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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 hejira 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 hejira 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 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



Riyadh Al-Adasani

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.

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

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 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 Zhukovskiy yesterday. — AFP



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

## 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 Iranian-backed movement would respond to the crash of two

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.

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



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

# 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



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.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace Minister of Finance Nayef 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



(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



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.

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 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

## Local

# 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 Abdel Fattah el-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

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 A320neo 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 gradually through 2026. — KUNA

## Chinese Ambassador visits 6.5 Ring Road construction site

**KUWAIT:** The Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang paid an on-site 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

is believed that MCC, as a national 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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## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: 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 zero-emission 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 getting 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



KUWAIT: An electric car charging station provided by a local dealership in Kuwait. — KUNA photos

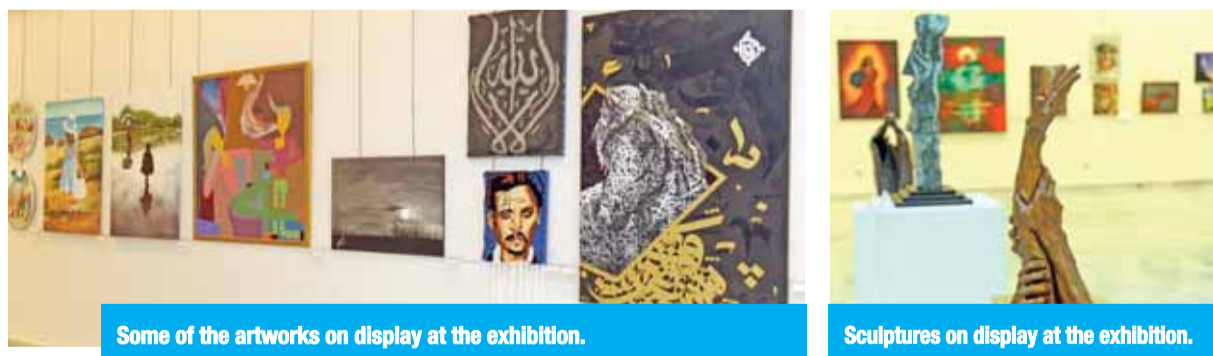
from promoting zero-emission vehicles. While the private sector is endorsing zero-emission vehicles, the government is carrying out similar steps to encourage the usage of electrical cars, motorbikes and so on.

The Environment Public Authority (EPA), the Ministry of Water and Electricity, and the Public Authority for Industry (PAI) are all working on measures to promote zero-emission vehicles in line with the State of Kuwait's 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.

environment and will coordinate efforts to encourage state bodies to choose electrical vehicles especially with the fact that Kuwait had recorded high temperatures this summer, a sign that climate change is on the rise. — KUNA



Some of the artworks on display at the exhibition.

Sculptures 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, study-

ing the projects offered by Yarmouk city and expressing opinions regarding the required standards in addition to holding workshops in the area.

On March 17, 2019, Yarmouk

was announced as the first healthy city in Kuwait to be recognized by World Health Organization (WHO), due to compliance with relevant standards. — KUNA



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 operate.

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 including inspections, issuance of licenses, legal matters and others," she explained.

"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.



Hanaa Al-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.



Dr Basel Al-Sabah



Over 680 nurseries in Kuwait

"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.

## 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 departing US ambassador, Jabri said visits by His 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



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



Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri meets with the Chinese Ambassador to Kuwait Li Minggang.

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



Indian opposition using witchcraft: Modi's ally

## 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

BEIRUT: Clashes between anti-government fighters and regime forces killed 51 combatants on both sides in northwestern Syria yesterday, a war monitor said. Russia-backed regime fighters have for weeks been chipping away at the edges of the jihadist-run stronghold of Idlib—a province that borders Turkey—after bombarding it for months.

But headline 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 full-blown 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

killed more than 920 civilians, the 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 overrun 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

such new territorial lines. Last week, regime 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.

### '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 north-eastern Syria and the Kurdish groups there,” Lund said. —Agencies

## 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 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

## 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 multi-vehicle 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

## 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 climate-change 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 Brazilian 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

**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-

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.

