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MPs want government action over demographic imbalance

Adasani to oppose privatization of public services

Public holiday on Muharram 1

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: The Civil Service Commission said the new hegira year holiday will be on Muharram 1, be it on Saturday or Sunday. It said if Muharram 1 is on Sunday, Sept 1, then it will be a holiday, but if it falls on Saturday, Aug 31, then Saturday will be the day off and there will be no compensatory holiday for it. The CSC moves holidays to Thursday if they fall within the workweek, except for the hegira and Gregorian new years, when the holiday will be on the day they occur.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Lawmakers yesterday urged the government to take concrete actions to translate its promises to rectify the severe imbalance in the demographic composition, where expatriates are more than double the number of citizens. MP Mohammad Al-Hadiya said issues like the demographic structure, labor cities and unmarried expats living in family residential areas have remained unresolved for years, although plans and

measures have already been prepared. He said that many single expats still live in family areas after the government repeatedly delayed the construction of special towns for laborers, although the cities were approved by the Municipal Council about 10 years ago. The lawmaker said the government has failed to take proper actions against visa traders, the majority of whom are highly influential people, which complicated the population problem. Hadiya accused the government of not being serious in resolving such critical issues.

MP Saleh Ashour said solutions to the population structure and towns for laborers have remained on government shelves for years without any action, adding that it is strange to repeatedly hear statements from ministers and officials about these issues, but they nevertheless remain without solutions. He said that scores of studies and researches had been made on these problems, but the government has made no progress on the ground to implement the solutions.

Meanwhile, MP Riyadh Al-Adasani warned the government yesterday against privatizing any public services which could result in hiking prices of the services and commodities. The lawmaker said allowing the private sector to control public utilities and vital sectors is totally rejected and threatened he would use constitutional tools against the government.

Adasani sent questions to the government over reports of plans to privatize some state-run public services, saying he is totally opposed to this because it will lead to price increases. The lawmaker also criticized the government for implementing the early retirement law by



forcing some employees to go on early retirement, saying he had warned against the loopholes of the law during its debate in the Assembly. He said he will file amendments to the law when the new Assembly term opens in October.

Russia, Turkey share 'concerns' over Idlib as Kurds pull back

MOSCOW: The leaders of Russia and Turkey said yesterday they shared deep concerns over fighting in northwestern Syria, with Ankara warning it would take the steps necessary to protect its troops there. After meeting for talks near Moscow, Russian President Vladimir Putin and Turkey's Recep Tayyip Erdogan said they hoped to work together to ease tensions in Idlib province. zone around Idlib to avert a full-scale regime assault.

But Assad's forces have been bombarding the province for months and on August 8 launched a ground offensive. Turkey established 12 military observation posts in Idlib under the buffer zone deal and one of them has been encircled by Syrian government forces. "The situation (in Idlib) has become so complicated that at this moment our troops are in danger," Erdogan said. "We do not want this to continue. All necessary steps will be taken here as needed."

Yesterday's talks between Putin and Erdogan came



Russian-backed government forces launched a ground offensive this month against Idlib, one of the last major areas of Syria outside government hands. The fighting is threatening to increase tensions between Russia and Iran, who back President Bashar Al-Assad's regime, and Turkey which supports some rebel groups. "The situation in the Idlib de-escalation zone is of serious concern to us and our Turkish partners," Putin said at a press conference with Erdogan carried on Russian state television.

He said Turkey had "legitimate interests" to protect on its southern borders and supported the creation of a security zone in the area. Putin said he and Erdogan had agreed "additional joint steps" to "normalize" the situation in Idlib, but did not provide details. Moscow and Ankara last year struck a deal to create a "de-escalation" buffer ahead of a summit on Syria that will see the two leaders joined by Iran's President Hassan Rouhani in Ankara on Sept 16. Erdogan said the September meeting "should contribute to peace in the region". Both leaders said they supported Syria's territorial integrity, but Putin emphasized the need to keep fighting militant forces in Idlib. "Terrorists continue shelling the positions of Syrian government forces, trying to attack Russian military installations," Putin said. "The de-escalation zone must not serve as a refuge for militants, let alone a bridgehead for new attacks."

Idlib is dominated by jihadist group Hayat Tahrir Al-Sham, the former Al-Qaeda affiliate in Syria. Recent fighting has been fierce in the province, the last major front in a war that has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since 2011. Yesterday, clashes between anti-government fighters and regime forces in northwestern Syria killed 51 combatants on both sides, according to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, a Britain-based war monitor.

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MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Turkish counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan eat ice cream during the MAKS 2019 International Aviation and Space Salon's opening ceremony in Zhukovsky yesterday. — AFP



TEHRAN: A man in a USA T-shirt is seen at Vali Asr Square in the Iranian capital yesterday. — AFP

Bibi tells Nasrallah to 'calm down' as Hezb plans response

BEIRUT/JERUSALEM: Hezbollah is preparing a "calculated strike" against its enemy Israel after suspected Israeli drones crashed in Beirut but it aims to avoid a new war, two sources allied to Hezbollah told Reuters yesterday. A reaction "is being arranged in a way which wouldn't lead to a war" that Hezbollah does not want, one of the sources said. "The direction now is for a calculated strike, but how matters develop, that's another thing."

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said yesterday Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah should "calm down" after Nasrallah said the Iranianbacked movement would respond to the crash of two **Continued on Page 24**



JERUSALEM: Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu boards an autonomous vehicle during a cornerstone ceremony for the Mobileye campus in Har Hahotzvim yesterday. — AFP

Iran dampens down prospect of Trump-Rouhani meeting

TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani told the United States to "take the first step" by lifting all sanctions against Iran, dampening down the likelihood of meeting US counterpart Donald Trump. Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif said the prospects for such a meeting were "unimaginable" even if the United States rejoins a landmark nuclear deal with Iran. Trump had said less than 24 hours earlier he was ready to meet with Rouhani within weeks, in a potential breakthrough reached during a G7 summit in the French seaside resort of Biarritz.

Iran's economy has been battered by US sanctions imposed since Trump in May last year unilaterally withdrew from the 2015 nuclear deal between the Islamic republic and world powers. "You must retreat from all illegal, unjust and wrong sanctions against the nation of Iran," Rouhani said. "The key for positive change is in the hands of Washington," he said, because Iran had already ruled out ever doing what worries the US the most – building an atomic bomb.

"This concern has already been removed" through a fatwa issued in 2003 by supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, he added. "We don't (intend to) make an atomic bomb... our military doctrine is based on conventional arms," said Rouhani. "So take the first step. Without this step, this lock will not be unlocked."

In Biarritz, French President Emmanuel Macron had said the "conditions for a meeting" between Trump and Rouhani "in **Continued on Page 24**

Saudi shops push boundaries on prayer shutdown

RIYADH: With burger patties sizzling over a hot grill, a Saudi eatery did the unthinkable as a muezzin's call to prayer sent Muslim worshippers scrambling to lower their shutters: it stayed open. The scene, amid a sweeping reform drive, was a striking contrast to the days when religious police wielded unbridled powers and drove people out of malls and shops to enforce the Islamic world's only mandatory prayer-time shutdown.



RIYADH: This picture taken on Aug 14, 2019 shows Saudis in a mall in the capital open during the sunset Maghrib prayers. — AFP

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Amir receives top state officials at Bayan Palace

Kuwait govt voices great relief for Amir's full recovery



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan photos

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Finance Navef Al-Hajraf, as well as Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan. His Highness the Amir also met with Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi, and with Minister of Justice and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs Fahad Al-Afasi. His Highness also received Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipality Affairs Fahad Al-Shola, and Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Jenan Mohsen Ramadan Boushehri. Furthermore, His Highness the Amir also received Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

The Kuwait government had expressed great relief on Monday for the full recovery of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah following a recent health setback. The government, in its weekly meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, expressed gratitude for citizens who inquired about the health condition of His Highness the Amir which reflected the "distinguished relation between the Kuwaiti people and their leadership, and a genuine reflection of the love to His Highness the Amir" among Kuwaiti people. The Cabinet also expressed gratitude for heads of state and senior officials in brotherly and friendly countries for their inquiry about the health condition of His Highness the Amir, Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement.

On Monday, His Highness the Amir received at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, and Minister Saleh. His Highness the Amir also thanked officials and ministers from across the Kuwaiti government and National Assembly for their tremendous concern over his wellbeing. — KUNA



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Minister of Finance Nayef Al-Hajraf, as well as Minister of Commerce and Industry and State Minister for Services Khaled Al-Roudhan.



(From left) Ministers Fahad Al-Afasi, Hamed Al-Azmi, Jenan Boushehri and Fahad Al-Shola attend the meeting with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Crown Prince receives Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Poet Yousef Yaqoub Al-Shatti.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness also received Kuwait's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. He then received Poet Yousef Yaqoub Al-Shatti who handed His Highness a copy of his poetic diwan containing a number of his artistic Arab poems. — KUNA

Kuwaiti FM receives outgoing ambassadors



KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with the Honduran Ambassador to Kuwait Nelson Garcia. — KUNA photos

KUWAIT: Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received the outgoing Honduran Ambassador to Kuwait Nelson Garcia at his office in the Foreign Ministry's building yesterday. The minister lauded the ambassadors' efforts with bilateral relations shared by Kuwait and Honduras during his tenure. Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received the outgoing ambassadors of Cambodia Tan Bunpa and Sri Lanka Kandeepan Amaniam on the occasion of the end of their tenures. During the meetings, Sheikh Sabah stressed efforts of the two diplomats and the mutual relations between Kuwait and their countries. In the meantime, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled received Greece's Ambassador to Kuwait Andreas Papadakis, on the occasion of the end of his tenure. During the meeting, Sheikh Sabah stressed on efforts of the outgoing ambassador and the mutual relations between Kuwait and Greece. The meetings were attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah and Foreign Ministry officials. —KUNA



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Cambodia to Kuwait Tan Bunpa.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Ambassador of Sri Lanka to Kuwait Kandeepan Amaniam.



Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with Greece's Ambassador to Kuwait Andreas Papadakis.



KUWAIT: National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem received yesterday at his office the Kuwaiti Ambassador to Malta Faisal Al-Mutairi. — KUNA



Kuwait welcomes planned visit of Egyptian President

Ministers briefed on measures taken to upgrade business environment in state departments

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti Cabinet, in its weekly meeting on Monday, welcomed the planned visit of Egyptian President Abdulfattah Al-Sisi to Kuwait and wished him and his accompanying delegation a good stay in the country. The government underlined the importance of this visit in strengthening bilateral ties and expanding cooperation in a variety of domains, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh said a press statement following the Cabinet meeting, held in Seif Palace under chairmanship of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.

Later, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet about the outcome of Polish Minister of Foreign Affairs Jacek Czaputowicz and his accompanying delegation's recent visit and talks in Kuwait. He unveiled that talks with Czaputowicz had tackled means to buttress bilateral relations in various fields, latest regional and international developments and several of issues of common concern.

Meanwhile, Kuwait's Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education Dr Hamed Al-Azmi apprised the Cabinet of the ministries' preparations for the new academic year 2019-20. In this regard, Azmi highlighted the efforts exerted by the competent bodies to build, equip and maintain schools and all educational facilities as well as printing and distributing textbooks. After his presentation, the Cabinet expressed appreciation for the ministries' efforts to provide best educational services and create a suitable environment for study.

Business environment

In the meantime, Chairman of Kuwait's Direct Investment Promotion Authority and of the Permanent Committee for Streamlining Business Environment and Enhancing Competitiveness Sheikh Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah made a presentation about the meas-



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting. — KUNA

ures taken by the authority and the committee to upgrade business environment in government agencies. The Cabinet thanked Sheikh Meshaal and all members of Permanent Committee for their efforts to ameliorate Kuwait's ranking on in the international business environment indexes. It noted the positive impact of any improvement to Kuwait's status on citizens who also benefit from upgraded state services. The ministers pointed out that these efforts aim to cut time, procedures, cost of doing business in Kuwait through simplifying procedures and transactions of all kinds, such as launching of new businesses, expanding existing ones, protecting of intellectual property, registering properties, obtaining planning permissions, joining electricity and water grids and issuing credit. They will also contribute to settling commercial disputes, guaranteeing competitiveness, countering corruption, strengthening partnership with the private sector, empowering small and medium size enterprises, supporting entrepreneurship and encouraging innovation, which will stimulate investment and create productive economy that will generate more jobs, said the Cabinet.

Furthermore, the Cabinet reviewed the semi-annual report of the Supreme Council of Privatization (July 2019), which detailed the council's activities and achievements in the first half of the year and its future plans for privatizing North Shuaiba Power Plant, the Ministry of Electricity and Water's facilities and telecommunications sector. The government, meanwhile, congratulated His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for the advent of the new Hijra Year 1441.

Houthi attacks

The Kuwaiti government also expressed its condemnation to Houthi firing of six missiles yesterday which targeted Jazan region in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. A government, in a statement, renewed its support to the Kingdom and all measures it would take to defend its territories, protect its sovereignty, and preserve security and stability of the country. The Cabinet asserted the continuation of these evil attacks reflects the determination of the Houthi militias to escalate tension in the region and disre-

gard all peace efforts. The Cabinet also praised the success made by the Saudi military forces in confronting these missiles. The Cabinet also condemned recent attacks on a checkpoint in northwest of Pakistan, which resulted in the killing and injury of a number of people, stressing Kuwait's firm position in rejecting terrorism, whatever its motives and causes.

Also during the meeting, the Cabinet congratulated Lieutenant General Abdulfattah Al-Burhan on his swearing-in as President of the Sovereign Council of the Republic of Sudan, wishing him all success and the Sudanese people prosperity and progress. Burhan came to power under an agreement reached recently by the army and opposition forces just a few days after they signed a power-sharing deal. A government statement said the Cabinet congratulated the Sudanese leadership following months of protests, which led to the ousting of former President Omar Al-Bashir. The Cabinet then expressed its regret over the floods that swept some lands in Sudan, which left a number of victims and material damage, expressing condolences to the victims' families. --- KUNA

Kuwait Airways looks forward to 'new breed' of **Airbus planes**

HAMBURG, Germany: The national carrier Kuwait Airways will soon receive its first Airbus A320neo aircraft, seen as a 'new breed' of airliners, said the company's chairman Yousef Al-Jassem. Kuwait Airways will officially claim the airliner amid a lavish ceremony planned for Thursday at the European aircraft-maker's headquarters in Germany's second largest city of Hamburg, Jassem said. On the Airbus A320neo plane, he said it would be the first out of a fleet of 15 gradually through 2026. — KUNA

aircrafts of the same type, all of which the company will receive intermittently through 2026. The new aircrafts will help create a more diverse and comprehensive itinerary for the company, allowing it to fly to new destinations across the globe, he added. Kuwait's flag carrier will always seek to garner the trust of its clientele through providing customers with high-quality services at affordable prices, Jassem explained, highlighting passenger convenience as the company's ultimate goal. Kuwait Airways signed a contract with Airbus in December of 2013 to purchase 25 types of A350 and A32Oneo planes, in addition to renting 12 planes of A330 and A320 pending delivery of the aircrafts. The contract was amended in October 2018 to include purchasing 28 new aircrafts that Kuwait Airways are set to receive



Chinese Ambassador visits 6.5 Ring Road construction site

KUWAIT: The Chinese Ambassador is believed that MCC, as a national to Kuwait Li Minggang paid an onsite visit Monday morning to a construction site located on the 6.5 Ring Road. This road project is being executed by the Metallurgical Corporation of China Ltd (MCC).

Ambassador Li noted that Kuwait's 6.5 Ring Road project, which will link the new airport with the Sabah Al-Salem University City, is a project of great importance to livelihoods. He said that, during a recent working meeting with the Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Housing Affairs Dr Jenan Boushehri, he was informed of the great expectations of the Kuwaiti government and citizens for the early completion and operation of this road project. It

top-level and world's leading contractor specialized in road and bridge construction, will complete the contracts as requested to fulfill the expectations.

As a newly appointed Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait, Li showed a great level of care about the project's progress and expressed his greetings to the front-line engineers and crews from China and other countries who worked under extreme heat, which reflects his deep feelings for Kuwait which he views as his second home. According to a representative from MCC, who accompanied the ambassador during the inspection, the project runs along the condensed residential areas.



KUWAIT: The Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang is seen with workers on the project's site.

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Photo of the Day

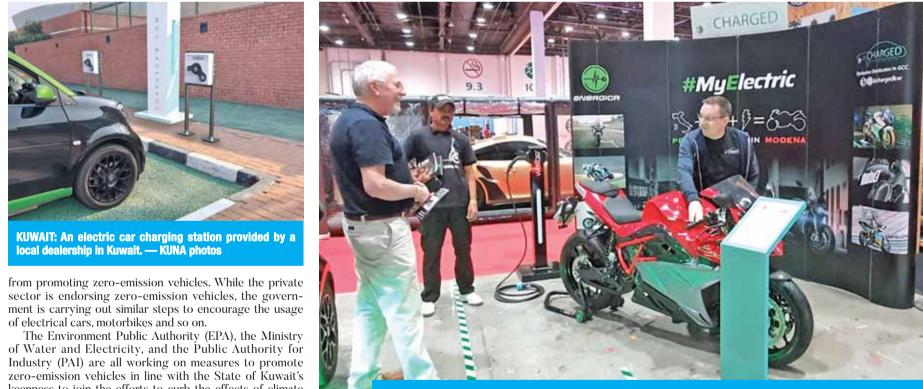


WAIT: An aerial view of Kuwait City. — Photo by Fahad Al-Otaibi (KUNA)

Kuwait gearing towards encouraging use of zero-emission vehicles, setting regulations

Lack of infrastructure, lower fuel prices main challenges before going fully zero-emission friendly

KUWAIT: Catching up with the rest of the world, Kuwait is gearing towards encouraging the use of zero-emission vehicles and setting regulations for such machines. In line



with a global trend to better the environment, Kuwait has set itself to introduce electrical vehicles to the market next year, as well as devising rules and regulations to obtain such machines and also how to use them on the open road.

Mohammad Al-Naibari, a spokesman for the Dodge's dealership in Kuwait, said that the idea of introducing zeroemission vehicles was a bit of a hassle at the beginning; however, the dealership pressed on forward trying to secure the rights to sell electrical vehicles in Kuwait. The idea includes cars and motorcycles, which look identical to their fuel-consuming counterparts, but are completely environmental friendly, said Naibari, adding that the dealership was not only responsible for selling the commodity, it also provided recharging points in public and private locations.

There are several types of such vehicles including hybrid semi-electric and fully-electrical vehicles, he explained. The demand for such machines is on the rise, claimed Naibari, adding that according to a survey prepared by the dealership in 2018, 60 percent of clients were willing to buy zero-emission vehicles, while 90 percent were willing to make a purchase if the government laid the infrastructure and encouraged people to go electrical.

Despite some individualistic efforts to import electrical cars, Kuwait is a bit far from fully going zero-emission friendly due to several aspects including the lower fuel prices compared with other countries and the lack of basic infrastructure to host electrical vehicle such as power recharging stations and actual regulations. Another challenge would be changing the mindset of local clientele who got used to regular fuel consuming vehicles; however, this will not deter private companies and local dealerships



keenness to join the efforts to curb the effects of climate change. The Ministry of Electricity and Water in specific will construct recharge stations within its headquarters to serve the five percent of zero-emission vehicles it plans to purchase. The EPA and the PAI will join the fight for the

A zero-emission motorbike displayed in a showroom in Kuwait

bodies to choose electrical vehicles especially with the mer, a sign that climate change is on the rise. — KUNA

environment and will coordinate efforts to encourage state fact that Kuwait had recorded high temperatures this sum-



Some of the artworks on display at the exhibition.



Kuwaiti artists showcase 104 works at year's 'most important' exhibition

KUWAIT: Some 64 Kuwaiti painters and sculptors are showcasing their works amid the locally-renowned summer cultural festival, praised as the 'most important' on the arts calendar. Al-Funoon and Ahmad Al-Adwani exhibition halls at the Kuwait City suburb of Abdullah Al-Salem are hosting a whopping 104 works by artists of all ages. Commenting on the event, National Council for Culture, Arts and Letters chief Kamel Al-Abduljalil said the annual event is regarded the "most important of its kind on the domestic arts scene as it sheds light on up and coming talent." One of the paintings on display, 'Until When' by Abdulrahman Al-Hamili, questions man's continuing pursuit of war. A journey into the calmness of nature is expressed in two works by aspiring artist, Norah Al-Hajeri. The young artist said she was thankful for the opportunity presented to her to parade her efforts at the much-celebrated occasion. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Women proudly stand alongside their artworks. — KUNA photos

KISR signs deal with Yarmouk health city

KUWAIT: Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) and Yarmouk Health City signed yesterday a memorandum of understanding to cooperate in the field of scientific studies and researches. The memorandum aims to contribute to enhancing the status of Yarmouk Health Zone as a health city approved by the World Health Organization.

In a press statement, Director General of KISR Dr Samira Omar said that the health city of Yarmouk was chosen by the organization as the first health city in Kuwait because of its commitment to the application of international standards adopted. Meanwhile, Mayor of Yarmouk Abdulaziz Al-Mishari said that this agreement confirms the strong relationship between Yarmouk area and the institute, and enhances cooperation in scientific fields to better serve the citizens.

The agreement comes within the framework of exchanging expertise and information, exchanging labor with scientific and technical competence, studying the projects offered by Yarmouk city and expressing opinions regarding the required standards in addition to holding workshops in the area.

was announced as the fist healthy city in Kuwait to be recognized by World Health Organization (WHO), due to compliance with relevant



KUWAIT: Director General of KISR Dr Samira Omar (left) and Mayor of Yarmouk Abdulaziz Al-Mishari sign the memorandum of understanding. — KUNA



Local

Nurseries' licenses stopped until new department is ready: Ministry official

Child's rights law mandates inspection of nurseries

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: With the increasing number of nurseries that have reached over 680, a new department of the ministry of social affairs will be formed soon to manage the affairs of nurseries in Kuwait. For this purpose, a ministry decree was issued recently to form this department with enough staff for supervision.

Hanaa Al-Hajery, Deputy Undersecretary of Social Development and Secretary General of the Supreme Council of Family Affairs, explained that the Ministry of Social Affairs (MSA) has stopped issuing new licenses for nurseries until the new department is ready to oper-



ate. "The decree was issued and was approved by the Civil Service Commission. There are still some technical procedures that have to be done at the ministry, including setting the number of employees in the department, their degrees and so on," she told Kuwait Times.

Previously, the Cabinet had decided to move the supervision of the nurseries to the ministry of education from the MSA, but this decision was canceled. "Due to the young age of children attending the nurseries. it was decided that nurseries be supervised by the MSA. Previously, the mother and childhood department was in charge and now the new department will replace it," added Hajery.

The child's rights law issued by MSA mandates inspection of nurseries. "The law also specifies

sanctions against violators, aiming to protect the child in educational, cultural and other aspects. It also deals with violence against children. Therefore, we need more staff to supervise and inspect the huge number of nurseries. For this purpose, the new department was formed includ-ing inspections, issuance of licenses, legal matters and others," she explained.

Hanaa Al-Hajery

There are many unlicensed nurseries, and it is the responsibility of MSA along with other authorities to inspect them. Also, new rules will be added or changed when issuing a new license for a nursery,' concluded Hajery.

Health Minister upgrades anesthetics safety procedures

By Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decree to form a technical committee to review and upgrade patient safety procedures when using anesthetics during surgeries and dental work. This comes in the aftermath of a child's death at a dental clinic in Fahaheel medical center recently, which initial reports indicate had happened after he was given local anesthetic during treatment.

The committee will be headed by the ministry's undersecretary for technical affairs, along with the chairman of the anesthesia departments' council, head of the anesthesia college at Kuwait Institute for Medical Specialties, director of quality and approval, director of drugs registration and supervision, director of dental medicine department and a senior legal specialist.

The committee will review procedures and local and general anesthetic policies in hospitals, specialized centers and clinics, follow new international upgrades in the field of anesthesia and related medicines, interactions and resulting effects, and



uses and cautions related to their use. It proposes upgraded work policy for anesthetic care before making the intervention in various specialties, making a mechanism for medical auditing using scientific indicators to follow the implementation of related policies within healthy environment protocols. It will also contact specialized international centers and organizations to benefit from their reports in this regard. The committee's work will be for one month from the date of its first meeting, and the chairman will submit a report including results and recommendations to be approved by the minister.

Info Minister affirms solid ties with US, China

KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri affirmed yesterday strength of Kuwait's relations at various levels with both the United States of America and China. The minister underlined the close ties with Washington and Beijing during separate meetings with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman and the Chinese envoy in the country Li Minggang.

In a statement after hosting the departg US ambassador, Jabri said visits by His



KUWAIT: Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri meets with the US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence



Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-

Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to the US cemented basis of the relations between the two friendly countries and their stances toward various international and Middle Eastern issues. He has indicated continuing action for bolstering further the media and cultural relations between the two friendly countries. Meanwhile, Silverman expressed gratitude for the warm, popular and official accommodations accorded to him during his stay in the country, describing the period he had spent in Kuwait as one of his most pleasant tenures as a US envoy abroad.

In the separate meeting with the Chinese envoy, minister Jabri has confirmed

Silverman. — KUNA photos

that the development in the Kuwaiti-Chinese relations in various domains emanates from His Highness the Amir's vision. His Highness the Amir's vision envisages bolstering the Kuwaiti relations with all peace loving nations for sake of backing up international peace and security, he said, adding His Highness the Amir's visits to China in the past paved the way for enhancing the bilateral relations.

In the meantime, the Chinese ambassador underscored significance of the role played by Kuwait under command of the Leader of Humanitarian Action, His Highness the Amir, for supporting global

stability and security. He expressed deep admiration toward His Highness the Amir's Vision 2035 that also implied revival of the Silk Road and establishing the Silk City as moves toward transforming Kuwait into a regional financial-commercial hub. He also expressed appreciation for opening an office for Kuwait News Agency in Beijing, a step that would contribute to evolving the bilateral relations at the media level.

Jordan FM's visit

In other news, Kuwaiti Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah stressed the importance of Jordan's Foreign Minister Ayman Al-Safadi's visit to Kuwait, scheduled for today, to boosting bilateral relations and discussing regional and international issues, especially the Palestinian issue. Jarallah applauded the Jordanian minister's interest in coordination and consultation with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. He said that His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Jordanian King Abdullah II attach much attention to the visit for the common interest of the two countries.

He added that bilateral relations are marked by permanent coordination and identical views on various issues, in addition to 57 partnership and cooperation deals in all domains. He pointed to the fourth session of the Joint Higher Committee chaired by the Foreign Ministers of the two countries held last February, during which a number of cooperation agreements were signed with a view to strengthening relations in various fields, especially economic, trade and investment ones. He also referred to His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah's recent visit to Jordan and the inauguration of the new Kuwaiti embassy building there. — KUNA

MP Adasani prepares to grill premier

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Parliamentary sources said MP Riyadh Al-Adasani is preparing a new grilling of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah in the upcoming term. This grilling will be the second in the coming term after the grilling of Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah, which he is also preparing, expected to be tabled before the start of the term so it can be discussed during the opening session at the end of October.

The sources said Adasani will submit his grilling motion of the premier after the legislative committee's report on the constitutionality of the grilling motion filed by MP Abdulkarim Al-Kandari, which he submitted in the previous term. The government asked it to be referred to the legislative committee to discuss its constitutionality.

Meanwhile sources revealed that the enrolment of a batch of bedoons in the military was postponed until January, in anticipation of the National Assembly approving a civil rights law for illegal residents to be discussed in November. Sources said the accepted batch includes more than 1,000 bedoons who are children of military men and those with 1965 census records. They have already undergone medical examinations and submitted their registration papers at their workplaces.

The sources said all those who were accepted hold unexpired security IDs issued by the central department for illegal residents, which is a must for admittance. They said bedoon children of Kuwaiti mothers are not among this batch, as they are accepted automatically in each military course without having to wait for a course designed for bedoons. In other news, the commerce and industry ministry closed five shops specialized in checking and repairing vehicles in Hawally for violating laws. It said the violations by the shops were sent to the commercial prosecution to take the necessary action.

KRCS supports students of low income families

KUWAIT: Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS) on Tuesday launched a campaign themed 'Donate to Teach Them,' for supporting students of limited income families. The society is launching this campaign in Kuwait for the sixth year in a row, said Anwar Al-Hasawi, the deputy chairman, in a statement marking the event at 360 shopping mall. Up to 5,000 students are expected to benefit from the campaign, said Hasawi who also thanked the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) for "sponsoring the program of teaching children of low income families as part of the strategic partnership with the society." The KRCS, since its establishment in 1966, has keenly sought to boost its local social welfare's role. Lama Al-Othman, the KRCS director of human resources, said donors could pay donations at the society location at the mall or via its electronic website. The campaign will be pursued next Sunday at the Avenues mall, with attendance of the KRCS Chairman Dr Hilal Al-Sayer, said Othman, thanking all citizens and companies that have supported the campaign. ---- KUNA



CONDOLENCES



The English Academy offers sincere condolences on the passing of:

Mr Mark Bretherton The School Principal

Mr Bretherton was the centre of the school community, and his presence around the school will be greatly missed.

The school will be officially closed, as a mark of respect, on Wednesday 28th August 2019.

May His soul rest in peace

Jabri meets with the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang

Internations wednesday, AUGUST 28, 2019



Indian opposition using witchcraft: Modi's ally

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Iran jails British dual national for spying



IDLIB: Turkish military vehicles drive down a road in Syria's northern province of Idlib. In northwest Syria, regime forces have in recent days chipped away at the jihadist-dominated region of Idlib on the Turkish border after months of deadly bombardment. —AFP

Northwest Syria clashes kill 51 fighters

Russia, Turkey balance interests amid Idlib offensive

fighters and regime forces killed 51 combatants on both sides in northwestern Syria yesterday, a war monitor said. Russiabacked regime fighters have for weeks been chipping away at the edges of the jihadistrun stronghold of Idlib-a province that borders Turkey-after bombarding it for months.

But hardline rebels and jihadists yesterday attacked loyalist positions in the south of the bastion, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. "Violent clashes east of the town of Khan Sheikhun broke out at dawn after jihadist and opposition groups attacked regime positions," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman said. The attack was led by the Al-Qaeda-linked Hurras al-Deen group and another jihadist faction-Ansar al-Deen-he said. The fighting has killed 23 regime forces and 20 opponents, including 13 jihadists, the Observatory said.

In the southeast of the bastion, eight rebels were killed trying to sneak through frontlines towards regime positions near the Abu Duhur military airport, the monitor added. Regime forces recaptured Khan Sheikhun last week, and have been massing north of the town in recent days as they prepare to push on with their assault. The town lies on a key highway running through Idlib province, and fully recapturing the artery would allow the government to reconnect Damascus to second city Aleppo.

Heavy regime and Russian bombardment has hit areas north of Khan Sheikhun in recent days, in the vicinity of the town of Maaret Al-Noman, the next stop north on the highway. On Monday, regime and Russian air strikes killed 12 civilians in the jihadist stronghold, the Observatory reported. The offensive comes despite a deal signed in September last year by Moscow and rebel backer Ankara to avert a fullblown assault on the Idlib region of some three million people.

The presidents of both countries were set to meet in Moscow yesterday. Hayat Tahrir al-Sham-a group led by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate-extended its administrative control over the whole of Idlib in January, but other rebel factions remain present. A spike in bombardment since late April has Observatory says, and caused more than 400,000 people to flee their homes, according to the United Nations. The Syrian civil war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since starting in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests.

