the restive region of its autonomy two weeks ago, government sources said. — AFP

government sources said. A magistrate speaking to AFP on condition of anonymity said at least 4,000 people were arrested and held under the Public Safety Act (PSA), a controversial law that allows authorities to imprison someone for up to two years without charge or trial.

"Most of them were flown out of Kashmir because prisons here have run out of capacity," the magistrate said, adding that he had used a satellite phone allocated to him to

collate the figures from colleagues across the Himalayan territory amid a communications blackout imposed by authorities. Authorities have repeatedly declined to provide a tally of how many people have been taken into custody, apart from confirming more than 100 local politicians, activists and academics were detained in the first few days after the state was stripped of its semi-autonomous status. — Agencies

10,000 homeless after fire razes Bangladesh slum

DHAKA: At least 10,000 people are homeless after a massive fire swept through a crowded slum in the Bangladesh capital and destroyed thousands of shanties, officials said yesterday. The fire broke out at in Dhaka's Mirpur neighborhood late on Friday and razed around 2,000 mostly tin shacks, fire services official Ershad Hossain said. "I could not salvage a single thing. I don't know what will I do," 58-year-old Abdul Hamid, who ran a tea stall inside the slum, told AFP as he broke down in tears.

Authorities eventually got the blaze under control and no-one was killed, although several people had minor injuries, firefighters said. Many residents - largely low-income garment factory workers - were not in the slum as they had left their homes to celebrate the Muslim Eid Al-Adha holiday with their families. "Otherwise, the damage would have been bigger," local police chief Golam Rabbani said.

Around 10,000 people have taken refuge in crammed camps at nearby schools closed for the weeklong holiday, according to Hossain. "We are providing them with food, water, mobile toilets, and electricity supply," municipal official Shafiqul Azam said, adding that authorities were trying to find permanent accommodation. Some families have



DHAKA: Resident gather charred debris in a slum in Dhaka yesterday, after a fire broke out late on August 17 at Mirpur neighborhood. — AFP

erected tarpaulins to shelter them from bouts of rain during the monsoon season, but the wet conditions have turned the fields muddy.

Experts say fires are frequent in Dhaka due to lax safety measures. At least 100 people have been killed so far this year in building fires across the densely populated

metropolitan city. In 2012, a fire swept through a nine-storey garment factory near Dhaka killing 111 workers. An investigation found it was caused by sabotage and that managers at the plant had prevented victims from escaping. A 2010 fire in Nimtoli, one of the most densely populated districts of the capital, killed 123 people. — AFP

Fears in US of a bad peace deal with Taliban

WASHINGTON: An Afghanistan peace agreement that the US seems close to reaching with the Taliban has prompted worries that President Donald Trump's desire to quickly withdraw US troops could further plunge the country into civil war. Trump said Friday he was pleased with talks on ending the war, 18 years after the September 11, attacks that prompted the US invasion of Afghanistan in the first place.

In recent days several US officials have suggested that an accord could be imminent in discussions with the Taliban in Qatar. The US negotiator, Zalmay Khalilzad, is expected to return to the region very soon in hopes of sealing an agreement with the Afghan rebel force. Such a potentially historic accord has raised an outcry from an eclectic assortment of critics in Washington, ranging from neo-conservatives to former Democratic administration officials to ex-military heroes.

In tweets, interviews and op-ed pieces in newspapers they are cautioning against hastily bringing home the 14,000 US troops in Afghanistan, a warning which some hope will also score points ahead of next year's presidential election. And they are calling on Trump to treat this war as he did North Korea and its nuclear weapons and insist on no deal rather than a bad deal.

"Under no circumstances should the Trump administration repeat the mistake its predecessor made in Iraq and agree to a total withdrawal of combat forces from Afghanistan," retired general David Petraeus, who used to command those soldiers, warned in a piece for The Wall Street Journal. He was referring to Barack Obama and how the withdrawal of US forces from Iraq helped fuel the emergence of the Islamic State group. The main points of the peace accord being negotiated with the Taliban are known: US soldiers would withdraw in exchange for a pledge from them not to let Al-Qaeda or the Islamic State group operate in the territory that the Taliban controls. There would also be an immediate ceasefire, and the Taliban would begin talks with the Afghan government, with which the rebels have until now refused all dialogue.

A 'messy, forever war'

Withdrawal of US troops is sought by the American public, has been promised by Trump and is a talking point of several Democratic presidential hopefuls. The risk is that it will intensify the war. This "will depend on the details," said Laurel Miller, former senior US State Department official responsible for Afghanistan and Pakistan. There is much speculation as to what those details might entail. For instance, it seems the Taliban are



DOHA: Mohammad Nabi Omari (center left), a Taliban member formerly held by the US at Guantanamo Bay, Taliban negotiator Abbas Stanikzai (center right), and former Taliban intelligence deputy Mawlawi Abdul Haq Wasiq (right) walk with another Taliban member during the Intra Afghan Dialogue talks in Doha. — AFP

prepared to call a ceasefire with US troops but not with the Afghan army. A total, absolute withdrawal of US forces has at least been on the negotiating table and it has never been ruled out in Washington. "If we leave Afghanistan without a counter-terrorism force, without intelligence-gathering capabilities, ISIS will re-emerge, al Qaeda will come back, they will occupy safe havens in Afghanistan, they will hit the homeland, they will come after us all over the world," Senator Lindsey Graham told Fox News.

Graham, who takes credit for persuading Trump to keep some troops in Syria after announcing a total pullout, insisted that Afghanistan needs a "continuing US presence" and America requires a "meaningful counter-terrorism force" there. Trump has promised only a strong intelligence gathering presence. And some in his administration want any future counter-terrorism operations to be launched from other countries.

"Effective counter-terrorism operations in Afghanistan - and, just as important, in neighboring tribal areas of Pakistan - will prove all but impossible absent an enduring US footprint on Afghan soil," Petraeus wrote in a piece co-signed by Afghanistan expert Vance Serchuk. Another issue is the timetable of a US withdrawal. Trump, seeking a second term in office, wants to announce the pullout before the election in November 2020. But there have been signs in recent days pointing to a withdrawal actually completed around the time of the election.

Setting a timetable now "means the Taliban will enter subsequent talks among Afghans having already achieved their main goal and with their stature and bargaining position thereby enhanced," Miller wrote in Foreign Policy. She argued that there should be a phased US withdrawal linked to specific progress in the Afghan peace process, such as adoption of a revised constitution with power-

sharing features and subsequent elections. Without a clear pledge from the Taliban to repudiate Al-Qaeda and respect women's rights, among others, and without verification mechanisms, "we will not be ending the war - we will be retreating and ceding the battlefield to our enemies, including the organization that harbored the terrorists responsible for killing nearly 3,000 Americans on 9/11," said Republican lawmaker Liz Cheney. At the Pentagon, officials are cautious. "It's an ugly, messy, forever war. It is probably going to be messy to get out," one military source at the Pentagon said. — AFP

Ambulance driver killed in Myanmar; army, rebels battle

YANGON: A volunteer ambulance driver was killed in Myanmar's remote northeast as clashes between the army and ethnic insurgents escalated over the weekend, state media reported yesterday. The area near the Chinese border has been riven by armed conflict for decades, but a fresh round of violence was sparked this week when a coalition of armed groups launched joint attacks against a military academy and police outposts, killing at least 15. The army claims the attacks were retaliation for massive drug seizures in July, but insurgents say they were responding to military offensives.

An ambulance from a local philanthropy group work-

ing around the town of Lashio came under assault by insurgent sniper and artillery fire on Saturday, the state-owned Global New Light of Myanmar reported. The attack killed 58-year-old driver Tun Myint, his wife Tin Tin Aye said. "The car was hit when they were trying to turn back from the mission because of intense fighting," she said. Video circulating online that could not be independently verified showed an overturned ambulance on the side of a road and workers frantically transferring a limp body to another vehicle.

The Taang National Liberation Army, one of the members of the Northern Alliance coalition of insurgent groups, said it was unclear who was responsible for the attack. "As the fighting was intensifying, it is hard to say who to blame," the TNLA's Mai Aik Kyaw said. Myanmar security forces clearing mines near a bridge also found a weapons cache with dozens of explosive devices, detonators and grenades, according to state media. The US Embassy in Yangon has issued a Friday warning for areas near the recent fighting and on Friday urged "restraint" from all sides in the conflict. — AFP



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the office of Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei shows him (right) meeting with Mohammed Abdul-Salam, spokesman for Yemen's Houthi rebels. — AFP

Houthi rebels appoint Tehran 'ambassador'

DUBAI: Yemen's Iran-linked Houthi rebels have appointed an "ambassador" in Tehran, a step condemned by the internationally recognized government as a breach of international laws. The Islamic republic made no announcement about accepting the appointment of an ambassador for the Houthis, who control the Yemeni capital Sanaa and much of the north.

The Houthi-run Al-Masirah TV said late Saturday that a "presidential decree was issued appointing Ibrahim Mohammed Mohammed Al-Dailami as an ambassador extraordinary and plenipotentiary for the republic of Yemen to the Islamic republic of Iran." Yemeni President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi severed diplomatic relations with Iran in October 2015, accusing Tehran of providing military aid to the rebels. Tehran has denied the accusation but publicly offers strong political backing to the Shiite Houthis. The Yemeni government denounced the naming of an ambassador.

"The exchange of diplomatic relations between Tehran regime and the Houthi militias breaches the international laws and norms and contravenes United Nations Security Council resolutions related to the Yemen crisis," the government said in a statement on Twitter. It said the step has exposed the hidden relationship between the Houthis and Iran. The announcement comes after Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei held talks in Tehran on Tuesday with a Houthi delegation headed by rebel spokesman Mohammed Abdul Salam. Khamenei renewed his support for the Houthis and accused Iran's foes of a "plot" to partition the country.

Yemen has witnessed intense fighting between the Houthis and government forces since the rebels entered Sanaa in September 2014 and drove Hadi into exile in Saudi Arabia. A Saudi-led coalition intervened in March 2015 to support the government forces. The conflict has claimed the lives of tens of thousands of people and displaced around 3.3 million since 2015. Two-thirds of the population-about 20 million people-require humanitarian support, according to the United Nations. — AFP

Analysis

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Shadows still loom around Epstein after sex predator's death

A week after his death, multimillionaire Jeffrey Epstein is being seen not only as a sexual predator with an insatiable appetite but also one whose proclivities were known in his well-heeled world. Even in a country where numerous powerful men have been brought down by revelations of the #MeToo movement, Epstein's alleged sexual aggressions against underage girls and young women stand out as shocking. His suicide on Aug 10 in a federal jail in Manhattan provided the latest jolt - but no final closure - to his disturbing story.

From 2,000 pages of court documents released the day before his death, as well as new lawsuits against his estate and those who allegedly recruited his young victims, emerge a sordid picture of a man who claimed a "biological" need for sex three times a day. The plaintiffs - some of them poor and underage at the time of the alleged abuses in the early 2000s - say Epstein's "recruiters" approached them outside their schools or at their workplaces.

These women allegedly persuaded the girls they could earn hundreds of dollars by providing non-sexual massages to a man described as a powerful New Yorker. Once in the wealthy financier's Manhattan residence they were taken to a "massage room" decorated with photos of nude women - there to be sexually abused, even raped, several women have testified. Epstein used similar methods to recruit and abuse girls at his opulent residence in Palm Beach, Florida, according to legal proceedings in that state. He allegedly did the same on his private island in the Caribbean, importing girls on a jet dubbed the "Lolita Express".

He also owned pricey properties in New Mexico and Paris, though no sordid details have emerged from those venues. But his address book, published in 2015 by the now-defunct Gawker website, included dozens of names linked to those locations, listed under "Massages". As authorities investigate Epstein's death - and his living associates - little doubt remains about the extent of his sexual obsessions.

'Lots of them, mostly young'

No less a figure than Donald Trump, then a jet-setting New York real estate mogul, commented in 2002 on Epstein's predilection for young women. A year later, Vanity Fair reported that "Epstein is known about town as a man who loves women - lots of them, mostly young." But it was only in 2005, after an alleged victim's mother complained to police, that an investigation turned up evidence linking him to sexual abuse of at least 30 young girls.

An agreement struck in 2007 between his lawyers and then US attorney Alex Acosta - who was named US labor secretary by Trump before resigning in July amid fresh scrutiny of the deal - resulted in Epstein facing an unusually light sentence on state prostitution charges. He spent 13 months in jail, allowed out daily to tend to business. Now officially a sexual offender, Epstein apparently continued pursuing his obsession.

In Aug 2018 he told a New York Times interviewer there were times in history when sex with teenage girls was acceptable, and that criminalizing it was an aberration. But while Epstein could be witty and charming - he was passionate about the piano and could hold his own in discussions with Nobel Prize-winning scientists - he was secretive about his business dealings, journalists who knew him say. "He's a classic iceberg," long-time friend Rosa Monckton told Vanity Fair. "What you see is not what you get."

Epstein's career began a bit improbably in the 1970s, when he landed a job as a math teacher at a prestigious private school in Manhattan. He met and endeared himself to Alan "Ace" Greenberg, then the boss of investment firm Bear Stearns, while tutoring Greenberg's son. Epstein eventually landed a job there, before quitting in 1981 to found his own financial advisory firm. According to Vanity Fair, it was the influential financier Steven Hoffenberg who introduced Epstein - the son of a parks employee in blue-collar Brooklyn - to jet-set circles. (Hoffenberg was later sentenced to 20 years in prison for defrauding some 3,000 investors in a Ponzi scheme.)

Moving in rarefied circles that included Bill Clinton and Britain's Prince Andrew, Epstein was particularly close to Leslie Wexner, a billionaire whose company owned the Victoria's Secret lingerie stores. Wexner says he cut off dealings with Epstein 10 years ago, accusing him of misappropriating "vast sums of money". — AFP

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



This photo taken on Aug 8, 2019 shows the exterior of Darulaman Palace, which is undergoing a complete renovation, in Kabul. — AFP

Afghan palace emerges from ruins on centenary

Inside an imposing building in Kabul, a team of welders hastily fuse a sweeping metal bannister to a grand staircase. Outside, gardeners spray torrents of water over the parched earth, willing the grass to grow. They have just days to finish a total renovation of the once-ruined Darulaman Palace, a hulking showpiece of Afghan architecture that came to symbolize the country's turmoils during decades of war.

With questions looming over Afghanistan's future and a possible deal between the US and the Taliban imminent, the war-torn nation is this month hoping to briefly celebrate its past - and Darulaman will be the centerpiece. Work at the famed palace must be completed by today (Aug 19), the date marking 100 years of Afghan independence from Britain, when President Ashraf Ghani will inaugurate the newly renovated structure.

The final use for Darulaman - which means "Abode of Peace" - has not been finalized, but at least part will be turned into a museum. Perched on a hill with an imposing view of Kabul, Darulaman was a total wreck until recently. Its roof was destroyed, its walls crumbling and pock-marked by bullet holes, and the once-magnificent neo-classical exterior covered in graffiti and appearing close to collapse.

But in 2016 Ghani ordered the palace's renovation and, after finalizing design plans, construction work began in earnest in March 2018. Project manager Javid Hamad said reconstructing Darulaman is vital to Afghanistan, as the work promises a new beginning after so much conflict. "The message of the Darulaman Palace is a message of peace, security, brotherhood and coexistence," Hamad told AFP during a recent tour of the site, where about 500 workers are toiling round the clock to get the job done.

The \$10.5-million renovation has been a boon to Kabul's workforce. Cedar trimmings in high-ceilinged rooms that come from Kunar province in the west, and marble fittings from the western city of Herat mean businesses around the country have benefited.