### Grey area

"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

## 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



Sergei Magnitsky

comply with their duty to protect his life". They also said Magnitsky had been ill-treated 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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## International

## 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 German city of Chemnitz but, 30 years after the Berlin Wall fell, another political wind is blowing here as the ex-communist 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

the legacy of the peaceful revolution of 1989, which 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 vocal 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 one-party 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-



**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

ured 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

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

## 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

## 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 capsized 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

## 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 renegotiate 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



**LONDON:** Britain's opposition Labor Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn (2nd right) sits with members of his shadow cabinet 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 pre-eminent 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



**DOVER:** Marchers wave to detainees in the prison as they go by Stafford 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 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

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

## 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, an 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



## 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 Muslim-majority 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 by women's rights groups. According to the ruling, the

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

## 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.

### Taking the lead

The force's origins can be traced back to the



**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 and Kashmir. "The malleability and the resistance of the force is very high," said Nair. In Srinagar, it is

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 has defended the use of what it refers to as non-lethal weapons. — Reuters

## 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) member of parliament for Bhopal constituency Pragya Singh Thakur gestures in this file photo as she leaves after attending the parliament session in New Delhi. — AFP



**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 long-awaited 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 identi-

fying 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 employ-

er 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 decreed 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 violations 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 Trigroudj 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



**KATHMANDU:** A boy swims in a pond covered with algae at Kirtipur on the outskirts of Kathmandu. — AFP



## Business

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IRVINE, CALIFORNIA: A sign is posted at the Johnson &amp; 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&amp;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

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

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

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.

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. Sujjan 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-



NEW DELHI: A fish stall worker arranges seafood and ice in a bucket at the INA food 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 year-accusing it of trying to undermine it.

He was followed in June by deputy governor Viral Acharya 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

# 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

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 Tasilaq, 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

## 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 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

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 demonstrators who gather weekly in the capital Algiers.

Elections for a successor for Bouteflika have been postponed indefinitely, despite a dialogue between opposition parties and the non-party government managed by army chief Lieutenant General Ahmed Gaed Salah.

To limit further dissent, the interim government has held back planned reforms, initiated towards the end of 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.

"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.

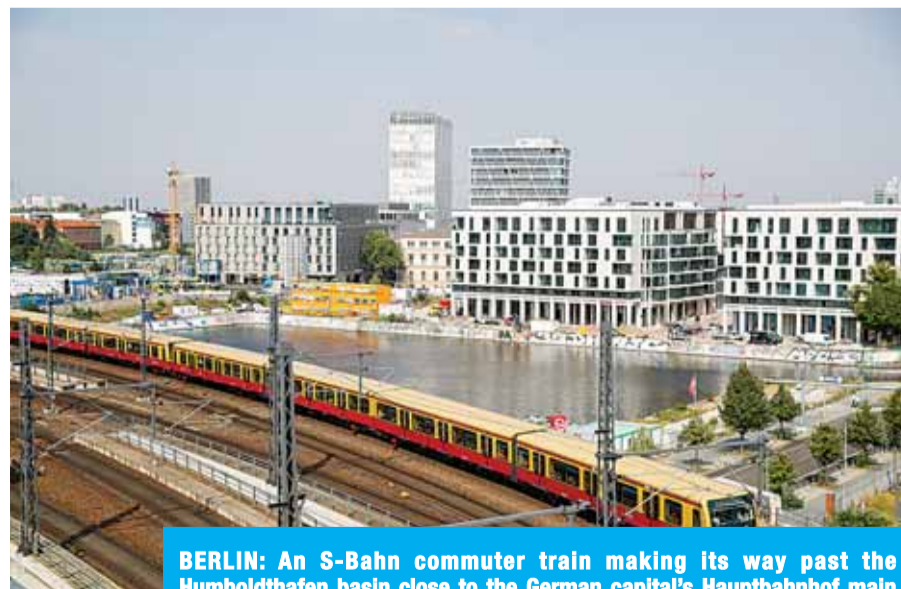
The German economy, which is highly dependent on exports, is vulnerable to global trading tensions, especially strife between Washington and Beijing, and uncertainty about Britain's exit from the European Union at the end of October. In seasonally adjusted figures, German exports fell by 1.3 percent 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 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

## 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 (PID) 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

## 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

## Business

# 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 pyramids

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

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

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.