Russia, Turkey interests

Meanwhile, a Moscow-backed regime offensive in northwest Syria is undermining an arrangement by Russia and Turkey for the anti-government bastion, but their own interests should prevent a total falling-out, analysts say. Syrian government forces launched a ground offensive against the jihadist-run stronghold of Idlib on the Turkish border on August 8 after months of heavy bombardment. They have since seized the key town of Khan Sheikhun and overran the countryside to its south, encircling a Turkish observation post there.

"Idlib complicates ties between Moscow and Ankara, because their interests there are not the same," said Russia-based analyst Alexandre Choumiline. "This was already the case before, but they had managed to find compromises," he added. "Today, there is less leeway." Damascus and Moscow are trying to eliminate Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate, Hayat Tahrir al-Sham, which dominates the Idlib region.

Rebel-backer Turkey, on the other hand, is looking to avoid any further escalation that would trigger a massive wave of displacement towards its southern frontier. "Turkey's position is very weak currently," said Nihat Ali Ozcan of the Ankara-based Tepav think tank. Last week, government forces encircled a Turkish observation post in Morek after capturing the town and surrounding areas. Days earlier, a regime air strike cut off a Turkish military convoy shortly after it crossed into Idlib en route to Khan Sheikhun.

'New territorial lines'

The flare-up undermined a deal last year between Russia and Turkey that sought to set up a buffer zone around Idlib to avert an all-out assault by Syrian President Bashar Al-Assad's forces. Turkish President Recep



IDLIB: Turkish military vehicles drive down a road in Syria's northern province of Idlib. In northwest Syria, regime forces have in recent days chipped away at the jihadist-dominated region of Idlib on the Turkish border after months of deadly bombardment. —AFP

Tayyip Erdogan was to meet his Russian counterpart Vladimir Putin in Moscow on Tuesday to discuss the escalation in Syria. He will also host Putin and his Iranian counterpart Hassan Rouhani for a summit in Ankara on September 16 to discuss the latest developments. But with the latest advances, "Putin and Assad have the advantage against Turkey," Ozcan said. "They want to go to the meeting to discuss a new map" of control, he said.

A revision of the September 2018 agreement may be on the horizon, but most of its original provisions had never been implemented. Jihadists have refused to withdraw from the planned buffer zone, despite the deployment of Turkish troops around the area. Two strategic highways through Idlib province were never reopened, prompting Damascus to take matters into its own hands. "In so far as there is a solution for Idlib, I expect it will involve both Turkish-Russian negotiations and military violence," said Aron Lund of the Century Foundation.

Initially, "what we're looking at is probably just a deal that would bring the fighting to a halt along new territorial lines and with new ceasefire conditions," the Syria expert added. Damascus is already trying to impose

forces recaptured Khan Sheikhun, which is located on the Damascus-Aleppo highway. Regime and Russian aircraft have since been pounding the area around Maaret al-Noman, the next stop north along the same road, in apparent preparation for a further ground push, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights monitoring group says.

such new territorial lines. Last week, regime

'Dancing around each other'

But analysts say Moscow and Ankara's interests go beyond Idlib. "Idlib is only a small part" of the Erdogan-Putin relationship, Ozcan said. "The two sides never trusted each other, but there is a political" relationship, as well as economic ties, he said. Lund said: 'Moscow wants to influence Turkey's view of a lot of other things." These include UN-led peace talks to end the Syrian civil war, as well as "Turkey's relationship to NATO and trade issues", he said. Ankara has purchased a Russian S-400 missile defense system, sparking tensions with fellow NATO member the United States. Turkey, meanwhile, might also be hoping for "some form of Russian assistance in handling the US presence in northeastern Syria and the Kurdish groups there," Lund said. —Agencies

2 children killed in multi-vehicle crash

OHIO: Two children were killed and at least 10 people injured, including other children, on Monday in a multivehicle crash involving a stolen police car in Dayton, Ohio, police said. The crash began with a reported stabbing in Dayton, police said, and a pickup truck accident in the Dayton suburb of Riverside at about 7:30 pm. Apparently, the suspect in the reported stabbing fled that scene and then crashed the pickup, police said. While Riverside police were looking for the driver

of the crashed truck, the suspect, who was still on the scene, jumped into a Riverside police sports utility vehicle.

Witnesses saw an officer have a brief struggle with the man and the officer may have used a taser on the suspect before he threw the SUV into reverse and drove off, the Dayton Daily News and other media reported. The man drove the stolen police vehicle back into Dayton and hit at least three occupied vehicles, including a van loaded with children, before wrecking the SUV near the Dayton Metro Library, police said.

Witnesses heard screams and rushed to the wrecked van, the Daily News and other media reported. Some passersby tried to get as many children as they could out of the van, but some children were pinned in the wreckage. At least 10 people were injured and two children died, Dayton police Major Eric Henderson said in a news briefing. Among the injured were three children with life-threatening injuries, he said.

Police said 11 people were in the van, including seven children: one in a car seat, one in a booster seat, one in the front, two in the middle and two in the rear. About 12 minutes passed between the pickup crash in Riverside and the fatal wreck in Dayton, police said. The names, conditions and ages of the injured were not released. Among them was the suspect, who was arrested at the scene, police said, but his name and other details were not available early yesterday. —Reuters

UN urges protection of journalists, activists as Mexico murders climb

MEXICO CITY: A Mexican government program to protect journalists and activists is underfunded and cannot guarantee safety amid widespread impunity and threats, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights in Mexico said. At least 11 reporters and 13 human rights activists have been killed so far this year, according to the UN group. That nearly exceeds last year's tallies, and suggests death tolls could reach record levels in 2019. Jan Jarab, head of the OHCHR here, said Mexico's "political commitment" to protecting journalists and activists had proven to be a challenge on various levels.

The concern raises questions about how much President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador sees the issue as a priority. Mexico's total murder tally has also continued rising, underlining the scale of the task he faces. Very few cases result in convictions, or even arrests. More than half of the suspects identified by the program were public officials. Rights groups say that officials who threaten journalists and activists are often seeking to hide corruption and protect their personal interests.

"Mexico lacks sufficient recognition for the work of human rights defenders and journalists," Jarab told a news conference where he presented a 410-page OHCHR report, which argues impunity in Mexico was a key reason to bolster the program. "Authorities need to publicly condemn all aggressions," he said. The government's Protection Mechanism for Human Rights Defenders and Journalists - which provides resources such as panic buttons, surveillance systems and body guards - currently serves 903 people, up from 48 at its launch five years ago.

However, budgets and staffing have not kept pace, and the program could comprise more than 3,400 people by the end of Lopez Obrador's six-year term in 2024, Jarab said. "The growth we've had in recent years could accelerate if things don't change," he added. "The mechanism needs strengthening, it needs to have sufficient staffing to protect the beneficiaries and take preventative actions."

Staffing has stagnated since 2014, while this year's budget is less than what was spent in 2017 and 2018, the report said. The government has not yet responded to an April request to increase the budget. Faced with scant resources, the program cannot guarantee efficient and proper functioning, the report said. For example, staff often suffer delays in reacting to threats because they cannot access work email outside of the office, or have difficulty navigating the internet on government computers.

A company monitoring panic button alerts cannot quickly evaluate and react to new risks, including emergencies, the report says. Four reporters were killed this month alone in Mexico, which Reporters Without Borders has called the most dangerous country for journalists in the Western Hemisphere. —Reuters



International

Bolsonaro open to G7 aid if Macron 'withdraws insults'

Devastating Amazon fires spark global outcry

PORTO VELHO: Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said yesterday he was open to discussing G7 aid for fighting fires in the Amazon if his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron "withdraws insults" made against him. Bolsonaro's remarks come amid an escalating war of words with Macron over the worst fires in years that have sparked a global outcry and threatened to torpedo a huge trade deal between the European Union and South American countries.

Hours earlier, a top Brazilian official had rejected the G7 countries' offer of \$20 million to combat the fires devastating the forest in Brazil and Bolivia, saying Macron should take care of "his home and his colonies." "Mr Macron must withdraw the insults he made against me," Bolsonaro told reporters in the capital Brasilia. "To talk or accept anything from France, with the best possible intentions, he has to withdraw these words, and from there we can talk.'

Macron and Bolsonaro have repeatedly locked horns in the past week, with the French leader accusing Bolsonaro of lying to him about his commitments on climate change and vowing to block the EU-Mercosur trade deal involving Brazil that took decades to negotiate. On Monday, Macron condemned "extraordinarily rude" comments made about his wife Brigitte by Bolsonaro a day earlier. Bolsonaro has hit back, accusing Macron of treating Brazil like "a colony or no-man's land."

The latest official figures show 1,659 new fires were started in Brazil between Sunday and Monday, taking the total this year to 82,285 - the highest since at least 2013 - even as military aircraft and troops help battle the blazes. More than half of the fires are in the massive Amazon basin. Bolsonaro - a climatechange skeptic - has faced criticism at home over his delayed response to the fires and thousands have protested in Brazil in recent days to denounce the destruction.

Bestselling Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho took to the internet to apologize - in French for Bolsonaro's behavior. "This is a rather sad video to ask forgiveness of my French friends for the crisis - I would even say the hysteria of Bolsonaro regarding France, the French president, the French president's wife," he said in a message posted on Twitter. "As Amazonia burns, they have no argument except to insult, deny, say anything to avoid taking responsibility," he added.

'Under control'

In the hard-hit northwestern state of Rondonia, thick smoke has choked the capital Porto Velho in recent days as fires blacken swaths of the rainforest. Defense Minister Fernando Azevedo e Silva on Monday claimed that the fires were "under control." "It has been exaggerated a little that the situation was out of control - it wasn't," he said. "The situation isn't simple but it is under control." Nearly 2,500 troops and 15 aircraft, including two C-130 Hercules, have been deployed, according to the defense ministry, which has published satellite data it says show a reduction in the number of fires in the nine states spanning the Amazon.

More than 43,000 troops were available to help put out fires, the government said previously. Images posted on the presidential office Twitter account Monday showed firefighters wearing bright orange or yellow clothing using water backpacks to douse flames. Experts say increased land clearing during the months-long dry season to make way for crops or grazing has aggravated the recurring problem this year.

Although about 60 percent of the Amazon is in Brazil, the vast forest also spreads over parts of eight other countries or territories, including the French overseas territory of Guiana on the continent's northeast coast. Bolivian President Evo Morales said Sunday he would accept international help to combat wildfires raging in his country's southeast. Bolivia suspended election campaigning on Monday to deal with the voracious fires that have devastated more than 9,500 square kilometers (3,600 square miles) of forest and grassland. — AFP



This combination of pictures shows French President Emmanuel Macron (left) and Brazili President Jair Bolsonaro. Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro said he was open to discussing G7 aid for fighting fires in the Amazon if his French counterpart Emmanuel Macron "withdraws insults" made against him. — AFP

Japan urges Iran to abide by nuke deal

YOKOHAMA: Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono said he urged Iran to abide by a 2015 nuclear deal during a meeting yesterday with his Iranian counterpart, Mohammad Javad Zarif. The men agreed to maintain close communication between Japan and Iran, which historically have had friendly ties, to ease tension between the United States and Iran, Kono told reporters afterward.

"Based on Japan's stance of consistently supporting the nuclear agreement, I asked the Iranian side to observe the agreement, to go back immediately to the commitments of the agreement, and to refrain from taking measures that would infringe on the agreement," Kono said. President Donald Trump pulled the United States out of the 2015 agreement last year and reimposed sanctions on Iran. In response, Iran has slowly been breaching its side of the deal, under which Tehran agreed to curbs on its nuclear program in exchange for the lifting of many international sanctions.

The standoff over the nuclear deal has caused a sharp increase in tensions between the two longtime foes. At the start of the meeting, Zarif and Kono smiled and shook hands. Zarif said Japan and Iran have special interests in the security of the energy market and stability in the Gulf. Kono declined to say if the two discussed the US-led mission to bolster Gulf security or purchases of Iranian crude oil.

Washington has been calling for its allies to join it in an operation to guard shipping in the Strait of Hormuz, a vital gateway for the world's oil industry. So far, Britain, Australia and Bahrain have joined the US-led security mission. Washington's call followed a series of attacks on international merchant vessels, which the United States has blamed on Iran, and the Iranian seizure of a British oil tanker. Tehran has denied accusations that it was behind attacks on six tankers in May

and June. French President Emmanuel Macron opened an avenue towards a diplomatic solution to the U.S.-Iran standoff at a Group of Seven summit in France at the weekend, saying that Iranian President Hassan Rouhani had told him he was open to a meeting with Trump. Zarif paid an unexpected visit to the summit, holding talks on the sidelines of the meeting with French officials.

Trump told a news conference it was realistic to envisage a meeting with the Iranian head of government in coming weeks. Both leaders are scheduled to attend the UN General Assembly next month. But yesterday, Rouhani said Iran would not talk to the United States until all sanctions were lifted. — Reuters

Aid groups warn against UN's bid to sanction Al-Shabaab

lars for Somalia will then be thrown into doubt. In some cases, foreign donors said they may need to freeze payments for up to a year as they consider how to comply with the new sanctions, said an aid source in New York liaising with the UN on the issue.



NAIROBI: Kenya is urging the UN to list Al-Shabaab under the same sanctions as Al-Qaeda and the Islamic State, but foreign donors say the move could leave millions in drought-stricken Somalia without aid. The proposed listing - which could take effect as soon as tomorrow comes at a critical time in Somalia, where 2.2 million people, or nearly 18 percent of the population, face the risk of severe hunger.

Al-Shabaab is already targeted under broader sanctions imposed by the United Nations on Somalia, which is heavily aid-dependent after three decades of conflict and economic ruin. Right now, UN agencies and humanitarian organizations are exempt from these sanctions, which enables them to deliver urgent aid without prosecution when they venture into territory controlled by Al-Shabaab.

But Kenya wants to tighten the screws on the jihadist group after several deadly attacks on its soil, and the sanctions regime it proposes would remove that safeguard. "A measure like this will have the effect of criminalizing humanitarian aid," Eric Schwartz, president of Refugees International said. "Any measure that would impact the current provision of aid would have extremely serious and substantial implications.'

If no member state objects before August 29 the Al-Shabaab listing under Security Council resolution 1267 will take immediate effect. Hundreds of millions of aid dol-

Rights court condemns Russia over Magnitsky

STRASBOURG: The European Court of Human Rights yesterday condemned Russia for "multiple violations" against Sergei Magnitsky, an anti-fraud crusader who died in custody in 2009 while awaiting trial. The court determined the 37-year-old lawyer and accountant had been mistreated and denied medical assistance in jail, following his arrest over alleged tax evasion. The case cast an international spotlight on Russian authorities' persecution of whistle-blowers and political opponents, prompting the United States and other countries to pass "Magnitsky Acts" targeting Russians accused of rights abuses.

It also contributed to increasing frosty relations between Washington and Moscow, which responded by outlawing the adoption of Russian children by American couples. Magnitsky went public with details of an alleged \$230 million fraud by Russian state officials before being arrested in November 2008. He was charged with two counts of tax evasion committed with William (Bill) Browder, a British financier who ran the Hermitage Capital hedge fund.

Despite a prison surgeon diagnosis of gallstones and other health problems and repeated requests for medical help, Magnitsky was held for months in overcrowded facilities unequipped to provide the necessary treatment, Europe's top rights court found. Faced with an outcry over his death, Russian prosecutors later launched an inquiry which determined that Magnitsky died from acute heart and pancreatic failure and fluid in the brain in combination with other conditions, including diabetes.

The court's seven judges for the case - including a Russian - ruled unanimously that the authorities "deprived Mr Magnitsky of important medical care and had failed to



"We would be operating in a huge grey area. As humanitarian actors, we would have this huge dilemma of carrying on providing aid, or we stop altogether," the official working for a large global charity told AFP on condition of anonymity.

Another concern is that banks, fearing repercussions, could limit financial services to humanitarian agencies working in Somalia - a process known as "de-risking" that makes it difficult to transfer money and fund programs.

The looming deadline has sparked a flurry of lobbying at Security Council headquarters in New York. Earlier this month, 20 former ambassadors, national security and humanitarian officials wrote to US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and USAID administrator Mark Green urging them to reject the Kenyan proposal.

Their decision "could either help sustain critical and life-saving relief to Somalia, or exacerbate the dire humanitarian situation and puts hundreds of thousands if not millions of people at grave risk", the August 7 letter warned. They (humanitarian groups) have worked carefully to develop systems to reach people while limiting aid diversion" to Al-Shabaab, it added. Exemptions from sanctions are extremely rare, the International Peace Institute pointed out in a June paper. Kenya sees Al-Shabaab as no different to extremist groups elsewhere and believes sanctions are a way to blunt their violence. — AFP

> comply with their duty to protect his life". They also said Magnitsky had been illtreated by guards and been unjustly held for too long in pre-trial detention. The judges also denounced an "inherently unfair" posthumous trial that found the accountant guilty. The court said however

that it did not find evidence to back up claims of arbitrary arrest and detention,

noting the investigation into tax fraud was opened before Magnitsky went public with his fraud claims. They ordered Russia to pay 34,000 euros (\$37,800) to Magnitsky's wife and mother - though rights groups say Russia, a Council of Europe member since 1996, has complied with less than half of the rights court's rulings. Russia's justice ministry said it would consider an appeal, noting in a statement given to Russian news agencies that the court "recognized that his arrest and detention conformed fully" with the European Convention on Human Rights of 1950.

Authorities had argued that Magnitsky was a flight risk, citing his application for a British visa and airline tickets booked for Kiev. But in 2013 they dropped a probe into his death, saying there was no evidence of beatings in prison and that his injuries were self-inflicted, and proceeded with his posthumous trial. "The court concluded that the investigation into Mr Magnitsky's death had not been thorough or effective," the ECHR said yesterday.

The ruling comes after the US State Department moved in May to impose sanctions on two Russian investigators for allegedly concealing facts over the Magnitsky's detention and death. The Magnitsky Act allows officials to block the US assets of blacklisted people and bar them from travelling to the United States. — AFP

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reach the North Pole



Sergei Magnitsky



30 years after Berlin Wall fell, dashed hopes boost far-right

Ex-communist city battles the image of a far-right hotbed

CHEMNITZ: A giant Karl Marx statue towers in the east the legacy of the peaceful revolution of 1989, which German city of Chemnitz but, 30 years after the Berlin Wall fell, another political wind is blowing here as the excommunist city battles the image of a far-right hotbed. Polls suggest that Sunday the region's voters will deliver strong gains for the anti-immigration Alternative for Germany (AfD), an ideological ally of nationalist parties now ruling ex-Soviet bloc countries Poland and Hungary.

That would rattle Chancellor Angela Merkel's coalition government and force the other parties to team up to form majorities. The AfD speaks to voters like Olaf Quinger, a 62-year-old butcher who voiced his fear and anger about the arrival of more than one million migrants in recent years. "The main problem is that people who are launching a kind of invasion of our country are being treated the same way as Germans," he said, standing at an AfD campaign booth. "That's a huge injustice."

Many asylum-seekers have flashy smartphones, he said, and "very few of them are really refugees ... they are here to leech off the state". AfD co-leader Alexander Gauland, 78 - who has labeled the Nazi era "a speck of bird-poo on German history" - last Saturday spoke in Chemnitz, Saxony state. Outlining party policies, he demanded secure borders and immigration caps, railed against Brussels and mocked teenage climate activist Greta Thunberg.

He then complained that Saxony, whose people he said had bravely won their freedom, was now often characterized as "a right-wing extremist stronghold, a brown stain, a state trapped in the past, the embodiment of a dark Germany". "If you believe our politicians and media," he told supporters, then Saxony - alongside with Poland and Hungary, which helped end the Soviet empire - are now "the hearts of darkness". "The truth is that Poland and Hungary - and Saxony - are the beating hearts of freedom and resistance, then and now.'

Strong in the east

The rise of the AfD has confronted Germany anew with

News in brief

Munich Airport cancels flights

MUNICH: Munich Airport was forced to cancel around 130 flights yesterday after police halted check-in and evacuated the building to search for a passenger who mistakenly went through an emergency exit. Police said they had to order all people out of the airport, including passengers who had already passed through security, to ensure no dangerous items had been left behind. The missing passenger, a Spanish man who opened an emergency door in terminal 2, was later found in terminal 1. Check-in resumed after a four-hour shutdown which would lead to significant delays for the rest of the day, the airport said. The airport handed out water bottles to waiting passengers on a hot, sunny day in Munich. — Reuters

brought political freedom but also economic pain. Many "Ossis", slang for east Germans, complain of a continued wealth gap and of western arrogance.

So-called "Wessis" meanwhile, often look down on the late-comers to liberal democracy and social diversity in the east where racist violence has flared repeatedly since the early 1990s. Chemnitz earned infamy a year ago when thousands of neo-Nazis, football hooligans and enraged citizens rallied near the 40-tonne Marx bust to vent their anger at immigrants. The spark that set off the days of unrest was the late-night fatal stabbing of a German man by a Syrian asylum seeker, who last week received a nine-and-a-half year jail term. An Iraqi suspect remains at large.

In the heated protests, AfD leaders marched with the radical Pegida and Pro Chemnitz movements. They were united in their anti-immigration stance and distrust of cosmopolitan elites and "establishment" institutions, parties and media, whom they regard as "traitors to the people". We are the people," is an old pro-democracy rallying cry that the AfD now levels against the "Merkel regime". Gauland praised Saxons for what he described as their instinctive, patriotic resistance to dictatorship and for being "a stake in the flesh of the multicultural, multiethnic, mentally controlled old Germany".

Flags, Hitler salute

The 1989 revolution swept away East Germany's oneparty state with its hated secret police. Reunification a year later brought a burst of infrastructure investment and led then-chancellor Helmut Kohl to promise "flowering landscapes" of prosperity. But it also sparked the mass closure of ramshackle factories and state farms, massive job losses and a population flight. Those who stayed behind often felt left behind, and their anger and envy can easily turn against newcomers.

"There is so much poverty among the pensioners," said Heide Haenig, 70, a retired chemical technician. She ges-

UK's Corbyn 'will do everything necessary' to stop no-deal Brexit

LONDON: Opposition Labor Party leader Jeremy Corbyn said he would do everything necessary to prevent Britain leaving the European Union without a divorce deal as he met senior lawmakers from other parties yesterday to discuss tactics. The United Kingdom is heading towards a constitutional crisis at home and a showdown with the EU as Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged to leave the bloc in 66 days without a deal unless it agrees to renegoti-



CHEMNITZ: Supporters of the far-right 'Pro Chemnitz' movement hold German flags as they listen to 'Pro Chemnitz' politician Martin Kohlmann during a rally. — AFP

tured to a nearby park where immigrants sat and claimed: "They act like they own Germany. They don't even have to pay rent. They get 200 euros per child... and then they have seven children!" Not everyone shares those views. Chemnitz mayor Barbara Ludwig, 57, Saturday took part in a civic discussion forum where people wrote goals like "tolerance" and "respect" on cardboard thought-bubbles.

Ludwig has voiced dismay that many now associate



LONDON: Britain's opposition Labor Party leader, Jeremy

Chemnitz with "the Karl Marx head, German flags and a Hitler salute" - but insisted to AFP that "the city has a lot to offer, it is quite different from the image created a year ago". People elsewhere in Saxony are also pushing back. On the day Gauland spoke to 400 people in Chemnitz, over 40,000 rallied in the state capital Dresden against racism and for cultural diversity. It was the largest rally there since the Wall fell. — AFP

David Frost would travel to Brussels on Wednesday for informal discussions. EU officials say they are listening to Johnson's arguments to replace one of the most hotly contested elements of the divorce agreement, something the bloc has previously said it will not agree to. A British official said it was felt there had been softening in the EU's rhetoric around the backstop. "It's good that there is a vibrant discussion, ideas are put forward but it's up to the UK government to come up with concrete proposals that would be compatible with the Withdrawal Agreement," European Commission spokeswoman Mina Andreeva said.

One EU diplomat said Johnson had not made any big mistakes at the G7 summit in France at the weekend, his first outing on the international stage since taking office last month. "If we could get something similar and if this thing would not be called a backstop - we could have success. All this may mean that, in the end, Johnson will have proven himself to be a refined strategist rather than suicidal," the diplomat said. British lawmakers return from their summer break on Sept 3, reconvening for a fight that will determine the fortunes of the world's fifth-largest economy. Votes in parliament have shown there is majority support for measures to block or hinder a no-deal exit. But any majority would be unstable, made up of lawmakers from different parties that are ideologically opposed, except when it comes to stopping a disorderly Brexit. Keir Starmer, the Labour Party's Brexit spokesman, said the purpose of yesterday's meeting with other opposition parties was to agree a plan for when parliament returns. He said options included passing a law to force the government to seek a delay to Britain's EU departure or trying to force the government's collapse in a no-confidence vote. — AFP

40 feared dead or missing

GENEVA: About 40 people are feared dead or missing after the latest wreck of a boat carrying migrants bound for Europe off the coast of Libya, while about 60 people may have been rescued, UN refugee agency spokesman Charlie Yaxley said yesterday. "Terrible news coming in of potentially large loss of life in a shipwreck off the coast of Libya," Yaxley said in a tweet, adding that details were still sketchy. "Around 60 people have been rescued and returned to shore. At least 40 people are estimated to be dead or missing." Unseaworthy vessels overloaded with migrants trying to reach Europe regularly capsize off Libya. Last week more than 100 people died, and a boat with about 250 capsized last month. Thousands of people per year have died in the Mediterranean from among hundreds of thousands attempting the crossing from North Africa to Europe in recent years. — Reuters

N Korea 'developing warheads'

TOKYO: Pyongyang appears to be developing warheads to penetrate a ballistic missile shield defending Japan, the country's defense chief said yesterday, pointing to the irregular trajectories of the latest missiles launched by North Korea. Defense Minister Takeshi Iwaya told a news conference that Japan believes the rockets were a new short-range ballistic missile, according to a ministry spokesman who confirmed his comments carried by domestic media. Recent short-range missile tests by Pyongyang have stoked alarm in neighboring Japan even as US President Donald Trump has dismissed the launches as unimportant. Saturday's test firings came a day after Seoul said it was ending a military intelligence-sharing pact with Tokyo, amid a worsening spat over wartime forced labor. Iwaya and other Japanese officials called Seoul's decision "irrational" as the threat posed by North Korea grows. — Reuters

Three killed as ship capsizes

YAOUNDE: At least three people died and scores were rescued after a ferry capsized off the coast of Cameroon this week, according to state radio and a security official. "One hundred and seven survivors were pulled out of the water as well as three corpses... the search is still under way," Cameroon Radio Television reported late Monday. The accident took place overnight Sunday/Monday and survivors were taken to nearby Limbe, a town on the Atlantic Ocean coast in southwestern Cameroon, the state broadcaster said. It said they were of Cameroonian, Nigerian and French nationality. A state radio claim that 40 were said to be missing was not confirmed by other sources. However, a security official in the Limbe region who asked not to be named confirmed the death toll of three with 107 survivors. A Facebook page used by people close to the armed forces said that almost 200 people were on board and published photographs of the overturned vessel. — AFP

ate the Brexit divorce.

Corbyn said an EU exit without an agreement would leave Britain at the mercy of President Donald Trump and US corporations. "The battle to stop no-deal Brexit isn't a struggle between those who want to leave the EU and those who want continued membership," Corbyn wrote in the Independent newspaper. "It's a battle of the many against the few who are hijacking the referendum result to shift even more power and wealth towards those at the top. That's why the Labor Party will do everything necessary to stop a no-deal bankers' Brexit.'

Britain is on course for a no-deal exit on Oct 31 unless parliament can stop it or a new agreement is reached with the EU. The British parliament has rejected three times the withdrawal deal agreed between Johnson's predecessor Theresa May and the EU, deepening a three-year crisis

Corbyn (2nd right) sits with members of his shadow cabi-net as they pose for a photograph while preparing to meet with leaders of Britain's other political parties to discuss options for Brexit. — AFP

that threatens Britain's status as one of the world's preeminent financial centres and a stable destination for foreign investors.

Johnson held talks last week with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, French President Emmanuel Macron and European Council President Donald Tusk about his demand that the Brexit deal on offer is changed to remove the so-called backstop, an insurance policy to prevent the return of a hard border in Ireland. He is due to talk by phone with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker later and earlier spoke to Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte. A UK official said Johnson's Brexit adviser

Iran jails British dual national for spying

TEHRAN: Iran has jailed a British dual national convicted of spying for Israel and upheld the sentence of a British Council staffer for "cultural infiltration", the judiciary said yesterday. Anousheh Ashouri, a woman with British and Iranian citizenship, got 10 years in prison for feeding information to Israel's Mossad spy agency, judiciary spokesman Gholamhossein Esmaili said.

The latest Iranian national with a Western passport to be detained in the Islamic republic, she was also handed a two-year prison term for receiving 33,000 euros (\$36,600) in illicit funds from Israel and ordered to pay the same amount in fines. Her sentence came as Iran's judiciary confirmed a 10-year jail sentence against British Council staffer Aras Amiri for "cultural infiltration".

Amiri was "sentenced to 10 years in jail... and she is already serving her term. This verdict has been upheld by the court," said Esmaili. "This person... was identified by us because of her cultural infiltration in society through arts and her widespread activities," the judiciary spokesman added. The judiciary's Mizan Online website reported Amiri's original sentence on May 13, saying she had "made a straightforward confession".

At the time, Esmaili said she had been tasked with drawing up and managing cultural "infiltration" projects. Amiri, a Iranian national who had been living in London, was reportedly arrested in 2018 during a trip to visit relatives in Iran. Iranian authorities shut down the British Council's office in Tehran more than a decade ago for what Esmaili described as "illegal activities". The council describes itself as the United Kingdom's organization for cultural relations and educational opportunities.

The verdicts come amid tensions between Iran and US ally Britain over the seizure of oil tankers in recent weeks. An Iranian supertanker was seized off the British overseas territory of Gibraltar on July 4 on suspicion of shipping oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions. That vessel has been released, but Iran continues to hold a British-flagged tanker it seized in the Gulf on July 19 for breaking "international maritime rules". — AFP



DOVER: Marchers wave to detainees in the prison as they go by Strafford County Detention Center, where ICE detainees are being held, in Dover during the New Hampshire Immigrant Solidarity Walk for Justice organized by Granite State and the New Hampshire council of Churches. — AFP

US Supreme Court urged to allow full enforcement of asylum crackdown

CALIFORNIA: President Donald Trump's administration on Monday asked the US Supreme Court to lift a court order preventing the government from fully enforcing a new rule that would curtail asylum applications by immigrants at the US-Mexico border. California-based US District Judge Jon Tigar last month issued a nationwide injunction blocking the rule, which requires most immigrants who want asylum to first seek safe haven in a third country they had traveled through on their way to the United States.

The San Francisco-based 9th US Circuit Court of Appeals on Aug. 16 upheld Tigar's injunction but limited it to the nine Western states over which it is has jurisdiction. Only two of those nine, California and Arizona, are on the border with Mexico. That left open the possibility that the rule could be applied in the two other border states, Texas

and New Mexico. The rule, unveiled on July 15, would bar almost all immigrants from applying for asylum at the southern border. It represents the latest effort by Trump's administration to crack down on immigration, a signature issue during his presidency and his 2020 re-election bid. One of the Republican president's main objectives has been to reduce the number of asylum claims primarily by Central American migrants who have crossed the US-Mexico border in large numbers during his presidency.