Testament to a troubled past

But not everyone is happy the palace is being returned to its former glory, wondering if the money could have been put to better use in one of the world's

poorest countries. "It is a good thing to rebuild Darulaman Palace, but if this money would have been spent on solving people's problems that would have been better," local shopkeeper Ali said. Another Kabul resident, Ghulam Mohammad, said the battered palace should have been left in its eerie, ruined condition as a testament to Afghanistan's troubled past. "It should have remained the same so people can remember how brutal the war was," Mohammad told AFP. "Prior to the reconstruction, the palace was beautiful."

On Aug 19, 1919, London and Kabul signed the Anglo-Afghan Treaty in which Britain recognized



Renovation a boon to workforce

Afghan independence and vowed that British India would not extend west beyond the Khyber Pass. Designed by German engineers for King Amanullah Khan in the early 1920s, Darulaman Palace was originally intended to be the location for Afghanistan's new parliament. But over the years, due to shifting political currents, it has also seen a string of other uses including as a home for various government ministries, a medical school and a museum.

It was gutted by fire in 1968, and since then has been repeatedly caught up in Afghanistan's conflicts. It was again set ablaze during a coup attempt in 1978, and was subsequently shelled during fighting in the 1990s. Afghans today are nervously awaiting the outcome of a deal between the US and the Taliban. The Pentagon is widely expected to cut its troop presence in return for various guarantees from its longtime foe, but many in Afghanistan do not trust the insurgents and worry they will try to seize power. — AFP



In this photo taken on Aug 1, 2019 an Afghan laborer works on the renovation of Darulaman Palace.

Miami: Beach parties, gators on golf courses... and new tech hub?

Miami is famous for beach parties, gators that wander onto golf courses and iguanas that tumble out of palm trees. But now the city of "Scarface" and "Miami Vice" is vying to become a new powerhouse of tech startups that some in the business hope will spawn a novel phenomenon - the "iguanacorn". The word is meant to represent the tropical answer to the Silicon Valley "unicorns," start-ups that are worth more than \$1 billion.

While still lagging behind San Francisco and New York, the Florida city is trying to position itself as a tech hub, and already has its first "unicorns" under its belt. They include ParkJockey, which has disrupted the car parking sector, and Magic Leap, which takes users into the world of augmented reality. Looking to surf the Florida tech wave, so-called startup accelerators - firms that invest in fledgling tech ventures and speed up their early development - are starting to pop up in southern Florida.

Among the leaders is 500 Startups, which opened a Miami branch last year, as well as TheVentureCity, set up two years ago to offer opportunities to Latin American and European entrepreneurs who lack Silicon Valley contacts. "Not everyone comes from Stanford or Columbia, from MIT, and has their own 'network' built up in San Francisco," said Laura Gonzalez-Estefani, a former Facebook executive and co-founder of TheVentureCity.

The idea of her company is to "identify the best businesses outside of Silicon Valley and give them a boost," she told AFP. She jokingly refers to such ventures as "iguanacorns". "Iguanacorns" is the way we tag the unicorns that are coming from emerging tech hubs," she said. In keeping with that idea, her office is decorated with pictures of unicorns and their tropical, reptilian cousins. Ana Gonzalez, head of 500 Startups Miami - which has its main headquarters in Silicon Valley - said that Miami's "entrepreneurial ecosystem is at an inflection point". Her goal too is to "connect resources and expertise from Silicon Valley with Latin America and the Southeast United States."

Diverse market

Miami is already an international city, home to a diverse

mix of Latinos and Europeans who can snack on Cuban croquettes or cross the street and find Russian "syrnikis", pancakes stuffed with cottage cheese. Fifty-three percent of the city's 2.7 million residents are foreign-born, and locals joke that Miami is the only foreign city Americans can visit without a passport. That diversity offers startups access to markets on the US East Coast, Latin America and Europe, according to experts.

Additional draws include low taxes, a lower cost of living compared to San Francisco and New York, and a pleasant climate - if you don't mind hurricanes. "A big percentage of our entrepreneurs are not from here," said Brian Breslin, head of the University of Miami's Entrepreneurship Center.

"Whether it's South America or Europe or other parts of the United States, they're coming here for lifestyle reasons, cost-of-living reasons, safety/security, access to different markets. So there's a lot of different value-adds of being here compared to, say, going to San Francisco, or

New York, or Boston, or any of the other traditional tech hubs," he said. According to 2019's Global Startup Ecosystem Report, which analyzes the health of tech ecosystems around the world, Miami is one of the ten cities to emerge as a hub this year, and ranks in the top 30 of the most important startup centers globally. Tech sector workers in the city increased by 40 percent between 2012 and 2018, the report said, noting that "Miami is becoming a tech powerhouse".

And Breslin said the cycle of growth in more established tech hubs indicates that more expansion is yet to come. "I don't think we've peaked yet. I think there's still growth to be had," he said. "People go work at Facebook, or Google, make a ton of money and go start a new business. And we're just now getting to that point where people made a lot of money working at Chewy.com, at Ultimate Software, hopefully soon at Magic Leap, and then those people will turn around and start the next wave of businesses," he said. — AFP



Laura Gonzalez-Estefani (right), founder and CEO of TheVentureCity, and co-founder Clara Bullrich pose as they attend a meeting at TheVentureCity office in Miami on Aug 9, 2019. — AFP

Business

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2019

12 Trump takes a step back in trade war, Economic data add to growth worries**13** Huawei launches new distributed operating system, HarmonyOS**14** Infiniti AI-Babtain invites customers to experience Infiniti Q60's 3.0-litre V6

MOSCOW: A woman passes a notice advertising loans, with a church seen in the background, in downtown Moscow. — AFP

Easy credit poses threat to Russian economy

Minister warns borrowing could lead to another recession

MOSCOW: New machines popping up in Russian shopping centers seem innocuous enough—users insert their passport and receive a small loan in a matter of minutes. But the devices, which dispense credit in Saint Petersburg malls at a sky-high annual rate of 365 percent, are another sign of a credit boom that has authorities worried.

Russians, who have seen their purchasing power decline in recent years, are borrowing more and more to buy goods or simply to make ends meet.

The level of loans has grown so much in the last 18 months that the economy minister warned it could contribute to another recession. But it's a sensitive topic. Limiting credit would deprive households of financing that is sometimes vital, and could hobble already stagnant growth.

The Russian economy was badly hit in 2014 by falling oil prices and Western sanctions over Moscow's role in Ukraine, and it has yet to fully recover. "Tightening lending conditions could immedi-

ately damage growth," Natalia Orlova, chief economist at Alfa Bank, said. "Continuing retail loan growth is currently the main supporting factor," she noted. But "the situation could blow up in 2021," Economy Minister Maxim Oreshkin warned in a recent interview with the Ekho Moskvy radio station. He said measures were being prepared to help indebted Russians. According to Oreshkin, consumer credit's share of household debt increased by 25 percent last year and now represents 1.8 trillion rubles, around \$27.5 billion.

For a third of indebted households, he said, credit reimbursement eats up 60 percent of their monthly income, pushing many to take out new loans to repay old ones. Alfa Bank's Orlova said other countries in the region, for example in Eastern Europe, had even higher levels of overall consumer debt as a percentage of national output or GDP. But Russian debt is "not spread equally, it is mainly held by lower income classes," which are less likely to repay, she said.

'People don't have money'

The situation has led to friction between the government and the central bank, with ministers like Oreshkin criticizing it for not doing enough to restrict loans. Meanwhile, economic growth slowed sharply early this year following recoveries in 2017 and 2018, with an increase of just 0.7 percent in the first half of 2019 from the same period a year earlier. That was far from the 4.0 percent annual target set by President Vladimir Putin—a difficult objective while the country is subject to Western sanctions.

With 19 million people living below the poverty line, Russia is in dire need of development. "The problem is that people don't have money," Andrei Kolesnikov of the Carnegie Centre in Moscow wrote recently. "This is why we can physically feel the trepidation of the financial and economic authorities," he added.

Kolesnikov described the government's economic policy as something that "essentially boils down to collecting additional cash from the population and spend-

ing it on goals indicated by the state." At the beginning of his fourth presidential term in 2018, Putin unveiled ambitious "national projects."

The cost of those projects—which fall into 12 categories that range from health to infrastructure—is estimated at \$400 billion by 2024, of which \$115 billion is to come from private investment.

A rise in value-added tax on January 1 that was presented as crucial for the projects contributed to Putin's fall in popularity over the last year. "If the debt bubble suddenly bursts, how will people behave?" Kolesnikov asked. "They will be left without money" while authorities continue to spend on grand but ultimately unprofitable projects, the analyst warned.

He cited grandiose "patriotic" undertakings such as a bridge connecting Sakhalin island to the mainland in far eastern Russia, and the creation of a "Russian Vatican" in the ancient monastery town of Sergiev Posad outside Moscow. That will come at a "diabolical cost", he quipped. — AFP

Argentine economy minister Dujovne resigns amid deepening crisis

BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Economy Minister Nicolas Dujovne resigned Saturday after a week of economic tumult caused by President Mauricio Macri's defeat in a primary poll ahead of a general election. Dujovne will be replaced by Hernan Lacunza, economy minister for Buenos Aires province, Argentine media reported.

The country's peso ended the week having shed 20 percent of 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.

Dujovne said, in a letter posted on the website of La Nacion newspaper, he was "convinced that, under the circumstances, the (government's) management needs significant renewal in the economic arena." He leaves in the middle of a deepening economic crisis following last Sunday's primary elections in which market-friendly Macri was dealt a huge blow in his bid for re-election when he polled 15 points less than center-left Peronist candidate Alberto Fernandez.

The primaries serve as a bellwether for general elections in October. Dujovne's announcement marks the first change in Macri's cabinet since voters went to the polls. Fitch, which downgraded Argentina's credit rating two notches to "CCC," said the center-right's defeat "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, has questioned the reform program backed by a \$56 billion rescue package from the International Monetary Fund.



BUENOS AIRES: In this file photo, Argentine President Mauricio Macri (left) poses with his new Finance Minister Nicolas Dujovne after swearing him in. Dujovne resigned from his position on Saturday. — AFP

Standard & Poor's dropped Argentina's rating a single grade from "B" to "B-." "My resignation is consistent with a government and political space that listens to the people and that acts accordingly," Dujovne said, in a clear message to the Argentine electorate, which still has two months left until voting in the presidential elections. 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. — AFP

Germany has fiscal muscle to counter next crisis: Scholz

BERLIN: Germany has the fiscal strength to counter any future economic crisis "with full force", Finance Minister Olaf Scholz said yesterday, suggesting Berlin could make available up to 50 billion euros (\$55 billion) of extra spending. With its economy on the brink of recession and borrowing costs at record lows, Germany is facing pressure at home and abroad to ditch its pledge to target balanced budgets and instead boost investment by taking on new debt.

A government official told Reuters earlier this month that the finance ministry was toying with the idea of issuing debt in line with the more formal debt-brake rules to help finance a climate protection program. Speaking at a government "open day" news conference, Scholz acknowledged the debate about debt-financed spending but said a state should live within its means in economic

good times, not least because this meant it would be better placed to act when things go wrong.

Germany's debt level is expected to fall to roughly 58 percent of economic output this year from 60.9 percent the previous year, putting it below the European Union's debt ceiling of 60 percent and giving it more flexibility on future spending. "So if we have a debt level in Germany in relation to economic output that is below 60 percent, then this is the strength we have to counter a crisis with full force," Scholz said.

Scholz said the global financial crisis in 2008/2009 had cost Germany roughly 50 billion euros, adding: "And we have to be able to muster that (sum of money). And we can muster that. That's the good news." The finance ministry declined to comment on a media report on Friday that said Berlin would be prepared to ditch its balanced budget rule and take on new debt to counter a possible recession.

The German economy contracted 0.1 percent quarter-on-quarter from April to June, pushing Europe's biggest economy close to a recession as sentiment surveys and industrial orders data suggest hardly any improvement in the third quarter. Most economists define a recession as a period of at least two consecutive quarters of contraction. — Reuters

Business

Huawei launches new distributed operating system, HarmonyOS

HarmonyOS will deliver an intelligent experience across all user scenarios



KUWAIT: At the Huawei Developer Conference yesterday, Huawei launched HarmonyOS - a new microkernel-based, distributed operating system designed to deliver a cohesive user experience across all devices and scenarios.

Richard Yu, CEO of Huawei's Consumer Business Group, explained the company's thoughts behind developing this new OS. "We're entering a day and age where people expect a holistic intelligent experience across all devices and scenarios. To support this, we felt it was important to have an operating system with improved cross-platform capabilities. We needed an OS that supports all scenarios, that can be used across a broad range of devices and platforms, and that can meet consumer demand for low latency and strong security."

"These were our goals with HarmonyOS," he continued. "HarmonyOS is completely different from Android and iOS. It is a microkernel-based, distributed OS that delivers a smooth experience across all scenarios. It has trustworthy and secure architecture, and it supports seamless collaboration across devices. You can develop your apps once, then flexibly deploy them across a range of different devices."

Traditionally, new operating systems are released alongside new types of devices. As early as 10 years ago, Huawei envisioned a future where intelligence would seamlessly integrate with all aspects of our lives, and it began exploring how it might deliver this experience - one that would transcend the boundaries of physical space and span different hardware and platforms.

HarmonyOS is a lightweight, compact operating system with powerful functionality, and it will first be used for smart devices like smart watches, smart screens, in-vehicle systems, and smart speakers. Through this implementation Huawei aims to establish an integrated and shared ecosystem across devices, create a secure and reliable runtime environment, and deliver a holistic intelligent experience across every interaction with every device.

HarmonyOS - Four distinct technical features

An all-scenario, intelligent experience sets a high bar for

connectivity, so HarmonyOS was designed with four distinct technical features to deliver on its promise to consumers.

1. Seamless: First-ever device OS with distributed architecture, delivering a seamless experience across devices

By adopting distributed architecture and distributed virtual bus technology, HarmonyOS offers a shared communications platform, distributed data management, distributed task scheduling, and virtual peripherals. With HarmonyOS, app developers won't have to deal with the underlying technology for distributed apps, allowing them to focus on their own individual service logic. Developing distributed apps will be easier than ever before. Apps built on HarmonyOS can run on different devices while delivering a seamless, collaborative experience across all scenarios.

2. Smooth: Deterministic Latency Engine and high-performance IPC

HarmonyOS will address underperformance challenges with a Deterministic Latency Engine and high-performance Inter Process Communication (IPC). The Deterministic Latency Engine sets task execution priorities and time limits for scheduling in advance. Resources will gravitate toward tasks with higher priorities, reducing the response latency of apps by 25.7%. The microkernel can make IPC performance up to five times more efficient than existing systems.

3. Secure: Microkernel architecture that reshapes security and trustworthiness from the ground up

HarmonyOS uses a brand-new microkernel design that features enhanced security and low latency. This microkernel was designed to simplify kernel functions, implement as many system services as possible in user mode outside the kernel, and add mutual security protection. The microkernel itself provides only the most basic services like thread scheduling and IPC.

Harmony OS's microkernel design uses formal verification methods to reshape security and trustworthiness from the ground up in a Trusted Execution Environment (TEE). Formal verification methods are an effective mathematical approach to validate system correctness from the source, while traditional verification methods, such as functional verification and attack simulation, are confined to limited scenarios. Formal methods, by contrast, can use data models to verify all software running paths.

HarmonyOS is the first OS to use formal verification in device TEE, significantly improving security. In addition, because the HarmonyOS microkernel has much less code (roughly one-thousandth the amount of the Linux kernel), the probability of attack is greatly reduced.

4. Unified: Multi-device IDE allows apps to be developed once and deployed across multiple devices

Powered by a multi-device IDE, multi-language unified compilation, and a distributed architecture kit, HarmonyOS can automatically adapt to different screen layout controls and interactions, and support both drag-and-drop control and preview-oriented visual programming. This allows developers to more efficiently build apps that run on multiple devices. With a multi-device IDE, developers can code their apps once and deploy them across multiple devices, creating a tightly integrated ecosystem across all user devices.