## Agility invests \$18m in green supply chain technologies

**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

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 benefiting from the \$18 million investment include Hylion and TVP Solar. Hylion 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,

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

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

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

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

## 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](http://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 photos-allowing their channels, stories and posts to stand out and make an impact. A new-and-improved version of the S Pen is also packed into the Galaxy Note10, building on the Bluetooth Low Energy-enabled S Pen capabilities with

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Technology

# Spacecraft carrying Russia's first humanoid robot docks at ISS

MOSCOW: It was second time lucky yesterday as an unmanned Soyuz 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 life-size 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-

ing shortly after lift-off — the first failure in the history 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-350, 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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- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, Ingrowing nail)
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Breast surgeries
- Hernia repair
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

**Dr. Hani Haider**  
General Surgery Consultant  
http://www.international-clinic.com  
Tel: 1886677  
ic\_kwt

**Scope of Clinical Practice:**

- General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- Single Port Surgery
- Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- VAAFT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon insertion & removal
- Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- Laparoscopic mini bypass
- Transanal minimally invasive surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

- American Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of American College of Surgery
- Canadian Board of General Surgery
- Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada
- American Board of Colo-Rectal Surgery
- American Board of Surgical Critical Care

**Dr. Abdullah Al Haddad**  
Surgery Department  
Consultant General Surgery, Laparoscopic & Colo-Rectal Surgeon

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**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
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Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

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**DR. WALEED S BUHAIMED**  
Consultant of General Surgery  
Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

**Academic Certificates - Training**

- Kuwait Board of General Surgery.
- (IFSO) member .
- Faculty member of (BEST).
- Member of Kuwait Surgical Association.

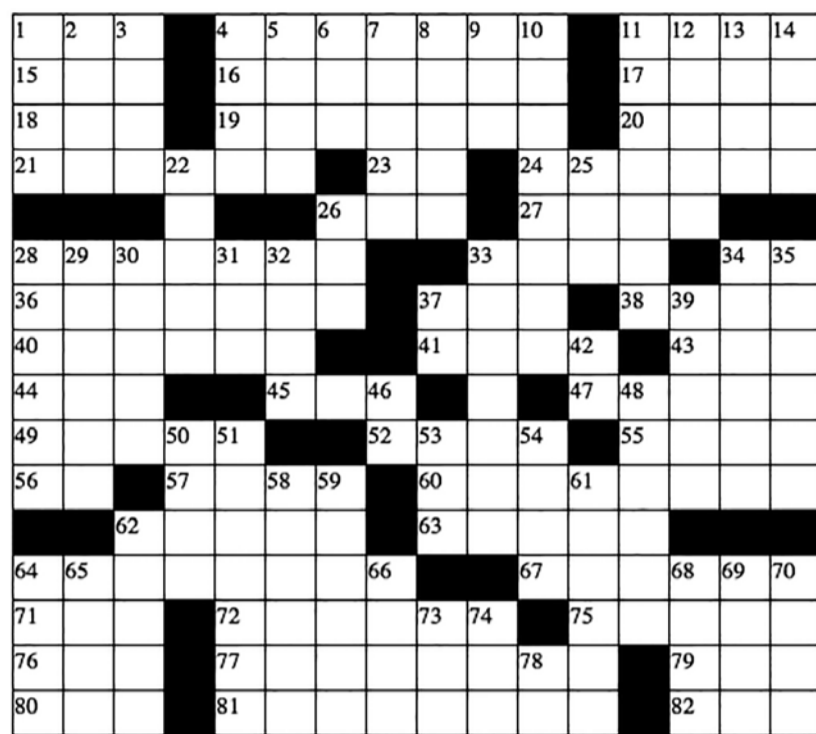
**Scope of clinical Practice.**

- Bariatric surgeries.
- Gallbladder stones surgeries.
- Abdominal wall and hernia surgeries.
- G.I. surgeries.
- Thyroid and para - thyroid surgeries.
- Anal surgeries.

email: wbuhaimed@gmail.com Tel.: 965 22269411/ Mob.: 965 99212228  
Jabriya, 4th Ring Road, Block 1A Floor 9 - Clover Center Mazaya Building

Stars

CROSSWORD 2292



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 coordinate 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 involving 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.