The rule drew legal challenges including from a coalition of groups represented by the American Civil Liberties Union. In the administration's request to fully enforce the rule, US Solicitor General Noel Francisco asked the Supreme Court to issue a stay blocking the injunction while litigation over the issue proceeds because the judge's order interferes with the government's authority to establish immigration policy.

The administration said the rule screens out asylum claims that are unlikely to succeed and "deters aliens without a genuine need for asylum from making the arduous and potentially dangerous journey from Central America to the United States." The Supreme Court last December rebuffed a bid by the administration to implement a separate policy prohibiting asylum for people crossing the US-Mexican border outside of an official port of entry, with conservative Chief Justice John Roberts joining the four liberal justices in denying the request. — Reuters



International

Bangladesh's women 'need not to declare' if they are virgins on marriage certificates

High Court orders government to remove the word 'kumari'

DHAKA: Bangladesh's top court has ruled that women need no longer declare if they are virgins on marriage certificates after a five-year legal battle by women's rights groups trying to protect women's privacy and potential humiliation. Marriage laws in the Muslimmajority country in South Asia had required a bride had to state on her marriage certificate if she was a "kumari" - meaning virgin - a widow, or divorced.

But the nation's High Court on Sunday ordered the government to remove the word "kumari" and replace it with "unmarried", a move welcomed on Tuesday but women's rights groups. According to the ruling, the

Indian paramilitary soaks up attacks and hits back in Kashmir

NEW DELHI: To quell protests and militant attacks in India-controlled Kashmir after abrogating the region's rights to set its own laws, the government in New Delhi doesn't rely so much on its million-strong army or the police. Rather, it is a paramilitary police force that is often on the front lines, whether facing stone-throwing youngsters or seasoned gunmen from militant groups.

That puts the force, known as the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), in an invidious position as it mans the concertina-wire barricades in the main city of Srinagar and elsewhere in Muslim-majority Kashmir. Clad in camouflage uniforms, the force is under the command of the Ministry of Home Affairs. Human-rights campaigners accuse it of heavy-handed policing with its anti-riot pellet guns, chilli grenades, which weaponise choking and burning chilli powder, and raids.

It was men from this force who were the target of a Feb. 14 suicide bomber who drove into an armed forces convoy in Kashmir and killed 40 of its members. That attack brought India and neighboring Pakistan, which both claim Kashmir in full but rule it in part, to the brink of war. The nuclear-armed rivals have fought three wars since 1947, two of them over Kashmir. Critics say CRPF is often overstretched and that because training, pay and benefits do not match levels in the army, morale can suffer.

Living conditions are poorer than those found in the army, said former officers. After the February bomb attack, many retired CRPF personnel protested in New Delhi to demand better pay and benefits. A parliamentary committee investigated the force's working conditions and said in a December report that authorities were "over-dependent" on it. The continuous deployment of CRPF companies that are supposed to be in training "affects the operational efficiency of the CRPF, as well as denies them training and rest", the committee said.

groom would now also have to disclose if he was unmarried, divorced or a widower. No one from the government was available to comment about the change or when it was to take effect.

Ainun Nahar Siddiqua, one of two lawyers involved in the case, said the case dated back to 2014 with the filing of a writ petition to change in the form provided under the 1974 Bangladesh Muslim Marriage and Divorce Act. "It's a ruling that gives us the belief that we can fight and create more changes for women in the future," Siddiqua, of Bangladesh Legal Aid And Services Trust (BLAST), told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We filed a writ petition because asking whether someone's a virgin or not is against the person's right to privacy."

Mohammad Ali Akbar Sarker, a Muslim marriage registrar from Dhaka, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that registrars like him were waiting for the Ministry of Law and Justice to officially inform them about the changes in the form. "I have conducted many marriages in Dhaka and I have often been asked why men have the liberty to not disclose their status but women don't. I always told them this wasn't in my hands. I guess I won't be asked that question anymore," said Sarker. — Reuters



KASHMIR: An Indian paramilitary trooper patrols at the top of a hill in Srinagar. — AFP

Crown Representative Police, which was established under British rule in 1939. It evolved into the CRPF with the enactment of an act in 1949, two years after India's independence, and was gradually expanded as it went on to tackle secessionist movements on India's borders. According to the latest available data, it had 319,501 personnel in Dec. 2017 and the government was planning to add more.

Traditionally, the force has been deployed to assist the police. But in recent years there has been a "role reversal" with the CRPF often taking the lead, said PM Nair, a defense analyst who served in the force for nearly eight years, two of them in Jammu clear from conversations Reuters reporters have had with police and CRPF officers that it is the latter who are running day-to-day operations at the barricades and are in the vanguard of raids into neighborhoods.

That can create resentment within the Jammu and Kashmir Police, some of whose officers have said they are being treated with contempt by CRPF personnel. The CRPF's use of pellet guns to disperse stone-throwers has led to criticism from rights activists. A cartridge can contain hundreds of pellets and they have caused thousands of injuries in Kashmir in recent years, including hundreds of people blinded. The government

India opposition using witchcraft, Modi ally says

NEW DELHI: A firebrand Indian monk-turned-lawmaker has suggested that political opponents are using "black magic" to harm Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Hindu nationalist party, after three top members died this month. "I met a holy man during the elections who warned that the opposition might use black magic and killing powers against the BJP," the newly elected Pragya Thakur from Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) said.

"He warned because of the evil powers bad times are upon us and it would harm the party and the leaders who are efficient, hardworking and manage the party affairs," she said in Bhopal, adding that the saint cautioned her to take "precautions". On Saturday finance minister Arun Jaitley died, following Babulal Gaur, a former state chief minister, and former foreign minister Sushma Swaraj earlier this month. All had been suffering from long illnesses.

Thakur became a national lawmaker in elections earlier this year despite being charged with terrorism and criminal conspiracy over a deadly 2008 bomb blast, has long courted controversy. The bombings that killed six people and injured more than 100 others was one of scores of attacks that investigators said were carried out by Hindu militant groups to target Muslims.

Released on bail in 2017 after nine years in detention, she denies the charges and accuses then ruling Congress party of implicating her to defame Hindus. During the election campaign in India - Asia's third largest economy - she hailed the assassin of the country's freedom icon Mahatma Gandhi as a "patriot", earning her a rebuke from Modi. - AFP



NEW DELHI: Indian Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) mem ber of parliament for Bhopal constituency Pragya

Taking the lead

Taking the lead and Kashmir. "The malleability and the resistance of defended the use of what it refers to as non-lethal the force's origins can be traced back to the the force is very high," said Nair. In Srinagar, it is weapons. — Reuters



LAMPANAH: Fishermen return after a day's fishing in Lampanah beach, Aceh. — AFP

How about Jokograd? Indonesians suggest names for new capital

JAKARTA: Indonesians leapt in with suggestions of a name for their future capital yesterday after the longawaited announcement of the new city's location gave no clue what it would be called. "Saint Jokoburg" and "Jokograd" were among 11 suggestions from Twitter user @Enggalpm after President Joko Widodo revealed the planned location of the new capital on Monday. "Hopefully they can be taken into consideration," the user wrote.

Suggestions, serious and lighthearted, swept social media after Widodo - known as Jokowi - said the capital would move in 2024 to the forested island of Borneo from the traffic-clogged, sinking megacity of Jakarta on the island of Java. The new site in the province of East Kalimantan will straddle the regions of North Penajam Paser and Kutai Kartanegara, but there was broad agreement that combining those names would be too much of a mouthful. "Mandalanusa", which loosely translates as centre of the archipelago, was suggested by Twitter user @IdThalamus.

That reflected the fact that the site is much nearer than Jakarta to the geographic centre of a country of 17,000 islands that stretch across an area of more than 5,000 km (3,100 miles) - wider than the continental United States. A spokesman for the national development planning agency said the name has not been decided. A spokesman for the home ministry could not immediately comment. In identifying a site for the new capital, Widodo has got closer than any predecessor to realizing an idea first mooted after independence in 1945.

Sensitivities

But names are a sensitive matter in the world's fourth most populous country, whose 260 million people encompass more than 300 ethnic groups. Muslims form around 90 percent of the population, but minorities of Christians, Hindus and others still number in the millions. Independence leaders carefully coined the neutral term Pancasila" - five principles - as the foundation for the new Indonesian state. "Sri Mahendrakerta", a combination of Sanskrit words that mean a city that is blessed by the Gods to carry wisdom, uphold justice, and create prosperity, was suggested by Twitter user @AnugrahArgaS6.

On Facebook, where Indonesia has 130 million users, users suggested the name Kartanegara. Kutai Kartanegara region - in East Kalimantan - was home to a 4th-century Hindu kingdom in what is now the world's most populous Muslim nation. Part of the justification for the move was also to get away from Java, where more than half Indonesia's people live and which has long been politically dominant. The name should reflect the unique characteristic of East Kalimantan, because the government has been making an effort to make the capital not Javanese-centric," said Kunto Adi Wibowo, executive director of pollster Kedai Kopi.

"The new capital should also not contain Joko Widodo's name because history will remember him as the president who moved the capital. That is enough to be his legacy," he said. Jakarta, 2,000 km (1,250 miles) southwest of the site of the new capital and home to more than 10 million people, was named Batavia by Dutch colonists and renamed after independence. In Sanskrit, Jakarta can be translated as "Victory Achieved". - Reuters

UN committee faults Nepal in child labor and abuse case

GENEVA: A UN committee has ordered Nepal to compensate a man blocked from seeking justice after suffering years of forced labor, as well as alleged torture in custody as a child. In a decision published yesterday, the UN Human Rights Committee also called on Nepal to remove all existing obstacles hindering victims of forced labor and torture from filing complaints.

The ruling came in response to an individual case brought by a Nepali man, using the pseudonym Bholi Pharaka, who from the age of nine had worked as a domestic worker in Kathmandu to help provide for his impoverished, indigenous family. When he was around 12, he moved to a new family, headed by an officer in the Nepali army, where he says he was forced to work from 4:00 am until 10:00 pm each day. He maintains he was subjected to physical and psychological abuse and never received compensation for his labor.

After two years, he escaped back to his home village in 2012, but was soon arrested, after his employer filed a police complaint accusing him of theft. While in custody, Pharaka, who was 14 at the time, says he suffered beatings and other torture to force him to confess. With his family unable to pay bail or legal fees, he was held in a severely overcrowded adult jail for months, where he says the torture continued, before being transferred to a juvenile facility.

The UN committee faulted Nepal's judiciary for failing to investigate the boy's claims in court that he had been tortured, and for failing to protect him as a minor and a member of a recognized vulnerable minority. It also decried that authorities had ignored multiple complaints filed by the boy's family regarding his treatment in custody and the forced labor he was subjected to. The committee called on Nepal to provide Pharaka with an "effective remedy", including adequate compensation, proportional to the violaions suffered.'

It also urged the country to remove "legal, practical and administrative obstacles" blocking victims of torture and child and forced labor from accessing justice. "It is our hope that Nepal will take all necessary measures to protect and help victims of such acts regain their lives," committee member Helene Trigroudja said in a statement. The committee has given Nepal six months to report back on measures it is taking to rectify the situation. The team of 18 independent experts monitors whether countries adhere to their human rights commitments, but does not have enforcement powers. — AFP



FAX



Analysis



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Can power napping solve electric car charging challenge?

utomakers around the world are pushing hard for new networks that can charge electric cars fast. In Europe, some power companies and grid operators are testing whether it might be smarter and cheaper to move into the slow lane. A 15-month study of electric car charging behavior in Germany has concluded that consumers can be persuaded to accept slow, overnight recharging that could help avoid brownouts from surges in electricity demand or costly upgrades to power grids.

The prospect of millions of EVs hitting the roads as governments gradually ban new diesel and gasoline cars is seen as a major challenge for power companies, especially in Germany which is switching from nuclear and coal to less predictable sources of energy such as wind and solar. The small study in the wealthy Stuttgart suburb of Ostfildern-Ruit though has helped alleviate the concerns of some grid operators that too many electric vehicles (EVs) charging at peak times could cause network crashes.

The engineers at Netze BW, the local grid operator behind the trial, found that all the households involved came around to leaving their electric cars plugged in overnight and only half ever charged simultaneously. "Since the experience with the project we have become a lot more relaxed. We can imagine that, in future, half of the inhabitants of such a street own electric vehicles," said Netze BW engineer Selma Lossau, project manager for the study. Still, with limited EV battery ranges for now, slow, overnight charging doesn't get around the problem of how to persuade drivers to ditch petrol cars altogether. Without a network of fastcharging stations offering quick refuelling, drivers may be wary of using EVs for long trips - which is why some automakers want lots of fast-charging stations to encourage the widespread adoption of electric cars.

'Changed my outlook'



G7 leaders and guests pose for a family picture with the Biarritz lighthouse in the background on the second day of the annual G7 summit in Biarritz in southwest France on Aug 25, 2019. — AFP

Tamer Trump at G7, but brash leader never far

ike Superman disguised as the mild-mannered Clark Kent, Donald Trump showed his tamer side at the G7 I - but the maverick showman expected by the world didn't take long to burst back out. Before the summit in France's Biarritz, speculation was rife over how Trump might blow up proceedings. At last year's session in Canada, he withdrew his signature from the closing statement and rowed over trade with host Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

But this time, he largely shelved trade-war threats against his Western allies and announced a stunning pause in his aggressive push on Iran by offering to meet his Iranian counterpart. Having been seen glowering at previous international events, he beamed during every photo op on the French coast and marvelled at the architecture and organization. "Nobody wanted to leave," said the US president, who could barely stop praising French President Emmanuel Macron. "You have been a spectacular leader," he said at their joint press conference closing the three-day affair.

An impromptu lunch - the secret weapon of French diplomacy - appeared to coax forth the New York tycoon's softer side. "It was the two of us: No staff, no anything," Trump said. "We were just trying to impress each other." Trump and Macron said au revoir Monday with a firm handshake that became a hug, then prolonged gripping of hands and a second round of handshaking and hugging.

But then...

So where was the usual Donald Trump - the one who

there all along. While Macron's risky bid to bring together Trump and the Iranians was met by calm approval, the US president was his unpredictable self on virtually every other issue. Early Monday, Trump broke what seemed to be big news by announcing China had told his staff in high-level phone calls that they wanted to resume trade talks.

But with details scant about who placed the calls, Trump later said a news bulletin - in which Chinese Vice Premier Liu He urged "calm" - had sparked much of his optimism. It followed confusion the previous day when Trump admitted regrets about the escalating trade war, only to have his spokeswoman announce that his sole regret was not raising tariffs even higher.

'World of missiles'

Trump also issued another now-routine dismissal of the threat from North Korea's missile testing, of particular concern to nearby US allies South Korea and Japan. "I'm not happy about it but then again he's not in violation of the agreement," Trump said, referring to North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, who state media said had supervised the test-firing of a "super-large multiple rocket launcher". Trump said this while seated alongside fellow G7 member Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. "The launch... clearly violates the relevant UN Security Council resolutions," Abe contradicted him. Trump's answer? "We are in the world of missiles folks, whether

'Sharknado'

Trump attacked as "ridiculous" a report saying he'd repeatedly asked staff about using nuclear weapons to disperse hurricanes - something straight from the "Sharknado" sci-fi disaster movie series. But he was again isolated from his G7 partners in treating the real-world threat of global warming as fiction. He missed the summit's Monday session on climate change. His spokeswoman said he was too busy. Then, speaking to reporters, Trump rejected cutting US fossil-fuel reliance and ridiculed renewable energy, saying: "I'm not going to lose that wealth ... on dreams, on windmills."

Golf and geopolitics

Which Trump will appear when it's his turn to host the G7 in 2020? He let slip he'd like to stage the event at one of his golf resorts, the Doral, near Miami - a move that would provoke political outrage at home and accusations, yet again, that he likes ripping up the rulebook. Stirring up geopolitical friction, Trump also went against key G7 members in insisting that Russia's Vladimir Putin deserves to attend the party. "I'd certainly invite him," he said. Russia was kicked out of the G8 after invading and annexing Crimea, a part of Ukraine. US allies may have enjoyed seeing a more placid Trump on the French seaside. But they'd better brace for more of the other kind too. "Sorry," he said bluntly, of his volatile style. "That's - AFP

likes to shock, confuse or just disrupt the world? Right you like it or not

Slower, or delayed, charging has already gained traction in Norway, Europe's leading EV market, where nearly 50 percent of new car sales are zero-emission vehicles. A study by energy regulator NVE showed that Norway faces a bill of 11 billion crowns (\$1.2 billion) over the next 20 years for low- and high-voltage grids, substations and high-voltage transformers unless it can persuade car owners to charge outside peak afternoon hours.

The investment cost to the country of 5.3 million people could drop to just over 4 billion crowns if cars are charged in the evening, and may fall close to zero if batteries are only plugged in at night, NVE said. NVE is now working a tariff proposal which will penalise peak-hours charging. Tibber, a Norwegian power company, already offers cheaper electricity for EV charging if you let it decide when your car is charged while firms such as ZAPTEC offer ways to adjust charging to the available grid capacity.

Some of the 10 households participating in the Stuttgart trial said they initially wanted to keep topping up their cars for fear of running out of juice, but soon adapted to leaving the power company to handle it as it saw fit overnight. "At the start, I did not want to take any risks and charged frequently in order to feel secure. Over time, I changed my outlook," said Norbert Simianer, a retired head teacher who drove a Renault Zoe during the trial. "I grew used to the car and became more at ease in handling the loading process.

Simianer and his neighbors were given electric cars and 22 kilowatt (kW) wall-boxes for their garages, alongside two charging points in the street, all free of charge. In return, they gave up their normal cars and allowed Netze BW, which is a subsidiary of German utility EnBW, to monitor and carry out a deferred and down-scaled charging process during a seven-and-ahalf-hour period overnight. Netze BW tried various options, either slotting cars in at the maximum 22 kW charging flow one after another, or lengthening the charging time for individual cars by adjusting the power flow, or combining both methods, Lossau said.

The participants, who used apps to check the status of their car batteries, grew accustomed to the lack of instant charging capability because their vehicles could always handle their everyday commutes of up to 50 km. EnBW said nine of the 10 households in the trial on Ostfildern-Ruit's Belchenstrasse had opted to keep the wall-boxes and most were exploring leasing electric car.

Lossau said monitoring 10 households did not in itself provide the "empirical mass to draw conclusions for the load profile of all of Germany". She also said there would need to be better two-way communication between EVs, the grid and consumers for the system to function efficiently on a large scale. "There will have to be more exchange of information between e-cars and the grid to update the loading status in real-time, because otherwise, there can be the wrong impression about the speed of loading," she said. - Reuters

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As Trump policies deepen farmers' pain, Dems see opening in rural America

eizing on mounting Farm Belt frustration with President Donald Trump's economic agenda, Democratic rivals are stepping up their push to take back part of rural America, whose overwhelming support for Trump helped propel his upset 2016 election victory. The sparsely populated US heartland has remained loyal to the Republican president even as farmers from Iowa to Wisconsin to Pennsylvania bear the brunt of his tariff war with China. His advisers insist Trump's projection of toughness against China will only delight, not alienate, his base.

Democrats seeking to face Trump in the Nov 2020 election challenge that presumption, pointing to farmers reeling from plunging prices and unsold crops during what is now more than a year-long trade war with China. Farmers and ethanol producers are also upset with the administration's latest decision to allow more oil refiners to skirt biofuel laws and use less corn-based ethanol.

From frontrunner Joe Biden to US Senators Elizabeth Warren and Amy Klobuchar, many of the more than 20 Democratic presidential candidates have highlighted the economic damage caused by Trump's trade war and biofuel waivers as the central plank of their pitches to rural America. At various campaign stops in Iowa since June, Biden has said the trade war was "crushing" American farmers. "How many farmers across this state, across this nation, have to face the prospect of losing everything, losing their farm because of these tariffs?" Biden said in Warren County, Iowa, last week.

Biden's aides say he will make campaigning in rural areas a top priority. "Vice President Biden will work to expand the market for ethanol and the next generation of biofuels, and will re-engage allies to negotiate trade that benefits American farmers and other workers," TJ Ducklo, a Biden spokesman, told Reuters. In recent weeks, several other candidates, including Warren and Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, have rushed to roll out plans for rural America, touching on everything from farm subsidies to rural healthcare and broadband.

They have already been campaigning heavily in rural Iowa, the state that kicks off the party's nominating contest in February and is the largest producer of corn and ethanol. In the past, Democratic candidates often just paid lip service to rural voters, said former US Senator Heidi Heitkamp of North Dakota, who founded the One Country Project to help Democrats broaden their rural appeal after she lost her re-election bid last year.

This year is different, she said in an interview. "There's an appreciation that we can't continue to fail at the rate we're failing in rural America and be successful in presidential races and Senate races," Heitkamp said. She added: "We're getting helped a lot by the president in this regard." Roger Johnson, president of the National Farmers Union, said in a statement last Friday: "Between burning bridges with all of our biggest trading partners and undermining our domestic biofuels industry, President Trump is making things worse, not better."

Uphill battle

Many rural voters helped former Democratic President Barack Obama win the White House in 2008 and 2012.

tributes about 20 percent of the pollution in fresh water sources around the world from its laundries, mills and other facilities, she added.

Many businesses now operate in regions facing high water stress, from India to Vietnam and California, company representatives said. By 2025, half of the world's population will be living in water-stressed areas, according to the World Health Organization (WHO).

Brewing change

For Dutch brewer Heineken, water is obviously a vital ingredient, said Jan-Willem Vosmeer, corporate social responsibility manager for the firm. But many breweries are located in increasingly water-stressed areas, and limited or irregular supplies could impact both communities and corporate bottom lines, he said. Finding ways to conserve water and use it responsibly "makes absolute business sense", Vosmeer said. "Diminishing availability of water poses operational, social, reputational and legal risks for all businesses. It should be high on the agenda" for companies, he said. Like many other food and beverage businesses, the largest part of Heineken's water "footprint" comes from agriculture, as it grows key ingredients such as barley, he said.

To save water, Coca-Cola is turning to new technology such as using air rather than water to clean bottles, said Liz Lowe, the company's British sustainability manager. It

But they supported Trump over Democrat Hillary Clinton in 2016 by more than 30 percentage points. Next year is again expected to be an uphill battle for Democrats. Officials worry the party's increasingly liberal direction on immigration and other Trump-driven hot-button issues is socially and culturally at odds with rural voters.

According to the latest Reuters/Ipsos poll conducted this month, five in 10 US adults in rural areas approved of Trump's performance in office, higher than his 41 percent approval nationwide. Tim Murtaugh, the Trump campaign's communications director, said farmers know the trade war is a "fight worth winning." "Farmers are patriots ... and they know the long-term benefits are going to be worth it for themselves and this nation," Murtaugh said.

The White House also unveiled a \$16 billion aid package in July to help farmers hurt by the trade war and bad weather. But Democrats point to last year's congressional elections, where the party increased its share of the vote from 2016 in at least 54 districts with large rural populations, as a sign that Trump's grip on rural America may be loosening. Even a small erosion in Trump's support among rural voters could make a difference in battleground states like Pennsylvania, Wisconsin and Michigan, where Trump won by razorthin margins in 2016, Democratic strategists say.

Trump won by a combined total of just 77,000 votes in the three states. Priorities USA, the largest Democratic Super PAC, is spending hundreds of thousands of dollars a week to run digital ads in those states as well as in Florida, aimed at tying Trump's policies to economic difficulties that many working-class people face.

A round of more bad news for farmers last week, including extra tariffs Beijing announced on soybeans and other key US agricultural exports, gave Democrats a fresh opening to attack Trump. - Reuters

is also better monitoring water use in factories and harvesting rainwater for toilet flushing at its plants - one way to act as a better water steward, she said. As well, in an effort to replenish natural water supplies, the global drinks giant is creating new wetlands and working with communities internationally to try to put the equivalent of all the water it uses in manufacturing back into nature and com-munities by 2020, Lowe said. "Water is the absolute heart of our business. If we don't have water, we don't have a business - full stop," she said.

Population growth, climate change, economic and agricultural expansion and deforestation are all placing greater pressures on the world's limited supplies of water, scientists say. For Swedish furniture store Ikea, consumer choice is also an important motivation for improving water practices. "There is a clear customer demand" for greener products, said Kajsa-Stina Kalin, Ikea's "healthy and sustainable living" leader.

The reality, she said, is that "climate change is no longer a distant threat" and "as a big global brand we know we are part of the problem but we really want to be part of the solution." The company, which had a billion visits to its stores in 52 countries last year, aims to reduce and reuse water in all its operations in a bid to attract environmentally aware customers. "We know that people are increasingly choosing to not shop at companies and brands that have no active sustainability work," said Kalin. - Reuters

Firms aim to use scarce water more wisely

utting on a pair of jeans or drinking a beer has a cost beyond the price tag, with billions of tons of water used globally each year to manufacture them and other consumer goods, companies said at an international water conference on Monday. But with population growth and climate change making water a scarcer and more precious resource, using water wisely is now a key to remaining profitable, they said. From growing cotton for textiles to manufacturing drinks and ensuring consumers have enough water as well, efficient water use is high on the agenda, representatives of popular brands said during opening events at World Water Week in Stockholm.

"Gap Inc sees water as a human right," Lisa Hook who works on sustainable innovation for Gap Inc. told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We can't do business where there is no water." Cotton is a thirsty crop and it takes about 1,000 gallons of water to make one pair of jeans, Hook said. The global apparel industry also con-

Kuwait Times

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2019





In focus after Trump offer, Greenland sees chance for an economic victory



JISINESS Turkish Airlines adds Mexico City and Cancun to its flight network



Johnson Johnson MEDICAL DEVICES COMPANIES IRVINE. CALIFORNIA: A sign is posted at the Johnson & Johnson campus on August 26, 2019 in Irvine, California. A judge has ordered the company to pay \$572 million in connection with the opioid crisis in Oklahoma. —AFP



J&J ordered to pay \$572m for opioid crisis

Company ordered to fund an 'abatement plan' for care for addicts, families

WASHINGTON: An Oklahoma judge yesterday ordered US health care giant Johnson & Johnson to pay \$572 million in damages for its role in fostering the state's opioid addiction crisis. In the first civil trial of a drugmaker over an epidemic that has caused hundreds of thousands of overdose deaths, Judge Thad Balkman said prosecutors had demonstrated that J&J contributed to a "public nuisance" in its deceptive promotion of highly addictive prescription painkillers. "Those actions compromised the health and safety of thousands of Oklahomans," he said.

According to the ruling, the company and its Janssen pharmaceuticals division will fund an "abatement plan" for care for addicts, families and communities ravaged by the crisis. "The defendants Janssen and Johnson & Johnson's misleading marketing and promotion of opioids created a nuisance," Balkman said.

Landmark case

J&J was the first pharmaceutical company tried over the US opioid crisis, which fueled over 70,000 overdose deaths in 2017 alone. But there are some 2,000 outstanding lawsuits against many drugmakers and distributors filed by state and local governments, many overwhelmed by the costs of an epidemic that has only slightly abated. Most of those are being rolled into a case to go to trial in October in Ohio that will likely set the basis for potentially many billions of dollars in settlements across the country.

Prosecutors had sought \$17 billion in damages against J&J for an abatement program to be spread over 30 years. But

Oil funds sidelined by economic uncertainty

LONDON: Hedge fund managers cut short positions in petroleum last week amid slow vacation trading and continued conflicting signals about the health of the economy and the outlook for oil supply. They and other money managers increased their net long position in the six most important petroleum futures and options contracts by 8 million barrels in the week to Aug. 20.

Portfolio managers were net buyers of NYMEX and ICE WTI (+18 million barrels), US heating oil (+2 million) and European gasoil (+1 million) but sold Brent (-7 million) and US gasoline (-5 million). Buying was mostly driven by the covering of previous short positions rather than the initiation of new long ones, according to an analysis of regulatory and exchange data. Funds cut short positions by 34 million barrels, including 39 million barrels in NYMEX and ICE WTI. Fund buying of WTI seems to have been driven mostly by local factors, principally the commissioning of new pipelines, easing congestion and pressure on prices in the Permian region of Texas and New Mexico.

Hedge fund positioning is broadly neutral, with the fund community holding a dynamic long position (excluding structural longs and shorts) of just 60 million barrels. There is plenty of scope for fund managers to add to long positions if fears about a global recession prove unfounded - or increase short positions if the economic outlook deteriorates. -Reuters

India's RBI unveils \$24bn windfall for govt

NEW DELHI: India's central bank has announced a \$24-billion windfall for the cash-strapped government, giving a much-needed boost to Prime Minister Narendra Modi as he seeks to kick start growth in Asia's third-biggest economy. But the payout will likely stoke fresh concerns about the Reserve Bank of India's independence following a standoff that has seen top officials quit amid accusations of government interference.

Modi has come under increasing pressure to fire up the economy, which has slowed in each of the past three quarters-losing its status as the world's fastest-growing-with unemployment at its highest since the 1970s. The auto sector has been particularly badly hit, with car sales plunging in July for the ninth month running, while weak consumer spending and high taxes have hit demand for everything from biscuits to hair oil.

Balkman said the state had not made a strong case for the future costs of the crisis to it and the community beyond one year, and so limited his ruling to that. J&J's shares rose about two percent to \$130 in after-market trade following the decision. The company immediately said it would appeal the decision.

"Janssen did not cause the opioid crisis in Oklahoma, and neither the facts nor the law support this outcome," said J&J executive vice president Michael Ullmann. "The unprecedented award for the state's 'abatement plan' has sweeping ramifications for many industries and bears no relation to the company's medicines or conduct."

Company downplayed addiction claims J&J argued that the law was being inappropriately applied and that its products had

The RBI said it had approved a transfer of 1.76 trillion rupees (\$24.4 billion) to government coffers, including a dividend of 1.23 trillion rupees and 526 billion rupees in excess reserves following the adoption of a new methodology for assessing market risk.

The announcement came days after Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman announced a slew of measures to help the economy, including bringing forward a \$10-billion liquidity lifeline for credit-shy banks and rolling back an extra levy on equity sales that had spooked foreign investors. Sujan Hajra, an economist at Anand Rathi Securities, said that the latest announcement is a "positive move" for the economy and for public finances.

"As the RBI said, despite this fund transfer, India will still have one of the best capitalizations of the central banks globally and it does not reflect poorly on either the government or the central bank," Hajra told AFP. Ashutosh Datar, an independent economist from Mumbai, agreed, telling AFP: "The amount looks huge but it is not and there is no raid on **RBI reserves.**"

However, the bank's independence has already been called into question after it cut interest rates four times this year to a nine-year low, report-

a very small role in the addiction epidemic in Oklahoma and nationally. Balkman said J&J had promoted its drugs by telling doctors and patients that pain was not being treated enough and that "there was a low risk of abuse and a low danger" in the drugs themselves. "The defendants used the phrase 'pseudoaddiction' to convince doctors that patients who exhibited signs of addiction... were not actually suffering from addiction, but from the undertreatment of pain," he said in his decision. He also said the company consciously downplayed risks it knew were present, pointing to the 2007 \$600 million fine in a Virginia trial of Purdue Pharma, one of the leading prescription opioid makers, for misleading the health industry and the public about the highly addictive properties of its Oxycontin painkiller.