The Huawei ARK Compiler is the first static compiler that can perform on par with Android's virtual machine, enabling developers to compile a broad range of advanced languages into machine code in a single, unified environment. By supporting unified compilation in multiple languages, the Huawei ARK Compiler will help developers greatly improve their productivity.

Developer plan and ecosystem development

At yesterday's conference, Huawei also announced the evolution roadmap for HarmonyOS and its kernel.

HarmonyOS 1.0 will be first adopted in its smart screen products, which are due to launch later this year. Over the next three years, HarmonyOS will be optimized and gradually adopted across a broader range of smart devices, including wearables, Huawei Vision, and head units for your car.

The success of HarmonyOS will depend on a dynamic ecosystem of apps and developers. To encourage broader adoption, Huawei will release HarmonyOS as an open-source platform, worldwide. Huawei will also establish an open-source foundation and an open-source community to support more in-depth collaboration with developers.

China is home to a strong app ecosystem and a massive user base. Moving forward, Huawei will lay the foundations for HarmonyOS in the Chinese market, and then expand it further to the global ecosystem. With a focus on providing new and unique value, Huawei will open up and share its core capabilities in areas like connectivity, cameras, and AI. It will work closely with ecosystem partners to deliver apps and services that provide consumers with the best possible experience and bring new life to the industry.

HarmonyOS will bring incredible new benefits to consumers, equipment vendors, and developers. For consumers, it will bring a cohesive and powerful intelligent experience across all aspects of their lives. For equipment vendors, it will help them gain a first-mover advantage in the age of holistic intelligent experience, where 5G, AI, and IoT will see explosive growth. At the same time, HarmonyOS will enable developers to win over more users with less investment, and rapidly innovate services across all scenarios.

"We believe HarmonyOS will revitalize the industry and enrich the ecosystem," said Richard Yu. "Our goal is to bring people a truly engaging and diverse experience. We want to invite developers from around the world to join us as we build out this new ecosystem. Together, we will deliver an intelligent experience for consumers in all scenarios."

Drone buzzes above vineyard helping Luxembourg winegrower

HETTERMILLEN, Luxembourg: Buzzing like a giant insect over the verdant Moselle Valley, a drone sprays fungicide over rows of vines. Luxembourg wine producer Corinne Kox began trials of the small unmanned aircraft last month over part of her century-old family estate near the borders with France and Germany.

The test drone, guided by a pilot operating a digital control panel on the ground, sprays more accurately and less wastefully than a helicopter which her family sometimes uses, she said.

Kox, who is in her late 30s, is among the trailblazers in Europe deploying drones in wine production.

"It gives us some flexibility, especially on the slopes," she told AFP. "With a tractor, it is sometimes dangerous to drive right after a rainfall because it slips," said Kox, who is gradually assuming management of the 10-hectare (24.7-acre) estate from her father. Drones have been in use in California's Napa Valley vineyards for some years.

In Europe, meanwhile, drones have been used in Switzerland for about three years and in Germany since last year, according to French viticulture expert Robert Verger. "In France, all aerial treatments in agriculture are forbidden, and the drone is classed as aerial treatment," Verger, of France's leading FNSEA agricultural union, told AFP.

Steep slopes

Above Hettermillen village on the Moselle River, Domaine Kox sprawls over lush green limestone slopes, where grapevines have been cultivated for 2,000 years. Born in 1919, Kox's late grandfather Francois launched a grape production business on the estate and her father and mentor Laurent turned it into a sophisticated vineyard and winery in 1977. Kox produces white wines from Riesling, Pinot Blanc, Auxerrois and Gewuerztraminer grape varieties. They also turn out a few sparkling wines as well as reds.

With a wingspan of nearly 1.5 metres (five feet) and eight propellers, the drone buzzes a metre or so above the vines, its two flashing green lights protruding like antennae. It sprays a liquid mix of sulphur and copper over the green leaves.

After flying for about five to six minutes, the drone returns to recharge its batteries and refill the plastic tank with 10 liters (2.6 gallons) of fungicide. It can fly



both in automatic mode on a pre-determined route, or be guided by the pilot on the ground. In conditions like those of the Grand Duchy's vined slopes, the drone can be an advantage, said chief editor of Luxembourg's specialist Vinorama magazine, Erwan Nonet.

"Luxembourg's average vineyard gradient is the highest in the European Union," he said. Wine growers and farmers find it safer to use drones to spread fungicides and other chemicals to protect crops, added Verger, of the FNSEA. They are "not in contact with the product" and less likely to have an accident, he noted.

More competitive?

Carrying out the trial at the Kox estate is private aviation operator Luxaviation, founded in Luxembourg in 2008, which supplies the drone and pilot. "There are other winegrowers who are interested in drones," Christophe Lapiere, director of Luxaviation Drones, told AFP, mentioning interest from South Africa and Australia.

Costing \$40,000 (about 36,000 euros) to buy, Kox is just leasing the drone but hopes, in the long term, it would cost the same as a helicopter but with less noise and greater efficiency.

"We're still in the trial phase, so we don't have exact figures yet, but the idea is to reduce costs to match the cost of the helicopter," she said. And, although she has still to reach a final decision, Kox said that she already planned to use the drone next year over a much larger portion of the estate. —AFP

PM welcomes move to shut down Latvian PNB Banka

RIGA: Latvia's prime minister on Friday welcomed a decision by European authorities to shut down the Baltic state's bank PNB Banka after they determined that nothing could prevent it from failing.

"The whole banking business in Latvia is becoming more stable and secure, and this particular decision shows that the European Central Bank (ECB)'s oversight is strong and effective," Prime Minister Krisjanis Karins told the LETA news agency. The Eurozone member has been scrambling to reform its banking sector after a string of high profile corruption and money laundering allegations in recent years.

PNB Banka itself was fined for money laundering by Latvia's financial regulator in 2017 after a joint probe with the United States' Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) found it had been used to circumvent international sanctions against North Korea. The bank, Latvia's sixth largest with 550 million euros (\$610 million) in assets, is being shut down for undercapitalisation.

PNB Banka "was failing or likely to fail" according to a statement by the ECB late Thursday.

The bank has been directly supervised by the ECB since May, and central bank officials decided its amount of available capital had deteriorated "to the point that the bank's assets were less than its liabilities". The ECB then informed Europe's Single Resolution Board, which in turn



determined "that resolution action is not necessary," and PNB Banka should be liquidated, an SRB statement said.

"The Latvian bank will be wound up under national law," SRB added.

The SRB was created in 2016 to deal with failing Eurozone banks by spreading the cost of dismantling them across the zone's entire banking sector. Several ailing Eurozone banks have thus disappeared, including the sixth biggest Spanish bank, Banco Popular, which was acquired in 2017 by rival Santander. Latvian Finance Minister Janis Reirs said Friday that PNB owes its clients 300 million euros.

"The government-run Deposit Guarantee Fund will step in to help the clients recover their money. Up to 100,000 euros for each client," he told Latvian public broadcaster LTV. Certain clients have more money tied up in the bank, including the second city of Daugavpils, whose mayor Andrejs Elksnins told LETA that city taxpayers could lose up to 1.3 million euros as a result.

The bank, which until last year was known as Norvik Banka, has been owned by Russian businessman Grigoriy Guseynikov since 2013. — AFP

Cuba slaps price controls as it seeks to keep lid on inflation

HAVANA: Communist-run Cuba has imposed price controls on goods and services ranging from lemons and pork to haircuts and taxi fares in what it says is an effort to tame inflation as it increases state wages and pensions. On Thursday, prices in Havana were set for some basic foods such as beans, pork, lemons, bananas, onions and cabbage.

In recent weeks, regional authorities have slapped price controls on taxi fares, beverages and haircuts, among other items. The price controls differ from province to province.

Cuba has controlled prices of certain goods in the past but the new controls mark a more systematic approach. President Miguel Diaz-Canel announced last month a series of emergency measures to fight economic stagnation and dwindling foreign currency earnings that began in 2015 as the economy of key ally Venezuela imploded, and which have been aggravated by a series of new US sanctions.

The measures included increased wages and pensions for more than two million state employees. That amounts to 8 billion Cuban pesos annually, equivalent to 13 percent of this year's budget.

The government is also introducing price controls and still-to-be-announced policies aimed at stimulating local production to meet increased consumer demand without sparking inflation. It estimates inflation was 2.4 percent in 2018. The price controls apply both to state-run companies that dominate the economy, and a growing private sector of cooperatives, farmers, small businesses and self-employed individuals who, for example, sell produce or drive taxis. — Reuters

Business

Infiniti Al-Babtain invites customers to experience Infiniti Q60's 3.0-litre V6

Opt for the first-ever Infiniti Twin-turbo, high potential models at affordable prices



KUWAIT: Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Infiniti vehicles in the State of Kuwait, urges its customers to explore the popular features of the Infiniti Q60 3.0-Litre V6 this special season. Known to deliver a confidence-inspiring and personalized experience behind the wheel, distinctive features that set it apart from its peers is the Infiniti Q60's powerful elegance and striking performance.

The Q60 features an aerodynamic front and rear "Zero Lift" design. It keeps the vehicle from lifting at high speeds, giving stability - even in cross-winds - and full control of one's steering.

For those who demand a performance-focused sound system, the new Bose Performance Series with Advanced

Staging Technology delivers. Thirteen high-performance speakers, including multiple new 10" and 6"x9" woofers and a lightweight silk dome tweeter achieve "live performance" precision. Revel in a wider and more precise soundstage, where the acoustics are always ideal.

Eye-inspired LED headlights give a provocative stare that can be seen from both the front and side. The Adaptive Front Lighting System (AFS) improves visibility at intersections and around curves, by sensing the steering and turning the headlights.

A recent Bose innovation, Advanced Staging Technology utilizes advanced algorithms to dynamically direct music to their ideal locations within the cabin. Instruments and vocals have exceptional clarity. So from the driver's seat, one will feel as if they're sitting

in the front row at a concert.

The 3.0-liter 2 turbocharged engine promises optimal power and efficiency, to glide forward confidently while the turbo spools quickly to produce 400hp at 6,400 rpm and outputs a stirring 350 Nm of torque.

Infiniti Al-Babtain encourages its customers to discover the high performance model by visiting the designated showroom located in Al-Rai.

Al Babtain Group was founded in 1948 to present a model of honesty, integrity and total dedication and to gain bright reputation in Kuwait and the Middle East area. Today Al-Babtain Group has licensing rights for some of the world's leading brands stretching the globe from the USA to the Far East. For 70 years, Al-Babtain Group has experienced continued success,

and large measure of this success came from the Group's advanced flexible management style and long term vision. These astounding results were achieved due to a versatile strategic formula focusing on growth amongst its sphere of activities; including automotive, technology, investment, information, industrial and Finance. The automotive sector is the main structure of the Al-Babtain Group's business, which owns some of the bestselling and demanded brands in Kuwait, in addition to heavy equipments. The Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co. and Trading and Contracting Company is proud to be the authorized agent and distributor of many Japanese, Chinese, and European (French) vehicles in Kuwait such as Nissan, Infiniti, Renault, Citroen.

Al-Tijari announces winners of Al-Najma weekly account

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

The results of the draw were as follows:

1- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 was for the share of Sameerah Ali Abdulraheem Bokhamseen.

2- The "Salary & Cash on Top campaign" prize of KD 1,000 was for the share of Faisal Turki Al-Ghadhour.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

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

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

New Mimecast report reveals analysis of 67bn rejected emails

DUBAI: Mimecast Limited, a leading email and data security company, yesterday released its first Threat Intelligence Report: Black Hat Edition 2019. The report provides technical analysis of emerging threats identified as attempts to get through the security environment of Mimecast customers. Within the report, Mimecast Threat Center researchers outline tactics and techniques of emerging threats, active threat campaigns observed, primary threat categories and volume, and the top targeted sectors. Researchers also offer their insights into how the threat landscape may change over the next 6-18 months based on observations made during this time. There are two opposing themes that ran through their analysis: attackers are using either (1) simple, opportunistic attacks or (2) complex, targeted attacks based on necessity to impact the target.

The Threat Intelligence Report covers the period between April and June 2019 and leverages the processing of nearly 160 billion emails, 67 billion of which were rejected for displaying highly malicious attack techniques. A significant increase in impersonation attacks was observed, leveraging well-known basic social engineering techniques to target individuals for fast and easy financial gain. Interestingly, the report cites that threat actors are adapting how they engage their targeted victims, initiating through email first, then shifting to SMS, a less secure communications channel. On the other hand, an increasing amount of more complex targeted attacks using

obfuscation, layering and bundling of malware were often used. Researchers found that threat actors using these types of attacks are familiarizing themselves with their target's security environment, then implementing multiple evasion techniques in efforts to avoid detection.

The report also gives specific examples of emerging threats, active threat campaigns observed, primary threat categories and volume, and the top targeted sectors. A large number of known malware campaigns were observed, including ones incorporating Emotet, Adwin, Necurs, and Gandcrab malware. Microsoft Excel was one of the most popular file types used to distribute malicious activity, as more than 40 percent of threats detected were using files associated with it. File types associated with Microsoft Word were seen in nearly 15 percent of threats.

"The cyberthreat landscape will continue to evolve as threat actors continue to look for new ways to bypass security channels to breach their targets. We've observed malware-centric campaigns becoming more sophisticated, often using different types of malware in different phases of an attack - yet, at the same time very simple attacks are also increasing significantly," said Josh Douglas, vice president of threat intelligence at Mimecast. "The mission of the Threat Intelligence Report is to help organizations better understand the global threat landscape, so they can make more informed decisions on how to strengthen their security posture."

Other key findings include outlined within the Threat Intelligence Report:

- Threat actors are becoming more organized and



Josh Douglas



Figure 6. Spam distribution by sector (attacks per user)

business-like by implementing subscription and as-a-service-based business models to deliver malware in an effort to reduce their work and improve their return-on-investments

- Spam is heavily used by threat actors as a conduit to distribute malware. Professional Education was the most targeted sector for spam, as they are likely seen as a prime target due to constantly changing student populations that are not likely to have high security awareness and the potential for attackers to get access to personal data

- Attacks on Management & Consulting and Biotechnology industries accounted for 30 percent of all impersonation attacks

- Trojans made up 71 percent of opportunistic attacks. In addition to this report, Mimecast also recently launched Mimecast Threat Intelligence, a value-added capability that gives customers a deeper understanding of the cyber threats their organizations face. This new set of capabilities is designed to give organizations greater visibility and access to threat data and analytics specific to their overall organization, enabling them to respond to threats more quickly and effectively. Learn more on the insights Mimecast Threat Intelligence provides to customers.

Is the clock ticking again for Argentine debt? Ask IMF

BUENOS AIRES: A collapse in Argentina's peso currency this week and soaring borrowing costs have fueled investors' concern that Latin America's third-largest economy is heading for another debt restructuring. The International Monetary Fund's next review of the country's \$57 billion lending program on Sept. 15 should provide a sign of whether Argentina's lender of last resort now thinks the same.

Business-friendly incumbent President Mauricio Macri's severe loss in Sunday's primary election to his left-leaning Peronist rival Alberto Fernandez, two months before the presidential vote, prompted market jitters about a possible lurch back toward the interventionist policies that Macri had vowed to end.

"The IMF probably will request a restructuring. The question is when," said Edward Glossop, Latin America economist for Capital Economics. "Given what the market has done this week, it's hard to argue that Argentina's debt is still sustainable." Restructurings are a traumatic subject for voters who remember the country's 2001/2002 default, which punctuated an economic meltdown that tossed millions of middle-class Argentines into poverty. Subsequent mini-defaults kept

the country locked out of global capital markets for years.

Against this backdrop, the peso lost 21 percent of its value against the greenback in the first days of the week before finding support in the neighborhood of 57 per dollar - making it significantly harder for Argentina, with its economy mired in recession, to pay its dollar debts. In its previous review of Argentina in July, the IMF warned there were "elevated" risks to the program, with peso weakness and political uncertainty likely to feed on each other.