DOWN

- 1. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
2. A lymph node that is inflamed and swollen because of plague or gonorrhoea or tuberculosis.
3. Impairment resulting from long use.
4. The state or quality of being widely honored and acclaimed.
5. 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 communion is given.
9. Not reflecting light.
10. Antacid (trade name Prilosec) that suppresses acid secretion in the stomach.
11. I species.
12. (zoology) Pertaining to or characteristic of birds.
13. City in northern Austria on the Danube.
14. At or constituting a border or edge.
22. A name under which Ninkhursag was worshipped.
25. Hormone secreted by the posterior pituitary gland (trade name Pitressin) and also by nerve endings in the hypothalamus.
26. A logarithmic unit of sound intensity equal to 10 decibels.
29. An archaic name for Easter or Passover.
30. Any of several tall tropical palms native to southeastern Asia having egg-shaped nuts.
31. Aromatic bulb used as seasoning.
32. A door-like movable barrier in a fence or wall.
33. The slender spear of the Bantu-speaking people of Africa.
34. (Akkadian) Mother of the gods and consort of Apsu.
35. (botany) Bearing a coma.
37. A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
39. A republic in West Africa on the Gulf of Guinea.
42. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
46. The eleventh month of the civil year.
48. A dog small and tame enough to be held in the lap.
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.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

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.



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.



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.



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.



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.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

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.



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.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

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.



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 job-related thoughts and ideas are available and as a result you will find business matters fall into place very well.



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.



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.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

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.

Wordsearch Puzzle

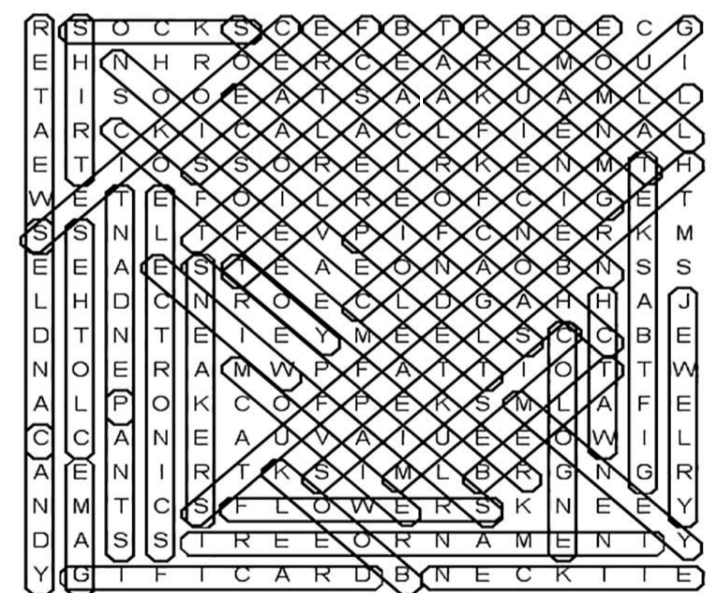
Christmas Tree

Find and circle all of the Christmas Tree words that are hidden in the grid. The remaining 53 letters spell a secret message.



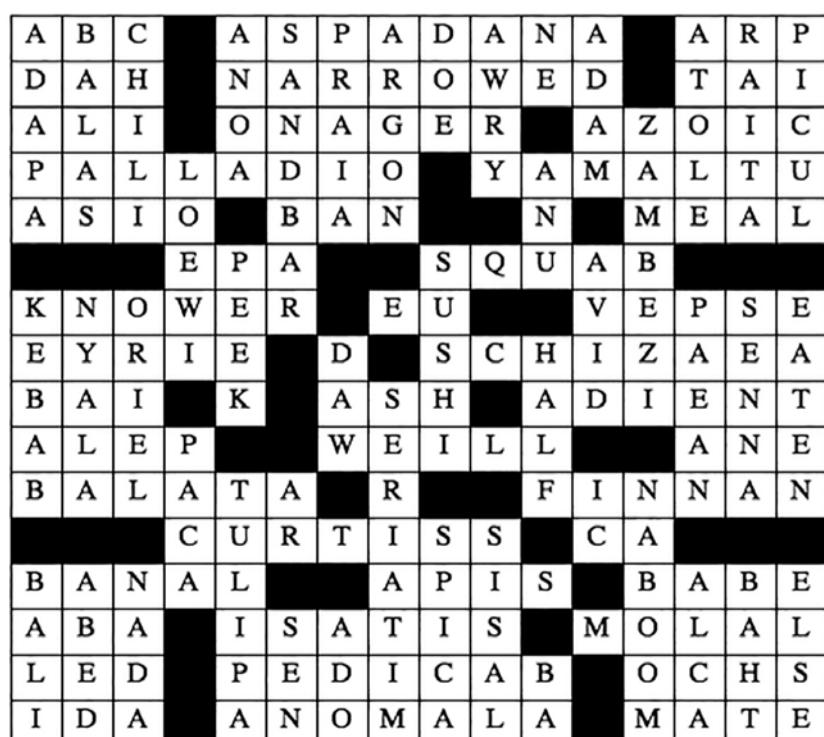
- ANGEL, ARTIFICIAL BRANCHES, CANDY CANES, CELEBRATION, DECEMBER, DECORATE, DECORATIONS, FESTIVE, FRESH CUT, GARLAND, GIFTS, GREEN, LARGE, LIGHTS, NEEDLES, ORNAMENTS, PINE, PRESENTS, PURCHASE, REAL, SCENT, SETTING UP, SKIRT, SMALL, SPRUCE, STAND, STAR, TAKING DOWN, TINSSEL, TOPPER, TRADITION, TREE FARM, TREE LOT, TRUNK, WATER, YEARLY.