J&J is the first drugmaker to go to trial and the case is seen as a bellwether for thousands of possible criminal and civil suits over the seeming uncontrolled distribution of highly addictive painkillers like oxycodone and hydrocodone, and J&J's Nucynta and Duragesic, between 2000 and 2015.

Two other major drugmakers accused in the same suit, Purdue Pharma of the United States and Israel's Teva, settled with Oklahoma before the case went to trial. Purdue, which produced the widely abused opioid Oxycontin, agreed to pay the state \$270 million in March and Teva negotiated an \$85 million settlement. Dozens of local and state governments across the country have also already exacted settlements with opioid manufacturers and distributors to address their problems. —AFP



market. — AFP

edly under government pressure. Governor Urjit Patel resigned in December following a public spat with the Modi government-which was re-elected earlier this yearaccusing it of trying to undermine it.

He was followed in June by deputy governor Viral Acharaya citing the same reasons, although the bank insisted this was unrelated and he had left for personal reasons. The government is "clueless about how to

solve their self-created economic disaster", tweeted Rahul Gandhi, the outgoing head of the opposition Congress party. "Stealing from RBI won't work - it's like stealing a Band-Aid from the dispensary & sticking it on a gunshot wound. #RBILooted". Indian stocks rose yesterday, with the Sensex up half a percent, adding to a 2.2-percent rise on Monday on the back of Friday's stimulus measures, traders said. —AFP



Business

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Wednesday, August 28, 2019

'Mr Volkswagen' Piech dead at 82

The autocratic heir of a storied motoring dynasty

BERLIN: Former Volkswagen boss Ferdinand Piech, his character, as he later recalled. who has died at 82, was the autocratic heir of a storied motoring dynasty who drove VW from the brink of bankruptcy to become a global empire.

He was celebrated as a visionary corporate leader and brilliant engineer who knew every model leaving the production line down to the last bolt. But the man with the steel-blue eyes was also feared as a ruthless manager and master of intrigue who used his connections to fight his many battles.

During his over half-century career he turned VW into a 13-brand empire and pillar of the German economy with now 660,000 employees. But in the end he left it in anger shortly before the company faced its worst ever crises with the "dieselgate" scandal.

"Piech wasn't just any car boss," judged top-selling Bild daily. "With him, a piece of German economic history dies. He was the last auto manager to build his own cars.'

News weekly Der Spiegel dubbed him the "Engineer of Power ... a brilliant technician and Machiavellian master".

'Dark time'

Ferdinand Karl Piech was born in Vienna on April 17, 1937. His father Anton ran the VW plant founded by Nazi dictator Adolf Hitler during World War II. His mother Louise was the daughter of Ferdinand Porsche, inventor of the iconic Beetle and founder of luxury brand. As a child, Ferdinand battled dyslexia and brought home poor grades. He was sent off to a tough boarding school-a "dark time" which hardened

He studied mechanical engineering and wrote his master thesis on Formula 1 engines, then started at Stuttgart-based Porsche. There Piech oversaw the design of the iconic Porsche 917, sales of which took off after it won races including the legendary 24 Hours of Le Mans. Two years later he switched to Audi, turning the VW subsidiary into a premium car maker that could compete with BMW and Daimler's Mercedes, and becoming its chairman in 1988. Piech then applied his magic to Wolfsburg-based VW, taking over in 1993 when it suffered massive losses. He fired managers, streamlined production and rapidly boosted sales and profits. He ran it until 2002 when, under company policy, he had to retire at age 65, but remained on its supervisory board until 2015 - having grown VW into a conglomerate that now includes brands Bentley, SEAT, Skoda, Bugatti and Lamborghini.

Battles and triumphs

Perhaps his toughest battle had come in 2009 when the Porsche family tried to take over Volkswagen in a clash of dynasties. In the end, the opposite happened and, in a triumph for "Mr Volkswagen", Porsche became one of the brands in the VW stable. Piech pushed VW on to become the world leader, selling over 10 million vehicles a year, and battling Japan's Tovota for global dominance. His reign ended when he went to war in 2015 with his long-time confidant, CEO Martin Winterkorn, and lost support of key players on the supervisory board. He had to admit defeat and left the company in

anger-arguably just in time.



HAMBURG: In this file photo, Ferdinand Piech, then supervisory board chairman of German auto giant Volkswagen (VW), and his wife Ursula Piech arrive for the company's annual general meet ing in Hamburg, northern Germany.

Months later the "dieselgate" scandal broke when US regulators discovered VW had fitted millions of cars with devices allowing them to cheat exhaust emissions tests. The corporate disaster has so far cost the group more than 30 billion euros and greatly damaged the image of the German automotive sector.

In 2017, Piech sold off most of his stake, worth about a billion euros, to other members of the Porsche-Piech family. On Sunday evening Piech, who had 12 children from different relationships, collapsed in a restaurant in Rosenheim, Bavaria in front of his wife Ursula, 63, and died that night in hospital.



In this file photo, then chairman of German carmaker Volkswagen Ferdinand Piech poses next to the Lupo car, which then was a world premiere presentation at the 100th edition of the Auto Fair in Paris. —AFP Photos

Auto industry expert Ferdinand Dudenhoeffer was among many who honored his legacy, saving that "without Piech, the automotive world would look very different today". —AFP

Japan estimates cast doubt over public pension sustainability

TOKYO: Japan's government unveiled estimates yesterday that showed public pension benefits steadily declining during coming decades, as it prepares to open up a debate on social security reforms needed to support an ageing population. Curbing bulging welfare spending is a vital step towards fixing the industrial world's heaviest debt burden, which is currently more than twice the size of Japan's \$5 trillion economy. While Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's government has made welfare reform a top priority, it has moved slowly due to fears that it could alienate the public. Japan has one of the oldest populations in the world, due to a low birth rate and people's longevity, putting pressure on its pension system.

French economic confidence defies euro-gloom: Surveys

PARIS: French consumers and businesses in August shrugged off the gloom settling in across much of the euro zone, with measures of confidence holding steady at relatively elevated levels, data showed yesterday.

Household confidence in the euro zone's second biggest economy remained at its highest level in a year and a half, according to a survey from the INSEE official statistics agency. Its confidence index was unchanged from July at 102 with households reporting concerns about unemployment retreating to a 10-month low. A second INSEE survey into business confidence found the index was stable at 105, comfortably above the long-term average of 100.

The index for the industrial sector even improved slightly to 102 from 101, despite global trade tensions and a strong euro, which hurts exports.



PARIS: A man looks at children's snacks displayed on shelves as he shops at a Carrefour Hypermarket store in Montreuil, near Paris, France.—Reuters

In its pension estimates - which are issued every five years to gauge health of public pensions - the government estimated monthly pension benefits at 220,000 yen (\$2,087.48) per model married couple, worth about 61.7 percent of pre-retirement income.

This pension-to-wage ratio is projected to fall to about 51-52 percent by the late 2040s, with the possibility of sliding further to around 45 percent in the 2050s, depending on growth and population outlook. By some estimates, the ratio would fall below 40 percent in the 2050s, assuming the national pension fund dries up while the economy contracts mildly and labor participation stalls. The government presented six types of estimates based on various scenarios, including a high economic growth case and base-line case. The estimates also took account of optional scenarios such as a wider range of part-timers include in corporate pension schemes, and delayed pension payments for people who work well past their retirement age. The estimates were largely unchanged from the prior projections made in 2014, due partly to rises in the number of people paying into the system and rising vields on investment

The government has vowed to keep the average pension-to-wage ratio from falling below 50 percent, but worries are persisting Japan's 'pay-as-you-go' pension scheme may be unsustainable, with fewer workers paying into it and a larger retired population drawing from it. "In Japan, adjustment in pension benefits and burdens has been lagging, while the overhaul of pension system has been left untouched," said Kazuhiko Nishizawa, social security expert at Japan Research Institute. —Reuters

In contrast, such concerns are crushing business confidence in Germany due to the dependence Europe's biggest economy has on exports for growth. While French companies are not yet giving into the gloom gripping their German counterparts, they are nonetheless not entirely immune and are reining their investment plans. A third quarterly survey from INSEE found that French manufacturers expected on average to raise investment by 6 percent this year, whereas they had flagged 11 percent the last time they were polled in April. France's economy is benefit-

Norway: Timing of **EFTA-Mercosur** pact 'awful'

OSLO: Norway, which is part of European Free Trade Agreement (EFTA) grouping four non-EU members, yesterday regretted the "awful timing" of a trade pact with Mercosur, as fires rage in the Amazon. Faced with massive criticism for his handling of the blazes in the rainforests, Brazilian President Jose Bolsonaro on Friday announced the

ing this year from a more than 10 billion euro level since the end of 2008, INSEE said earlier (\$11.14 billion) package of measures aimed at boosting the incomes of the poorest workers and pensioners.

President Emmanuel Macron rolled out the measures, made up largely of tax breaks, after facing a series of violent anti-government protests last year, which was partly the result of concerns over dwindling purchasing power. French consumers and business have also been taking heart at a steady decline in unemployment, which has long dogged previous presidents. It fell in the second quarter to 8.5 percent, the lowest

agreement between EFTA, formed by Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, and the South American grouping Mercosur, made up of Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay.

"It was awful timing, with the Amazon ablaze," acknowledged Prime Minister Erna Solberg in an interview with business daily Dagens Naeringsliv (DN).

"On the other hand, it's an agreement we've been working on for several years and the pact supports the goal of a sustainable development of the rainforest," she added. The announcement of the deal came as countries like France and Ireland threatened to block another free trade deal between the EU and Mercosur, to protest against Bolsonaro's handling of this month.

"We are delivering solutions that work and we have a level of growth that is solid, even if overall eurozone growth is insufficient and solutions are needed," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said on French television LCI. He added that for now he saw no reason to revise the government's 2019 growth forecast of 1.4 percent, but promised an update when next year's budget is presented at the end of September. Germany's government expects growth this year of only 0.5 percent. —Reuters

the fires. It also came just days after Norway, following in Germany's footsteps, announced it was blocking 30 million euros (\$33 million) of subsidies to Brazil, accusing it of turning its back on the fight against deforestation.

Given the timing, Solberg's right-wing government was harshly criticized by environmental groups and members of the opposition. According to Norwegian newspaper Klassekampen, two small coalition parties, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats, may reject the pact when it is up for ratification in parliament. Almost 80,000 forest fires have been reported in Brazil since the start of the year-the highest number since 2013 — and more than half of them have been in the Amazon. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muza	aini Exchange Co.	Yemen Riyal/for 1000 Tunisian Dinar Iordanian Dinar	1.222 110.650 429.980	Turkish Lira Singapore dollars	53.195 218.734		Chinese Yuan Hong Kong Dollar Indian Rupee	0.041442 0.036923 0.003704	0.045942 0.039673 0.004476
EUROPEAN & US Dollar Transfer Euro Sterling Pound	& AMERICAN COUNTRIES 304.300 339.600 373.680	Lebanese Lira/for 1000 Syrian Lira Morocco Dirham	0.203 0.000 32.304	BAHRAIN EX	CHANGE COMPAN	Y WLL	Indonesian Rupiah Japanese Yen Korean Won	0.000017 0.002794 0.000240	0.000023 0.002974 000255
Canadian dollar Turkish lira Swiss Franc	230.970 53.390 313.070	Dollarco F	Exchange Co. Ltd	CURRENCY British Pound	BUY Europe	SELL	Malaysian Ringgit Nepalese Rupee Pakistan Rupee	0.068893 0.002677 0.001339	0.074893 0.003017 0.002109
US Dollar Buying	297.000 297.000 AN COUNTRIES 2.878 4.245 1.940 1.692 2.644 220.270 38.792 3.596 5.817 9.972	Rate for Transfer US Dollar Canadian Dollar Sterling Pound Euro Swiss Frank Bahrain Dinar UAE Dirhams Qatari Riyals Saudi Riyals Jordanian Dinar Egyptian Pound	Selling Rate 304.440 229.505 374.860 342.345 298.290 809.620 83.290 84.530 82.080 430.680 18.391	British Pound Czech Korune Danish Krone Euro Georgian Lari Hungarian 0.001147 Norwegian Krone Romanian Leu Russian ruble Slovakia Swedish Krona Swiss Franc	$\begin{array}{c} 0.364226\\ 0.005082\\ 0.041230\\ 0.330057\\ 0.13200\\ 0.001337\\ 0.029742\\ 0.065204\\ 0.004621\\ 0.009095\\ 0.027404\\ 0.304239\\ \end{array}$	$\begin{array}{c} 0.378126\\ 0.014382\\ 0.046230\\ 0.343757\\ 0.132000\\ \hline\\ 0.034942\\ 0.082054\\ 0.004621\\ 0.019095\\ 0.032404\\ 0.315239\\ \end{array}$	Philippine Peso Singapore Dollar Sri Lankan Rupee Taiwan Thai Baht Vietnamese Dong Bahraini Dinar Egyptian Pound Iranian Riyal Iraqi Dinar	0.005786 0.213890 0.001340 0.009789 0.009604 0.00013 Arab 0.801009 0.018629 0.000084 0.0000210	0.006089 0.223890 0.001920 0.009969 0.010154 0.00013 0.809069 0.021989 0.000086 0.000270
Malaysian ringgit GC Saudi Riyal	77.826 CC COUNTRIES 81.201	Sri Lankan Rupees Indian Rupees Pakistani Rupees Bangladesh Taka	1.693 4.249 1.930 3.605	Australian Dollar New Zealand Dollar	Australasia 0.197355 0.187545	0.209355 0.197045	Jordanian Dinar Kuwaiti Dinar Lebanese Pound Moroccan Dirhams	0.424290 1.000000 0.000157 0.021000	0.433290 1.000000 0.000257 0.045000
Qatari Riyal Omani Riyal Bahraini Dinar UAE Dirham	83.633 790.903 808.560 82.904	Philippines Pesso Cyprus pound Japanese Yen Syrian Pound Nepalese Rupees	5.815 18.110 3.885 1.590 2.660	Canadian Dollar US Dollars US Dollars Mint	America 0.224288 0.300200 0.300700	0.233288 0.305500 0.305500	Omani Riyal Qatar Riyal Saudi Riyal Syrian Pound Tunisian Dinar	0.785258 0.082928 0.080060 0.001289 0.102090	0.793159 0.083762 0.081360 0.001510 0.110090
AR Egyptian Pound - Cash Egyptian Pound - Transfer	AB COUNTRIES 21.500 18.381	Malaysian Ringgit Chinese Yuan Renminbi Thai Bhat	73.565 43.385 10.880	Bangladesh Taka	Asia 0.002960	0.003761	Turkish Lira UAE Dirhams Yemeni Riyal	0.045617 0.082216 0.000989	$\begin{array}{c} 0.055462 \\ 0.083044 \\ 0.001069 \end{array}$



Business

In focus after Trump offer, Greenland sees chance for an economic victory

Island eyes US investments in mining, transport and tourism

COPENHAGEN: Greenland's leaders want to use global interest in the Arctic island aroused by President Donald Trump's eye-catching offer of a sale to stimulate investment and earn more from US military activity there. Some business leaders and officials are seeking to translate the unexpected publicity into badly-needed ventures in roads, airports, hospitality and mines.

"When you stimulate investment in an area like Greenland, magic wonders can happen in mining, tourism, and infrastructure," said Verner Hammeken, chief executive of Greenland's Royal Arctic Line.

Trump last week called off a planned visit to Copenhagen, where he was to meet Greenland's leader, after his idea to buy the vast island, home to only 56,000 people, was rebuffed. Greenland is important for the US military and its ballistic missile early warning system, as it balances a Russian and Chinese commercial and military buildup in the Arctic. The United States maintains an air base in Thule in Greenland's northwest but doesn't pay any rent under a 1951 treaty with Denmark.

Greenland had long wanted more in return for the base's use. But discontent worsened in 2014 when the US military cancelled a contract with Greenland Contractors, a partly state-owned firm that had serviced the base for more than four decades. And in 2017, the Department of Defense picked a US company instead of Greenland's Royal Arctic Line to ship goods to the base, causing further resentment among politicians and locals.

"It is only natural that we should make the most of the US presence in Greenland, as we accommodate the defense cooperation on our land," Greenland's minister for foreign affairs Ane Lone Bagger told Reuters in an interview this week.

"Our fair share"

The service contract with Greenland Contractors was of Danish shipping giant Maersk.

Algerian economy creaks at the seams after six months of turmoil

ALGIERS: On the face of it, Algeria's state-dominated economy has weathered six months of turmoil well, with flightloads of public sector workers heading abroad for holidays even as protesters who ousted the veteran president in April now target his allies.

But business, and leisure, as usual for the North African country's army of worth about 600 million Danish crowns (\$89 million) a year before it was ended and was an important contributor to the small economy, which mainly relies on fishing and annual grants from Denmark.

"To the greatest extent possible, it must be Greenlandic companies as well as Greenlandic workers who service the base. It is only natural that we get our fair share," she said. As a result of the strained relations, formalized annual meetings in the so-called Joint Committee between officials from Nuuk, Copenhagen and Washington have been on standby since 2014.

"For five years we've tried to get the Thule contracts back, but at this point I don't have much hope," Aaja Chemnitz Larsen, a lawmaker from opposition party Inuit Ataqatigiit told Reuters.

"The current America First strategy has not helped the relationship between Greenland and the United States," she said. The White House did not respond to a request for comment. The Pentagon said it "will prioritize activities in the Arctic that support homeland defense" and contribute to maintaining "balances of power in the Indo-Pacific and Europe." Last year, the US Department of Defense said it wants to "pursue potential strategic investments vigorously," including airports in Greenland for both military and civilian use. The Danish foreign ministry said it is in contact with the US administration about resuming Joint Committee meetings and that it will work "to ensure maximum benefit to Greenland." Greenland is an autonomous Danish territory, but Denmark deals with the island's security and foreign affairs.

Royal Arctic Line, a state-controlled company that lost the shipping contract to Thule, continues to sail to nearby towns. "It seems a bit strange that you use an area in a country without supporting that country's infrastructure," said Royal Arctic's Hammeken, formerly of Danish shipping giant Maersk.

Snow covered mountains rise above the harbor and town of Tasiilaq, Greenland. —Reuters

He said he regrets losing the contract, and there is "clear value in combining civilian supplies with military activity, especially in rural areas that are difficult to access." He would like more US investment: Greenland has no roads between its 17 towns and one commercial

international airport.

"We've seen that when the United States catches interest in certain areas around the world, investments from private American companies follow," he added. —Reuters



Nigeria says it will not give up assets in \$9bn gas project row

ABUJA: Nigeria will not relinquish assets to a firm registered in the British Virgin Islands following a court ruling related to a \$9 billion gas project dispute, the West African country's information minister said yesterday. Earlier this month a judge in London granted Process and Industrial Developments Ltd (P&ID) the right to attempt to seize some \$9 billion in assets from the Nigerian government over an aborted gas project. The \$9 billion sum would be one of the largest financial penalties imposed on Nigeria, representing 20 percent of the currency reserves of Africa's largest economy and top oil producer. Information Minister Lai Mohammed - addressing journalists alongside the finance minister, attorney general and central bank governor in the capital, Abuja - said it would not relinquish any assets. 'The federal government is taking all necessary steps to appeal the decision of the UK Court, to seek a stay of execution of the decision, to defend its rights and to protect the assets of the people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria," he said. The company was awarded \$6.6 billion in an arbitration decision over a failed project to build a gas processing plant in the southern Nigerian city of Calabar. The award was based on what the firm could have earned during the 20-year agreement as part of a deal struck in 2010. The judge's decision converted the arbitration award to a legal judgment and the sum rose to around \$9 billion with interest accrued since 2013. —Reuters

state employees masks a growing economic drama behind the standoff between political, business, labor and military elites and those determined to force them out. The country's rich oil and gas resources are still flowing, but thousands of jobs are on the line and growth is stuttering in an economy where official data shows one in four of the under-30s, who form 70 percent of the population, is unemployed.

The resignation of Abdelaziz Bouteflika in April was followed by the appointment of an interim president overseen by the military, and corruption investigations have been opened into some of those around the former leader. Putting tycoons close to Bouteflika behind bars was a key demand of the protests. But while investigations drag on, five big firms across sectors from sugar to cars are almost paralyzed as their owners struggle to sign pay checks or orders to import materials because their bank accounts have been frozen.

Malik, one of 15,000 employees of detained businessman Ali Haddad, said he had just been sacked as a reporter for Dzayer TV. "The managers told me there Bouteflika's 20-year rule, to wind down subsidies, open the economy to investment and create jobs outside bloated public services. An energy law to cut red tape is on hold and inside Algeria's sprawling state energy company Sonatrach, which is hoping to boost production by linking up with oil majors, there is growing concern.

is no more money," he said, withholding his second name for fear of repercussions.

Haddad denies wrongdoing and the

interim government says it will find ways to safeguard jobs, but after three months

without pay, hundreds of his workers

have joined tens of thousands of demon-

strators who gather weekly in the capital

Bouteflika have been postponed indefi-

nitely, despite a dialogue between oppo-

sition parties and the non-party govern-

ment managed by army chief Lieutenant

government has held back planned

reforms, initiated towards the end of

To limit further dissent, the interim

General Ahmed Gaed Salah.

Elections for a successor for

Algiers.

"Output is ongoing at Sonatrach, but everything else is completely frozen including talks with Exxon and Chevron," a Sonatrach source told Reuters, declining to be named due to the delicate political situation. Exxon declined to comment and Chevron was not immediately available.

Any deal with a foreign firm is sensitive in Algeria and needs the support of a permanent president, not a caretaker: the source said it was not clear when the talks may restart. "No visibility for the short term as politics not economics is at the top of the agenda for now," the source said. The company spokesman was not immediately available for comment.

The country is a key gas supplier and security partner to Europe in a volatile region: Islamist militants are on the rise ALGIERS: Customers at a vegetables and fruits market in Algiers, Algeria. — Reuters

in West Africa and to the east, in Libya, two rival governments are fighting for control. The government has given no growth forecast for this year, but Algiers University economics professor Abderrahmane Aya said the turmoil will cost this year's GDP one percentage point of growth, which reached 2.3 percent in 2018, and could get much worse.

"No one can now imagine the magnitude of the economic problem," he said.

No strategy?

Bouteflika's fall came as authorities began trying to persuade citizens that a welfare state providing unproductive state jobs and guaranteeing cheap housing, petrol, food, drugs and free hospital treatment was no longer viable. Oil and gas provide 94 percent of export earnings and 60 percent of the budget, but earnings fell 6.3 percent to \$17.65 billion in Jan-June with rising energy consumption eating into gas exports.

Imports, averaging \$50 billion a year, provide most of Algeria's needs, legacy

of a reluctance to allow foreign investment due to its 1954-62 independence war with France and once strong ties with the Soviet Union. The trade deficit rose 12 percent in the first half of this year, customs data showed.

"Everything seems to indicate that we are going through a long period of economic uncertainty," Abdelhak Lamiri, a former government economic adviser, wrote in the El Watan newspaper. "The government is not empowered to take strategic decisions."

Houari Tigharsi, an economist and member of parliament's finance committee, said investors were apprehensive and non-energy domestic production capacity was down 50 percent. "If the crisis drags on, we will not only see a fall in growth but the economy will even face disaster," he said. Interim President Abdelkader Bensalah has resisted calls to quit from protesters who see him as symbol of the old regime. He says the only way out of the crisis is to hold elections "as soon as possible".—Reuters

Germany posts large public surplus amid budget debate

BERLIN: Germany yesterday announced a smaller but nonetheless substantial budget surplus for the first half of 2019, amid increasing calls for Berlin to spend more to stave off recession. The positive figure of 45.3 billion euros (\$50.3 billion) in public coffers is down from the same period last year, when it reached 51.8 billion euros, with a surplus of 62.4 billion euros for 2018 as a whole, federal statistics office Destatis said.

For the past five years, Europe's biggest economy has consistently posted public budget surpluses. The latest figure is 2.7 percent of gross domestic product, suggesting Chancellor Angela Merkel's government could untie the purse strings and boost sluggish growth. Destatis also confirmed that Germany's GDP declined by 0.1 percent in the second quarter while all signals point to further shrinking in the current quarter, spelling a technical recession. The German economy, which is highly dependent on exports, is vulnerable to global trading tensions, especially strife between Washington and Beijing, and uncertainty about Britain's exit from the European Union at the end of October. In seasonally adjusted figures, German exports fell by 1.3 percent from the previous quarter, while imports were down by 0.3 percent, Destatis said.

In annual comparison, exports contracted by 0.8 percent-the first time that has happened in six years.

'Black zero'

With rising fears of a global downturn, Merkel's government is facing increasing calls, both at home and abroad, to spend more on investments or approve tax cuts to support the economy. Before the G7 summit in Biarritz, French President Emmanuel Macron had mentioned Germany as among "countries that have the capacity" to stimulate the economy and suggested this was a "profound question" for Merkel to ponder.

Merkel also faces domestic calls to put an end to the dogma of balancing the federal budget, known as the 'Black Zero'. But with key regional elections looming this weekend and next month, it would be a gamble to ditch the policy, which is popular with voters. For now, Merkel is refusing to question the poli-



BERLIN: An S-Bahn commuter train making its way past the Humboldthafen basin close to the German capital's Hauptbahnhof main railway station. —AFP

cy, which in principle has been set in stone until 2021, despite favorable loan financing conditions and the need for investment in infrastructure. The chancellor, a champion of European budgetary discipline, has argued that Germany "cannot live sustainably beyond our means" and must be able to finance the state pensions for an ageing population. A force critic of that approach US

A fierce critic of that approach, US economist Paul Krugman recently again

criticized Germany's "ruinous obsession over public debt." Even if Berlin were to decide to dip into debt, its room for manoeuvre is limited because the country's constitution has a 'brake' which limits the annual deficit to 0.35 percent of GDP.

Commerzbank analysts have calculated that this would allow only limited firepower, a "fiscal stimulus in 2020 of only five billion euros". —AFP

Russian client sues Boeing to cancel 737 MAX order

MOSCOW: A Russian aircraft leasing company confirmed yesterday that it has filed the first US lawsuit to cancel an order for 35 Boeing 737 MAX jets. Avia Capital Services (ACS), a subsidiary of state-owned Russian conglomerate Rostec, confirmed to AFP a report of the lawsuit in the Financial Times, which said it was the first civil action brought by a customer against the US aerospace giant over the 737 MAX. The FT reported that ACS had filed the suit in Chicago claiming that Boeing had "intentionally" failed to disclose information about the airworthiness of the jet to its customers. It accuses Boeing of negligence in selling the "defective" aircraft. ACS is seeking \$115 million in compensatory damages, and several times that amount in punitive damages, the FT reported.

Rostec said it was ready to help mediate in the dispute. "Rostec and Boeing are solid partners, with a time-proven and stable relationship. The company is closely following the situation with Avia Capital Services and is ready to help the parties come to a compromise," Rostec executive director Oleg Yevtushenko said in a statement sent to AFP.

"We hope that the issues raised can be resolved through dialogue." —AFP



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Turkish Airlines adds Mexico City and Cancun to its flight network

Flights to these American cities to be operated three days a week



KUWAIT: Turkish Airlines, flying to more countries than any other airline, continues to enhance its flight network. Flag carrier has launched scheduled flights to Mexico City, the second biggest city of Latin America and capital of Mexico along with Cancun, one of the favorite holiday centers of Central America.

The flights to Mexico City and Cancun, the 18th and 19th destinations of Turkish Airlines in Americas, will be operated three days a week on Istanbul-Mexico City-Cancun route starting from August 21, 2019. With these flights, Turkish Airlines adds Mexico, the biggest country of Central America, to its flight network, thus offering a connectivity opportunity to a greater area from Istanbul Airport. During the press conference held in Mexico City International Airport for the Mexico City and Cancun inaugural flights, Turkish Airlines Chairman of the Board and the Executive Committee M. Ilker Ayci, said; "We continue to expand the borders of our flight network within the framework of our growth strategy. Following Bali, we are happy to be able to connect these two important cities of Americas to 125 countries around the world. From this day forth, our guests traveling to Mexico City and Cancun will be able to fly with the comfort of Turkish Airlines. We believe our new flights will strengthen the ties between Turkey and Mexico in every way."

Mexico City, crossroads of history and trade

Once homeland of Mayans and Aztecs, Mexico City carries the signs of the first civilizations of Americas dating back as far as 2000s BC. It is also a city of commerce as one of the important trade centers of Americas. Featuring over 150 museums, second only to Paris in terms of their sheer number, Mexico City's cultural heritage draws tourists from all over the globe.

Ancient city of Teotihuacan and its pyr-

amids are the other touristic options to discover near the Mexico City. The city manages to meet all expectations with its colonial architecture, tasty Mexican cuisine, beautiful squares and numerous fun activities.

Four million tourists choose Cancun every year

With fishing and agriculture as the main sources of income during the Mayan period, the city of Cancun boasted numerous important developments in astrology, physics and math and it is now one of the most important tourism centers of Central America. Contributing significantly to the economy of Mexico with its tourism income, the city hosts approximately 4 million tourists every year with its over 150 hotels. Apart from swimming, diving, and other fun activities, its history, cuisine and Underwater Museum makes it an ideal place for those who want an unforgettable holiday.



AUB congratulates

Agility invests \$18m in green supply chain technologies

portfolio of warehousing and light industrial facilities across the Middle East and Africa. Agility incorporates sustainability into business discussions with customers and offers emissions reports using a methodology certified to ISO 14064 standards. To drive green transformation across the industry, Agility Ventures has made green technologies one of its four core investment areas. Agility Chairwoman Henadi Al-Saleh said: "Green technology is a major focus of our investment strategy, and we're always on the lookout for dynamic new businesses that can revolutionize the supply chain to help protect the planet. We are looking at innovative solutions that drive business value by reducing costs, increasing efficiency, and reducing energy consumption at the same time." Green technology start-ups benefitting from the \$18 million investment include Hyliion and TVP Solar. Hyliion is a hybrid technology trucking industry that reduces fuel consumption and corresponding emissions by 30 percent. It achieves this by recycling kinetic energy from braking that would otherwise be wasted. TVP Solar is a break-through, high-vacuum solar thermal technology serving the most energy-demanding applications, such as air conditioning,



winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on the 25th of August 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al-Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period.

The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 as Saeed Mohd Al-Mutairi.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Adwan Abdullah Al-Mutari, Abbas Mohammed Al-Gallaf, Khalil Ali Abdulla, Abeer Sadeq Hajee, Alfahdah Abdulraheem Al-Zaabi, Talal Meshal Humoud, Abdulmajeed Zayed Al-Enezi, Tahani Hadran Jaber, Khaled S Al-Masoudi, Venkatraman Rajaraman, Yahia Obid Ali, Adel B Alomar, Ibrahim Noukhaza Abdulla Al-Bloushi, Abdulrahman Jalil Al-Dashty, Fahad Salem Al-Ajmi, Abdulla Ali Moh'd, Jasim Abdulla, Madan Mohamed Javid Mohamed, Denny Thampan And A Hasan Salman A Hasan.

On the occasion Ahli United Bank congratulate its winning customers, and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers. Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000. One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad

One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid ul-Fitr and Eid Al-Adha, when the winning customers will receive the Eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation.

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

It is worth mentioning that there is possibility to open the account online for non-customers and there is possibility to transfer the salary to Al-Hassad account. In addition Al-Hassad customers can issue an ATM immediately and have the freedom to deposit and withdraw any time. **BAAR, Switzerland:** Agility, a leading global logistics provider, announced that it has invested \$18 million in green supply chain technologies so far through its corporate venture arm Agility Ventures.