A spokesman for the IMF declined to comment for this story. Macri took office in 2015 promising to bring an end to the cyclical crises that over the last 100 years turned one of the world's strongest economies into a serial defaulter.

But he overestimated his ability to attract the foreign direct investment needed for sustainable economic growth and underestimated the effect his plan for cutting public utility subsidies would have on inflation, now roaring at 55 percent. Anger at the painful austerity measures was a driving factor in Macri's drubbing in Sunday's primary by Fernandez, who has teamed up with former free-spending populist President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner as his running mate.

Argentina's primary election is unusual. With major parties already having selected their candidates before the ballot, it functioned as a massive opinion poll on the Oct. 27 presidential election. Investors swiftly reassessed that a restructuring was far more likely and the markets started tumbling Monday morning.

'Crunch point'

Macri loosened his fiscal stance this



BUENOS AIRES: A digital display sign shows the price of sunflower oil for sale at a supermarket in Buenos Aires. —AFP

week, promising to lower workers' income taxes and levies on the sale of basic foods, increase welfare subsidies and other spending likely to pressure his deficit cutting effort under the IMF deal.

"A crunch point could be Sept. 15, when the next IMF loan tranche - about \$5.4 billion - is due to be disbursed. The Fund could request a restructuring as a condition of this," Glossop said. In 2001, the IMF's refusal to disburse funds to Argentina helped trigger the country's default.

Despite the fact that Macri has blown out Argentina's IMF-agreed fiscal targets, the IMF could surprise the market by granting additional relief funds. "In general

the Fund acts to avoid defaults. So if the IMF could put in an extra \$5 billion or \$10 billion it would not be much money, but it would help avoid a painful default," said Gabriel Rubinstein, a Buenos Aires-based economics consultant.

'Grim scenario'

Shamaila Khan, who manages portfolios exposed to Argentina as director of emerging market debt at AllianceBernstein in New York, said Argentine bonds were trading at 40 to 50 cents on the dollar. "The market is telling us that there is an extremely high probability of restructuring but not a very high recovery rate," she said. —Reuters

Health & Science

Iceland commemorates first glacier lost to climate change

The plaque bears the inscription 'A letter to the future'

REYKJAVIK: Iceland yesterday honored the passing of Okjokull, its first glacier lost to climate change, as scientists warn that some 400 others on the subarctic island risk the same fate. A bronze plaque will be unveiled in a ceremony starting around 1400 GMT to mark Okjokull — which translates to "Ok glacier" — in the west of Iceland, in the presence of local researchers and their peers at Rice University in the United States, who initiated the project.

Iceland's Prime Minister Katrin Jakobsdottir, Environment Minister Gudmundur Ingi Gudbrandsson, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Mary Robinson are also due to attend the event. "This will be the first monument to a glacier lost to climate change anywhere in the world," Cymene Howe, associate professor of anthropology at Rice University, said in July.

The plaque bears the inscription "A letter to the future," and is intended to raise awareness about the decline of glaciers and the effects of climate change. "In the next 200 years all our glaciers are expected to follow the same path. This monument is to acknowledge that we know what is happening and what needs to be done. Only you know if we did it," the plaque reads.

It is also labeled "415 ppm CO₂," referring to

the record level of carbon dioxide measured in the atmosphere last May. "Memorials everywhere stand for either human accomplishments, like the deeds of historic figures, or the losses and deaths we recognize as important," researcher Howe said. "By memorializing a fallen glacier, we want to emphasize what is being lost — or dying — the world over, and also draw attention to the fact that this is something that humans have 'accomplished', although it is not something we should be proud of."

Howe noted that the conversation about climate change can be abstract, with many dire statistics and sophisticated scientific models that can feel incomprehensible. "Perhaps a monument to a lost glacier is a better way to fully grasp what we now face," she said, highlighting "the power of symbols and ceremony to provoke feelings". Iceland loses about 11 billion tons of ice per year, and scientists fear all of the island country's 400-plus glaciers will be gone by 2200, according to Howe and her Rice University colleague Dominic Boyer.

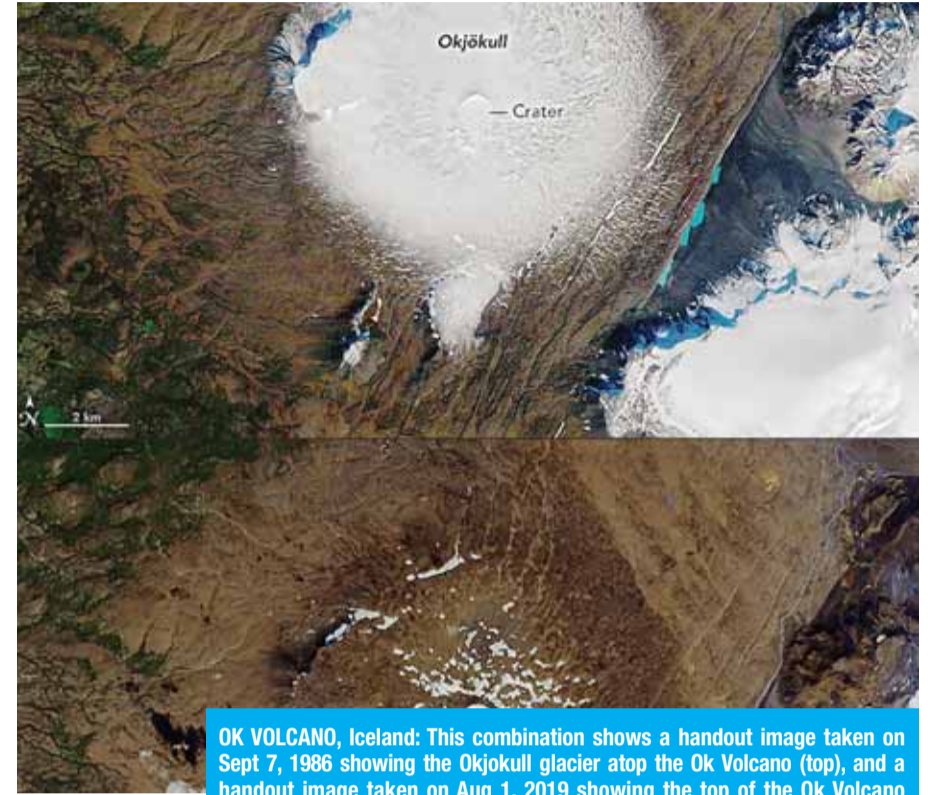
Stripped in 2014

Glaciologists stripped Okjokull of its glacier status in 2014, a first for Iceland. In 1890, the glacier ice covered 16 square kilometers but by

2012, it measured just 0.7 square kilometers, according to a report from the University of Iceland from 2017. In 2014, "we made the decision that this was no longer a living glacier, it was only dead ice, it was not moving," Oddur Sigurdsson, a glaciologist with the Icelandic Meteorological Office said.

To have the status of a glacier, the mass of ice and snow must be thick enough to move by its own weight. For that to happen the mass must be approximately 40 to 50 meters thick, he said. According to a study published by the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) in April, nearly half of the world's heritage sites could lose their glaciers by 2100 if greenhouse gas emissions continue at the current rate.

Sigurdsson said he feared "that nothing can be done to stop it." "The inertia of the climate system is such that, even if we could stop introducing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere right now, it will keep on warming for century and a half or two centuries before it reaches equilibrium." Iceland's Vatnajökull National Park, which was added to UNESCO's World Heritage List in early July, is home to, and named after, the largest ice cap in Europe. — AFP



OK VOLCANO, Iceland: This combination shows a handout image taken on Sept 7, 1986 showing the Okjokull glacier atop the Ok Volcano (top), and a handout image taken on Aug 1, 2019 showing the top of the Ok Volcano where the Okjokull glacier has melted away throughout the 20th century and was declared dead in 2014. — AFP



SANTIAGO: Snow cannons spray artificial snow on a ski slope at El Colorado skiing centre, in the Andes Mountains, some 30 km from Santiago. — AFP

Climate change forces Chile ski stations to make fake snow

SANTIAGO: Once deep in powder this time of year, Chile's ski stations are fighting the ravages of climate change and pollution that have brought less and less snow to the central Andes. Just a few decades ago, the Andes mountain range could be buried under four meters of snow, forcing the closure of access roads and requiring the use of tractors to get around. But this year, it's snowed only three times in the Chilean Andes, and never more than 30 centimeters.

It's not just Chile affected, but the whole of the Andes where the area of snow cover in the central zone has diminished by five to 10 percent each decade, according to Raul Cordero, an academic at the University of Santiago. "But it's not just snow cover that's decreasing, the thickness of the snow cover is also reducing," he said. "So when we talk about a decrease of the cover of five to 10 percent, this probably signifies a much greater reduction in the volume of available snow over the Andes."

Rising temperatures mean the snow line — above which snow never melts all year round — keeps creeping upwards. The snow melt is even more pronounced in the central zone due to pollution from the Chilean capital, one of the most contaminated urban areas in the region. A recent study led by Cordero found that soot, or black carbon, from Santiago was settling in the Andes and accelerating the snow melt. As it's black, it absorbs more solar radiation and heats up quicker. "When this pollution is over the cities it poisons people and when the wind blows, this pollution goes and is deposited on the mountains and contributes to the snow melt," said Cordero.

Japan under pressure over past hunting of endangered whales

GENEVA: Japan insisted it no longer hunts endangered sei whales in international waters, but faced accusations of still violating a wildlife treaty by allowing commercialisation of meat from past catches. The standing committee of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) last October found Japan in breach of the treaty and ordered it to rectify the situation or face trade sanctions.

The elected panel, which handles the treaty's compliance and enforcement, dismissed Japan's claims that the cull since 2002 of some 1,500 North Pacific sei whales was only scientifically motivated. Instead, it found that the hunt was primarily commercially motivated, and thus constituted international trade in a protected species and a clear violation of the treaty. Japan told the committee meeting in Geneva on Friday that it no longer permits the

hunting of sei whale on the high sea and is therefore in compliance with CITES. "This matter should be considered closed," a member of the Japanese delegation said, a day before a global conference of all 183 countries that have signed the treaty kicks off in Geneva. But committee members from a range of countries, including the European Union, Israel, Niger, Peru and the United States, disagreed. Many voiced outrage at the continued sale of meat and blubber from the whales deemed to have been illegally culled and imported over a 16-year period. According to conservationists, 1,500 tons of meat from 131 sei whales killed in 2018 alone have been commercialized in Japan, and sei whale meat remains widely available in shops and restaurants in the country.

'Truly shocking'

"It is truly shocking," the representative from Niger told the meeting, maintaining that when illegal international trade is detected in other endangered species, such as elephant ivory, the stockpiles are ordered confiscated and destroyed. The European Union representative agreed, pointing to article 8 of the convention, which he said "requires ... confiscating specimens traded, or in this case introduced from the sea, in violation of CITES."

EU MPs urge ban on trophy hunting of endangered species

GENEVA: Dozens of European parliamentarians and conservation groups called yesterday on the regulator of global wildlife trade to ban all trophy hunting of rhinos, elephants and other endangered animals. The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES) bans all commercial trade in more than 1,000 species of animals and plants considered to be endangered, listed under its so-called Appendix I.

But in a letter handed to CITES Secretary-General Yvonne Higuero, more than 50 European MPs and an equal number of conservationist groups decried that trophy hunting, which is deemed "non-commercial", has been exempt from that ban. "A considerable number of Appendix I species trophies are traded each year, (including) trophies of species listed as extinct in the wild, critically endangered, endangered, vulnerable or near threatened on the IUCN Red List," the letter said. The signatories called on CITES to "treat the trade in hunting trophies in the same manner as it treats all other trade in wildlife," and to "implement an immediate moratorium on the import of all Appendix I species." They also called for an end to allowing captive farming of lions for hunting trophies. The letter was delivered during an ongoing global wildlife conference in Geneva tasked with evaluating the CITES rules, but the issue is currently not on the agenda for debate.

'Absolutely inexplicable'

The Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, which is behind the push to close the CITES "loophole", said in a statement that "CITES permits have been issued (by) hunters wanting to shoot and take home trophies of some of the world's most endangered animals." A wide range of species are coveted by hunters, including elephants, white and black rhinos, giraffes, but also primates like chimpanzees, cheetahs, crocodiles and grey parrots. Eduardo Goncalves, the founder of the Campaign to Ban Trophy Hunting, told AFP the CITES exemption for trophy hunting was "absolutely inexplicable." Trophy hunting, he said, is a "global multi-million dollar industry", which is "clearly commercial". The United States, which by far sees the biggest import of hunting trophies, has issued an estimated 200,000 import permits in the past decade, according to a report by the campaign. That is nine times more than China, which came in second, the report said, warning though that the number of permits issued by Beijing had skyrocketed from just 18 in 2007 to 2,142 a decade later. The report also noted significant recent increases in trophy hunting by citizens from a range of other countries, including Canada, Belgium, Austria and Russia. Government-licensed hunting is common across parts of Africa, with tourists paying to shoot a small number of selected animals. The practice is controversial but many wildlife experts accept that hunting can aid long-term conservation. — AFP

Japan meanwhile stressed that it had immediately followed the committee's October ruling, but balked at the idea it should be applied retroactively. In the end, the committee ordered Japan to report back on its use of the sei whale stockpiles, but put off the thorny discussion on confiscation until next year.

Juan Carlos Vasquez, in charge of legal affairs at the CITES secretariat, told AFP the issue was complex and would likely spark a lengthy debate, but said he did not think it was fair to compare Japan's sei whale meat stockpile with stockpiles of illegal ivory.

The illegal ivory trade is "clearly conducted by criminal syndicates," he said, stressing that Japan's sei whale hunt on the other hand was conducted by scientific institutes. "Everything is traced, registered, controlled," he said, adding that while CITES had rebuked Japan over its motives for the whaling, it was clear that "these are not criminals hunting whales." While Japan remains bound by CITES international wildlife trade restrictions, it has withdrawn from the International Whaling Commission (IWC), enabling it last month to resume commercial whaling in its territorial waters for the first time in decades. It has allotted itself a hunting quota of 227 of the giant sea mammals this year, including 25 sei whales. — AFP

CO2 row over climate activist Thunberg's trip to New York

PARIS: The team behind teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg's yacht voyage to New York yesterday fended off claims that her trip will create carbon emissions because team members will take transatlantic flights. The 16-year-old Swede, whose school strikes have inspired children across the world to protest against global warming, refuses to fly because of the carbon emissions caused by planes.

But she has been offered a lift on the Malizia II racing yacht, and set off on August 15 along with her father Svante and a filmmaker to document the journey, in order to attend the UN talks in September with a clear conscience. However a spokesman for German round-the-world sailor Boris Herrmann, the yacht's co-skipper, told Berlin newspaper TAZ that several people would fly into New York to help take the yacht back to Europe. Herrmann himself will return by plane, according to the spokesman. The paper estimated that in fact Thunberg's boat trip would end up being more polluting than if she and her companions had just taken flights to New York themselves.

'An imperfect solution'

That conclusion was quickly picked up on social media sites among Thunberg's detractors. But Team Malizia manager Holly Cova insisted that the young activist's journey would be climate neutral. "All Team Malizia flights are offset," she said in a statement issued by Thunberg's entourage. She explained that the New York trip had been organized "at very short notice, and as a result two people will need to fly over to the US in order to bring the boat back".

"We only have one boat, so they cannot easily sail over to meet them. Altogether, four crew will be sailing the boat back. These are logistical decisions that Team Malizia alone has taken," she added. Cova admitted "this is an imperfect solution," adding that "the world has not yet found a way to make it possible to cross an ocean without a carbon footprint."