Christmas Gift Ideas

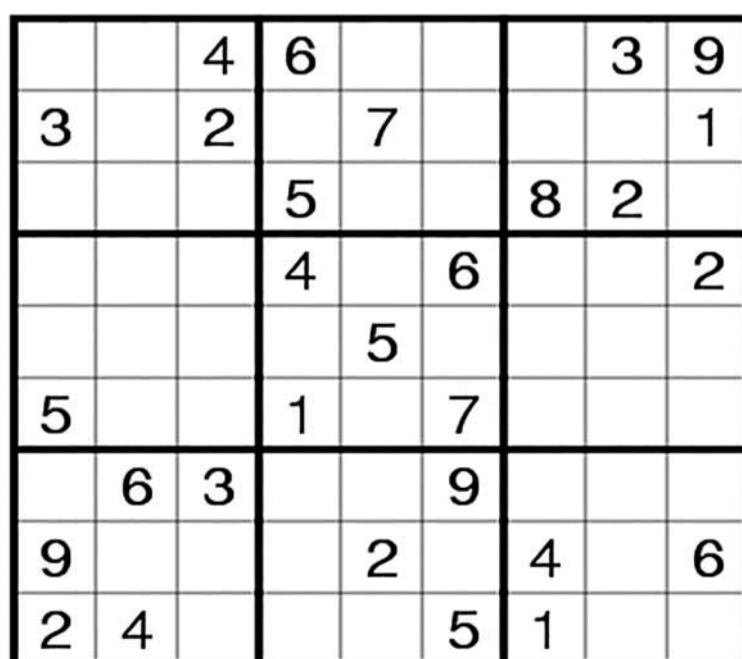


- BAKING, BELT, BOOK, BRACELET, CANDLES, CANDY, CHOCOLATES, CLOTHES, COFFEE MAKER, COFFEE MUG, COLOGNE, COOKIES, DOLL, EARRINGS, ELECTRONICS, FLOWERS, GAME, GIFT BASKET, GIFT CARD, HERBAL TEAS, JEWELRY, MONEY, MOVIE, MUSIC, NECKLACE, NECKTIE, PANTS, PENDANT, PERFUME, PLANT, SCARF, SHIRT, SNEAKERS, SOCKS,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

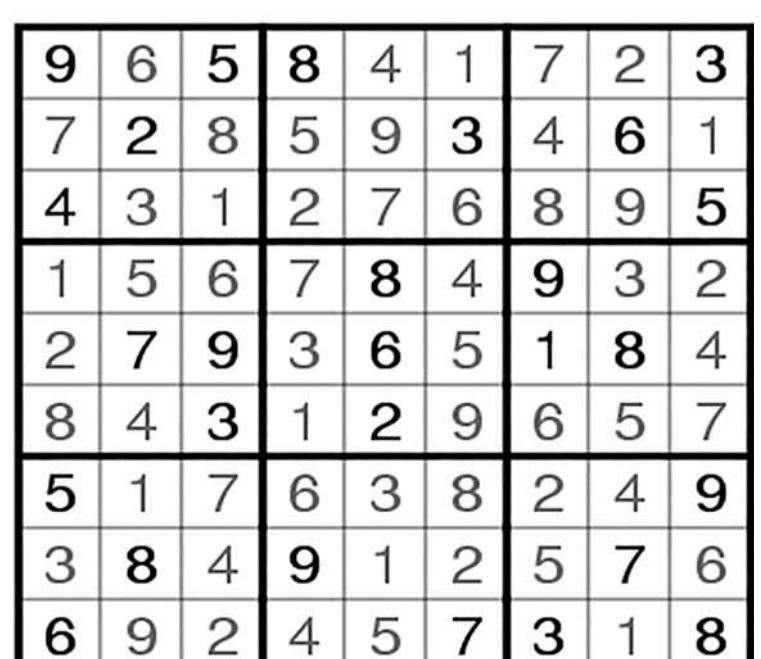
Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