The announcement came yesterday as part of Agility's launch of its latest sustainability report, "Values into Action." It follows the news that Agility committed to adopt science-based targets for greenhouse gas emissions reduction and achieved third-party certification for its shipment emissions reporting.

Agility is pursuing an ambitious environmental strategy. By 2025, it plans to cut its emissions by 25 percent from 2016 levels. To reach that goal, the company is implementing renewable energy pilots in large facilities across the world and building to green standards as it adds over 300,000m2 of facilities to its

VIVA launches Samsung Galaxy Note10|10+ postpaid plans

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, launched the all-new Samsung Galaxy Note10|10+ with VIVA Postpaid plans starting at KD 29, available at VIVA's official website www.viva.com.kw, where you can enjoy free delivery, VIVA stores and on the VIVA App. The new line of premium smartphones combines elegant design with powerful performance and productivity tools to help users make the most of every moment.

Abdulrazzaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "VIVA will continue providing its customers with the latest world class devices and smart solutions that cater to their lifestyle and meet their aspirations." Galaxy Note10|10+ allows users to utilize state-of-the-art tools to capture stunning video and photosallowing their channels, stories and posts to stand out and make an impact. A new-and-improved version of the S Pen is also packed into the Galaxy Note10, building on the Bluetooth Low Energy-enabled S Pen capabilities with

Air Actions, allowing users to control certain aspects of the device using different gestures with the S Pen.

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

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

For the first time ever, the Galaxy Note comes in two sizes, so consumers can choose the device that's best for them. While the Galaxy Note10 packs a 6.3-inch display combining the power of the S Pen and ultimate productivity in a compact form factor, the Galaxy Note10+ features the biggest Note display ever with a 6.8-inch display on a device that's still easy to hold and use. Galaxy Note10 and 10+ is offered in Aura Glow, Aura White and Aura Black. desalination, and process heat. Already deployed in the Middle East - including in Agility's corporate headquarters -TVP solutions operate autonomously with no need for cleaning, directly replacing fossil fuels with cheaper, cleaner, solar heat.

Agility CEO Tarek Sultan said the company has strived to set high standards for corporate citizenship over the past decade, particularly in the areas of environmental responsibility, humanitarian relief logistics, and fair labor practices. "We've invested heavily in our human rights approach over the years and tried to lead by example, especially in emerging markets. Our community outreach program has helped more than 1.6 million people in need and we've supported the education of over 36,000 students around the world in the last three years. In partnership with the humanitarian community, Agility has donated logistics expertise and services to more than 45 major humanitarian operations in countries ranging from Indonesia to Peru. Agility's investments in the environment are the company's new frontier."

SAMSUNG

Get your new Samsung Galaxy Note10/10+

Enjoy 2 months FREE with VIVA Postpaid plans





Health & Science

African forest fires in spotlight after Amazon global outcry

Congo Basin absorb tons of carbon dioxide in trees and peat marshes

KINSHASA: In NASA satellite images, forest fires in central Africa appear to burn alarmingly like a red chain from Gabon to Angola similar to the blazes in Brazil's Amazon that sparked global outcry.

At the G7 summit this week, French President Emmanuel Macron tweeted about the central Africa fires and said nations were examining a similar initiative to the one proposed to combat Brazil's blazes.

G7 nations have pledged \$20 million on the Amazon, mainly on fire-fighting aircraft. Macron's concern may be legitimate, but experts say central Africa's rainforest fires are often more seasonal and linked to traditional seasonal farming methods.

No doubt the region is key for the climate: The Congo Basin forest is commonly referred to as the "second green lung" of the planet after the Amazon. The forests cover an area of 3.3 million square kilometres in several countries, including about a third in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the rest in Gabon, Congo, Cameroon and Central Africa.

Just like the Amazon, the forests of the Congo Basin absorb tons of carbon dioxide (CO2) in trees and peat marshes - seen by experts as a key way to combat climate change. They are also sanctuaries for endangered species.

But most of the fires shown on the NASA maps of Africa are outside sensitive rainforest areas, analysts say, and drawing comparisons to the Amazon is also complex. "The question now is to what extent we can compare," said Philippe Verbelen, a Greenpeace forest campaigner working on the Congo Basin.

"Fire is quite a regular thing in Africa. It's part of a

Humility, and other trends in health analytics

By Jeff Terry, CEO Healthcare Command Centers, GE Healthcare and Andy Day, Principal, Advanced Analytics, GE Healthcare

Our team at GE Healthcare uses analytics to help caregivers improve outcomes and efficiency. Our work includes retrospective analytics to assess performance and monitor KPIs, simulation analytics to align leaders with a strategy by testing alternative futures, and actionable analytics to support real-time decisions with predictive and prescriptive information. Here are some recent trends we observe:

1. Humility. We notice growing humility among healthcare leaders regarding the use of data and artificial intelligence (AI) to support real-time decisions. It's quite striking. A few years ago, the CIO, CTO or CMIO of many major institutions would hold forth about their big data strategy and growing army of data scientists. Vendors spoke of data lakes, AI platforms, and digital envelopes ... it was an international broken record of buzzwords and futures. If only we had all the world's data, then we'd find something to do with it. Fast forward to present day, and something is different. Much of that old drumbeat continues of course, but a contrarian cadence has risen to meet it. Leaders talk about moving from "PowerPoint to proof points." Consider recent head-lines:

cycle, people in the dry season set fire to bush rather than to dense, moist rainforest." Guillaume Lescuyer, a central African expert at the French agricultural research and development centre CIRAD, also said the fires seen in NASA images were mostly burning outside the rain forest.

Angola's government also urged caution, saying swift comparisons to the Amazon may lead to "misinformation of more reckless minds". The fires were usual at the end of the dry season, the Angolan ministry of environment said.

"It happens at this time of the year, in many parts of our country, and fires are caused by farmers with the land in its preparation phase, because of the proximity of the rainy season," it said.

Different risks

Though less publicised than the Amazon, the Congo Basin forests still face dangers. "The forest burns in Africa but not for the same causes," said Tosi Mpanu Mpanu, an ambassador and climate negotiator for the DR Congo.

"In the Amazon, the forest burns mainly because of drought and climate change, but in central Africa, it is mainly due to agricultural techniques." Many farmers use slash-and-burn farming to clear forest. In DR Congo, only nine percent of the population has access to electricity and many people use wood for cooking and energy.

DR Congo President Felix Tshisekedi has warned the rainforests are threatened if the country does not improve its hydro-electric capacity.

Deforestation is also a risk in Gabon and parts of the DR Congo, as well as damage from mining and oil projects. Some countries are now implementing stricter

and even eagerness to adopt them, has undoubtedly turned a corner. Ten years ago, our initial client presentations had to have an educational flavor. Today, many healthcare leaders understand the concepts and instead ask pointed questions about the scalability and durability of our technology.

Simulation analytics take many forms. Given the complexity of hospitals and health systems, not to mention the human factor of patient decision making, it's hard to argue that discrete-event simulation and agent-based modeling are the most appropriate tools for healthcare strategic planning. Growing awareness of these tools is one factor driving their use.

The other factor is increasing utilization of tertiary and quaternary facilities driven by consolidation, an aging population, and the relative infancy of population health efforts. We see this all over the world. Healthcare executives in the US, Canada, UK, France, Brazil, Mexico, Germany, Saudi Arabia, Australia and virtually everywhere else that we work face budgets that have grown more slowly than patient demand, not to mention patient expectations.

There are no easy answers but more and more healthcare leaders are using simulation analytics to test alternative investment strategies and, in the process, align divergent stakeholders to an agreed-upon path forward. The key is that there are many good ideas. The risk is to launch many small projects rather than the few crucial high-impact programs. The challenge is that each project affects the others. Simulation analytics are increasingly valued for their ability to measure the overlap, understand the potential ramifications, and align the team.



AMAZON: Brazilian farmer Helio Lombardo Do Santos is seen at a burnt area of the Amazon rainforest, near Porto Velho, Rondonia state, Brazil. Hundreds of new fires have flared up in the Amazon in Brazil, data showed Monday, even as military aircraft dumped water over hard-hit areas. — AFP

environmental policies. Gabon, for example, has declared 13 national parks that make up 11 percent of its national territory.

DR Congo has declared a moratorium on new industrial logging licences but that has not stopped artisanal cutting,

'Water women' quench thirst of central India's parched villages

JHANSI: Her face veiled, Kiran Aherwal shoveled gravel into a broad platter, placed it on her head, then stepped off to help construct a new check dam in her thirsty village in central India. Years of drought and water scarcity have often led her children to go hungry, she said - but she aims to change that. As more rivers, reservoirs and wells go dry across Bundelkhand - a parched region of 20 million - Aherwal has joined about 600 "Jal Sahelis", or water women friends, to try to fix the region's perennial water woes.

The women - up to three in each of more than 200 villages - galvanise their communities to harvest rainwater, dig wells, de-silt ponds, build check dams and repair hand pumps. The women say their efforts have resulted in better irrigation, healthier crop harvests, increased drinking water and most importantly, fewer long walks to fetch water. "During summers, we have to get water from about 5 kilometres (3 miles) away. When there isn't enough water, I can't even make food on time or feed my children," said Aherwal, 28, who became a Jal Saheli in her village of Agroutha in April. "This will help solve our water problem. Our village will be able to drink water. We will get to irrigate our crops again." In earlier times, Bundelkhand, blighted by 13 episodes of drought in the last two decades, received 52 days of rainfall a year. But the number of days has more than halved since 2014, according to Skymet Weather, a private weather forecasting agency. That has led to repeated and widespread crop failures in a region that is dependent on agriculture, prompting a growing tide of farmers to migrate to nearby cities.

which industrial loggers can exploit. "We need to protect the forests that are still largely intact and stop degradation," said Greenpeace's Verbelen. "The forests that are still intact remain an important buffer for future climate change." — AFP

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That can involve creating a water conservation plan for their village, participating in local council talks, meeting government officials, and learning how to use tools to fix wells and hand pumps - a chore traditionally done by men.

Sanjay Singh, the secretary of Parmarth Samaj Sevi Sangathan, a grassroots charity behind the Jal Saheli programme, said the women were now more involved in household and village decisions, leading to effective change in some places. "The index of happiness has increased (in the region)," Singh told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Bindrawan Lodi, a 60-year-old farmer, agreed. He said without the Sahelis' push to revive their community pond, his Chaukheda village would have been in "a lot of trouble".

"This place was bone dry. Now we have enough water to irrigate our crops. Drinking water is still a struggle ... but this is a start," he said.

Migration

Bundelkhand, once a region green with dense forests and fields, is increasingly barren with little ground water. The area's rocky terrain largely stops rainwater from percolating into aquifers, Singh said. Loss of forests also has hit rainfall, and water reservoirs have sometimes been used wastefully, residents say. Although civil society and government agencies have ramped up water conservation efforts, Singh warned much more needed to be done before the "dangerous" effects of climate change exacerbate problems of unemployment, malnutrition and migration. Two in five people in rural Bundelkhand have become urban migrants over the last decade, according to estimates by activists from the Bundelkhand Water Forum, a coalition of local organisations. Singh said more private investment, bigger government budgets, work restoring trees and other greenery and climate adaptation techniques such as growing less water-intensive crops could help stem the exodus. That is one of the reasons, the Sahelis say, they work so hard. They want to ensure their children can stay put and their daughters or daughters-in-law can live a life free of water worries. "We see ads on TV that show water flowing from taps, from showers and think 'Wow, we should move to the city'. But that is a false dream, at least for people like us who have no money. So it is better to make changes here," said Aherwal. "Our village will become beautiful in the next five years. All you will see is water everywhere." — Reuters

- "How to Cut Through the Artificial Intelligence Hype" -Tech Emergence
- "Fake Artificial Intelligence vs. the Real Thing" Enterprise Tech
- "Artificial Intelligence in business: Separating the real from the hype." McKinsey and Company

You see it up close with healthcare leaders too. I had the honor last month to facilitate a panel with three CIOs from major health systems in New York City, each a great leader from a great institution. What struck me most was their humility. They see the potential of predictive analytics and AI, but they were also upfront about the relatively small steps their teams have made so far. "Very basic" use of machine learning to route ambulances. Tracking refrigerator temperatures. Recognition that even though all sites may be on a single EMR instance, it still takes rework to implement an analytic at two sites in the same system. And so on...

We see this humility all over the world. A new appreciation that while health data is "small" compared to telecom and retail, its complexity dwarfs all other domains combined. In other words, a new appreciation of the chasm from imag-



ining to actually implementing a real-time health analytic. And it's into that chasm that healthcare analytics leaders must dive.

For us, this is the most positive trend of all. As unrealistic optimism fades, data scientists, data translators, change leaders, and clinicians are getting down to the intensely difficult work of solving problems with real-time data in service of caregivers, patients and families. Humility. That's good news.

2. Scenario Planning with Simulation Analytics. We notice accelerating adoption of digital twins and other simulation analytics to test alternative futures and eventually align leaders with a strategic plan. Using simulation analytics to test alternative surgical block schedules, bed complements, bed algorithms, winter-surge strategies, and unit-level staffing plans is not exactly new. Our team has been doing this work for more than ten years. But acceptance of these methods,

3. Analytics Career Paths. We notice growing appreciation of a simple fact: "data scientist" must be a career and not just a job. To be viable, an analytics capability must offer employees a long-term career path. This seems so obvious, and yet organizations have spent years and large sums to learn it. "We have a team of twenty data scientists," or "we hired an amazing data scientist with [amazing clinical and data science credentials]" just isn't enough. Imagining, building, validating, deploying, refining, supporting and expanding real-time decision support analytics is not a year's work. It's decades of work.

In recent discussions with CIOs and CMIOs there is a growing appreciation of this reality. In short, an appreciation that the capability they seek requires career paths to attract, retain and grow great employees in stable roles over decades so those employees can invest in their lives and families.

The good news is that the macro-trend towards fewer larger systems makes such career paths possible in more and more large health systems. Even so, much work remains to craft those career paths, compensation structures, etc. By the same token, we work with leaders of smaller institutions who have spotted this trend and choose to outsource their analytics capability.

4. Problem-Back Machine Learning. We notice that while machine learning (ML) is the most accessible rung on the AI ladder, the technology alone is insufficient. Fully harnessing the power of ML to predict census and bottlenecks requires three competencies: technology, nuanced local knowledge of healthcare delivery, and a data translator to bridge the two. As with humility, there seems to be a growing appreciation that it is the combination of these competencies that is essential to impact care delivery. Together, staff can work "problem-back" to first pinpoint the problem, then the desired response and finally the analytic that will trigger it.

5. Early Warning Explosion. We notice a proliferation of early warning algorithms to predict inpatient deterioration. There's HEWS, MEWS, CEWS, TEWS, PEWS and fifty more. This trend is related to the democratization of machine learning of course. It also demonstrates a wonderful aspect of modern patient care: the data exists in the EMR and patientmonitoring equipment to identify with some measure of accuracy those patients who are likely to have problems tomorrow. A remarkable reality.

That's the good news: it is increasingly possible to anticipate patients who will decline. It's not yet routine, but no longer science fiction either. The harder part is putting this into practice. Why might that patient deteriorate? Who should see that information? What to do? Answering these questions is the work ahead and many great caregivers are sorting them out. We're trying to help through our command center work. The challenge is to incorporate new methods into an acute care setting that is already strained, already delivering great patient care, and (sometimes rightly) resistant to change.

It's a wonderful time for analytics in healthcare and always an honor to serve caregivers.

Woman's job

Women and children often bear the brunt of water shortages - from domestic violence as tensions rise in water-short homes to missed school days and child marriage, according to local water conservation experts.

In rural India, collecting water is primarily a woman's job. It is common to find veiled women, carrying up to four pots – some balanced on their heads – walking miles with their children to fetch water several times a day.

With their vision obstructed, there are times they trip and drop their pots, forcing them to go back for refills. "We used to get so tired fetching water," said Tara, a Saheli in Manpur village who goes by one name.

"Sometimes we would say 'Ok, we didn't wash our clothes today, we will do it tomorrow' or 'I didn't bathe today, maybe tomorrow'. That's how bad it was," she said.

But things have changed since 2016 after Tara and two other Sahelis talked about the need for water conservation in their village and gathered dozens of people to revive their community pond and wells, and install new hand pumps.

Now washing dishes, cooking, mopping, doing the laundry, bathing, farming and taking care of livestock have become much easier, said Geeta, another Saheli who goes by one name. "If there is water, we have everything and if there is no water, we have nothing," she said, gesturing to Manpur's brimming pond where buffaloes wallowed to beat the heat.

Rural Indian women make good managers and protectors of natural resources, said Reetu Sogani, a researcher on traditional knowledge, gender and climate change. "Because they interact so closely with their natural surroundings and they know what kind of problems they face in day-to-day life ... they come up with solutions and adaptation mechanisms based on their knowledge," she said.

'Index of happiness'

For many women, it hasn't been easy to become Jal Sahelis in a male-dominated, conservative region, where age-old customs dictate a woman's life.

"My husband got upset and asked 'Why are you going out?', 'Where are you roaming around?' ... 'You aren't even getting paid, what is the point?'," said Aherwal, who makes up to 6,000 rupees (\$84) a month rolling traditional cigarettes at home. "I endured all his anger, his scoldings to join this group." Several Sahelis said their husbands and in-laws eased up after noticing the water situation was improving – and the women weren't cutting corners at home.

After their chores and work at home, most women can carve out only two hours a day for their Saheli work, they said.

Venezuela nurses turn to side jobs to survive economic crisis

CARACAS: Edgar Fernandez keeps a mariachi suit in a rusty wardrobe at the public hospital in Caracas where he works as a nurse, donning it for performances that augment his meager salary.

Given that he earns just \$10 a month, the money from these shows has been his salvation in crisiswracked Venezuela, where nurses have been forced to reinvent themselves as home entrepreneurs, security guards or builders just to survive. Being a nurse in Venezuela is an almost impossible job these days: the country has seen an exodus of the profession, leaving those who remain short of colleagues and contending with problems such as major shortages of medical supplies and devastating electricity blackouts.

"A nurse's salary is worth nothing," Fernandez told AFP, saying the money he earns from a 12-hour shift "can't buy anything." When a show clashes with his work shift, he has to pay a colleague to cover for him, meaning that his earnings — which are not always money — shrink. "Sometimes they pay me... with flour, lentils... I prefer this to going home empty handed," said the 40-year-old, who practically lives in the Perez Carreno hospital, sleeping on a dirty mattress since he cannot afford rent.

Decked out in his silver-lined outfit, Fernandez sings in bars and homes, and is even sometimes hired by former patients. He saved up to record an album, which he peddles to radio stations. His hope is to one day find fame.—AFP





Spacecraft carrying Russia's first humanoid robot docks at ISS

MOSCOW: It was second time lucky vesterday as an ing shortly after lift-off — the first failure in the history unmanned spacecraft carrying Russia's first humanoid robot into orbit docked at the International Space Station following a failed attempt over the weekend.

"Sorry for the delay. Got stuck in traffic. Am ready to carry on with work," the robot's Twitter account said in a jokey first tweet from space. Copying human movements and designed to help with high-risk tasks, the lifesize robot named Fedor is due to stay on the ISS until September 7.

The robot sat in the commander's seat of an unmanned Soyuz spaceship that blasted off Thursday from a Russian spaceport in southern Kazakhstan. "Let's go. Let's go," the robot was heard saying during the launch, repeating the phrase used by the first man in space Yuri Gagarin.

Soyuz capsules are normally manned on such trips, but this time no humans were travelling in order to test a new emergency rescue system. The ship was carrying scientific and medical equipment and components for the space station's life-support system, as well as food, medicines and personal hygiene products for crew members, Russia's Roscosmos space agency said.

After the successful docking at the second attempt, a NASA TV commentator praised the vessel's "flawless approach to the ISS". "Second time was a charm... the crew is up to seven," he said, referring to the six astronauts aboard the space station.

An aborted attempt to dock on Saturday had increased uncertainty over the future of Russia's space programme, which has suffered a number of recent setbacks. Last October a Soyuz rocket carrying an American and a Russian had to make an emergency land-

of manned Russian flights.

On Saturday, NASA had said the Soyuz craft was "unable to lock onto its target at the station". Russian flight controllers had told the ISS crew it appeared the problem that prevented automated docking was in the station and not the Soyuz spacecraft, NASA added.

Fedor — short for Final Experimental Demonstration Object Research — can be operated manually by ISS astronauts wearing robotic exoskeleton suits and it mirrors their movements.

Robots like Fedor will eventually carry out dangerous operations such as space walks, according to the Russian space agency.

Its head Dmitry Rogozin told Interfax news agency that the next stage for Fedor could be further tests on Russia's new manned transport ship under development, the Federatsiya, or a spacewalk to work on the outside of the ISS. "That's what he's being created for. We don't really need him inside the station," Rogozin said. Fedor is not the first robot to go into space. In 2011, NASA sent up Robonaut 2, a humanoid developed with General Motors that had a similar aim of working in high-risk environments.

It was flown back to Earth in 2018 after experiencing technical problems. In 2013, Japan sent up a small robot called Kirobo along with the ISS's first Japanese space commander. Developed with Toyota, it was able to hold conversations — albeit only in Japanese.

The International Space Station has been orbiting Earth at about 28,000 kilometres per hour (17,000 miles per hour) since 1998. — AFP



MOSCOW: A combination of file photographs shows (L) a handout provided by NASA on March 13, 2012 showing an image of the Robonaut 2 humanoid robot during a system checkout in the Destiny laboratory of the International Space Station (ISS), (top R) a handout picture taken on July 26, 2019 and released by the official website of the Russian State Space Corporation ROSCOSMOS on August 21, 2019 showing the Russian humanoid robot Skybot F-850, Fedor, being tested ahead of its flight on board Soyuz MS-14 spacecraft at the Balkonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan, and (down R) a handout picture received from KIBO ROBOT PROJECT on November 6, 2013 showing a humanoid robot Kirobo. — AFP













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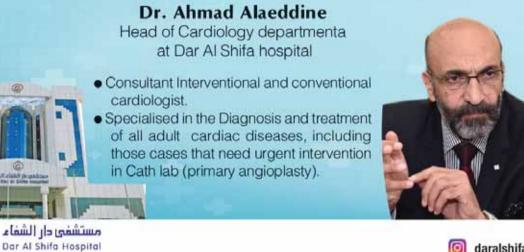
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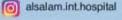
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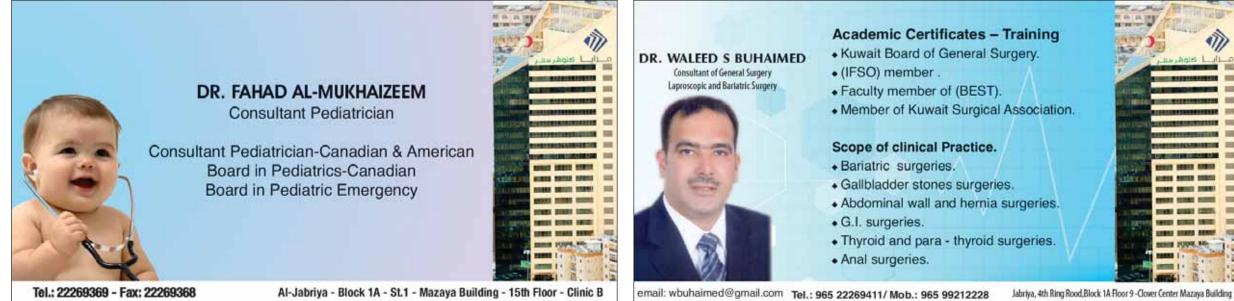
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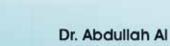
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 Treatment of snoring. Treatment of vertigo. Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment



- plications)
- VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)

♦ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy ♦ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery







Stars

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28	29	30		31	32				33		\top	\top		34	35
36	\top	\top		\top	1			37		\top		38	39		\top
40	\top	\top	1	\top	\uparrow			41	\top	\top	42		43	\top	\top
44	\top	\top			45		46				47	48			1
49	\top	\top	50	51			52	53		54		55	\top	\top	\top
56	\top		57	\top	58	59		60	\top	\top	61			\top	1
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64	65		1	\top	+	+	66			67	\top	\top	68	69	70
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80	+	\vdash		81	+	+	+	\top	+	\top	+		82		+

ACROSS

- 1. The compass point that is one point west of due south.
- 4. Headlight that provides strong beam for use in foggy weather.
- 11. An account describing incidents or events. 15. An actor's line that immediately precedes and serves as a reminder for some action or speech.
- 16. Relating to or like or divided into areolae. 17. Roman poet remembered for his elegiac
- verses on love (43 BC AD 17). 18. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- 19. United States composer (born in Italy) of operas (born in 1911).
- 20. Water chestnut whose spiny fruit has two rather than 4 prongs.
- 21. 3rd largest island in the world.
- 23. The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
- 24. Relating to the Lamaze method of childbirth.
- 27. (Norse mythology) Ruler of the Aesir. 28. Any customary and rightful perquisite
- appropriate to your station in life. 36. Being or affecting only a part.
- 38. A fee charged for exchanging currencies.
- 40. (medieval legends) The bride of King Mark of Cornwall who fell in love with the king's nephew (Tristan) after they mistakenly drank a love potion that left them eternally in love with each other.
- 41. United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
- 43. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked). 44. (computer science) A coding system that
- incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
- 45. A federal agency established to coordi-

STAR TRACK



Your mind is very sharp today; take care to think through your response to others. You may be impatient and eager for new experiences. Work, achievement and completing unfinished tasks take center stage most of this day. You have a need for psychological security and absolute truth in all matters. This cuts through most chitchat and settles on matters of substance. Ideas and thoughts have greater meaning and form just now. At home, you want communication. Perhaps this concerns that energetic relative that wants to join you in your business. This evening would be a good time to become involved in clear communications.

Taurus (April 20-May 20)

The minute you walk into your office this morning, you are most likely to be catapulted into schedules and meetings and potential problems that may be a little more frustrating than usual . . . But you love it. You organize and ask a few questions and take control with little difficulty. The good life and all that is fine and luxurious may be what you value just now. Your ability to control the day is one step closer to where you want to be. You enjoy finding solutions to whatever problems you find. Moving forward is the big issue of the day. You do not play favorites and are quite impersonal when it comes to your responsibilities.

Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A high pressure but very lucky day is ahead of you now. You could make a few changes with your routine and find that you have a whole different job title. This will probably be temporary but will help you to show off your skills. An instance of being able to speak up and pitch in and help when others will not help is commendable and higher-ups are impressed. Good advice from a guide or older person is available if you need it today. You are just plain witty when it comes to a group discussion this afternoon-ideas roll off your tongue. Communicating by phone, by letter or in person is an important ingredient for the afternoon. A sense of support for whatever plans you may have this evening makes this a happy time.

ward where career and success are concerned. Stay away from sensitive communication with loved ones until after the sun goes down-there are disturbing energies floating around this afternoon. You may find that someone close to you understands and is supportive of your point of view. Communication with others is important so do not close yourself off from receiving the input that casual conversation with friends and loved ones

Leo (July 23-August 22)

You might like to ignore responsibilities and do some socializing this day but realities demand that you tend to business. After the workday is over you may find yourself in fun conversations with friends. You may discover that you are more intuitive now than in the past. You may sense and feel things that others do not. It is not a time when you are at your most practical but you are quite passionate and love the company of friends as well as family. Everything works together to bring out your unique and unusual qualities. You may find that someone close to you understands you and is supportive of your new positive self.

Virgo (August 23-September 22)

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Your income is accented. Someone that has not supported your ideas before today may come around to your way of thinking. You can expect a sense of support and goodwill from those around you. You have a need to be respected, and there are opportunities to create that respect today. You may be helping a group of people become organized. Perhaps this is a citizen's group that gathers information for publishing. You are able to pull in some extra money at this time. Perhaps you have a part-time job or perhaps you have found a way to apply your skillful ways and gain a paycheck at the same time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You are very focused on your career and your finances lately and that is a good thing. You are proud of the progress you are making. Events at work may make it easy for you to be original, have breakthroughs and find new solutions to old problems. You could discover yourself through creativity and self-expression. A more outgoing manner may be enjoyed now. You demonstrate your ideas and put them into practice. Your analytical powers are superb and you enjoy finding new avenues of inner growth. You and a romantic partner grow closer now. You may sense correctly that you can open up and share your deepest feelings-the feeling is mutual. New and unusual ways of appreciating and loving may be possible now.



You are up early this morning-ready to conquer the world. High hopes are great, but applied effort is the key to success now. This is a great time to work with others. You may be sought after as the right person for a particular job. Gossip is disturbing this afternoon and you try your best to stay away from those that gossip. You may have to say a few words. Everything works together to show you at your most elegant, particularly in a social situation this evening. You have a grasp for abstract and spiritual ideas and you are able to communicate your views very well. Close relationships offer a lot of potential for growth at this time.

Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You have a lot on your mind this morning but may feel a strong need to communicate and gather ideas in order to gain a focus. Good practical jobrelated thoughts and ideas are available and as a result you will find business matters fall into place very well. A great deal of mental activity and energy has begun now. You have the ability to communicate with superiors or describe what you see; higher-ups will listen. Co-workers may even describe you as the go-between. This may be the perfect opportunity to visit a nearby park and if the weather is good, a bit of exercise with a loved one or friend may be just what is needed this afternoon.

Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

A period of great mental activity begins now. Opportunities flourish and you may find yourself wanting to do almost everything. Take the time to weigh the pros and cons carefully when it comes to changing jobs just now. If you move too quickly, you may find yourself in a job that runs against your best talents and abilities. Do not sell yourself short. A little errand in your neighborhood this afternoon begins to feel like an adventure. Complications happen when we are not paying attention to the details. This may include activities such as stepping into a volunteer program without finding out the requirements or substituting at a part-time job without negotiating the working hours.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

A friend or loved one may tend to put the damper on what you say or think, or in some way manage to restrict your ability to communicate. You may have thoughts that differ with someone close to you. Communication in the business world, however, seems to go your way. Positive things are happening and your career depends on your own ambition and drive, which are strong now. You are able to use good common sense, feel the trends and make the right moves. This is a time to get ahead by taking action.



There may be obstacles in your path today but if you keep your eyes open you will have very little problem navigating through the day. It pays in the long run to be patient with others. Extra work will bring extra money and that is the good news for this day. You become more direct, less interested in frills and more able to cut through to the real business at hand. Your ability to be and act on the spot is strengthened-much intensity. This afternoon you may be shopping for special items around your living area. You may even want to purchase a little paint or other items for some repair jobs you may have previously postponed. A healing between family members is possible this evening. An honest and kindly conversation clears the air.

Cancer (June 21-July 22)

This is a great time, when good fortune and plain old luck surround you. It is certainly not a time to stay home-you are in a work mode and in the mood to accomplish much. It is easy for you to make correct decisions, find the right path and move forcan bring. Steer clear of the sensitive subjects for now.