'I will just ignore them'

The 60-foot (18-metre) yacht is skippered by Hermann and Pierre Casiraghi, vice president of the Monaco Yacht Club and a member of the principality's ruling family. It can travel at speeds of around 35 knots (70 kilometres an hour) but will be heading into the wind for much of the time so will be slower, and the captain wants a smooth ride. Ahead of the UN summit on September 23, Thunberg will take part in youth demonstrations, before heading to Canada, Mexico and then to Chile for another UN conference in December. It is not clear how she will be travelling. "I don't know yet how I will get home," she said before she set off from the English port of Plymouth.

Thunberg has become a figurehead for climate action with her stark warnings of catastrophe if the world does not act now to cut carbon emissions and curb global warming. She has received criticism and abuse for her uncompromising attitude, but shows little concern at how she might be received among climate change deniers in the United States. "I will just ignore them because I'm only acting and communicating the science, and if they don't like that, what have I got to do with that?" she said. — AFP



PLYMOUTH: Swedish climate activist Greta Thunberg (L) and German captain Boris Herrmann wave from aboard the Malizia II IMOCA class sailing yacht, off the coast of Plymouth, southwest England. — AFP

Health & Science

Mussels, 'super-filters' that can help beat water pollution

PARIS: Seafood lovers who prize the mussel for its earthy taste and succulent flesh may be unaware of its growing potential in the fight against water pollution. The mussel is the hoover of the sea, taking in phytoplankton for nourishment along with microplastics, pesticides and other pollutants — which makes it an excellent gauge. One day, it may also be pressed into service to cleanse water.

"It's a super-filter in the marine world, filtering up to 25 liters of water a day," says marine biologist Leila Meistertzheim. "It's a real model of bioaccumulation of pollutants generally speaking." As they pump and filter the water through their gills in order to feed and breathe, mussels store almost everything else that passes through — which is why strict health rules apply for those destined for human consumption. Like canaries in a coal mine, mussels have long been used as "bio-indicators" of the health of the seas, lakes and rivers they inhabit. Little-known pollutants can turn up to join the usual suspects, with increasing attention paid to microplastics containing bisphenol A and phthalates, both thought to be endocrine disruptors.

Meistertzheim heads a study for France's Tara Ocean Foundation using mussels to gauge the health of the estuaries of the Thames, Elba and Seine rivers. The mussels, placed in fish traps, are submerged in the waters for a month before researchers dis-

sect them to determine what chemical substances lurk in their tissues. The idea of deploying mussels across the oceans to absorb ubiquitous microplastics is just a dream for now, but for other pollutants, the bivalves are already at work. "In some places, mussels are used, as well as oysters, to cleanse the sea of pesticides, for example," Meistertzheim notes.

E coli busters

Richard Luthy, an environmental engineer from California's Stanford University, says that, in most cases, mussels harvested from contaminated waters should not be eaten. But if the contaminant is E. coli, mussels can be thanked for the "removal and inactivation" of the fecal material, he says, calling the service a "public health benefit".

The mussels are edible because they "excrete the bacteria as faeces or mucus," he says. Mussels living in waterways affected by eutrophication — often marked by abundant algae — are also fit for human consumption, researchers say. The phenomenon is often the result of waste dumped into the waterway containing phosphates and nitrates, such as detergents, fertilisers and sewage.

The nutrients in these substances encourage the proliferation of algae, which in turn starves the water of oxygen, upsetting the ecosystem. Mussels "recycle" these nutrients

by feeding on the algae, says Eve Galimany, a researcher of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's Milford Laboratory who has experimented with mussels in the Bronx River in New York.

The recycling principle is already at work in a pilot project titled Baltic Blue Growth in Sweden, Denmark and the Baltic countries which grows mussels to be fed to animals such as poultry, fish and pigs. "Eutrophication... is the biggest problem of the Baltic Sea, the most urgent one," says project head Lena Tasse. Mussels "could be part of a solution". Why feed them to animals if they are safe for humans? Because Baltic mussels are too small to be of interest to seafood lovers, says Tasse, adding: "Swedes like big mussels."

Meanwhile, the jury is still out on the effects of microplastics on human health. A recent report by WWF said that humans ingest an average of five grams of microplastics a week — about the weight of a credit card. A 2018 study published in the journal Environmental Pollution, based on samples from British coastlines and supermarkets, estimated that every 100 grams (3.5 ounces) of mussels contained 70 tiny pieces of plastic. Should we be worried? Meistertzheim thinks not. "I eat them," she says. "A dish of mussels is not necessarily worse than organic hamburger meat wrapped in plastic." — AFP

Arctic sea ice loaded with microplastics

PARIS: At first glance, it looks like hard candy laced with flecks of fake fruit, or a third grader's art project concocted from recycled debris. In reality, it's a sliver of Arctic Ocean sea ice riddled with microplastics, extracted by scientists from deep inside an ice block that likely drifted southward past Greenland into Canada's increasingly navigable Northwest Passage between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

"We didn't expect this amount of plastic, we were shocked," said University of Rhode Island ice expert Alessandra D'Angelo, one of a dozen scientists collecting and analyzing data during an 18-day expedition aboard the Swedish icebreaker Oden. "There is so much of it, and of every kind — beads, filaments, nylons," she told AFP from Greenland, days after completing the voyage. Plastic pollution was not a primary focus of the Northwest Passage Project, funded by the US National

Science Foundation and Heising-Simons Foundation. Led by oceanographer Brice Loose, the multi-year mission is investigating how global warming might transform the biochemistry and ecosystems of the expansive Canadian Arctic Archipelago.

One key question is whether the receding ice pack and influx of fresh water will boost the release into the atmosphere of methane, a greenhouse gas 30 times more potent than CO2. The Arctic region has warmed twice as quickly as the global average, some two degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Average Arctic sea ice extent set a record low for July, nearly 20 percent below the 1981-2010 average, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) reported on Thursday.

But plastics has inserted itself onto the research agenda all the same. "The ubiquity of plastic, for us it was kind of a punch to the stomach," Loose said. "Just to see what looked like a normal ice core in such a pristine environment chock full of this completely foreign material." A study published Thursday in Science Advances concluded that a large quantity of microplastic fragments and fibres are transported by winds into the Arctic region, and then hitch a ride Earthward in snowflakes. — AFP

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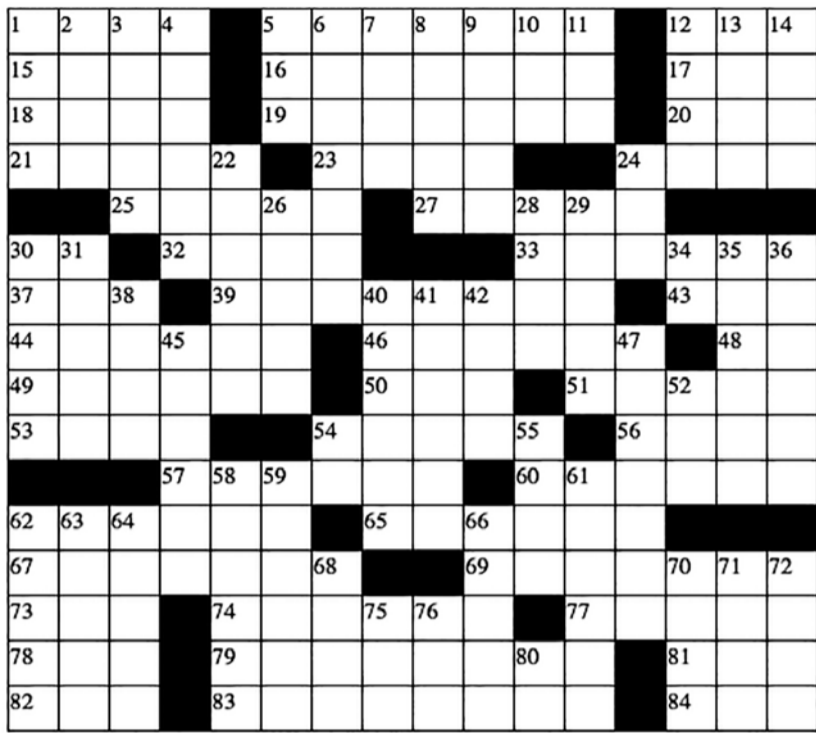
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2284



ACROSS

- 1. Indian physicist who with Albert Einstein proposed statistical laws based on the indistinguishability of particles.
5. Related on the father's side.
12. A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
15. Chief port of Yemen.
16. The act of creating written works.
17. A human limb.
18. Any of the three Fates or goddesses of destiny.
19. A dialect of English spoken in the Lowlands of Scotland.
20. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
21. Norwegian composer whose work was often inspired by Norwegian folk music (1843-1907).
23. Not far distant in time or space or degree or circumstances.
25. The capacitance of a capacitor that has an equal and opposite charge of 1 coulomb on each plate and a voltage difference of 1 volt between the plates.
27. Formerly a term of respect for important white Europeans in colonial India.
30. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
32. A Chad language spoken south of Lake Chad.
33. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
37. (prefix) Bad or erroneous or lack of.
39. (chemistry) Containing combined water (especially water of crystallization as in a hydrate).
43. Electrical conduction through a gas in an applied electric field.
44. A statement asserting the existence or the truth of something.
46. Inability to name objects or to recognize written or spoken names of objects.
48. A rare silvery (usually trivalent) metallic element.
49. A mountain peak in the Andes in Bolivia (21,391 feet high).
50. Former measure of the US economy.
51. State in northeastern India.
53. Block consisting of a thick piece of something.
56. Minute floating marine tunicate having a transparent body with an opening at each end.
57. Roman Emperor who was the adoptive son of Trajan.
60. (of tempo) Leisurely n.
62. Inability to walk.
65. Talks a great deal about uninteresting topics.
67. A Bantu language spoken by the Chaga people in northern Tanzania.
69. Superclass of eel-shaped chordates lacking jaws and pelvic fins.
73. (Babylonian) The sky god.
74. A port city in eastern South Africa on the Indian Ocean.
77. Open to or abounding in fresh air.
78. The money risked on a gamble.
79. A wild and exciting undertaking (not necessarily lawful).
81. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
82. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
83. A great raja.
84. A doctor's degree in education.

DOWN

- 1. A vigorous blow.
2. Any property detected by the olfactory system.

Yesterday's Solution

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

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You exhibit the ability to focus and make all sorts of ideas into practical matters—bringing them into possibilities. You have great discipline when it comes to working with whatever binds or links people together.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Put your mind to work and take care of any details to complete a project. For mental discipline should come easily. Problems and obstacles that have previously been a problem, now find easy solutions.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You could discover a difficult co-worker that opens up to you. Some answers that may help this person are to help him or her break down a difficult task into manageable segments and to teach this person how to organize time by being a good example.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Some of the issues confronting you now are in making peace with the past and coming to terms with any karmic debts you may have accrued in this life. Some suggest a backward walk or a review of each day and then letting go of any negative—perhaps, if needed, a correction in thinking may be all that is necessary.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You are most persuasive with others and a communication attempt with a difficult person is successful. Your patience with the elderly is also commendable and you may decide to choose some form of volunteer service or business that includes care of the elderly—making their lives easier.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You spend a lot of time playing catch-up this morning. You prepare to do your best on a tough project this day. Get your shopping out of the way soon! You may be sought after for your counsel regarding some very personal and emotional issues this afternoon.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

With you in charge, successful endings are ahead. This is an easy, calm day that should find everything running in a smooth manner. Prosperity and security take center stage in your thoughts and you make your plans for next year's employee upgrade.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

This is not necessarily an argumentative day, but you will find yourself taking on more of an attitude of needing to agree to disagree. When you get home this afternoon, get the old bike out and spend some time taking a little bicycle ride.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Some mystery around the neighborhood will become easier to understand today; however, you could be missing a big chunk of the puzzle. It is important to discover the other side of the story, so to speak. There are two sides to every story.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Others could find you a difficult person to deal with today. This, however, is a good time to quietly stand your ground. Others may try to sway you to another way of thinking or try to get you to do something you do not want to do.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Support from those you admire is your best influence. A positive change is coming this month. Taking responsibility for errors of the past and growing into a wise and fair person are very important for your awareness at this time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Open round-table discussions are important in your profession as well as a way to stay in touch with individual family members. No meal time should be frustrating and it is good to take the opportunity to gather for family chats.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Cheerleading - All Star

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

Wordsearch grid with letters and words to find. Includes a list of cheerleading terms like Aerial, Arch, Back Bend, etc.

Cheerleading

Cheerleading word search grid with words circled and a list of words to find.

The hidden message is: THE HOME TEAM MAY LOSE BUT THE CHEERLEADERS ALWAYS GIVE A WINNING PERFORMANCE.

Daily Sudoku

Daily Sudoku puzzle grid with numbers 1-9 in some cells.

Yesterday's Solution

Grid for Yesterday's Solution Sudoku puzzle with filled-in numbers.

Lifestyle

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2019



Indonesian students participate in a carnival to celebrate the country's 74th Independence Day, in Banda Aceh yesterday. — AFP

Ai Weiwei fears 'Tiananmen' crackdown in Hong Kong

Watching the Hong Kong protests from afar, Chinese dissident-artist Ai Weiwei fears the worst, warning of a repeat of the 1989 Tiananmen Square crackdown in Beijing. "I don't think any prediction is too big," the 61-year-old told AFP in



Berlin-based Chinese dissident artist Ai Weiwei speaks to AFP reporters in Berlin. — AFP

an interview in his Berlin studio. China "is a society which sacrifices anything to maintain its control," he warned. "In 1989, the whole world was watching and the tanks crushed the students, ... a peaceful demonstration." Ai's bleak warning comes after two months of protests that have turned increasingly violent, and as Beijing has massed security forces nearby on the mainland in a show of force.

Although most analysts consider a full-blown crackdown unlikely, fears of worse to come have hovered over the former British colony that was returned to China in 1997. Ai, a long-time and outspoken government critic, says he has no illusions that Beijing values order above all else. "At the beginning of this demonstration, two months ago, I already warned that the Chinese government eventually, if they cannot make this demonstration disappear, will use violence," he said. "There is no other way, they can't talk about the situation or negotiate. That's not a skill they have. All they have is the military and the police."

'Mental violence'

Ai, China's best known modern artist around the world, once helped design Beijing's Bird's Nest Olympic stadium, but later found himself at the receiving end of the state's wrath. The New York-trained artist had confronted authorities especially after the 2008 Sichuan earthquake, charging that corruption and shoddily built state school buildings had heightened the death toll. Ai was detained for 81 days in 2011 amid a crackdown on dissent. His passport was confiscated and only returned to him in 2015, after which he moved to Berlin. "I share their frustration," he said about the Hong Kong protesters. "I see myself as one of them, and I see them as part of me."

"As a victim of the Chinese authoritarian state, I have been secretly detained, I've been beaten, I have been put in jail, nobody knew where ... so what am I gonna say?" In an authoritarian state, Ai said, "the violence is not just physical, the violence is mental, it's being refused any discussion. This kind of violence, this state violence, is horrible." What the Hong Kong protesters are doing "is perfectly right", he argued. "They should defend 'one country, two systems'. They should not let Hong Kong's freedom disappear. And the only way they can do that is to keep fighting."

'Suicide game'

From his Berlin base, a sweeping studio complex in a former brewery, Ai, also a documentary film-maker, weeks ago deployed a camera crew to the Hong Kong unrest. Since then, he said, he has witnessed the situation get "worse and worse, because the people are so frustrated", while police started using tear gas and batons. "Hong Kong students never experienced a situation like that," Ai said. "The demonstrators, most of them are born since the 90s, they never knew Hong Kong would have this kind of situation." Ai also took aim at Western countries, charging that too many are scared to stand up to Beijing and endanger their commercial interests.