# 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

Holidaymakers 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 Rosignano Solvay.



A man surfs as a ship sails next to the “Spiagge Bianche” (white sand) beach.



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

Art 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 pub-

lic 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



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



Singer-songwriter Miley Cyrus performs on stage.

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



US singer-songwriter Billy Ray Cyrus speaks on stage.



Canadian singer-songwriter Shawn Mendes performs on stage.

Korean boy band BTS won for best K-Pop and best group, while the 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 Beyonce. — Reuters



Missy Elliott performs onstage.



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



Shawn Mendes and Camila Cabello perform onstage.



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



Colombian musician J Balvin poses with awards.



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



US singer Normani performs on stage.



US singer Lizzo performs on stage.



US singer Bebe Rexha poses with an award.



US rapper Fetty Wap performs on stage.



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**

Jonas Brothers - "Sucker"

**BEST DANCE**

The Chainsmokers ft. Bebe Rexha - "Call You Mine"

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



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.



Haitian rapper Wyclef Jean performs on stage.



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



Missy Elliott performs on stage.



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

Two 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.

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 world—what better way to give a different image of our country,” he said. — AFP



Players hew a thin stick, roughly about as long 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.

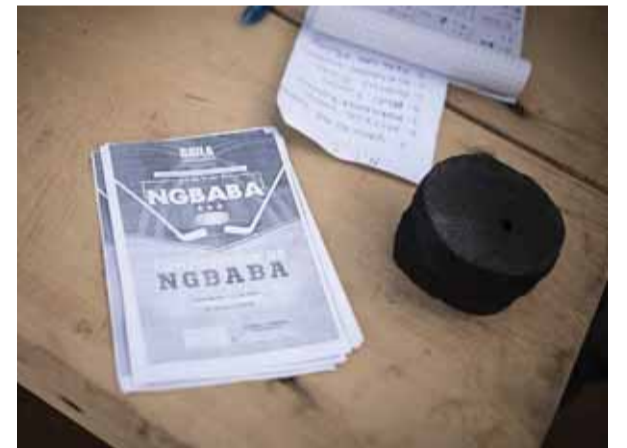
To reach the puck in time requires lightning sharp reflexes, and it takes quick thinking and team coordination to mount a counterattack. “It’s



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.



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

E-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 Singapore-based 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 research 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.









## Sports

# '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 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 night-watchman 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

endeared him to the crowd. "It's nice to have that, it's 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



**LEEDS:** England's Ben Stokes (R) and England's Jack Leach react after winning the third Ashes cricket Test match between England and Australia at Headingley. — AFP

injured, Leach suddenly found himself unexpectedly thrust back into the Test side. "I probably thought I'd be watching the Ashes at home," he admitted. "But I

wanted to be ready to play and not presume anything. Now my opportunity has come about so I'm trying to make the most of it." — AFP

## Black tennis pioneer Gibson honored, equality fight goes on

**NEW YORK:** Even as a new US Open statue paid tribute to the courage and perseverance 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 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



**NEW YORK:** A statue honoring the pioneering champion Althea Gibson by artist Eric Gouldner is seen after its 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

## 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, averaging 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

## 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 great Manny Pacquiao. The 31-year-old two-time 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 semi-final 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 pacesman 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 welterweight 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

## 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



**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



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



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



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



NEW YORK: Serena Williams of the United States celebrates after defeating Maria Sharapova of Russia after their Women's Singles first round match on day one of the 2019 US Open at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center. — AFP

# 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 Cathy 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 Prajesh 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 Trungelli 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