- nate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
- 47. The mission in San Antonio where in 1836 Mexican forces under Santa Anna besieged and massacred American rebels who were fighting to make Texas independent of Mexico.
- 49. A deep opening in the earth's surface.
- 52. Prolific Spanish playwright (1562-1635).
- 55. Type genus of the Anatidae.
- 56. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- 57. Young of domestic cattle.
- 60. A person whose head is bald.
- 63. A rechargeable battery with a nickel cathode and a cadmium anode.
- 64. An extraordinary writ commanding an official to perform a ministerial act that the law recognizes as an absolute duty and not a matter for the official's discretion.
- 67. A kind of heavy jacket ('windcheater' is a British term). 71. A religious belief of African origin involv-
- ing witchcraft and sorcery. 72.100 dirhams equal 1 riyal.
- 75. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of
- the Old World.
- 76. The basic unit of money in Romania.
- 77. Direct opposite.
- 79. A negative.
- 80. Any of various trees of the genus Ulmus.
- 81. A great raja.
- 82. A branch of the Tai languages.

Guinea 42. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith

37. A soft silvery metallic element of the

crossing. 46. The eleventh month of the civil year.

DOWN

1. Someone who works (or provides work-

2. A lymph node that is inflamed and swollen

because of plague or gonorrhea or

4. The state or quality of being widely hon-

Chocolate cookie with white cream filling.

6. (British) Informal term for information. 7. The dried fibrous part of the fruit of a plant of the genus Luffa.

8. The table in Christian churches where

10. Antacid (trade name Prilosec) that sup-

presses acid secretion in the stomach.

12. (zoology) Pertaining to or characteristic of

13. City in northern Austria on the Danube.

14. At or constituting a border or edge.

22. A name under which Ninkhursag was

26. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity

31. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning. 32. A door-like movable barrier in a fence or

29. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.

30. Any of several tall tropical palms native to

33. The slender spear of the Bantu-speaking

34. (Akkadian) Mother of the gods and con-

southeastern Asia having egg-shaped

equal to 10 decibels.

people of Africa.

35. (botany) Bearing a coma.

alkali earth group.

sort of Apsu.

25. Hormone secreted by the posterior pitu-

itary gland (trade name Pitressin) and

also by nerve endings in the hypothala-

3. Impairment resulting from long use.

ers) during a strike.

ored and acclaimed.

communion is given.

9. Not reflecting light.

worshipped.

11.1 species

birds.

mus.

nuts.

wall.

tuberculosis

48. A dog small and tame enough to be held in the lap.

A republic in West Africa on the Gulf of

- 50. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
- 51. Covered with paving material.
- 53. The compass point that is one point north of due east.
- 54. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- 58. A thin plate or layer (especially of bone or mineral).
- 59. Coming next after the third and just before the fifth in position or time or degree or magnitude.
- 61. Fairly small terrestrial ferns of tropical America.
- 62. Mosses similar to those of genus Bryum but larger.
- 65. Norwegian mathematician (1802-1829). 66. One of the two main branches of orthodox Islam.
- 68. A loud bombastic declamation expressed with strong emotion.
- 69. A woman hired to suckle a child of someone else.
- 70. Knock unconscious or senseless.
- 73. The month following March and preceding May
- 74. Extinct flightless bird of New Zealand.
- 78. A person who announces and plays popular recorded music

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Yesterday's Solution

Wordsearch Puzzle

Christmas Tree

Find and circle all of the Christmas Tree words that are hidden in the grid.

The remaining 53 letters spell a secret message.

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GREEN

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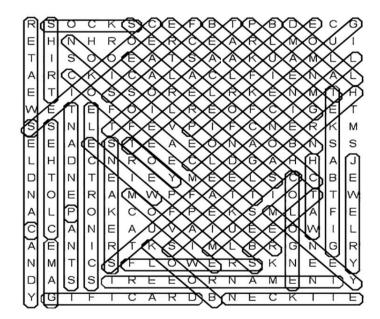
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Yesterday's Solution

Christmas Gift Ideas



BAKING	COOKIES	MOVIE	SNEAKERS
BELT	DOLL	MUSIC	SOCKS
BOOK	EARRINGS	NECKLACE	STUFFED ANIMAL
BRACELET	ELECTRONICS	NECKTIE	SWEATER
CANDLES	FLOWERS	PANTS	TELEVISION
CANDY	GAME	PENDANT	TOOL SET
CHOCOLATES	GIFT BASKET	PERFUME	TOY
CLOTHES	GIFT CARD	PLANT	TREE ORNAMENT
COFFEE MAKER	HERBAL TEAS	SCARF	WATCH
COFFEE MUG	JEWELRY	SHIRT	WINE
COLOGNE	MONEY	SLIPPERS	

Yesterday's Solution

		_			_			_
9	6	5	8	4	1	7	2	3
7	2	8	5	9	3	4	6	1
4	3	1	2	7	6	8	9	5
1	5	6	7	8	4	9	3	2
2	7	9	3	6	5	1	8	4
8	4	3	1	2	9	6	5	7
5	1	7	6	3	8	2	4	9
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6	9	2	4	5	7	3	1	8

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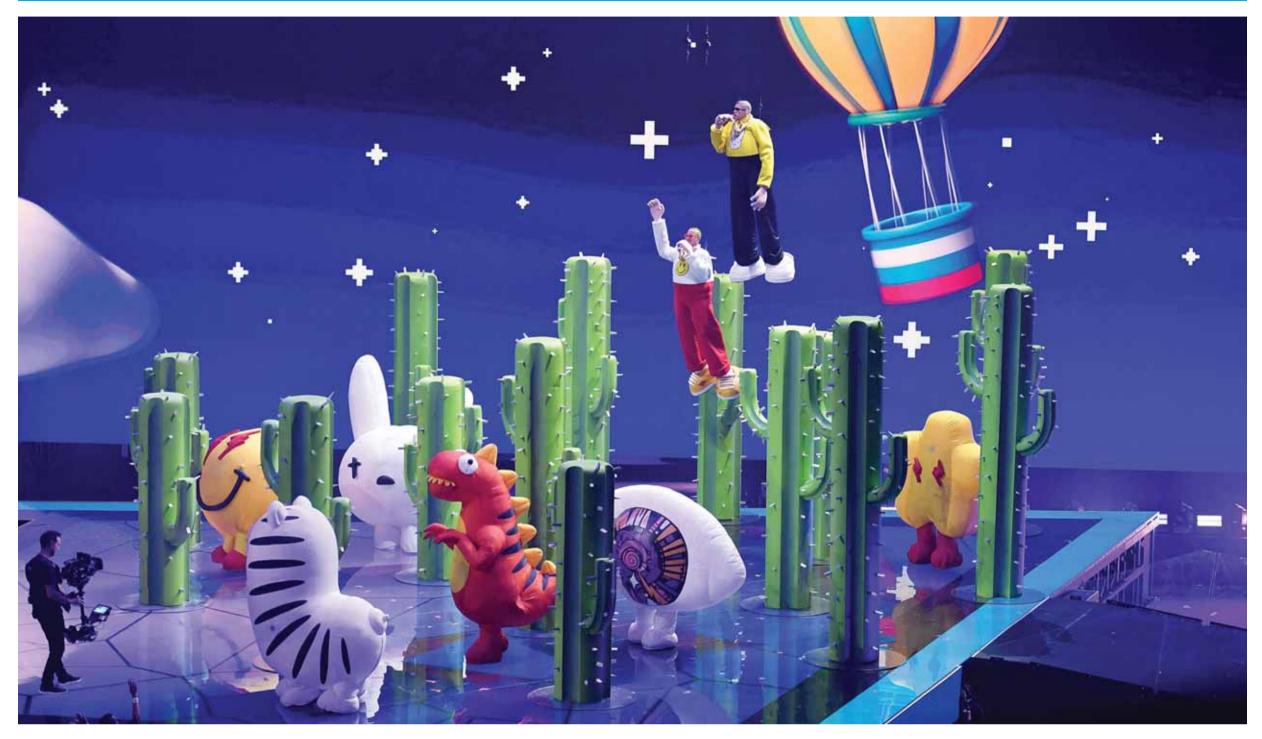
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Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2019



Colombian musician J Balvin (left) and Puerto Rican singer Bad Bunny perform on stage during 2019 MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey on Monday. — AFP

Lovers of Tuscany's 'paradise' beach have factory to thank

olidaymakers splash in the turquoise waters of the Rosignano Solvay beach in Tuscany and laze on its pristine white sands-most of them fully aware that the picture-perfect swimming spot owes its allure to a nearby factory. "I discovered it on Google Maps," said Dutch tourist Lieuya, who travelled to the beach with his family to enjoy a setting more reminiscent of the Caribbean than of northern Italy. "I was told it's not dangerous, that the color comes from the soda factory next door," he told AFP.

Questions have lingered for decades over why the sea and sand are such startling colors-with some environmentalists suggesting the phenomenon is caused by heavy metals emitted by the plant. The beach, about four kilometers (two-and-a-half miles) long, is named after the Solvay factory, which produces soda ash for making glass as well as sodium bicarbonate, or baking soda. The plant strenuously denies polluting the surrounding coastline.

Tourists taking a dip or settling down in beach chairs for a light pasta lunch are not worried about the striking contrast between the waters off Rosignano Solvay and those of the nearby Monte alla Rena beach. "Every time I come here, I think that if swimming is allowed by local, regional and national authorities, we can believe them when they say that the water is clean," says Italian teacher Marina, who declined to give her last name.

A notice from the regional environmental protection



A sand snail stands as tourists sunbathe on the "Spiagge Bianche" (white sand) beach in Rosignano Solvay.

agency Arpat at the beach entrance says the water quality is "excellent". Swimming is banned along a small stretch of the beach, but that is because of a strong current in the area. The plant, some 25 kilometers south of the port city Livorno, opened at the start of the last century and a new town-Rosignano Solvay-sprang up to house workers and their families. Today, the global chemical giant operates in 61 countries and boasts some 24,500 employees.



A girl holds a cherry inflatable mattress as she walks on the "Spiagge Bianche" (white sand) beach.

Reflection of the sky

"Solvay was like a mother to this area of Tuscany. We called it 'mamma'," Leonardo Martinelli, a journalist born in the town and whose mother worked at Solvay for half a century, told AFP. Belgian industrialist Ernest Solvay, the plant's founder, "guaranteed well-being by opening a school, a hospital and a theatre," he said. The factory has ensured "the unemployment rate has always been low," he added. The group's industrial director Davide Papavero told AFP the company "respects all the rules of a high-risk site". "The plant... only discharges powdery deposits of limestone, a harmless substance that is safe for the environment, but explains the white color of the sand," he said. The startling blue of the water is caused by the reflection of the sky against the white sea floor, Papavero added. Local mayor Daniele Donati also insists the plant's activities "do not pose any health problems".

But Maurizio Marchi, from Italy's Medicina Democratica health association, says the plant is a blight. "The reality is that for a century, this place has been a Solvay landfill, an industrial landfill," he insists.

Environmentalists have also deplored the gutting of limestone hills near San Vincenzo and mass extraction of rock salt. Manolo Morandini, a journalist with local daily Il Tirreno who has written extensively on the subject, says Marchi's concerns would once have been valid, but no longer. "In the 1980s it was indeed a toxic beach. But the production cycle that used mercury and heavy metals has been changed," he said. He says the famous white beach is nothing more than an "artificial" construct-one which nonetheless offers holidaymakers a slice of paradise. — AFP







A general view from the Mayor's office of The Solvay chemical plant in A man surfs as a ship sails next to the "Spiagge Bianche" (white sand) beach. Rosignano Solvay.

Tourists swim in the waters off the "Spiagge Bianche" (white sand) beach, in Rosignano Solvay, a town in Italy's central Tuscany region. — AFP photos

Renovation halts 'caterpillar' rides at France's Pompidou museum

rt and architecture fans hoping to experience the glass-enclosed escalators hugging the facade of the Pompidou Centre in Paris will have to wait until next year, as extensive renovation work is carried out on the groundbreaking four-decade-old structure. The museum said Tuesday that the "caterpillar" escalator as well as the sloping stone plaza in front of the iconic structure were closed to the public Tuesday for work expected to last until September 2020. As a result, the centre's three million annual visitors will have to use an entrance around back, usually reserved for the vast public library that forms part of the inside-out complex.

While a hit with visitors, the escalator can get unbearably hot under the summer sun, whose rays have taken their toll on the corridors since the Pompidou opened in 1977. The glass panels in particular, which offer pristine views of the heart of Paris, will be replaced to offer better insulation. The main entry underneath will also be enlarged and equipped with revolving doors, the museum said. Designed by star architects Renzo Piano and Richard Rogers, the building's radical design pushes almost all its structural and mechanical elements to the exterior, freeing up vast exhibition spaces.

On full display outside is a maze of blue air-conditioning conduits, green water pipes, yellow electrical casings and red elevators. The escalator closures come as the Pompidou is preparing for one of this year's major shows in Paris, a retrospective devoted to Francis Bacon. Because of the expected crowds, tickets will be available only by reservation-a system recently implemented by the Louvre as well to cope with a huge influx of visitors. — AFP





Lifestyle Awards

Wednesday, August 28, 2019



US singer-songwriter Taylor Swift performs on stage during 2019 MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP photos



Gigi Hadid, Taylor Swift, Halsey, Bella Hadid and Todrick Hall pose during the 2019 MTV Video **Music Awards.**



US rapper Lil Nas X poses with the Song of the Year Award in the press room during the 2019 **MTV Video Music Awards.**

Swift, Cardi B and Missy Elliott bring girl power to Video Music Awards show



ylor Swift won video of the year and Ariana Grande was voted artist of the year in a girl-powered MTV Video Music Awards (VMA) show on Monday, while rapper Cardi B won best hip-hop video and newcomer Lizzo celebrated large women. Alternative pop singer Billie Eilish, 17, beat Lizzo to be named both best new artist and best breakthrough or

PUSH artist in the fan-voted awards show. Another newcomer, Lil Nas X, took home the song of the year award for "Old Town Road," his country rap collaboration with Billy Ray Cyrus that ruled for a record 19 consecutive weeks at the top of the Billboard singles chart. Swift and Grande went into the ceremony in Newark, New Jersey, with a leading 10 nominations each. With Grande on tour in Europe and absent from Monday's show, Swift provided the opening act with a rainbow-themed performance of her pro-LGBTQ single "You Need to Calm Down" from her new, and already best-selling, album "Lover." Accepting the video of the year award, Swift said that since the VMAs are chosen by fans, "It means that you want a world where we are all treated equally under the law." "You Need to Calm Down" also brought the country-turned-pop singer the "video for good" statuette for songs that have raised awareness. Cardi B beat out a male-dominated lineup to win best hip-hop video for "Money," and ended a delighted acceptance speech saying: "Thank you, Jesus." The outspoken rapper was also on hand to present Missy Elliott with this year's Vanguard Award for career achievement, calling her "a champion for women who want to be doing their own thing." Best new artist contender Lizzo, enjoying a breakout year, performed her hits "Truth Hurts" and "Good as Hell" in a yellow sequined bodysuit, accompanied by plus-size dancers, in a message for body positivity. Mendes and Camila Cabello stoked reports that they are dating with a steamy live version of their romantic duet "Senorita," which reached No. 1 this week on the Billboard singles charts. The duet won the statuette for best collaboration.







US singer-songwriter Billy Ray Cyrus speaks on stage.

Canadian singer-songwriter Shawn Mendes

Korean boy band BTS won for best K-Pop and best group, while the recently reunited Jonas Brothers, won best pop song for "Sucker" and paid tribute to their New Jersey roots with a performance from Asbury Park. Monday's VMAs had none of the stunts and draw-dropping moments that have become milestones in pop culture, including Madonna's onstage smooch with Britney

Spears in 2003, and Kanye West storming the stage in

2009 to tell Swift that her award should have gone to

Bevonce. — Reuters

US rapper Cardi B walks on stage to present the Video Vanguard Award to rapper Missy Elliott (off frame).



Shawn Mendes and Camila Cabello perform onstage.



(From left) Kevin Jonas, Joe Jonas and Nick Jonas speak on stage.



performs on stage.

Missy Elliott performs onstage.



Canadian singer Shawn Mendes and US-Cuban singer-songwriter Camila Cabello pose with an award.



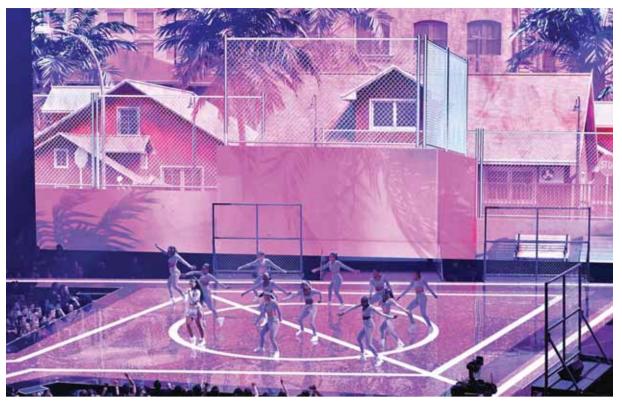
Colombian musician J Balvin poses with awards.



US rapper Missy Elliott poses in the press room with 'The Video Vanguard Award'.



Lifestyle Awards





US singer Normani performs on stage.

US singer Lizzo performs on stage.



US singer Bebe Rexha poses with an award.





Jonas Brothers - "Sucker"





DJ Khaled speaks on stage.



Colombian musician J Balvin poses with an award.

Winners

VIDEO OF THE YEAR Taylor Swift - "You Need to Calm Down" ARTIST OF THE YEAR Ariana Grande SONG OF THE YEAR Lil Nas X ft. Billy Ray Cyrus - "Old Town Road (Remix)" BEST NEW ARTIST Billie Eilish BEST COLLABORATION Shawn Mendes & Camila Cabello - "Se?orita" PUSH ARTIST OF THE YEAR Billie Eilish BEST GROUP BTS BEST HIP HOP Cardi B - "Money" BEST POP

BEST DANCE The Chainsmokers ft. Bebe Rexha - "Call You Mine" BEST K-POP

BEST K-POP BTS ft. Halsey - "Boy With Luv" BEST LATIN ROSALIA & J Balvin ft. El Guincho - "Con Altura" BEST R&B Normani ft. 6lack - "Waves" BEST ROCK Panic! At The Disco - "High Hopes" VIDEO FOR GOOD Taylor Swift - "You Need to Calm Down" BEST EDITING Billie Eilish - "Bad Guy" - Editing by Billie Eilish BEST ART DIRECTION Ariana Grande - "7 Rings" - Art Direction by John Richoux SONG OF SUMMER Ariana Grande & Social House - "boyfriend" VANGUARD AWARD Missy Elliott

A\$AP Ferg and Big Sean pose in the Press Room.



US rappers A\$AP Ferg (left) and Big Sean perform on stage.



Spanish singer Rosalia poses with awards.



US rapper Queen Latifah performs on stage.



US singer Gabriella Wilson, aka H.E.R., performs on stage.



Haitian rapper Wyclef Jean performs on stage.



Treach, Vin Rock, and DJ Kay Gee of Naughty by Nature and US rappers DoltAll (second right back) and Redman (right) pose in the press room.



Missy Elliott performs onstage.





Lifestyle Features

Wednesday, August 28, 2019



Ngbaba players contest a penalty kick during a game in Bangui.



A Ngbaba team celebrates their victory after a match in Bangui.

Ngbaba, a sport lost in time, returns to battered C. Africa

wo teams confronted each other on the dusty sports field, wielding roughly cut sticks to whack a homemade puck at high speed. For the middle-aged and beyond, the sight of this rugged game triggered distant memories, of happier times. The sport, known as ngbaba, is unique to the Central African Republic-and, almost like the embattled country itself, has been hauled back from near-death. Once played widely in streets and villages, ngbaba-pronounced "g'baba"-has simple rules and requires speed, dexterity and a dose of fearlessness.



Players hew a thin stick, roughly about as long

years since we've seen this," exclaimed Terrence, 31, as he prepared to take to the field. "It brings back good memories for everyone." Jean, a student kicking his heels in the shade of the mango trees as he awaited his turn to play, said ngbaba belonged to the time before social networking and mobile phones. "In the old days, young people only had ngbaba for leisure," he said.

Sonek Langate, head of the Baila association that has launched ngbaba's rebirth, said: "Every time we organize a match, everyone wants to take part." "We have to revive this game, especially among the young generation. We have a culture and we should value it."

Misty origins

Ngbaba is played only in the CAR, one of the poorest, most war-ravaged countries in Africa. But how it began is unclear. Neither players nor spectators at the match had any idea, nor did a local history professor. Michel, a gnarled old man who is the university archives watchman, recalled that "it was already being played in the 1970s." His theory: the sport developed from children who watched western sports on TV after the CAR began to get television. The idea is tempting, given the clear similarity with mega-sports like ice hockey and baseball.

Yet games using sticks and a ball or other object have a history that long predates these modern sports-and some speculate that ngbaba's roots may be much older. "It was part of the initiation rites among certain tribes," Langate suggested. "You can find variations of it in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Cameroon." If so, ngbaba clearly meets some of the needs of typical rites to celebrate the passage into manhood, such as endurance and bonding. The whizzing puck can cause painful injuries and confrontation also brings rivals together. "It's not a sport for softies," said Terrence, dripping with sweat as he came off the field. Ngbaba is also a "driver of peace and social cohesion," Langate argued. "In the old days, young people would challenge kids in other neighborhoods to a match-it helped them to get to know each other and make friends.'

Conflict

But at the start of the century, ngbaba's fortunes began a downward spiral. Like so many other aspects of life in the CAR, it became a victim of the unrest that broke out among the country's mosaic of ethnic and religious groups. "People became afraid of going into other neighborhoods," Langate said, adding that parents took to banning their children from playing it, fearing violence and eye injuries.

In 2003, former president Francois Bozize seized power in a coup, and in 2013 was himself overthrown, and since then, much of the country has been at the mercy of armed groups trying to control gold, diamond and oil deposits. In February, Bozize's elected successor, Faustin-Archange Touadera, signed a peace deal with 14 militias who still control more than three-quarters of the territory.

Peace hopes

The agreement is the 13th in a decade and violations have been many. But in the past few months, the country's roads and the streets of the capital have been relatively calm, enabling Baila to set up matches between neighborhoods. Many hurdles lie ahead before ngbaba recovers its former glory. "These days, young people prefer to play football or basketball, because they have a better chance of making a living from those sports," said Jean, the student.

"What we need is a professional federation." Joel Nacka, a CAR businessman who lives in France, the former colonial power, has his eyes on that very goal. He is hunting for sponsors and, more distantly, believes that the sport can be exported. "A sport that we give to the worldwhat better way to give a different image of our country," he said. — AFP



A Ngbaba player chases the puck with a wooden stick during a game in Bangui.



A Ngbaba player stretches out before a game in Bangui.



as their arm and slightly curved at the end, and use it to hit a puck carved out of an old pair of rubber sandals. If the puck lands in the opposing side of the pitch, the other team has to make sure that they get to it quickly to keep it moving and hit it back over to the other side. The aim is to avoid the puck stopping face down in your half of the pitch. At this match, played on a sports field at the University of Bangui, the challenges and skills of ngbaba were on clear display.

To reach the puck in time requires lightning sharp reflexes, and it takes quick thinking and team coordination to mount a counterattack. "It's

This picture shows a puck and flyers of a Ngbaba game on the table of the Ngbaba arbitrator in Bangui.

Armed with smartphones, Myanmar e-sports players battle power outages

Sports star Myint was on the cusp of victory when the screens went dark in the Yangon cafe where he competes, costing him thousands of dollars in missed prize-money and denting his reputation. Myanmar's gaming scene is mushrooming, but frequent power cuts are holding players back in the emerging democracy. "Every time a black-out happens, we curse out the electricity corporation-and it happens often," he told AFP. More than 60 percent of people in Myanmar still live without reliable electricity after a political transition in 2010 that sought to pull in foreign investment after decades of junta rule.

That includes getting in on the global explosion in eSports, a billion-dollar industry that will be a medal event in the Southeast Asian Games in November for the first time. But Myanmar is at risk of missing out with power cuts, few personal computers and a dearth of resources to support travel and competition abroad holding homegrown champions back. Myint Myat Zaw, a 21-year-old player also known as "Insane", said he has lost about 40 matches due to blackouts, making it difficult to earn a slot abroad where cash prizes are now in the tens of millions of dollars. He plays Dota 2, which in Shanghai hosted its equivalent of the champions league this weekend, boasting a record \$34.3 million prize pool. But Dota 2 tournaments are rare in Myanmar, he said, making it difficult for him to earn a living from the game. "The last three years was the hardest period of my career...I lived in a game shop and was also short on food," he told AFP.

Anywhere, anytime

For gamers, a dingy internet cafe has long been the typical venue to battle it out with players from other countries. But that has started to change as cheap SIM cards hit the markets and smartphone use soars. Mobile penetration stood at just seven percent in 2012, but demand has skyrocketed and the figure now sits at more than 80 percent. Players competing on mobiles can stay logged on when local grids go dark. "We can play anywhere, anytime," said Myint Myat Aung, a mobile gamer who competes on PlayerUnknown's Battleground (PUBG) for Singaporebased eSports team Impunity.

It is also cheaper. "We only have phone bills which don't

cost very much," he told AFP.

Last month, Impunity, with more than 400 other teams, took part in a PUBG tournament hosted by Samsung Galaxy at a Yangon mall. Staring into smartphones, players took down their opponents with sniper rifles, the action projected onto a large screen as spectators cheered. The prize pool for the tournament was around \$7,000, an immense sum in a country where the average income is less than \$1,300 a year.

Impunity's country manager Brian Min Sett said the increasing value of winnings was sign of growth as "our country doesn't have many high-prize tournaments." Myanmar, like other developing countries, is at "a serious disadvantage" compared to its neighbours, said Jeremy Jackson, market analyst for eSports reseach firm NewZoo. "Access to stable electricity and internet are crucial when it comes to competitive gaming," Jackson told AFP. "Undoubtedly, greater smartphone penetration will allow more people access to the mobile competitive gaming landscape."

Myanmar legends?

In a country that has produced few international athletic stars, eSports offers players a way into a global community and a chance to make a steady salary, especially for those competing in ultra-popular mobile games. "They can make their own living just by competing in tournaments," said Kaung Myat San, co-founder of the HOG e-sports center in Yangon. Myanmar's sporting authorities lack funding, so HOG plans to send 16 athletes to represent Myanmar in the Southeast Asia games-including Myint Myat Zaw, who was scooped up as a salaried player earlier this year.

Both Dota 2 and Mobile Legend - a fantasy battle game designed for smartphones with more than 3 million users in Myanmar - will be part of the competition. After years of struggling to eke out a living playing for people wishing to boost their scores, Myint Myat Zaw said he was "proud" to now be representing Myanmar. "Although there is more pressure, it makes me keen to do better," he said. — AFP



These photos show members of the eSports team Impunity training in Yangon.— AFP photos



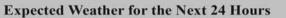
This photo taken shows eSports professional player Myint Myat Zaw (back right), also known as "Insane", playing Dota 2 at an eSports shop in Yangon.

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STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



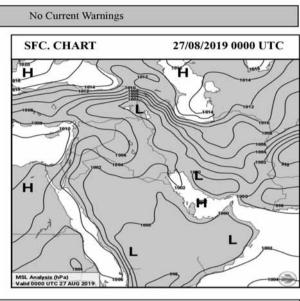
Tel: (+965) 161 Ext: 6819 - 6817 Fax: (+965) 24348714 www.met.gov.kw



BY DAY: Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 32 km/h .

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas with light to moderate variable wind to
south easterly wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING	i j	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	35 °C
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	29 °C
ABDALY	48 °C	31 °C
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C
JAHRA	48 °C	32 °C
FAILAKA ISLAND	- °C	- °C
SALMIYAH	39 °C	33 °C
AHMADI	40 °C	34 °C
NUWAISIB	47 °C	30 °C
WAFRA	48 °C	28 °C
SALMY	48 °C	31 °C



4 DAYS FORECAST							
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DAY	DATE	WEATHER		MIN.	Wind Direction	Wind Speed	
Wednesday	08/28	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	26 °C	NE-SE	08 - 35 km/h	
Thursday	08/29	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	27 °C	N-SE	10 - 32 km/h	
Friday	00/50	Hot and Humid specially over coastal areas with a chance for fog forming over some areas	44 °C	27 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 32 km/h	
Saturday	08/31	Hot and Relatively humid specially over coastal areas	46 °C	26 °C	VRB-S	06 - 30 km/h	

PRAYER	TIMES	RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT				
Fajr	04:00	MAX. Temp.	50 °C			
Sunrise	05:22	MIN. Temp.	28 °C			
Zuhr	11:50	MAX. RH	39 %			
Asr	15:24	MIN. RH	05 %			
Sunset	18:16	MAX. Wind	S 32 km/h			
Isha	19:36	TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm			

Flight Schedule

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

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

Passport No. Z2809495 do here-

by change my name as NOREEN

es. I also undertake to effect the

My name as per Indian Passport

change in all my other public

documents. (C 5581)

MARGARET (given name) D MELLO (surname) for all purpos-

(given name) holder of Indian

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address being, 67-8-5B, Ashok I, ROCHELLE D MELLO (given Nagar, Behind GPT, Kakinadaname) holder of Indian Passport 533003, East Godavari, Andhra No. Z2814386 do hereby Pradesh. Hereby correct my givchange my name as ROCHELLE en name as Sri Lakshmi (given name) D MELLO (sur-Madhavi and surname as name) for all purposes. I also Chodisetty. Immediate effect. undertake to effect the change (C 5670) 28-8-2019 in all my other public docu-

Faiza Abdul Karim holder of Passport No. K7914117. I am changing my name to Faiza Abdul Karim Rajiwate with immediate effect. (C 5668) 23-08-2019

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

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Israeli soldiers use virtual, augmented reality to train

PETAH TIKVAH: An Israeli soldier carefully eyes the narrow, damp tunnel carved from surrounding rock through a tightly strapped black headset. He is not in one of the attack tunnels built by Lebanon's Hezbollah under the border with Israel, but one of a new generation of soldiers using virtual and augmented reality to train. In a small computer-lined room, T, a 20-yearold member of Yahalom, or Diamond - the special operations unit of the army's combat engineering corps - simulates an advance along the narrow passage.

His head sweeps from side-to-side and up and down, while his hands probe walls invisible to the onlooker. "We see everything, even falling drops of water," says the soldier, who cannot be named for security reasons. "I really feel like I'm there," he told AFP. "I feel the humidity, the sense of being stifled." The headset displays every detail of the virtual tunnel – a reconstruction of one of several subterranean infiltrations uncovered by the army – allowing instructors to guide T in real time.

In December, the Israeli army launched an anti-tunnel operation on the Lebanese border dubbed "Northern Shield". Israel said it had found six tunnels, while UN officials confirmed three reached into the Jewish state's territory. Hezbollah planned to use them to abduct or kill Israeli soldiers or civilians, and to seize territory in the event of hostilities, according to the military. They ran for dozens of metres and some reached a depth of 55 m.

In recent days, fresh tensions have

erupted between Hezbollah and Israel; the Iran-aligned Shiite movement blamed the Jewish state for a drone attack on its Beirut stronghold. Israel has not commented. Hezbollah chief Hasan Nasrallah called it the first such "hostile action" since a 2006 war between his movement and the Jewish state. He threatened retaliation. The Israeli army is also on the lookout for tunnels dug into the Hamas-ruled Gaza Strip.

They are used by militants and, on the Egyptian border, smugglers trying to circumvent a blockade on the Palestinian enclave. The Israeli army says it has destroyed several tunnels that ran into its territory and were designed as attack launchpads. The Egyptian army has vigorously hunted for and blocked smuggling tunnels from its side of the frontier.