"Western countries want to take advantage of China ... the factory of the world," he said, describing it as a country with "no human rights, no regulations on working conditions, no environmental concerns". "So they shy away from talking about human rights, and I disagree with them," said the artist. "I think it is very short-sighted. I think this is a suicide game they are playing. —AFP

Nirvana artist finds a new canvas in Serbia

After making his name designing and printing posters for Nirvana and other bands at the height Seattle's grunge scene, American artist Jeff Ross has since been wandering the globe in search of inspiration. Now he is finding it in Serbia, where the 58-year-old recently set up studio outside of Belgrade and is taking part in the gritty capital's vibrant street art scene.

"I sense there is something here, there is a ball of something happening and I want to be here for it, and collaborate, teach people how to screen print, make art, make music, noise," he

told AFP of the "energy" that drew him to Serbia. On a recent night Ross could be seen spray-painting loopy, brightly coloured designs on the walls of Maniac, one of Belgrade's underground-literally beneath a street-late-night alternative music clubs. He also works on private pieces for sale in the studio he has set up in Pancevo, a smaller city just across the Danube from Belgrade.

That's where he keeps the iconic black-and-white prints he designed for Nirvana posters and merchandise back in the 1990s. Born in Germany but raised in the United States, Ross

says he was drawn to Pancevo's slow vibe after four years of making art in chaotic Bangkok. Another draw to Serbia is a certain spirit of improvisation that reminds Ross of his "punk rock days". "Everybody (here) makes things with what they have... My art is the same thing, I collect things, I use everything I can find to make art, so Serbia, Belgrade, is perfect for that." — AFP



US artist Jeff Ross poses for a photo in his studio next to print posters he designed.



US artist Jeff Ross shows off his print posters he made for Nirvana.



US artist Jeff Ross works on his drawing in the subway in the center of Belgrade.



US artist Jeff Ross works on his drawing, in Pancevo, near Belgrade. — AFP photos



Okaz Knights at Taif

Season bring history to life

The 13th edition of Souk Okaz, being held as part of Taif Season, features theatrical performances depicting Arab life in previous eras, including knights from antiquity and historic camel caravans. The supervisor of the Knights Club in Souk Okaz, Daifallah Al-Jaid, said that the scenes being presented by 50 "knights" and 100 camel riders are based on times of up to 1,500 years ago, enabling visitors to get an idea of the life-styles prevalent in the period.

The knights and camel jockeys can be seen in Okaz

Avenue and other areas, including the historical markets; performers enact the roles assigned to them, with knights roaming on horseback and camel caravans parading through the market throughout the day. The distinctive costumes for the Okaz knights were carefully crafted, drawing on international expertise and designers from Arab countries to create authentic clothes and weapons, including spears, swords and shields.



'MAGICAL' WOODSTOCK: THE TOWN THAT LENT THE FESTIVAL ITS NAME

Music blared from the church near local Woodstock teenager Richard Heppner's home—but it wasn't bells that sent his father over the edge. "You cannot call the cops on Jimi Hendrix," Heppner recalls insisting until his dad conceded, as the guitar hero rehearsed in the abandoned place of worship. The town of Woodstock—a municipality 107 miles (172 kilometers) north of New York City—didn't actually host the festival carrying its name, but rubbing shoulders with greats like Hendrix was standard fare, said Heppner, who holds that his home town's artistic bent reaches back long before 1969.

"We like to believe the spirit that gave birth to the festival started right here," said the now 67-year-old, who serves as the town's historian. Organizers of the Woodstock weekend, whose 50th anniversary started Thursday, originally wanted to hold the event celebrating peace, love and music in its namesake town, long a haven for creative types including Bob Dylan. For space and permit reasons they were forced to look elsewhere—about 60 miles southwest—but opted to retain the Woodstock moniker.

Though the festival wasn't held in the town now home to some 6,000 people, tourists making pilgrimages to the

original grounds have continued to mistakenly arrive in droves for half a century, a snafu that never fails to make Heppner smirk. "The name continues to hold the magic," he said, speaking from the town's historical society. "Our name is attached to a generation."

Artistic legacy

According to Heppner and other long-time residents of the town it's a reputation not misplaced, as the town of Woodstock in upstate New York traces its artistic, anti-authoritarian roots much further back than its association with the storied festival. After dreaming up their vision in a series of love letters, American artist Jane Byrd McCall Whitehead and her husband-to-be, Englishman Ralph Radcliffe Whitehead, opened the Byrdcliffe art colony in the mountains overlooking Woodstock in 1903, which remains active to this day. "This is a town that is generated by that kind of artistic spirit," said Derin Tanyol, director of exhibitions and programs at the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild.

It "really has earned its title as an artist's colony," she said outside one of Byrdcliffe's main houses nestled behind a mulberry tree, where an outdoor psychedelic art exhibit entitled "Psych Out!!!" is ongoing. Alan Baer,

an architect and the exhibit's curator, arrived in Woodstock three decades ago with his artist wife, drawn by the area's artistic energy. "There's so much history here," he said. "You're working independently of that history, but it's in your genes; you definitely feel it."

Today tourists in Woodstock can dine in upscale sustainably sourced restaurants and pick up a tie-dye "Grateful Dead" T-shirt after, with several shops downtown capitalizing on the town's link to the festival by offering hippie goods visitors seek. "We certainly rely on the Woodstock music festival to bring people here, even if they end up having to go somewhere else," Tanyol said with a laugh.

Giggles aside, the town's reputation has begun drawing in more and more wealthy New Yorkers seeking fresh air and fresh vision—triggering a spike in real estate prices and a dwindling population of creatives able to maintain a living. And yet, according to Tanyol, an age-old feedback loop is at play: "This is a town that really is culturally and economically defined by... two very distinct types, the starving artist and the wealthy New Yorker who has a second home here." "The artists need the wealthy people in order to fund the organizations that give the artists places to have their exhibitions—and the

wealthy people need the art."

'Magical place'

Townpeople have noticed even more travelers in search of the Woodstock aura showing up in town in recent months, as the actual festival grounds in Bethel prepare to host a series of events and concerts from veteran performers like Santana August 15-18. The constant influx of cash and people summering upstate has some in the town conceding that Woodstock's longstanding countercultural spirit is "waning," historian Heppner said.

"Have we lost the true meaning of Woodstock? Some people say yeah, yeah we have," he said. "If I can't rent a house here, and I like music, or I like to paint—you don't have an art colony if you don't have artists." But for Baer, the area is a "charged, magical place" that he thinks will last. "It's the art spirit; it has nothing to do with money," the 69-year-old said. "It has everything to do with seeing, looking for whatever can make a difference in the world—artistically, creatively—and giving it a place in our existence." — AFP



People enter a Woodstock souvenir store on Tinker Street in Woodstock, New York.



Derin Tanyol, Director of Exhibitions and Programs at the Woodstock Byrdcliffe Guild poses for a picture.



A Woodstock sign is seen. — AFP photos



Merchandise is seen outside a souvenir store on Tinker Street.



A person looks at Woodstock souvenirs outside a store on Tinker Street.



A guitar sculpture by artist 'Rennie Cantine' is on display on Tinker Street.



Participants of the "Baltic Way 30" depart the antique cars' event at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius.



Vintage car rally marks Baltics human chain anniversary

Hundreds of vintage cars set out across the Baltic states Sunday to mark the 30th anniversary of a human chain of more than a million people demanding independence from the Soviet Union. Decorated with Lithuanian, Latvian and Estonian national flags, some 200 cars began their journey from the central square in the Lithuanian capital Vilnius to the cheers of onlookers. A number of concerts are scheduled en route before the convoy reaches the Estonian capital Tallinn on Tuesday.

The 675-kilometre (420-mile) human chain, known as the Baltic Way, linked Vilnius, Riga and Tallinn on August 23, 1989 to mark the 50th anniversary of the infamous Nazi-Soviet pact that carved up eastern Europe and led to the Baltic states' occupation by the Soviet Union. The vintage cars taking part represent both eras, from Mercedes-Benz and Lincolns of the 1930s to Soviet-era Volgas and Ladas of the 1980s.

One of the largest demonstrations in the Soviet Union, the Baltic Way was a "life changer" for many of the six million people living in the three countries, said parade participant Raimundas Skridulas. "We were at the Baltic Way near Panevezys in northern Lithuania. It means everything, it changed our life for the better," the 60-year-old told AFP, sitting in a 1972 Mercedes. Six months after the protest, Lithuania became the first Soviet republic to declare independence.

The three countries won international recognition in 1991 before joining the EU and NATO in 2004. Organiser Egidijus Einoris said it was the first joint event of this scale for vintage car enthusiasts in the three states. "All Baltic people were united 30 years ago and we have managed to repeat that," he told AFP. "It is hard to describe the feelings in 1989. It was a huge feeling of national pride. I feel nostalgic when I look back at the pictures," he added. — AFP



The front part of an antique car is pictured during the antique cars' event "Baltic Way 30" at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius.



A sticker reading "Baltic Way 30" is seen on the rear window of an antique car during the "Baltic Way 30" antique cars' event at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius.



Participants of the "Baltic Way 30" get ready to depart the antique cars' event at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius, Lithuania. — AFP photos



A participant of the "Baltic Way 30" departs the antique cars' event at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius.



A placard reading "The Baltic Way 30" is fixed on the bumper of an antique car during the "Baltic Way 30" antique cars' event at the Cathedral Square in Vilnius.



A worker sliding a block of natural ice on a bamboo rail after it was cut from an open-air pool at a factory in Nikko.

High-end rebrand makes lifesweet for Japan's 'ice farmers'

In a mountainous area north of Tokyo, a priest blows a conch shell as Yuichiro Yamamoto bows and thanks the nature gods for this year's "good harvest": natural ice. Yamamoto is one of Japan's few remaining "ice farmers", eschewing the ease of refrigeration for open-air pools to create a product that is sold to high-end shaved ice shops in trendy Tokyo districts. His trade had all but disappeared in recent decades, and the shaved ice or kakigori that is popular throughout Japan in summer had been produced with cheap machine-made ice. But reinventing natural-made ice as a high-end artisanal product has helped revive the sector and save his firm.

"When I started making natural ice, I wondered how I should market it. I thought I needed to transform kakigori," Yamamoto tells AFP at his ice-making field in the town of Nikko, north of Tokyo. Yamamoto took over a traditional ice-making business 13 years ago in Nikko, where he also runs a leisure park. At the time, shaved ice cost just 200 yen (\$2) in the local area and Yamamoto, who was fascinated by traditional ice-making, knew he couldn't make ends meet. "My predecessor used to sell ice at the same price as the fridge-made one, which can be manufactured easily anytime throughout the year," the 68-year-old says.

The situation made it "impossible" to compete he explains, as producing natural ice is labor intensive. Instead he decided to transform cheap kakigori into a luxury dessert, made with his natural ice and high-grade fruit puree rather than artificially flavored syrup. After months of research, he began producing his own small batches of artisanal kakigori.

A grueling process

"I put the price tag at 800 yen for a bowl of kakigori. I also priced the ice at 9,000 yen per case, which is six times more than my predecessor," he says. At first, there were days he threw away tons of ice because he could not find clients. But one day buyers from the prestigious Mitsukoshi department store discovered his product, and began stocking it, turning around his fortunes. Kakigori dates back to the Heian Period (794-1185) when aristocratic court culture flourished in the then-capital of Kyoto.

It was a rare delicacy reserved for the rich, with the ice naturally made and stored in mountainside holes covered with silver sheets. It was only after 1883, when the first ice-making factory was built in Tokyo, that ordinary people could taste the dessert. With the development of ice-making machines, the number of traditional ice makers dropped to fewer than 10 nationwide.

The story is one familiar to many traditional Japanese crafts and foodstuffs—with expensive and labor-intensive products losing ground as cheaper, machine-driven versions become available. And making ice naturally is a grueling task. The season begins in the autumn when workers prepare a swimming-pool-like pit by cultivating the soil and pouring in spring water.

Thin frozen initial layers are scraped away along with dirt and fallen leaves. The ice-making begins in earnest in the winter, when water is poured in to freeze solid, but it must be carefully protected. Producers regularly scrape off snow that can slow the freezing process. "I once spent 16 hours non-stop removing snow," Yamamoto recalls.

Cult product

And rain too can ruin the product, causing cracks that mean the whole batch has to be discarded. "I check the weather forecast 10 times a day," Yamamoto laughs. Once the ice is 14 centimeters (5.5 inches) thick, which takes at least two weeks, workers begin cutting out rectangular blocks. Each block, which weighs about 40 kilograms (88 pounds), is glided into an ice room filled with sawdust on a long bamboo slide. The blocks are sold to some of Tokyo's high-end shaved ice shops as well as department stores.

In the Yanaka district, more than 1,000 people queue up every day for a taste of kakigori made with natural ice produced by another ice-maker from Nikko. Owner Koji Morinishi says the naturally made ice has a texture that is different from machine-made products. "It feels very different when you shave it. It's harder because it's frozen over a long period of time," explains Morinishi. "It's easier to shave really thin if the ice is hard. If not hard, it dissolves too quickly."

Morinishi himself struggled when he first opened the kakigori shop, but has gradually built a cult following for his desserts topped with purees of mango, watermelon, peach or other fruit. And Yamamoto's firm has seen demand soar—he now harvests 160 tons a year and knows two new producers who have entered the market. He says: "This business has become attractive and the ice makers are all busy." — AFP



An itinerant Buddhist monk blowing a conch shell for a "good harvest" of natural ice at a factory in Nikko.



Blocks of natural ice being moved on a bamboo rail after being cut from an open-air pool at a factory in Nikko, Tochigi prefecture.



A worker removing a block of natural ice after it was cut from an open-air pool at a factory in Nikko, Tochigi prefecture. — AFP photos



Margaret Gallagher, 77, poses holding a cake in front of the open fireplace in her three roomed thatched cottage near the village of Belcoo, Enniskillen, northern Ireland, on the border with the Republic of Ireland. — AFP photos



Margaret Gallagher, 77, poses for a photograph in her garden in front of her three roomed thatched cottage near the village of Belcoo, Enniskillen. — AFP photos



An oil lamp is seen on the windowsill in the three roomed thatched cottage home of Margaret Gallagher.



Cloggs belonging to the late father of Margaret Gallagher.

NORTHERN IRISH PENSIONER THRIVES IN OFF GRID COTTAGE

A wind-up radio, a smattering of color photos and a stack of glossy books: these are the only signs that Margaret Gallagher lives in the modern world. For all of her 77 years Gallagher has lived in a 200-year-old thatched cottage in Northern Ireland without running water, electricity or an indoor toilet. It is an "off grid" lifestyle that defies modernity but is in tune with contemporary trends.

"I've never known anything, only what I'm living now. So you never miss what you've never had," Gallagher said, as she showed off her white stone home. "All I need is good health to be able to live out my life in this idyllic home."

A family home

Gallagher's close family has lived here since her grandfather bought the house, plastered with cow manure and pigs blood, from his cousins after they emigrated to the United States in 1887. Nestled in the countryside of County Fermanagh, the 13 meter by 7 meter (43 foot by 23 foot) cottage is split into three spaces—a kitchen bracketed by two spartan bedrooms. Come rain or shine the entire home is heated by an open hearth fire stacked with bricks of peat, emitting a distinctive blue smoke funneled up through a chimney above.

Earlier in her life, Gallagher held down the family's small farm, nursing her bedridden father in the house for 17 years, before working in local community development. Every morning she is roused at 5.00am by a local wren which perches on her windowsill and demands to be fed. "Lucky I'm not a good sleeper anyway," she quipped. Then Gallagher starts her day—hauling water from a nearby spring well, stacking wood and peat for fuel and cooking three meals a day on the open fire which lights her home alongside oil lamps and candles. "This is my lot. I am happy with it," she told AFP after a morning spent baking a cake over the fire. "This is me—open space, doing my own thing, working with what I know. It's hallowed ground as far as I'm concerned."