Until recently the domain of video game creators, the virtual world has in recent years made inroads into medical, aerospace and military research, where it is increasingly used for training. "Technology is an essential part of the fight," which justifies heavy investment, says H, commanding officer of Yahalom's training center at a military base in central Israel. The Hezbollah tunnels exposed by Israel have been digitally scanned and appear on a soldier's headset as they are in reality. "The soldier sees what a tunnel looks like," says H.

Since it is not always possible to train in the field, the virtual world allows personnel to familiarize themselves with a hostile underground environment without leaving their base, he added. There are a dozen sol-



PETAH TIKVA: Israeli soldiers engage in combat exercise inside a physical mockup enemy tunnel at an Israeli army base on Aug 20, 2019. — AFP

diers on the current course; 100 have been through it since it began three years ago. While virtual reality (VR) aims to place the person in a simulated world, augmented reality (AR) allows elements to be added in a real-world environment. Both aim to provide a multisensory experience.

Soldiers can experience scenarios where there are obstacles such as holes, cables, or explosive devices and simulate the hand movements they will need to defuse a real bomb. "There are elements one can face in a tunnel which are difficult to reproduce," such as humidity, says the commander, but it serves as a good introduction to the subject. "It's not very nice to be dozens of meters underground, cut off from the world," says T. "Anything that can help you prepare is important.

He says that the electronic training has

made him "more ready to enter a tunnel" in real life. Not far from the "VR room" is a physical mockup of a Hamas tunnel where soldiers can engage in combat exercises, polishing what they have learnt through VR. Three soldiers make their way inside, their faces covered with balaclavas, machine guns in their hands as they move through the rock passageway, narrow and dark. — AFP

Iran dampens down prospect of Trump...

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the next few weeks" had been created through intensive diplomacy. Trump said he "would certainly agree to that" and that the timeline proposed by Macron was realistic. The US leader was equally confident that Rouhani would be in favor. "I think he's going to want to meet. I think Iran wants to get this situation straightened out," he added.

News of the potential meeting was welcomed by financial markets. "Expectations are ... rising that tensions in the Gulf can be de-escalated following President Macron's overtures to broker a meeting between Donald Trump and his Iranian counterpart," noted AxiTrader analyst James Hughes. The rial was higher at about 112,000 to the dollar, up from 117,500 a week ago under the unofficial rate in Iran's capital, according to the Bonbast website that monitors exchange rates. But Zarif said yesterday he had made it known at the G7 summit that a meeting between Rouhani and Trump would be highly improbable even if the Americans returned to the nuclear deal. "On my trip to Biarritz I said that a meeting between Iran's president and Trump is not imaginable" until America rejoins the nuclear pact, said Zarif. "Even at that time, we will not have a

bilateral negotiation," he added.

Rouhani has indicated he is open to holding talks with the Americans, but it is an approach that has faced criticism from ultraconservatives. In his speech yesterday, he said his government's policy of "constructive interaction" with the world was in line with Khamenei's approach of "extensive interaction". But he stressed the US had to "retreat from their mistakes" and return to its commitments under the nuclear deal. "Our path is clear if they come back to their commitments, we too will fully act on our commitments. If they do not come back to their commitments, we will continue our path," said Rouhani.

But the Iranian president said he was not just looking for photo opportunities. "We seek to resolve issues and problems in a rational way but we are not after photos. For anyone wanting to take a picture with Hassan Rouhani, this is not possible," he said. People on Tehran's streets expressed doubts over the possible benefits of any meeting between Rouhani and Trump. "I believe there's no point in negotiating with America," said Valiollah Tavakoli, a self-employed man from the capital, adding there was little to show from the nuclear talks. "People's situation got worse and worse every day. So as the supreme leader said, negotiation with America is useless. The possible meeting between Rouhani and Trump was blasted as a photo opportunity yesterday on the front page of the Javan newspaper close to Iran's Revolutionary Guards. Both Rouhani and Trump are scheduled to be in New York for the UN General Assembly at the end of September which could provide a stage for talks. — AFP

Saudi shops push boundaries on...

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Last month Riyadh, keen to stimulate an economy hit by low oil prices, decreed that some businesses can stay open 24 hours a day for an unspecified fee.

But the decision triggered confusion over whether it includes the five daily Islamic prayer times. Stores in some Riyadh malls saw it as a nod-and-a-wink approach to avert a conservative backlash, testing what could be one of the most sensitive of a string of reforms in the ultra-conservative kingdom. The burger shop manager showed AFP a text from its Saudi owner, instructing him to stay open: "The (government statements to stay open, especially with the relative absence of the religious police that was responsible for enforcing the system," Eman Alhussein, a fellow at the European Council on Foreign Relations, told AFP.

Following the pre-dawn Fajr prayer, shops in the kingdom typically have to close four times daily, with workers often out of action for more than 30 minutes. But it is too soon to know the financial impact of easing a restriction that members of the advisory Shura Council say costs the Saudi economy tens of billions of riyals a year.

"The ability to make closing for prayer more optional would increase worker productivity and possibly overall business activity" as the kingdom seeks to boost non-oil revenue and tackle high youth unemployment, said Karen Young from the American Enterprise Institute. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman has rolled out a series of reforms over the past two years, including allowing women to drive, reopening cinemas and reining in clerical power

Russia, Turkey share 'concerns' over Idlib...

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Putin and Erdogan met on the sidelines of the MAKS international air show on the outskirts of Moscow - a showcase for Russia's military and civil aerospace industry. The two leaders highlighted their increased cooperation, which saw Turkey begin taking delivery in July of Russian S-400 missile systems it ordered in defiance of warnings from Washington.

Turkey's defense ministry said the second stage of deliveries had begun yesterday and would last for a month. Putin said he and Erdogan had discussed further military cooperation, including on Russia's Sukhoi Su-35 fighter jet. A move by NATO member Turkey to purchase Russian fighters would be sure to further anger Washington. "We have many opportunities, we demonstrated new weapons systems and new electronic warfare systems," Putin said. "In my opinion there was a lot of interest from our Turkish partners."

Meanwhile, Kurdish authorities in northeast Syria said yesterday their forces had started to withdraw from outposts along the Turkish border after a US-Turkish deal for a buffer zone there. They said work had begun Saturday on "the first practical steps - in the Ras al-Ain area - in removing some earth mounds and withdrawing a group of (Kurdish) People's Protection Units and heavy weapons".

On Monday, they repeated the same steps in Tal Abyad, "showing the seriousness of our commitment to current understandings" on the buffer zone, the semiautonomous Kurdish administration said in a statement. The so-called "safe zone" agreed by Washington and Ankara earlier this month aims to create a buffer between the Turkish border and Syrian areas controlled by the Kurdish People's Protection Units (YPG), a group Ankara sees as "terrorists".

Details of the safe zone are currently hazy, and no final date has been set for when it would be established. But on Monday, Erdogan said Turkish troops would soon enter northeast Syria. "Our armed drones, drones and helicopters are in the region," he said. "We expect our ground troops to enter the region very soon," he told supporters in eastern Turkey.

On Saturday, Turkish Defense Minister Hulusi Akar said a US-Turkey operations center aimed at creating the buffer area was at "full capacity". He said the first joint helicopter flight took place on Saturday afternoon. Mazlum Abdi, the chief of the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces, on Saturday said his forces would support the implementation of the US-Turkey deal.

Turkey has repeatedly threatened to attack Kurdishheld areas in northeast Syria. Ankara considers the YPG, which forms the backbone of the SDF, to be an extension the outlawed Kurdistan Workers' Party (PKK) - a group that has fought a bloody insurgency inside Turkey for 35 years. The "safe zone" was initially suggested by Washington to dissuade Ankara from carrying out another cross-border attack, after previous offensives in 2016 and 2018.

SDF spokesman Mustafa Bali told Reuters the strip along the border would vary between 5 and 14 km and will include rural areas or military positions, not cities or towns. The YPG and SDF will dismantle barricades there and hand over control to military councils of local fighters, he said. Bali said Turkish and US-led coalition forces would patrol the border strip but be based inside Turkey. The deal creates "a security mechanism, not safe zone, that assuages Turkey's claims of fearing over its national security," he added.

A source familiar with the talks told Reuters that although Washington and Ankara were still discussing how deep the zone would go, they had agreed to start work on one stretch of the border. "The safety mechanism arrangement is being implemented in phases," the source said, adding that arrangements would vary at different parts of the border.

The source said US-Turkish joint patrols will monitor the removal of heavy weapons, fortifications and tunnels, along with YPG presence between Tal Abyad and Ras al-Ain, two Syrian border towns about 100 km apart. That stretch is around a quarter of the whole border that could be covered by the zone, which Turkey says should extend 20 miles (32 km) inside Syria.

A senior Turkish official said Ankara and Washington had bridged some, but not all, of their differences. "There was a rapprochement, but our insistence on the 20 miles persists. The United States has taken steps to improve this, but they are still not enough," the official said. "It is not possible for us to accept the SDF's presence there." — Agencies ment) decides to allow shops, restaurants and markets to work for 24 hours and the decision includes... prayer times."

It was among a handful of eateries in Riyadh's upscale Kingdom Centre mall openly catering to customers during the sunset Maghrib prayer. At another leading Riyadh mall, Al-Nakheel, a similar scene played out during the evening Isha prayer. While many retailers rolled down their shutters, several cafes and restaurants teeming with customers kept their cash registers ringing, while children continued to bounce around in an indoor amusement park. "Most of the time stores here are (now) open during prayer time," Francis, an Asian coffee shop manager, told AFP.

Two other shop managers said they had paid no government fee to stay open, but were cautiously testing the waters, as officials appeared to be looking the other way. "Those (workers) who want to pray can pray, those who want to work can work," one of them said, pointing out that many were non-Muslim and had previously been obliged to idle away time. The other manager, who also requested anonymity due to the issue's sensitivity, said he would still shut shop if confronted by the religious police.

Until three years ago, the religious police elicited widespread fear, chasing men and women out of malls to pray and berating anyone seen mingling with the opposite sex. But the bearded enforcers of public morality, whose powers have been clipped in recent years, are now largely out of sight. Retailers could take advantage of "vague govern-

Bibi tells Nasrallah to 'calm down' as...

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drones in a Beirut suburb. In a speech on Sunday, Nasrallah described the drones, including one that had exploded, as the first Israeli attack in Lebanon since the two sides fought a month-long war in 2006. "I say to the Israeli army on the border from tonight, stand guard. Wait for us one, two, three, four days," Nasrallah said.

One of the drones exploded near the ground, causing some damage to Hezbollah's media center in the southern suburbs of the capital which it dominates. Israeli officials have declined to comment when asked if Israel was responsible. "I heard what Nasrallah said. I suggest to Nasrallah to calm down. He knows well that Israel knows how to defend itself and to pay back its enemies," Netanyahu said in a speech.

Precise details about where the drones were fired from have yet to emerge. Hezbollah has said the two drones were rigged with explosives after its experts took apart the first drone. Asked if Israel attacked any ground targets in Lebanon in recent days, Regional Cooperation Minister Tzachi Hanegbi, a member of Netanyahu's security cabinet, told Israeli Army Radio: "We of course did not respond to the accusations leveled at us. On their face, these things seem weird and intriguing. The media have reported this fact - that these are allegations that have no basis."

Lebanon's Higher Defense Council, which includes the president, prime minister and army commander, convened yesterday and said the Lebanese have "the right to defend themselves against any attack". Israel deems the heavily armed Shiite Hezbollah movement the biggest threat across its border. In their 2006 war nearly 1,200 people, mostly civilians, died in Lebanon and 158 people died in Israel, mostly soldiers.

as he seeks to project a business-friendly image.

The reaction of archconservatives has so far been muted, given his parallel crackdown on dissent. But in a series of tweets last year, the religious police, officially known as the Commission for the Promotion of Virtue and the Prevention of Vice, said it was forbidden to keep stores open during prayer, calling it "one of the most important pillars of Islam".

Last month, Saudi state media reported that the kingdom will allow round-the-clock trading - for what some local media said was a fee of up to 100,000 riyals (\$27,000). But nothing was said about prayer times. Confusion reigned after Saudi-owned Al-Arabiya television first tweeted that the decision included prayers, but quickly deleted it after a government official rejected the claim on air. Saudi Arabia's media ministry and the mall operators did not respond to requests for comment.

Not all shops are staying open, however. One Turkish eatery said it preferred to close during prayers as the vague government ruling offered "no guarantees" it would not be penalized. Beyond large malls, shops also appear to be observing the shutdown, even as some operate on the quiet after rolling down their shutters. "Give it time," said Amer, a Saudi pharmacist in his 40s, buying a coffee and dessert at Al-Nakheel during Isha prayer. "The government is testing reactions. If there is no (backlash) they might make it official." — AFP

Regional sources say that Israel and Hezbollah have formed an unwritten understanding that while they can exchange fire within Syria, any attacks within Lebanon or Israel are to be avoided lest they escalate to war. Israel has grown alarmed by the rising influence of its foe Iran during the war in neighboring Syria, where Tehran and Hezbollah provide military help to Damascus.

Tehran also has wide sway in Iraq, where a grouping of Iraq's mostly Shi'ite Muslim paramilitary groups, many of which are backed by Iran, have blamed recent blasts at their weapons depots and bases on the United States and Israel. Lebanese President Michel Aoun said on Monday his country had a right to defend itself, likening Israeli drone strikes to a "declaration of war". Late on Saturday, Israeli air strikes killed two Lebanese Hezbollah fighters in Syria.

Israel, which regularly strikes Iranian-linked targets in Syria, said it hit a compound controlled by Iran's Revolutionary Guards Quds force, accusing it of planning killer drone attacks. Netanyahu also issued warnings to Lebanon and Qassem Soleimani, commander of the Quds force, which the Israeli leader said aspires to destroy Israel. "Watch what you say, and moreover be careful about what you do," Netanyahu said.

Andrea Tenenti, spokesman for the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) that patrols the border with Israel, said the situation in the area remains quiet. "UNIFIL continues to work with the parties to ensure that there are no misunderstandings or incidents that may endanger the cessation of hostilities," Tenenti told Lebanon's state news agency NNA, referring to a UN Security Council resolution that called for an end to the fighting in 2006.

In public comments during a visit on Sunday to Israel's north, where he met army commanders, Netanyahu appeared to hold out the prospect of targeting Lebanon directly for attack if Hezbollah struck Israel. "Any country that allows its territory to be used for aggression against Israel will face the consequences, and I repeat: the country will face the consequences," he said. — Reuters



Sports

Phils, Rockies hit walk-off homers as Phillies secure win over Pirates

PHILADELPHIA: Sean Rodriguez led off the bottom of the 11th inning with a home run to give the Philadelphia Phillies a 6-5 win over the visiting Pittsburgh Pirates on Monday night. Rodriguez stroked a 1-2 slider from Michael Feliz (2-4) down the left field line for his fourth homer of the season. The Phillies moved to within one game of the second National League wild-card spot, currently held by the idle Chicago Cubs. Brad Miller, Bryce Harper and Corey Dickerson also clubbed homers, and J.T. Realmuto had three hits for the Phillies. Mike Morin (1-0) tossed two innings of two-hit relief.Pittsburgh's Kevin Newman went 2-for-6 and drove in two runs for a 4-2 lead in the seventh, and Bryan Reynolds, Melky Cabrera, Colin Moran and Adam Frazier each notched two hits. Josh Bell hit a game-tying solo homer in the ninth inning.

Rockies 3, Braves 1

Ryan McMahon hit a walk-off, two-run homer in the ninth inning, and Colorado beat visiting Atlanta in Denver. The contest was a makeup of an April 10 game that was postponed due to a blizzard that hit the Denver area. Trevor Story had three hits, and Jairo Diaz (5-3) got the win despite allowing the tying run in the ninth inning for the Rockies, who snapped a four-game losing streak. Matt Joyce and Francisco Cervelli collected two hits apiece for Atlanta, which had its eight-game winning streak ended.

Cardinals 12, Brewers 2

Yadier Molina, Marcell Ozuna and Paul DeJong drove in three runs each to propel St. Louis to a win at Milwaukee. The Cardinals won their fifth straight game and their 14th game in their past 17 tries. They extended their National League Central lead to three games over the idle Chicago Cubs and 5 1/2 games over the third-place Brewers. Molina hit a two-run single in the first inning to start the Cardinals' onslaught. He tacked on a solo homer in the fourth inning. Ozuna hit a three-run double in the second inning as the Cardinals scored six times. DeJong later added a two-run homer and a sacrifice fly.

Space Jam or the World Cup? LeBron among US' absent stars

WASHINGTON: So many NBA headliners from the United States are skipping the Basketball World Cup in China that they would assemble a formidable allstar squad of their own. But it is nothing new for the Americans as they seek a third consecutive crown in the global showdown that runs August 31 to September 15. And from past experience, it could even pave the way for a new US figurehead to emerge. LeBron James, Kawhi Leonard, Stephen Curry, James Harden, Anthony Davis, Russell Westbrook and Paul George are among those who opted out. Kevin Durant, Kyle Lowry and Klay Thompson are injured. The World Cup final comes only two weeks before most NBA training camps open, with the first games of the 2019-2020 campaign on October 22. Adding to the usual pressures of pre-season were the large number of transfers by top stars in the offseason and an up-for-grabs mentality in the Western Conference, where a halfdozen revamped clubs are legitimate NBA title contenders. "I think most of the star players, they are trying to save their energy. I think

Yankees 5, Mariners 4

Rookie Mike Ford homered in consecutive at-bats, and New York edged host Seattle. A night after homering off Dodgers ace Clayton Kershaw, Ford capped a four-run second inning with a two-run homer, and he connected again in the fourth against Tommy Milone (3-8). Ford became the 23rd different player to produce a multi-homer game for New York this year. Gleyber Torres also went deep as the Yankees also extended their major league record for homers in a month to 64. New York improved to 3-4 on a nine-game West Coast road trip. Dylan Moore hit a three-run homer and Mallex Smith hit a solo homer for the Mariners, who lost for the third time in their past nine games.

Padres 4, Dodgers 3

Eric Lauer tossed six innings of three-run ball as host San Diego edged Los Angeles. Kirby Yates struck out three in a hitless ninth to pick up his major-leagueleading 38th save. Lauer (7-8) was the pitcher of record when the Padres scored three runs in the bottom of the sixth inning, with a huge assist on a throwing error by Dodgers center fielder AJ Pollock. Justin Turner and Enrique Hernandez hit solo homers for the Dodgers, and Turner added a run-scoring double against Lauer, who left the mound for the last time trailing 3-1 in the middle of the sixth. Lauer yielded six hits and four walks with eight strikeouts.

Diamondbacks 6, Giants 4

Eduardo Escobar broke open a close game with a two-out, two-run single in the seventh inning, and Adam Jones added a home run in the eighth as Arizona won at San Francisco. Arizona led just 3-2 before two walks sandwiched an infield single by Tim Locastro to load the bases in the seventh. Escobar then singled to center field, giving the Diamondbacks a three-run cushion. The Giants closed within 6-4 in the ninth on a sacrifice fly by Evan Longoria and a two-out, dropped fly ball by Arizona left fielder Locastro, on which Kevin Pillar was generously credited with an RBI double. Facing the potential tying run, Archie Bradley came on to strike out pinch hitter Mike Yastrzemski for his eighth save.

that's the main reason they are dropping out," said Sam Mitchell, an NBA TV analyst who played in the league in 1989-2002 and coached for parts of six seasons. "There are 80 percent of the players on the star teams who have a chance to compete for a championship. For you to go play in the world championships, risk getting injured... it's a lot to ask." Some players never considered this year's team, including Lakers star James, who began filming "Space Jam 2" in late



PHILADELPHIA: Sean Rodriguez #13 of the Philadelphia Phillies hits a walk-off solo home run in the bottom of the 11th inning against the Pittsburgh Pirates at Citizens Bank Park. —AFP

A's 19, Royals 4

Marcus Semien hit a three-run triple in the second inning and a three-run home run in the third to help visiting Oakland blow out Kansas City. Semien added a runscoring grounder in the eight to finish with a career-high seven RBIs. The A's scored in eight straight innings, including five runs each in the second and third innings. Oakland got four hits from Josh Phegley and three hits apiece from Mark Canha, Matt Olson and Khris Davis in a 22-hit attack. Former Royal Homer Bailey (12-8) picked up the win in the first appearance against Kansas City during his 13-year career. He allowed three runs on eight hits in six innings with three strikeouts and no walks.

Reds 6, Marlins 3

Freddy Galvis slugged a go-ahead, three-run homer in the fifth inning, leading Cincinnati to a win at Miami. The Reds' Eugenio Suarez and Phillip Ervin added solo homers in the eighth and ninth innings, respectively. Galvis, who also had a runscoring groundout, finished with a season-hightying four RBIs as the Reds snapped their threegame losing streak. Sonny Gray (10-6) allowed two hits, five walks and two runs in six-plus innings. He struck out six. Raisel Iglesias closed out the win by pitching the ninth, allowing Jorge Alfaro's solo homer. —Reuters

Rio flashback: Ono wins judo world crown

TOKYO: Japan's judo king Shohei Ono smashed Azerbaijan's Rustam Orujov to capture his third world title

in 2008 and 2012 and had played in eight consecutive NBA Finals until this year. Many players said they needed the offseason to integrate with their new clubs or new teammates. "I think other guys looked at it like, 'Why would I want to go potentially be the face of what could be a losing roster?" said CJ McCollum, who also withdrew from the team, on a podcast of ESPN's Adrian Wojnarowski.

June. The 34-year-old won Olympic gold

'Dream Team' to 'B team'

San Antonio Spurs coach Gregg Popovich, who is guiding the US team for the first time, has been forced to name a squad of emerging talents. Popovich and his men were given a jolt on Saturday when they were stunned 98-94 by Australia in Melbourne, snapping a run of 78 consecutive American wins in major competitions and exhibition games. "Nobody wins forever," said Popovich, whose team bounced back to beat Canada 84-68 on Monday.

This may be no "Dream Team" — the

demanding. The higher salaries help too. All Black legend Carter was said to be earning around \$1.3m at the Kobelco Steelers, not counting the lucrative endorsement deals that saw the World Cup-winning fly-half become a Japanese media star. But the high-profile players have failed to bring fans through the turnstiles, with attendances in free-fall and embarrassingly low gates at some

matches.

Even the Top League final, which saw the Kobelco Steelers beat the Kubota Spears 43-7 on August 10, attracted a meager crowd of 7,890. Throughout the season crowds averaged around 2,500, hitting a low of 528 for a match between Toyota Loom and NEC Green Rockets. Crowds are small because there is no loyalty for the corporate-based teams, said Akimoto Hinato, an expert in rugby in Japan. "The championship is made up of corporate clubs. They don't represent a town, don't have a stadium and their 'home' games are played from Kyushu to Hokkaido," at opposite ends of the country, said Hinato. "It is difficult under these conditions to pull in a crowd apart from supporters of the company," he told AFP.

'Anyone with two legs'

The Top League has a unique structure, with Japan Inc powerhouses like Toyota, Toshiba, Mitsubishi and Honda prepared to splash serious cash to run a side for company prestige. The system started after the war when companies such as Kobe Steel founded rugby clubs



SYDNEY: Team USA stands on the court for the National Anthem before the game against Canada on August 26, 2019 at Qudos Bank Arena. —AFP

name given to the star-studded 1992 Olympic side — but young talent has done the job in past US World Cup campaigns. The 2010 squad was derided as a "B" team but won the crown behind future NBA superstars Durant, Westbrook, Curry and Kevin Love. In 2014, the victorious USA team included Davis, Harden, Thompson, Curry and Most Valuable Player Kyrie Irving.

Mason Plumlee is the only 2014 World Cup player back for the Americans, while Kemba Walker is the lone all-NBA player on the squad.

Harrison Barnes is the only member of the 2016 Rio Olympic gold-medal team in the lineup, adding to doubts back home that the US can make it three world titles on the spin. Spanish center Marc Gasol, who helped Toronto to the NBA crown, told The New York Times that he expects the US to use the skepticism as motivation in China. "Even with all the guys that dropped out... they are still super-talented physically and technically," Gasol said. "They are pretty well coached as well. So you put it all together and it's a great team." —AFP



TOKYO: In this file photo taken on September 1, 2012, All Blacks rugby union player Sonny Bill Williams greets supporters of his new team, Japanese outfit Panasonic Wild Knights. —AFP

and encouraged employees to play to improve morale and fitness. As late as the early 2000s, the league was known as the Japan Company Rugby Football Championship, only changing to the Top League in 2003 in a bid to become more professional.

But even now, many teams are a mix of former internationals on hefty salaries and company employees, who have been known to miss training for meetings. This hybrid pro-am system was exposed during a recent Japanese national team tour to England when it emerged the amateur

players were getting a daily allowance of just 2,000 yen (\$19). Unsurprisingly, it's also had an impact on quality.

Fiji's Nemani Nadolo has been quoted as saying that "anyone with two legs could play there" and Japan's test captain Michael Leitch has raised doubts about the ability of the competition to breed Japan internationals of the future. But Hinato noted that foreign stars have raised standards among Japanese players, helping Japan become one of the top sides outside the traditional rugby heartlands. —AFP yesterday in a carbon copy of their one-sided Olympic final in Rio three years ago. The 27-year-old, widely regarded as the sport's best pound-for-pound fighter, displayed barely a flicker of emotion after flattening Orujov in the men's 73kilogram class with a performance that if anything was even more dominant than Rio.

"I came to win so I'm not surprised," said Ono, who won all six of his matches at the Tokyo 2020 test event by ippon — judo's closest equivalent to a knockout. "How I won my fights didn't bother me at all," added the Olympic champion, unbeaten in international competition since 2015. "I managed not to get seduced by everyone saying 'Ono is the clear favorite' and put that kind of stuff out of my mind. I just wanted to focus on what I love — judo, and on getting the job done."

Elsewhere, Japan-born Christa Deguchi secured Canada's first judo world title by stunning local favourite and defending champion Tsukasa Yoshida in the women's 57-kilo final. But most of the crowd at Tokyo's iconic Budokan — venue for next year's Tokyo Olympics and the 1964 Summer Games — came to watch Ono. The lightweight division's most fearsome judoka, Ono underlined that aura of invincibility by brutalizing Russian Denis Iartcev in the semi-final. He stepped it up another level in the final, unleashing a ferocious throw to beat Orujov and boost his record against the Azerbaijani to five-for-five.

As the packed crowd went wild, Ono bowed politely to the loser before quietly raising his fist in celebration. "I have to believe I can keep improving," insisted Ono, looking ahead to the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. "Winning today will make me even more determined to get back to work in order to climb the highest peak once more in one year's time." —AFP

US star Lloyd believes women could thrive in NFL

LOS ANGELES: United States soccer star Carli Lloyd believes women could thrive as goal kickers in the NFL after a successful try out with the Philadelphia Eagles last week. Footage of two-time FIFA women's player of the year Lloyd successfully kicking a 55-yard field goal went viral last week, and the 37-year-old later said she had received "some inquiries" after the footage went online.

Although Lloyd maintains she is committed to soccer, she told NBC Sports on Monday that she believes there is no reason why women could not operate as kickers in the NFL. "I'm laughing about it, but the more I think about it, this has the chance to be sort of a pioneering moment for women," Lloyd told NBC. "I know that I could probably do it. It could be a huge pivotal moment. There is no reason why a woman could not do this."

Lloyd, a member of two World Cup-winning teams with 113 international goals, easily kicked several 40-yard field goals in addition to the 55-yarder at last week's practice involving the Eagles and the Baltimore Ravens. "Nothing scares me," Lloyd added. "Big thing would be getting used to the big boys out there. What's the worst that can happen? I don't make the team? Let's just say I did try. Maybe I change the landscape a lot." Lloyd also revealed she pushed a 57-yard attempt just wide, but believes she could easily have made it with more practice. —AFP

Big stars, small crowds: Japan's unique but unloved rugby scene

TOKYO: Rich clubs owned by massive corporations have attracted a parade of star players to Japan but the unusual setup hasn't been a hit with fans, prompting a re-think as the World Cup looms. Sparse crowds for Japan's Top League, where giants of the game play alongside amateurs for the pride of major companies, have triggered moves towards a fully professional league as Japan gears up to host Asia's first World Cup.

Dan Carter, Sonny Bill Williams, George Gregan are just some of the luminaries who have plied their trade in Japan, picking up generous pay cheques. The trend shows no sign of stopping, with All Black captain Kieran Read, fellow New Zealander Brodie Retallick and Australian scrum-half Will Genia among a number of players heading to Japan after the World Cup. Wallaby fly-half Christian Lealiifano abandoned the captaincy of the ACT Brumbies after receiving an offer he said was "too hard to turn down" from Ichikawa-based NTT Communications.

The Japanese league attracts such top talent — often players approaching the twilight of their careers — because the seasons are short and less physically





'Village cricketer' Leach can't believe he's an Ashes hero

'I just had to stay calm and do the job at hand'

LEEDS: Jack Leach put his cult hero status down to endeared him to the crowd. "It's nice to have that, it's looking like a "village cricketer" after his key supporting role enabled Ben Stokes to steer England to a staggering victory in the third Ashes Test. England were 286-9, still needing 73 more runs to reach a victory target of 359 when last man Leach walked out to bat at Headingley on Sunday.

Already something of a crowd favorite, the bespectacled and balding Leach held firm as all-rounder Stokes, who was 61 not out when joined in the middle by the left-arm spinner, blazed his way to an astounding unbeaten 135 that saw England to a one-wicket win that leveled the five-match series at 1-1.

But just as Ian Botham's 149 not out in England's celebrated 1981 Test win over Australia at Headingley after following-on needed the support of Graham Dilley, and Kevin Pietersen's Ashes-clinching 158 at the Oval in 2005 would not have been possible without Ashley Gile at the other end, so too did Stokes need Leach to stay with him during what became a remarkable last-wicket stand of 76.

Even though Stokes farmed the strike superbly, Leach — whose career average of 11 matches his position in the batting order — still had to face 17 balls for an invaluable one not out. But having made 92 as nightwatchman in a Test against Ireland at Lord's last month, Leach hung in for an hour. His only real scare came when, with two needed to win, he nearly ran himself out only for Nathan Lyon to fail to gather a return when Leach was yards short of his ground.

Leach, however, tied the scores before Stokes struck the winning boundary off fast bowler Pat Cummins. The sight of Leach carefully polishing his glasses as England closed on their record fourth-innings winning total also

probably because I look like a village cricketer out there, in my glasses and with the bald head," said Leach.

'That could be me'

"Maybe people think 'that could be me' because all the others look pretty professional." Leach, whose tailend resistance has seen him offered free glasses for life by series sponsors Specsavers in a response to a suggestion on Twitter from Stokes, added: "I'm just enjoying playing for England." The 28-year-old said his careful cleaning routine was simply about removing condensation as he faced up to an Australia attack led by fast bowler Josh Hazlewood.

"I just had to make sure they were clean every time I was facing up," said Leach. "I would really regret it if they had been smudged and I'd got out, then the cameras zoom in on the glasses and they say 'he didn't clean his glasses'. I just had to stay calm and do the job at hand." When Leach came into bat, it seemed England's chances of a win had evaporated. But having seen, albeit as a fan watching television, Stokes star in England's World Cup final triumph against New Zealand with 84 not out at Lord's six weeks earlier, Leach had faith even when all seemed lost.

"I was watching the World Cup final as a fan and that showed that anything is possible," he said. "Ben Stokes was at the centre of that as well. Maybe Ben Stokes has to be at the centre of all things that are possible. He was just unbelievable." Leach would have likely been watching the Headingley match on television too had not rival spinner Moeen Ali been dropped after a woeful display in the series opener at Edgbaston.

With World Cup-winning leg-spinner Adil Rashid

injured, Leach suddenly found himself unexpectedly be watching the Ashes at home," he admitted. "But I make the most of it." — AFP

wanted to be ready to play and not presume anything. thrust back into the Test side. "I probably thought I'd Now my opportunity has come about so I'm trying to

Black tennis pioneer Gibson honored, equality fight goes on

NEW YORK: Even as a new US Open statue paid tribute to the courage and perseverence of black tennis pioneer Althea Gibson, Serena and Venus Williams warned Monday that the social and racial battles she fought remain issues today. Gibson, the first black Grand Slam



West Indian pace bowler Wright pulls up stumps - at 85

LONDON: Cecil Wright's name will not rank alongside West Indies legends Viv Richards, Gary Sobers and Frank Worrell, but for longevity he outranks them all. The fast bowler known affectionately as 'Cec' has announced he will retire in two weeks' time — at the ripe old age of 85 Wright, who in his heyday represented Jamaica against Barbados, lining up against Sobers and Wes Hall, moved to England in 1959 and launched a career as a professional in the Central Lancashire League for Crompton. After three years he decided to stay on in England and settled down after meeting his future wife Enid, then having a son. Wright, who also played with Richards and Joel Garner, another of the great West Indies pace attack of the late

1970s and early 1980s, has taken over 7,000 wickets during a career spanning more than 60 years. At one point he took 538 wickets in five seasons, aver-

aging one every 27 balls. "Pretty good going," said cricket Bible Wisden, referring to Wright's stamina. Bit finally even he has accepted that the time has come to pull up stumps on his career. "I wish I knew the reason for my longevity, but I couldn't tell you what it is," he told The Daily Mirror, who estimated that he had played in over two million games. He once attributed his staying power to his love of traditional no frills Lancashire food such as hot pot. "To be honest I eat anything that's going but I don't drink much, just the odd beer," he was quoted as saying. "And I keep fit, although these days I use my age as an excuse to miss training."I find keeping active helps to ease aches and pains. "I don't like to sit still and watch TV, I would rather have a walk or potter about in the garage. Wright will bring down the final curtain on his career on Saturday September 7, turning out for Uppermill, near Oldham, against Pennine League side Springhead. — AFP



tennis champion, died in 2003 at age 76 after winning five Grand Slam singles titles, including a historic breakthrough singles win at the 1956 French Championships.

"It sends a great message to me in particular, knowing what she went through, being truly the first pioneer, an African-American in tennis, just to a sport that wasn't open to black people," 23-time Slam singles champion Serena Williams said. "It's also really important to be thankful and to know what she went through ... No matter what color you are, you can definitely learn a lot about the opportunities she helped bring to tennis."

At a time when racism was widespread, Gibson also won the 1957 and 1958 US Open and Wimbledon titles despite often being forced to sleep in cars and barred from restaurants. "What people have to understand is how she persevered and what she means not just to our sport, to all society, to everyone," US tennis legend Billie Jean King said. The tribute comes as incidents involving white supremacists are growing in the United States. "Every generation has to continue the process and the fight to keep freedom available, to get rid of sexism and racism," King said. "Right now I think we have a lot of racism."

Venus Williams, a seven-time Slam singles

Sun Yang says 'facts distorted' in doping test

SHANGHAI: China's triple Olympic swimming champion Sun Yang yesterday described as "intolerable" the speculation surrounding him ahead of a Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) hearing into a murky missed drugs test. The 27-year-old's career is in jeopardy after he was accused of smashing a blood vial with a hammer during an out-of-competition dope test last year.

FINA agreed with Sun that testers failed to produce adequate identification or follow protocol, but the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) responded by taking the case to CAS. "Misguided public opinion has distorted the facts," Sun, a hero to millions in China but derided as a "drugs cheat" by some of his rivals, wrote on social media. "My training and my personal life have been greatly disturbed by this and it's become intolerable." Sun, a controversial character, was allowed to compete in the World Championships in South Korea in July, winning two golds but also becoming a focus of protests from other swimmers.

Writing on the Twitter-like Weibo, Sun

Goulder is seen after it's unveiling at the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. — AFP

champion, said the equality Gibson fought for remains elusive. "I don't think anyone really understands what it was like in those days," she said. "We came here for freedom and it was unfortunate that many people were not given that. Because of Althea, people fighting for it, we've gotten a lot closer to it. "She went through it so I didn't have to. What she achieved, that statue is the beginning of what we should be doing for Althea.'

Serena noted the battle for equality as a woman and an African-American continues. "We're going through a lot of that now in general." she said. "We need people to fight for us, whether it is for equality, whether it is for racism... or else change necessarily won't come as fast as we would need it to." England's Angela Buxton, 85, was Gibson's women's doubles partner in 1956 French and Wimbledon title runs but gave a sobering assessment of the artwork.

"You want an honest opinion? Well, it doesn't resemble her at all," Buxton said. "Sorry to

say that. I would have passed her any day and not know who it was. "But the main thing is not the statue. It's what I learned from her and what I enjoyed with her."

Gibson inspired King

Gibson also helped inspire King, a 12-time Grand Slam singles champion who is now 75, to become a historic champion for women's rights. "She totally inspired me," King said. "I knew if Althea had gone through what she had gone through and changed the world, that I had a chance to follow in her footsteps and help change the next generations.

'Althea is a very strong reminder that it's important to the living people right now that we carry on her legacy and the legacy of equality." King said women still have great strides to make in society to achieve equality with men. "Being a woman? We're still second-class citizens, and she's African-American, so just go down the totem pole some more," King said. —AFP



Chinese swimmer Sun Yang

said that he was looking forward to giving his account of what happened during the now-infamous doping test. "There is something I can't say, I can't make the truth public," he added on Weibo. "But fortunately the surveillance cameras have recorded

everything, otherwise I won't be able to defend myself against irresponsible accusations." A CAS hearing was originally scheduled for September, but is now unlikely to be before the end of October, CAS said earlier this month. — AFP

Misbah emerges as front-runner for Pakistan coach

KARACHI: Former captain Misbah-ul-Haq yesterday emerged as the favorite to take over as Pakistan's cricket coach after Mickey Arthur was axed following a disappointing World Cup. Misbah, Pakistan's most successful Test captain, has stepped down from the Pakistan Cricket Board's executive committee to clear the way for his application. "I have resigned from the cricket committee and have applied for the post of Pakistan's head coach," said the former batsman, describing the position as a "dream".

Boxing great Lomachenko now eyes a different catch

LONDON: Ukraine's world lightweight champion Vasyl Lomachenko says he wants to enjoy hunting and fishing and not box on into his 40s like fellow great Manny Pacquiao. The 31-year-old twotime Olympic champion will hope to add the vacant WBC belt to his WBA and WBO lightweight titles when he fights Britain's Luke Campbell in London on Saturday.

Lomachenko, who enjoyed an outstanding amateur career winning Olympic gold in 2008 (featherweight) and 2012 (lightweight) and is believed to have lost just one of his 396 bouts, told

The four-member executive committee declined to renew Arthur's contract after Pakistan failed to reach the semifinal of the World Cup in England and Wales. The PCB did not reveal whether anyone else had applied for the post. However, Pakistani media said former Australian batsman Dean Jones and ex-West Indies paceman Courtney Walsh were among the applicants.

Misbah said competition for the job would be tough. "It is interesting to see my name emerging in the media even before I had applied... I envisage there will be a few more very competent and highly qualified people applying for one of the most challenging jobs in the game," he added. Misbah totalled 26 wins in 56 Tests as captain, with 19 losses and 11 draws. He retired in 2017. Pakistan are likely to announce their new head coach ahead of the limited-overs series against Sri Lanka starting in Karachi from September 27. — AFP

the BBC he will retire before he is 40. Pacquiao became the oldest welterwight world champion in history when aged 40 he won on a split decision over American Keith Thurman in July.

Lomachenko is adamant he will not be following suit. "No, I don't want that, it's too much," he said. "I have trained since I am four years old. I was born a boxer. "Always, something has to end. I want to hunt, I want to fish every day. Now I can't do this as I train every day. "My motivation, my goal, is four titles (at lightweight). After, I don't know what happens. Now it's two more belts."

Campbell matched Lomachenko at the London Olympics in 2012 with gold in the bantamweight division and he will bid to do better than compatriot Anthony Crolla, who was knocked out in the fourth round by the Ukrainian in April. If Lomachenko is to hold all four world title belts, he will not just need to beat Campbell on Saturday but also target Ghana's Richard Commey, who possesses the IBF crown. — AFP



Sports

Dynamite debut: Lukaku scores as **Conte's Inter reign starts in style**

Begins his campaign to topple eight-time holders Juventus

MILAN: Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku scored on his respecting the idea of what I wanted," said Conte. "Then Inter Milan debut as new coach Antonio Conte's reign got off to a perfect start with a 4-0 win over promoted Lecce on Monday. "There was a spark, but now we must become dynamite," said Conte as he begins his campaign to topple eight-time holders Juventus. Lukaku ---a 65 million euros (\$73 million) summer signing from Manchester United — scored the third goal on the hour mark at the San Siro.

A blunder by Lecce goalkeeper Gabriel parried the ball into the path of Lautaro Martinez allowing Lukaku to finish off. The 26-year-old turned and took a bow in front of the jubilant Inter fans among the 65,000 crowd. "Lukaku entered the world of Inter in the best way, with great humility," said Conte. "He's a gentle giant, a giant with a smile. He is ready to work for the team. But not only Romelu, Lautaro also played very well.'

Croatian Marcelo Brozovic had opened the scoring after 21 minutes with a powerful strike for his 15th goal in his sixth season with Inter. But another new signing Stefano Sensi, a summer loan from Sassuolo, also found a way through three minutes later. Lecce played the last quarter of an hour a man down after Brazilian Diego Farias saw red in his first game for a stude on tackle on his former Cagliari teammate Nicolo Barella.

Antonio Candreva blasted in the fourth goal on 84 minutes, allowing Inter to match champions Juventus and runners-up Napoli who both won their opening league matches at the weekend. Juventus beat Parma 1-0, with Napoli edging a seven-goal thriller at Fiorentina 4-3. "We started off well with the right intensity and desire,

at 2-0 I didn't like what I saw from the lads. Too relaxed, losing intensity under pressure. "We need to improve both mentally and physically but I am very happy and satisfied, I like working with these guys who have always shown great commitment. "Let's celebrate until midnight, from tomorrow we think of Cagliari, it will be a difficult trip," he added of next weekend's game in Sardinia.

Icardi 'irritates'

Conte's arrival at Chinese-owned Inter has raised expectations of a first Serie A title since 2010. The former Juventus and Chelsea boss took over from Luciano Spalletti who secured Champions League football with a fourth-place finish last season. The 50-year-old's coaching credentials include three Serie A titles with Juventus from 2012 to 2014, and the Premier League with Chelsea in 2017.

And former Italy boss Conte's first game was against his hometown club Lecce, the team where he started his playing career, and who are back in Serie A after seven years. The sideshow surrounding former Inter captain Mauro Icardi continued with the Argentine not named on the bench. Inter director Giuseppe Marotta insisted there was no room in the club for the forward, with the transfer window closing on September 2.

Icardi has rejected moves away from the San Siro despite being frozen out of the team and stripped of the captain's armband last season amid a protracted contract dispute. Icardi's wife Wanda Nara, who is also his agent, said he wants to remain at Inter and had been told to



MILAN: Inter Milan's Italian forward Antonio Candreva (C) celebrates scoring with Inter Milan's Belgian forward Romelu Lukaku (L) and Inter Milan's Italian midfielder Nicolo Barella during the Italian Serie A football match Inter Milan vs US Lecce on August 26, 2019 at the San Siro stadium. — AFP

comments with a bit of irritation, both for the timing and the method," Marotta told sports broadcaster DAZN Zhang, have invited Icardi to stay." — AFP

stay by senior club bosses. "We greeted Wanda Nara's before Monday's game. "I absolutely deny that any of the club management, and in particular (president) Steven

African players in **Europe: Klopp** hails 'absolutely amazing' Salah

PARIS: Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp called a Mohamed Salah goal against Arsenal at the weekend "absolutely amazing" as the Egyptian once again stole the show among Africans in the major European leagues. The reigning African Footballer of the Year fired into the corner of the net after a run from close to the halfway line as the Reds triumphed 3-1 to top the Premier League table. Salah has recovered impressively with Liverpool after being part of the Egyptian team stunned by South Africa in Cairo at the last-16 stage of the Africa Cup of Nations during July.



Naismith, Snodgrass recalled for crucial Scotland Euro qualifiers

LONDON: Experienced duo Steven Naismith and Robert Snodgrass were recalled to the Scotland squad by Steve Clarke yesterday for next month's challenging home Euro 2020 qualifiers with Russia and Belgium. Naismith, who won the last of his 49 caps against Portugal in October last vear, has been beset by injury problems and this term the 32-year-old forward has not played a full 90 minutes for Scottish Premiership side Hearts.

West Ham defender Snodgrass, 31, has not featured in a Scotland side since coming on as a substitute for his

"But at the moment I just feel it's a little bit too early to push him."

Scotland made a woeful start in their Euro qualifying campaign under Clarke's predecessor Alex McLeish, having been hammered by Kazakhstan and Belgium, the number one ranked side in the world. Scotland are fourth in their group, level on six points from a possible 12 with Kazakhstan, six points behind leaders Belgium. The Scots host Russia, who are second in the group with nine points, on September 6, and the Belgians three days later.

ENGLAND Mohamed Salah (Liverpool)

The Egypt forward produced a masterpiece in a 3-1 win over Arsenal as he scored an early contender for goal of the season. With Liverpool two goals up after Cameroon defender Joel Matip's header and Salah's penalty, the star man took possession just inside the Arsenal half and weaved his magic. Accelerating away from David Luiz and Nacho Monreal, Salah burst into the penalty area and fired home to ensure leaders Liverpool extended their 100 percent start to the season.

Jordan Avew (Crystal Palace)

The Ghana forward bagged his first goal of the season to help Palace claim their first league win at Manchester United since 1989. Ayew scored the opener in the first half of the 2-1 triumph, latching on to Jeffrey Schlupp's flick-on and coolly converting Palace's first goal of the campaign.

Moussa Djenepo (Southampton)

The Mali winger made a stunning impact with his first Premier League goal to set the Saints on course for a 2-0 win at south-coast rivals Brighton. Djenepo, a close season signing from Standard Liege, had been on the pitch as a

ANFIELD: Liverpool's Egyptian midfielder Mohamed Salah runs with the ball during the English Premier League football match between Liverpool and Arsenal at Anfield. — AFP

substitute for just 78 seconds when he cut in from the left to bury the ball into the top-right corner from the edge of the area.

SPAIN Karl Toko Ekambi (Villarreal)

The Cameroonian laid on the assist for Gerard Moreno to open the scoring for Villarreal, but could not stop Levante coming from behind to win 2-1. Midfielder Toko Ekambi slid a perfect pass for Moreno to finish in the third minute at the City of Valencia Stadium but two Roger Marti penalties in the second half gave Levante victory.

ITALY

Christian Kouame (Genoa) Ivorian Kouame grabbed a point for Genoa in a hard-fought 3-3 draw against Roma in the Stadio Olimpico. The 21-year-old's diving header on 70 minutes wrapped up the scoring and earned him his fifth Serie A goal.

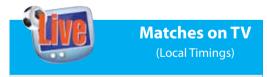
Kevin-Prince Boateng (Fiorentina)

Former Ghana international Boateng scored his first goal for new club Fiorentina in a 4-3 defeat by Napoli. The 32-year-old arrived from

Serie A rivals Sassuolo during the close season after a loan spell with Barcelona. He scored the third Fiorentina goal to pull them level, but the Serie A runners-up snatched victory two minutes later.

GERMANY Ihlas Bebou (Hoffenheim)

The Togolese forward scored his first league goal for new club Hoffenheim in a 3-2 win over Werder Bremen, smashing in a loose ball inside the area to put his team 2-1 up on the hour mark. — AFP



FRENCH LEAGUE

LOSC Lille v Saint Etienne 20:00 **beIN SPORTS** OGC Nice v Olympique Marseille. 22:00 beIN SPORTS

Hulk double saves 'lost' Shanghai

SHANGHAI: Brazilian striker Hulk scored twice from the penalty spot to rescue Shanghai SIPG in a 2-2 stalemate against Urawa Reds in the AFC Champions League quarter-finals yesterday. J-League side Urawa will go into the home second leg as slight favorites on the away-goals rule, but it could have been so much better after they led 2-0 at the break.

The 33-year-old Hulk held his nerve twice in the second half from the spot to keep Vitor Pereira's Chinese champions alive in the tie. Pereira felt that his side, boasting expensively assembled attacking players Hulk, Oscar and Marko Arnautovic, could have gone on to win the game. "At half-time we were maybe out of the competition," said the Portuguese. "But crowd feeling that Yan was fouled

now everything is possible. "In the first half the team looked lost, lost on the pitch and without confidence," he added. "We suffered a bit, but the reaction in the second half gave us hope to win the game."

Shanghai's Chinese international goalkeeper Yan Junling was badly at fault for the opener as Urawa threatened to go goal-crazy at a stunned Shanghai Stadium. On only three minutes he flapped at a high ball, dropping it at the feet of Tomoaki Makino, who swivelled to fire into an empty net. The home side complained bitterly but Yan was culpable, spilling the ball under negligible pressure from Makino. On 30 minutes the visitors, two-time Asian champions, stretched their lead when Shinzo Koroki ran through on goal and slotted under Yan, who again might have done better.

Shanghai's record of never losing in the Champions League at home in 19 matches was in serious danger. Boos rang out at half-time in the direction of referee Mohammed Abdulla Hassan of the United Arab Emirates, the home



SHANGHAI: Shanghai SIPG's Hulk gestures in the match against Urawa Red Diamonds during their AFC Champions League quarter-final football match at Shanghai Stadium. -—AFP

for the opener. Arnautovic, signed from West Ham United during the summer, was making his Asian Champions League debut, but the Austrian striker was subdued throughout.

Shanghai, whose domestic league defense is faltering after racking up too many draws, to win the penalty. —AFP

emerged for the second half with intent and scored on 49 minutes. Oscar, an Asian-record 60 million euro capture from Chelsea in 2017, took on several Urawa players before he was felled in the box. It looked harsh on the visitors, with Oscar appearing to leave his leg in

26th cap in the 4-0 hammering by Belgium in a friendly in September 2018. "He has good experience, Robert," said Clarke. "When I spoke to him over the summer he was very keen to come back on board. "He picked up a little injury last week but he let us know he was fine." Despite the size of the task facing Scotland, who have conceded seven goals without scoring against Belgium in their last two outings, Clarke decided to give striker Leigh Griffiths more time to reintegrate into the Celtic team.

Griffiths missed the last six months of the 2018/19 campaign to deal with mental health problems but has scored three goals this season and said he was ready to return for Scotland. "He was close," Clarke said. "Leigh has got some fantastic attributes. I just look at him just now and he's come a long way in a short space of time after a very difficult spell in his life. "And I feel we should just give him a little more time to settle into the role again at Celtic and get himself fully fit and firing. And a fully fit and firing, sharp Leigh Griffiths will always be good for us.

Xavi's Al Sadd beaten in quarter final first leg

DOHA: Xavi's Al Sadd face an uphill task after a 2-1 defeat in their AFC quarter-final first leg against Saudi Arabia's Al Nassr on Monday. Al Nassr, who qualified for the quarterfinals for the first time, missed star striker Abdelrazzaq Hamdallah through injury. But nevertheless they made most of their chances to clinch the win in front of a huge crowd at the King Fahd International Stadium in Riyadh.

The hosts enjoyed the upper hand early in the match and came close to scoring in the 14th minute when Abdulrahman al-Dawsari broke free and passed to Saleh Al-Abbas, whose shot hit the upright. With the pace picking up, Al Sadd began to make inroads and broke the stalemate in the 21st minute. Abdelkarim Hassan's pass from the left was fumbled by Hassan Al-Haydos but the

Squad

Goalkeepers: Craig MacGillivray (Portsmouth/ENG), David Marshall (Wigan Athletic/ENG), McLaughlin (Sunderland/ENG)

Defenders: Liam Cooper (Leeds United/ENG), Grant Hanley (Norwich City/ENG), Charlie Mulgrew (Wigan Athletic/ENG), Stephen O'Donnell (Kilmarnock), Liam Palmer (Sheffield Wednesday/ENG), Andrew Robertson (Liverpool/ENG), Greg Taylor (Kilmarnock)

Midfielders: Stuart Armstrong (Southampton/ENG), Ryan Christie (Celtic), Ryan Jack (Rangers), John McGinn (Aston Villa/ENG), Callum McGregor (Celtic), Kenny McLean (Norwich City/ENG), Robert Snodgrass (West Ham United/ENG), Scott McTominay (Manchester United/ENG)

Forwards: James Forrest (Celtic), Ryan Fraser (Bournemouth/ENG), Oliver McBurnie (Sheffield United/ENG), Steven Naismith (Hearts), Matt Phillips (West Bromwich Albion/ENG), Johnny Russell (Sporting Kansas City/USA) — AFP

ball fortuitously fell to Ali Asadalla, who scored with a measured shot from the right into the top of the net.

The hosts kept looking for openings and built up pressure, finding the equalizer a minute before half-time, thanks to a defensive lapse. Giuliano's corner caught Al Sadd napping and Al-Dawasri was quick to pounce on the ball and shoot home from close range. Al Nassr could have gone ahead immediately after played started in the second half but Al Sadd goalkeeper Saad al-Sheeb brought off a fine reflex save off a powerful shot from Fahad bin Jumayah.

While the Al Sadd attack led by Akram Afif did cause jitters for the hosts, they couldn't find a way to get past the defense. Al Nassr found the winning goal in the 72nd minute, this time Giuliano turning from provider to scorer. Moroccan Nordin Amarabat instigated the move, crossing from the left for Feras Al-Biraikan, who in turn headed the ball towards Giuliano. The Brazilian made no mistake with a header of his own, his sixth goal of the tournament. Al Sadd will now meet Al Nassr in the second leg on September 16 in Doha, hoping their away goal will stand them in good stead as they chase a second straight semi-final spot. — AFP



Sport Vinez

WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 28, 2019

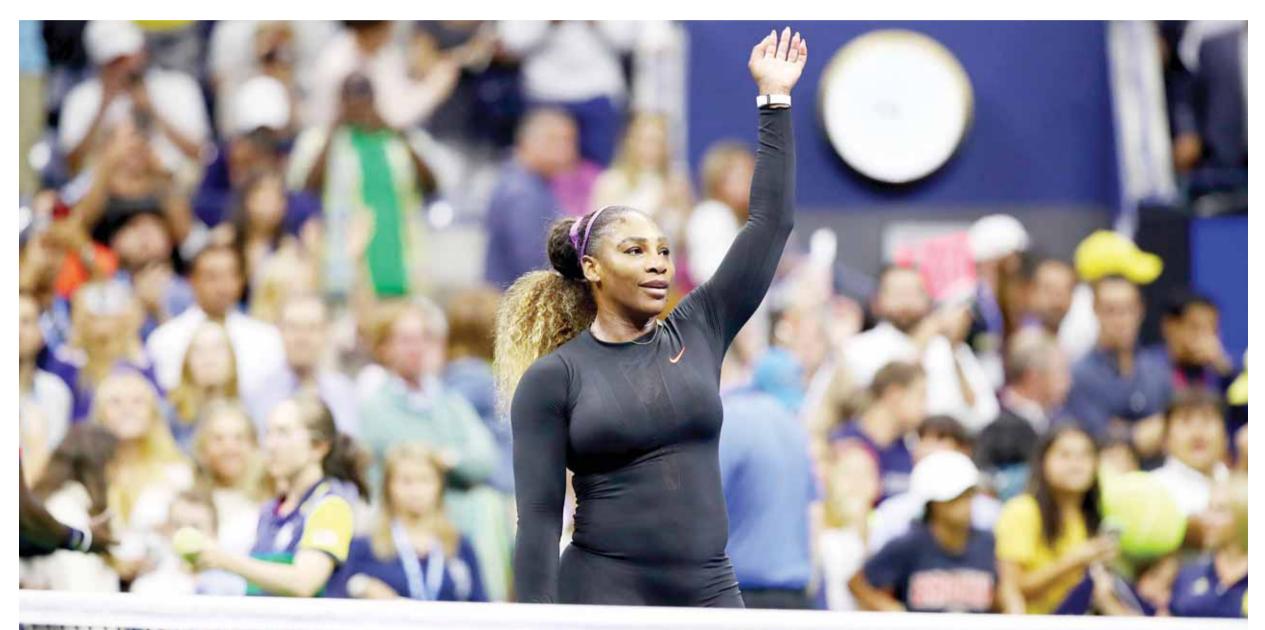


Space Jam or the World Cup? LeBron among US' absent stars



- 'Village cricketer' Leach can't believe he's an Ashes hero
- Dynamite debut: Lukaku scores as Conte's Inter reign starts in style





Serena routs Sharapova in US Open

'Rusty' Federer rallies past Indian qualifier Sumit Nagal

NEW YORK: Serena Williams overwhelmed Maria Sharapova 6-1, 6-1 on Monday to reach the second round of the US Open in search of her 24th Grand Slam title while "rusty" Roger Federer rallied past Indian qualifier Sumit Nagal. Six-time US Open champion Williams crushed the five-time major winner from Russia in only 59 minutes, beating Sharapova for the 19th consecutive time and improving to 20-2 in their all-time rivalry.

"Whenever I play her I bring out some of my best tennis," Williams said. "When you play her you have to be super focused." Williams, who next plays 121st-ranked US wildcard Caty McNally, blasted five aces and 16 winners while Sharapova made 20 unforced errors. "She served really well. Found her spots really well," Sharapova said. "I think that's where she hurt me a lot."

Williams is hoping to match the all-time record of 24 Slam singles titles won by Margaret Court. Swiss third seed Federer, who has a men's record 20 Slam titles, dropped the opening set in 36 minutes, then returned to form and defeated Nagal 4-6, 6-1, 6-2, 6-4. "I played like my beard today. I was rusty," Federer said. The shock first set was a wake-up call, a 38-year-old legend who was 61-0 in Grand Slam first rounds since the 2003 French Open trailing a 22-year-old from New Delhi who is ranked 190th and fell to 0-5 in tour-level matches.

'Just in time'

"Just tried to forget it, play tough, stay with him. It was a tough first set for me," Federer said. "He came back and played really strong. I was missing a lot of balls and trying to cut back on unforced errors. "It all came back just in time." Sharapova, the 2006 US Open winner who defeated Williams in the 2004 Wimbledon final, upset Simona Halep in the first round two years ago but could not revive that magic.

The 37-year-old American said that after learning she would face Sharapova, "every practice after that was super focused and super intense." Eighth-seeded Williams rolled through the first set in 24 minutes then broke to open the second. She denied Sharapova on two break points to hold in the fifth game, an impressive backhand winner ending the threat. "That was definitely a big point for me," Williams said. "You can't let her get any momentum." Williams broke again to 4-1, rescued three break points in the sixth game to hold serve and broke again to advance, showing no sign of the back spasms that limited her pre-Open play. "The body is good," she said. "My back is a lot better. I'm excited. This is going to be fun."

Djokovic cruises

Top-ranked defending champion Novak Djokovic cruised into the second round while French Open champion Ashleigh Barty and third seed Karolina Pliskova struggled but advanced. Serbian star Djokovic, who has won four of the past five Grand Slam singles titles, dispatched Spain's 76th-ranked Roberto Carballes Baena 6-4, 6-1, 6-4. "Getting out of the blocks, it takes time for you to feel comfortable on the court," Djokovic said. "I'm quite pleased with my performance and looking forward to the next one."

Djokovic, trying to become the first back-to-back US Open winner since Federer won from 2004-2008, will next face Argentina's 56th-ranked Juan Ignacio Londero. Djokovic owns 16 Grand Slam titles, four off Federer's record and two back of Spain's Rafael Nadal. Together the "Big Three" have won the past 11 Slam titles and are again heavy favorites. Australian second seed Barty overcame a horrible start to oust 80th-ranked Zarina Diyas of Kazakhstan 1-6, 6-3, 6-2.

Barty made 19 unforced errors to drop the first set in 28 minutes, but took nine of the last 11 games to book a date with American Lauren Davis. Pliskova, a 2016 US Open runner-up, edged 138th-ranked Czech compatriot Tereza Martincova 7-6 (8/6), 7-6 (7/3) after exchanging service breaks over the first six games. "Not my best performance," Pliskova said. "Not happy that I lost three breaks of serve in a row." Russian fifth seed Daniil Medvedev, an ATP winner at Cincinnati, beat India's Prajnesh Gunneswaran 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 in 85 minutes. He faces Bolivia's Hugo Dellien next.

"I can't say I'm feeling amazing about my game but to win by that score in the first round is great," Medvedev said. Japanese seventh seed Kei Nishikori, the 2014 US Open runner-up, won 6-1, 4-1, when Argentine qualifier Marco Trungelliti retired with a back injury. "I'm happy with the way I played," said Nishikori, who gets American Bradley Klahn next. — AFP

Red Star Belgrade fans park tank, spark uproar

BELGRADE: Red Star Belgrade fans stirred controversy by parking an army tank outside their stadium ahead of yesterday's Champions League play-off second leg against Swiss side Young Boys. The tank, a decommissioned T-55 purchased from an army depot and painted with Red Star's logo, was installed with a crane outside the stadium stands as an "attraction", the Serbian club said on their Facebook page.

However, the move divided fans and

drew strong condemnation in neighboring Croatia, who saw the tank as a symbol of the assault by Serb forces on the city of Vukovar at the start of Croatia's independence war in the 1990s. An article in the leading Croatian sports daily Sportske novosti slammed the "morbid provocation from Belgrade".

"They want to play in the Champions League as they celebrate one of the worst crimes," the newspaper wrote. Online Croatian news site Index.hr accused Red Star of "displaying a Vukovar tank in front of their stadium", although neither the club nor its supporters presented it that way. On their own fan website, redstarbelgrade.rs, supporters said the tank was meant to represent the "machine" of the club and the nickname of a group of hardcore fans, who are known as the Northern Army.

The controversy comes amid already high tensions after a Serb-owned bar in Croatia's Knin region was attacked by masked men while patrons were watching the first leg between Red Star and Young Boys last week. The relationship between Croats and the Serb minority in Knin is still tense almost 25 years after the end of the 1991-1995 independence war that separated Croatia from Serbia and the rest of the former Yugoslavia.

The incident involving the tank divided opinion in Serbia, with some welcoming the move on social media while others denounced it as in "bad taste". Yesterday fans at the stadium clambered on top of the tank and posed for photos. Questioned at a press conference, Serbia's Interior Minister Nebojsa Stefanovic said "there were no elements of a criminal act and therefore no reason for police intervention" in regards to the tank. Red Star are hoping to secure progress to the Champions League group stage for the second season running after a 2-2 draw in the first leg in Switzerland last week. — AFP



BELGRADE: Red Star fans pose on a former Yugoslav army T-55 tank parked at the northern grandstand of the Rajko Mitic stadium. —AFP