Margaret Gallagher, 77, poses for a photograph in front of her library of books in her bedroom in her three roomed thatched cottage near the village of Belcoo, Enniskillen. — AFP

'They love fads'

Ironically, Gallagher's archaic existence puts her on the cutting edge of changes in mainstream discourse around the environmental and psychological impact of modern lifestyles. Aside from her radio, only the occasional newspaper and a basic mobile phone — charged in her car "to ring for a priest or a doctor"—connect Gallagher to the outside world, making her an unwitting advocate for the movement. Environmental concerns and growing housing costs are also driving a new generation to search for alternative ways of living with a smaller carbon footprint. But Gallagher is skeptical of the current push towards eco-friendliness.

"It's faddish—they love fads. It's brand new and shiny. In a year or two it'll be something else. It's not for real." Gallagher has never married, but does not feel her solitary existence marks her as a hermit. "There's a vast difference in being lonely and being alone," she said. "I'm alone but I'm not lonely." And she does not regret her decision to live a life that still requires hard graft in her twilight years. "I've enjoyed every minute of my life to date". — AFP



A picture shows turf in a bucket for the fire outside the three roomed thatched cottage home of Margaret Gallagher.



Pipes and snuff belonging to the late father of Margaret Gallagher.



A picture shows paraphernalia for the administration of the Anointing of the Sick, for a priest to administer the last rites, set up in the upper bedroom of the three roomed thatched cottage home of Margaret Gallagher.



A small gas stove is seen in the three roomed thatched cottage home of Margaret Gallagher.



Crockery is seen in the three roomed thatched cottage home of Margaret Gallagher, 77, near the village of Belcoo, Enniskillen.



General view of the 180-m-high and 165-m-wide rice field art featuring Japan's rugby national team players (from left) Kazuki Himeno, Michael Leitch and Fumiaki Tanaka in Gyoda city, Saitama prefecture is seen yesterday. — AFP

Opposition appoints 5 civilian members of Sudan ruling council

KHARTOUM: Sudan was expected to form its sovereign council yesterday, the first step after the signing of a transitional constitution triggered unprecedented celebration in Khartoum. Rare scenes of jubilation filled the streets of the capital on Saturday after generals and opposition leaders signed the documents that will govern Sudan's three-year transition to civilian rule. The ceremony in a hall by the Nile river was attended by several high-ranking foreign officials, the biggest such event in years to be held in the once-pariah state.

Worldwide congratulations poured in after the signing, which revellers and officials alike hailed as the beginning of a "new Sudan" after 30 years of rule by the now-detained Islamist general Omar Al-Bashir. "I welcome this historic moment for Sudan. This agreement responds to the demands of the Sudanese people

who have tirelessly called for change and a better future," said Britain's Minister for Africa Andrew Stephenson.

US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo vowed his country would support the establishment of "a government that protects the rights of all Sudanese citizens and leads to free and fair elections". According to the green book of documents signed on Saturday, several key steps will be taken before embarking on the long and obstacle littered road to 2022 polls.

The ruling sovereign council is to be comprised of six civilians and five military nominees. Opposition sources told AFP that five names had so far been chosen, including only one woman. The Forces of Freedom and Change (FFC) chose Aisha Mousa, Siddiq Tower, Mohamed Elfaki Suleiman, Hassan Sheikh Idris and

Taha Othman Ishaq, the coalition source said. On Saturday the spokesman for the Transitional Military Council (TMC) said that TMC head Lieutenant General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan, his deputy General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo and Lieutenant General Yasser Al-Atta will serve as three of the five military members. It has yet to announce the other two chosen members.

The body, which will replace the Transitional Military Council, will be headed by a general for the first 21 months, and a civilian for the last 18 months of the transitional period. Abdalla Hamdok, a former UN economist who was on Thursday picked by the protest camp to be prime minister, is due to be formally appointed tomorrow. A cabinet is then to be formed before Sudan's new institutions can tackle the main challenges that lie ahead, first among them measures to

rescue a moribund economy.

Making the most of a new freedom acquired during eight months of protests - and clashes with men in uniform that left at least 250 dead - Sudanese families took to the streets for wild celebrations Saturday night. Youths spilling out of honking cars drag-raced down the main Nile-side road deep into the night, while groups sang and danced - the same two words echoing across the entire city: "Madaniya, Madaniya".

It loosely translates as "civilian rule" and one would be hard-pressed to find somebody on the streets of Khartoum publicly opposing that goal. Some members of the opposition alliance that organized the protests however fear that the euphoria could be short-lived. Deep distrust remains between the incoming sovereign council's main players. — AFP

Is Trump's love affair with Fox...

Continued from Page 1

halls. Last week in a tweet to his 63 million followers, the president managed to disparage Fox and his mainstream news foil CNN, while heaping praise on the new object of his media affection.

"Watching Fake News CNN is better than watching Shepard Smith, the lowest rated show on @FoxNews. Actually, whenever possible, I turn to @OANN!" Trump posted. Since March he has tweeted links to OANN stories or shared his appreciation of the network 13 times. The relationship has been years in the making. In 2015 Trump was interviewed by Sarah Palin, the Republican vice presidential nominee in 2008, when she guest-hosted OANN's show "On Point."

At his first press conference as president-elect, in January 2017, Trump took a question from an OANN reporter. OANN was then called on dozens of times at the daily briefings in Trump's first 100 days in office. During his June 2018 press conference in Singapore, following the summit with North Korea's Kim Jong Un, Trump took a question from OANN White House correspondent Emerald Robinson, but not before gushing about her network.

"Thank you for the nice way you treat us. We appreciate it," he said. "Really, it's very good. It's really beautiful what you do." The San Diego-based operation describes itself as "straight news, no opinion." But the pro-Trump agenda is crystal clear, more than a dozen current and former employees told The Washington Post in 2017. Herring himself, in his pinned tweet, describes OANN as "the president's favorite new outlet." When Fox cut away from broadcasting a Trump

rally in New Hampshire on Thursday, Herring tweeted, "We will never cut away!"

OANN has faced accusations of promoting conspiracy theories and peddling Kremlin propaganda. "Yeah, we like Russia here," a staffer assigned to brief new OANN producer Ernest Champell told him, according to The Daily Beast. Champell left, disillusioned, four months later. "The network has a history of race-baiting and presenting anti-Muslim, anti-immigrant and anti-abortion reporting," according to Media Matters, a progressive nonprofit group that says its mission is "analyzing and correcting conservative misinformation."

While OANN's influence in the White House may far outweigh its position in the news media landscape, Trump clearly retains an affinity for several people in the Fox organization. The show "Fox & Friends" remains his go-to morning program: Trump has phoned in on numerous occasions as president. Perhaps that is why Democratic longshot contender Julian Castro purchased ad time during "Fox & Friends" this week, airing a spot in which he directly addresses Trump and blames him for inspiring the El Paso shooter who massacred 22 people early this month.

Sean Hannity, the network's popular anchor, campaigned for Trump in 2016. But friction emerged this week when Hannity expressed support for CNN anchor Chris Cuomo after a video of Cuomo in a heated argument at a New York bar went viral. It was a sharp contrast to Trump, who tweeted that Cuomo - the brother of New York's Democratic governor Andrew Cuomo - was "nuts" and showed a "total loss of control" in the incident.

The president expressed frustration when Fox aired multiple town halls in recent months featuring Democrats who are trying to unseat him in 2020, including South Bend, Indiana Mayor Pete Buttigieg, currently fifth in major polling. "Hard to believe that @FoxNews is wasting airtime on Mayor Pete," Trump tweeted in May. "Fox is moving more and more to the losing (wrong) side in covering the Dems." — AFP

that the postponement of the application of the new decision was due to technical reasons, and work is underway to reclassify work and amend regulations in cooperation with the ministry of commerce and industry. Aqeel stressed the readiness of the bodies affiliated to her ministry to achieve more during the coming period, whether with regards to the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development or the General Authority for Manpower and other bodies. — KUNA

But on Friday the US Justice Department filed a request to detain the ship alleging it was involved in supporting illicit shipments to Syria by Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps, listed as a terrorist group by Washington.

The seizure triggered a sharp deterioration in relations between Tehran and London. Iran subsequently detained the British-flagged tanker Stena Impero in what was seen as a tit-for-tat move. The US Justice Department says the Grace 1 - now renamed the Adrian Darya - and its oil are subject to forfeiture because of US sanctions violations. Ties between Tehran and Washington have frayed since US President Donald Trump withdrew last year from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between major powers and Iran, reimposing crippling unilateral sanctions. — Agencies

4,000 detained in Kashmir since...

Continued from Page 1

Ahmed, the nephew of 62-year-old Sidiq Khan, told AFP Sunday during his wake. The Kashmir government did not immediately respond to a request for comment. One youth had died in the early days of the lockdown after he jumped into a river while being chased by police.

Authorities have repeatedly declined to provide a tally of how many people have been taken into custody, apart from confirming more than 100 local politicians, activists and academics were detained in the first few days after the state was stripped of its semi-autonomous status. They said the "few preventive detentions" were made to avoid a "breach of the peace" in a region that has fought an armed rebellion against Indian rule for three decades. Those detained include high-profile former chief ministers Mehbooba Mufti and Omar Abdullah.

Jammu and Kashmir government spokesman Rohit Kansal said previously there was "no centralized figure" for the total number of people detained. But AFP spoke to numerous government officials in Kashmir's main city of Srinagar, including police and security personnel, who confirmed the sweeping arrests. A police official who asked to remain anonymous told AFP "around 6,000 people were medically examined at a couple of places in Srinagar after they were detained".

IS Kabul wedding attack kills 63...

Continued from Page 1

among the dead. "Following the explosion, there was total chaos. Everyone was screaming and crying for their loved ones," he told AFP from his bed in a local hospital, where he was being treated for shrapnel wounds.

Images from inside the hall showed blood-stained bodies on the ground along with pieces of flesh and torn clothes, hats, sandals and bottles of mineral water. The huge blast ripped parts of the ceiling off. The wedding was largely a gathering of Shiite Muslims, who frequently are targeted in Sunni-majority Afghanistan, particularly by IS. The extremist group's Afghan affiliate claimed responsibility for the blast, saying the bomber targeted the wedding because it was Shiite.

Wedding guest Hameed Quresh told AFP the young bride and groom were saying their vows when the bomb went off. "We fainted following the blast, and we don't know who brought us to the hospital," sobbed Quresh, who lost one brother and was himself wounded. Another guest told Tolo that some 1,200 people had been invited. With low security, weddings are seen as easy targets.

The attack sent a wave of grief through a city grimly accustomed to atrocities and garnered broad condemnation. President Ghani called it "barbaric", while

"They are first sent to the central jail in Srinagar and later flown out of here in military aircraft," he added.

Residents living around the airport in Srinagar, where the Indian Air Force controls air traffic, say military aircraft land and take off every night. Another security official said "thousands are jailed" but that the figure did not include other residents whose detentions at police stations had not been recorded. Families of those detained were reluctant to speak to AFP, fearing they would get into trouble with authorities. A resident who asked not to be named told AFP a shopkeeper was arrested despite not taking part in protests, with a police officer telling him he was detained "because he talks a lot".

Authorities yesterday earlier reinstated the heavy restrictions even though they had earlier flagged easing them, after eight people were injured during protests. The Press Trust of India news agency cited unnamed officials saying there had been clashes in a dozen locations around Srinagar on Saturday. Authorities have previously denied or played down reports of any violence and stressed that most of the Muslim-majority Kashmir Valley has been peaceful.

State government spokesman Kansal told reporters late Saturday that eight people had been injured in the clashes but did not provide further details. A senior government official told AFP earlier yesterday that more telephone exchanges would return to normal operations "by the evening" and schools in some areas would reopen today. New Delhi's shock decision has sparked public anger and frustration and there have been several rallies in Srinagar attracting thousands of demonstrators. — AFP

Afghanistan's chief executive Abdullah Abdullah described it as a "crime against humanity". US ambassador to Afghanistan John Bass called it an act of "extreme depravity".

The attack underscores both the inadequacy of Afghanistan's security forces and the scale of the problem they face. While the police and army claim they prevent most bombings from ever happening, the fact remains that insurgents pull off horrific attacks with chilling regularity. On July 28, at least 20 people were killed when attackers targeted Ghani's running mate Amrullah Saleh during presidential election campaigning. The incident showed how, even amid tight security and known threats, insurgents still conduct brazen attacks.

The issue also goes to the heart of a prospective deal between the US and the Taliban that would see Washington begin to withdraw its approximately 14,000 soldiers from Afghanistan. The deal relies on Taliban guarantees they will stop groups such as Al-Qaeda and IS from using Afghanistan as a safe haven. Saturday's attack suggests any such promise would be tough to keep. The "Taliban cannot absolve themselves of blame, for they provide platform for terrorists," Ghani said.

Few believe such a deal will bring quick peace and Afghans fear the Taliban could return, eroding hard-won rights for women in particular and leading to a spiralling civil war. Meanwhile, in the northern province of Balkh, 11 members of the same family were killed when their car hit a roadside bomb, officials said. The provincial governor blamed the Taliban for planting the device. — Agencies

Recruitment of expats based on...

Continued from Page 1

Regarding the implantation of the new national labor percentages in the private sector, Aqeel affirmed

Kuwait, Iran discuss means to alleviate...

Continued from Page 1

"The EU sanctions regime against Iran - which is applicable in Gibraltar - is much narrower than that applicable in the US," the Gibraltar authorities said in a statement.

A Gibraltar judge had ordered the Grace 1 tanker released on Thursday, weeks after authorities seized the vessel on suspicion of transporting oil to Syria in breach of European sanctions. Iran has repeatedly denied this.

Sports

Brewers' Eric Thames outslug host Nationals in 14 innings

Angels' rally just big enough to defeat White Sox

WASHINGTON: Milwaukee's Eric Thames roped a two-run homer in the 14th inning and the Brewers scored a wild 15-14 victory over the host Washington Nationals on Saturday night. Thames' 17th homer of the season, off Javy Guerra (1-1), was Milwaukee's seventh long ball in a game that lasted 5 hours, 40 minutes. The seven homers tied a Brewers record for most in a game. Christian Yelich went 5-for-6 with two homers, four RBIs, three runs and a stolen base; Ryan Braun hit a pair of solo home runs and also stole a base; and Mike Moustakas (3 RBIs) added a solo shot. Both Braun and Moustakas had three hits. Trent Grisham stroked a two-run homer. Adam Eaton (4-for-8, two doubles) and Trea Turner each hit three-run homers, and Juan Soto and Howie Kendrick smashed two-run drives for the Nationals.

Angels 6, White Sox 5

Brian Goodwin and Justin Upton hit solo homers, and Mike Trout had two RBIs to help Los Angeles register a victory over Chicago in Anaheim, Calif. Goodwin also drew a bases-loaded walk in the seventh to account for the final run of a four-run uprising that gave the Angels the one-run lead. Los Angeles has won two of the first three contests of the four-game set. Eloy Jimenez hit a two-run homer, and James McCann had a two-run double for the White Sox.

Braves 4, Dodgers 3

Atlanta got back-to-back home runs from Josh Donaldson and Adam Duvall in the sixth inning and hung on to beat visiting Los Angeles. It was the 14th time the Braves have hit back-to-back homers this season, but the first time it has happened to Los Angeles starter Hyun-Jin Ryu. Donaldson hit his 29th homer with one out in the sixth, and Duvall followed with his sixth — and his first since Aug. 1 — as the Braves took a 4-2 lead. It was the first time the Braves have beaten the Dodgers in five meetings. The attendance of 43,619 set a SunTrust Park attendance record in its third season.

Athletics 8, Astros 4

Mark Canha contributed run-scoring hits to five- and three-run uprisings, helping host Oakland run away from Houston. The second-place Athletics won their fourth straight and made it three in a row over the first-place Astros, winning by more than one run for the first time in the series. A's starter Chris Bassitt (9-5) benefited from the big-time offensive support to extend his string of unbeaten starts to four. He allowed three runs and eight hits in six innings, walking two and striking out four.

Cubs 2, Pirates 0

Kris Bryant homered and Jon Lester pitched six-plus scoreless innings as visiting Chicago broke a four-game losing streak by beating Pittsburgh. Lester (10-8) gave up four hits, with three strikeouts and five walks. He and relievers Tyler Chatwood and rookie Rowan Wick — who each allowed no hits — combined for the shutout, with Wick getting the final three outs for his first career save. Bryant's homer helped make up for two earlier errors he made at third base that forced Lester to work out of jams.

All Blacks say WCup more important than top ranking

AUCKLAND: All Blacks coach Steve Hansen dismissed concerns about losing their number one world ranking yesterday as he concentrated on a World Cup selection conundrum after demolishing Australia.

Despite scoring five unanswered tries to retain the Bledisloe Cup with a 36-0 romp in Auckland on Saturday, the All Blacks lost the top ranking for the first time in 10 years, replaced by Wales courtesy of their 13-6 win against England in Cardiff.

But Hansen said it was the World Cup and not world rankings that mattered and the way his reshaped side bounced back from losing to Australia the previous week raised several questions to be answered before finalising a 31-man squad in 10 days. "I've never understood their (ranking) system. You win a game and you lose the top ranking," Hansen said while spelling out the All Blacks' priority.

"We just need to get ourselves in the

right frame of mind to go to the World Cup and win that." After the 47-26 hiding by the Wallabies in Perth last week, Hansen's decision to axe three established players — Ben Smith, Rieko Ioane and Owen Franks — produced eye-catching performances from their raw replacements Sevu Reece, George Bridge and Nepo Laulala. As the All Blacks pummeled the Wallabies across the park, Hansen said several players put their hand up for a ticket to Tokyo.

"Where we had question marks we no longer have questions marks, but in other ways it makes it tougher too," Hansen said listing tighthead prop, the midfield and outside backs and whether to take an extra

six or an extra lock as key issues.

Bridge and Reece were particularly prominent with Hansen saying that put pressure on the other wing contenders.

"There's an old saying 'never give a sucker an even break because he'll take it'. Now we've got some genuine competition and it will be good to see how it unfolds."

Hansen confirmed the shoulder injury that saw Richie Mo'unga leave the field was not serious, and injured lock Brodie Retallick remained in the frame to make the Cup squad. However, he had no word on whether strongman Liam Squire would change his mind after the blindside flanker asked not to be considered for the World Cup for undisclosed reasons. —AFP

Medard ends try drought with double to sink Scotland in WCup warm-up

PARIS: Veteran full-back Maxime Medard scored twice as France hammered Scotland 32-3 in their first Rugby World Cup warm-up Test in Nice on Saturday.

Medard, 32, winning his 57th cap, dotted down either side of the break for his first tries in more than three years. The fixture was the first outing of the side since the appointment of former French captain Fabien Galthie as an advisor to head coach Jacques Brunel, before he takes over from the 65-year-old after the World Cup in Japan.

"We were opportunistic, we managed to score some good tries. We could have scored more but it's a satisfactory match which will do some good to our spirits," Brunel said.

Prop Jefferson Poirot led les Bleus for the first time in the absence of injured Guillem Guirado as Fijian-born winger Alivereti Raka and flanker Francois Cros made their debuts in the starting lineup as the hosts scored five tries in all.

Scotland coach Gregor Townsend chose to rest first-choice half-backs Finn Russell and Greig Laidlaw and put his faith in Glasgow pair Adam Hastings and Ali Price for the match in Nice.

"We thought we had prepared the squad well, but we were wrong. We wasted the whole first half," Townsend said. "The team will be changed quite a bit for next Saturday," he added looking ahead to the return fixture between the sides in Edinburgh.

Galthie's focus on improving France's fitness was seen almost immediately. Raka, 24, celebrated his first cap with a maiden Test try after just 94 seconds as he crashed over under the posts. Camille Lopez converted before adding his only penalty of proceedings after a quarter of an hour of play.

Les Bleus' second try came from further pressure



NICE: France's full back Maxime Medard (C) celebrates with teammates after scoring a try during the 2019 Rugby World Cup warm-up test match between France and Scotland, at the Allianz Riviera stadium, in Nice. —AFP

inside the Scottish 22m. Lopez found himself in space out wide before feeding Damian Penaud who passed to Medard for his first try in international rugby since February 2016. The fly-half missed the extras before his opponent in the visitors' number 10 shirt Hastings claimed his side's first and only points with a penalty after 26 minutes.

Hastings turned villain seven minutes later as he was shown a yellow card and Les Bleus chose to kick to the corner. France scored their third try as Gregory Alldritt, who has a Scottish father, dived over with five minutes of the half remaining and the host led 20-3.

After a slow opening quarter of an hour to the final 40 minutes France crossed for their fourth try. Medard added his second of the match after good work from



WASHINGTON: Christian Yelich #22 of the Milwaukee Brewers singles against the Washington Nationals during the first inning at Nationals Park in Washington, DC. —AFP

belting a three-run shot in the fifth inning as host Cincinnati recorded a win over St. Louis. Rookie Nick Senzel homered to lead off the first inning, and Freddy Galvis had a pair of hits and drove in a run for the Reds, who have won two of three following a four-game losing skid. Matt Carpenter homered in the second inning for the Cardinals, who followed up Friday's 13-run, season-high 18-hit performance by falling for just the second time in eight contests.

Giants 11, Diamondbacks 6

Brandon Belt hit a grand slam, Kevin Pillar had a career-high five hits and Logan Webb won his major league debut as San Francisco cruised past Arizona in Phoenix. Belt connected off Taylor Clarke (4-4) as part of a five-run second inning. He also had an RBI single in the third and a run-scoring groundout in the eighth to match his career high with six RBIs. A night after hitting two home runs, Pillar singled four times and doubled. He scored three times and drove in a run. Mike Yastrzemski singled three times a night after belting three home runs.

Mets 4, Royals 1

Jacob deGrom pitched seven innings of one-run ball and star rookie Pete Alonso hit a tiebreaking two-run, bases-loaded single with two outs in the seventh inning and visiting New York

defeated Kansas City. DeGrom (8-7) gave up two of his three hits to Hunter Dozier, who singled in the fourth and seventh. DeGrom struck out five, walked two and threw 107 pitches. DeGrom allowed three runs or less for the 16th straight time. Not including openers, that is the longest active streak in the majors. He also moved five ahead of injured Washington ace Max Scherzer for the National League lead with 194 strikeouts.

Twins 12, Rangers 7

C.J. Cron homered to highlight a six-run first inning, and Miguel Sano had three hits, including a two-run home run, to lead Minnesota to a win over Texas in Arlington, Texas. Marwin Gonzalez, Jorge Polanco and Jake Cave also finished with three hits, and Cron and Max Kepler had two hits for the Twins, who finished with 18 hits. Danny Santana had two homers and four RBIs and Shin-Soo Choo went 3-for-5 with a double and RBI for Texas, which lost for the ninth time in its last 11 games.

Rockies 11, Marlins 4

Ryan McMahon hit two of Colorado's five home runs, and the Rockies beat Miami in Denver. Trevor Story, Charlie Blackmon and Ian Desmond also homered for the Rockies, who have won three in a row for the first time since June 18-20. —Reuters

Italy's Ghiraldini returns from injury for WCup

MILAN: Leonardo Ghiraldini is set to return from injury with the experienced hooker included yesterday in Italy's largely youthful squad which features 23 tournament debutants for next month's rugby World Cup in Japan.

Ghiraldini, who has 104 caps, ruptured anterior cruciate ligaments during the Six Nations last March and had been considered a doubt to play in his fourth World Cup.

But the 34-year-old Italy vice-captain has been chosen by coach Conor O'Shea in a squad largely made up of players who have never competed in the sport's showpiece event.

"Leo is a player with great experience. He worked hard and constantly throughout the summer. We are happy for him, he is an added value both on and off the field," said O'Shea.

"Leo, together with (Sergio) Parisse and (Alessandro) Zanni, are playing their last matches in the Italy jersey of their extraordinary careers. "We want to make a dream come true and we have the cards to be able to succeed."

O'Shea whittled down his original 44-man provisional outfit to 31, a day after Italy's 85-15 victory over Russia in their second warm-up in San Benedetto del Tronto. Captain Parisse returned against Russia after missing their defeat by Ireland, and will play in his fifth World Cup, becoming just the third player to do so after compatriot Mauro Bergamasco and Samoan Brian Lima.

The 35-year-old, who earned his 139th international cap against Russia, joins Australian George Gregan as the third-most capped international, behind New Zealand's Richie McCaw (148) and Ireland's Brian O'Driscoll (141).

Second-rower Zanni (113 caps) will also play in his fourth World Cup, while Benetton fly-half Tommaso Benvenuti (57) will line out in his third. But among the squad which includes 15 players from Italian side Benetton, and 10 from Zebre, will be 23 who have not played in a World Cup before.

They include Wasps fullback Matteo Minozzi, 23, who scored a hat-trick of tries against Russia, while Gloucester scrum-half Callum Braley and Benetton prop Marco Riccioni are the most inexperienced members of the group with two caps each. Gloucester flanker Jake Polledri and former England Under-20 back-row David Sisi also made the cut.

"Choosing the 31 players for the Rugby World Cup and talking to those who will not continue the adventure with us was probably the hardest thing I have done," said O'Shea. "It is a dream for everyone to represent Italy at the World Cup. It's hard because everyone deserved to be here."

Italy play France on August 30 and England the following Friday in pre-tournament warm-ups, before facing defending champions New Zealand, South Africa, Namibia and Canada in Pool B. —AFP

25 Medard ends try drought with double to sink Scotland in WCup warm-up



26 Stokes blasts century as England set Australia 267 to win second Test



27 Top seeds Djokovic, Barty toppled in Cincy semi-finals



LONDON: Leicester City's Portuguese defender Ricardo Pereira (2R) vies with Chelsea's Brazilian midfielder Willian (C) during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Leicester City at Stamford Bridge in London yesterday. — AFP

Chelsea held 1-1 by Leicester

Chelsea manager Lampard denied first win

LONDON: Frank Lampard is still waiting for his first win as Chelsea manager after Wilfred Ndidi gave Leicester a 1-1 draw to spoil the Blues legend's homecoming yesterday. Thrashed 4-0 at Manchester United last weekend and beaten on penalties by Liverpool in the European Super Cup on Wednesday, Lampard's side took an early lead through Mason Mount's first goal for Chelsea.

But Ndidi atoned for the costly mistake that led to Mount's opener as the Nigeria midfielder headed Leicester's well deserved second half equaliser. Lampard had been given a thunderous reception in his first game as Chelsea manager at Stamford Bridge.

Yet the mood was far gloomier by the final whistle after a spluttering display raised the spectre of a potentially difficult season for the returning hero.

Lampard, Chelsea's all-time record goalscorer, managed to avoid being the first Blues boss to lose his first

two Premier League games in charge since Gianluca Vialli 21 years ago.

But on this evidence there is a lot of work for the 41-year-old to do if he is to emulate his 13-year playing spell at Chelsea, which included three Premier League titles and the club's first Champions League crown.

Greeted by a huge flag with the message 'Frank Lampard's blue and white army' and another reading 'Welcome home Super Frank', the former England midfielder emerged from the tunnel to cheers and turned to applaud the crowd as they chanted 'Super Frankie Lampard'.

With his former Chelsea team-mate John Terry in the stands to support his old friend, the Blues nearly gave Lampard a dream start in the first minute when Olivier Giroud chested Cesar Azpilicueta's pass to Pedro and the Spaniard volleyed into the side-netting.

Moments later, Mount threatened when he burst

through, but the youngster shot too close to Kasper Schmeichel, who did well to block Christian Pulisic's attempt from the rebound.

Mount, a tenacious attacking midfielder in Lampard's mold, didn't need to rue that miss for long. The 20-year-old, who impressed while playing for Lampard on loan at second tier Derby last season, opened his Chelsea account in the seventh minute, with a helping hand from Ndidi.

When Caglar Soyuncu rolled a pass to Ndidi, he dithered on the ball too long and Mount alertly pressured him into conceding possession before sliding a clinical finish past Schmeichel.

It was just reward for a blistering start from Chelsea and Lampard celebrated by punching the air in delight. Mount should have doubled Chelsea's lead when he headed straight at Schmeichel from Pedro's cross before N'Golo Kante shot wide from Giroud's flick.

But Chelsea couldn't keep up that ferocious pace and their dip gave Leicester a lifeline they should have taken when James Maddison miscued his pass after dancing around Blues keeper Kepa Arrizabalaga early in the second half.

Giroud had started up front instead of Tammy Abraham, who suffered racial abuse on social media after he missed the decisive penalty in that Super Cup loss in Istanbul.

But Lampard responded to Chelsea's loss of control and Giroud's lack of impact by introducing Abraham on the hour, the young striker greeted warmly by Blues fans after the midweek taunts.

It wasn't enough to swing the momentum back in Chelsea's favour and Leicester's dominance was rewarded in the 67th minute. When Maddison swung over a corner, Ndidi rose above Azpilicueta to plant a powerful header past Kepa. — AFP

Miller-Uibo sparkles as Blake shows he is not spent force

BIRMINGHAM: Bahamas star Shaunae Miller-Uibo came from behind to overhaul home hope Dina Asher-Smith and win a star-studded women's 200 metres at the Birmingham Diamond League meeting yesterday.

Asher-Smith fell just short, as did her compatriot Adam Gemili in the men's 100m, the injury-plagued sprinter being held off by the slimmest of margins by Jamaica's 2011 world champion Yohan Blake.

There was a consolation for Asher-Smith as well as two-time world champion at the distance Dafne Schippers who finished a distant fourth. That's because Miller-Uibo will only contest the event in which she is Olympic champion — the 400m — at the world championships in Doha which begin on September 27.

"Nothing went right for me from the get go," said Miller-Uibo. "I had to really fight to get back on level terms but once I pulled up beside her I knew I had the power to win," added the 25-year-old. Asher-Smith was satisfied with her run which saw Jamaican great Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce finish third.

"The competitor inside me always wants to win but with that field I am more than satisfied to be second," said Asher-Smith. Blake and



BIRMINGHAM: Bahama's Shaunae Miller-Uibo reacts after her win in the women's 200m during the 2019 IAAF Birmingham Diamond League athletics meeting at Alexander Stadium in Birmingham yesterday. — AFP

Gemili have both had injury woes down the years but they provided a thrilling finish to the 100 metres.

Blake timed 10.07sec holding on by eight thousandths of a second from the fast-finishing Gemili in a race that had lost some of its lustre with the withdrawal on Friday of American champion Christian Coleman. — AFP

Lundstram strike gives Sheffield Utd 1-0 victory over Palace

LONDON: John Lundstram's second-half goal gave Sheffield United a 1-0 win over Crystal Palace yesterday, in the first Premier League game at Bramall Lane for 12 years.

Palace manager Roy Hodgson restored Wilfred Zaha to his starting line-up after starting him on the bench for the scoreless opening-week draw against Everton, while Chris Wilder started with the same side that secured a 1-1 draw against Bournemouth. Zaha, who has been linked with a move away from the club before the European transfer window closes on Sept. 2, was kept under control by the Sheffield defence as Palace once again struggled to create scoring opportunities.

David McGoldrick missed a great opportunity to put the home side ahead just before halftime, but 25-year-old midfielder Lundstram made no mistake early in the second period, lashing the ball home after it was steered into his path by Palace goalkeeper Vicente Guaita. Lundstram's strike mean he has now scored a goal in each of England's top four divisions. Employing a more direct approach to try to force an equaliser, Palace had plenty of possession, but the Sheffield rearguard dealt comfortably with their attacks as they sealed their first win of the season. — Reuters