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MPs pass budget with deficit of KD 6.7bn, higher spending

Finance minister survives no-confidence vote, Amir sends congratulations

By B Izzak

102,280 residencies of expats cancelled in four years: MoI

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Interior ministry statistics show that a total of 102,280 residency visas of expats working for both the government and the private sector were cancelled between 2015 and the end of the previous year. Statistics showed a remarkable drop in the number of expats in both sectors in 2018, when 2,501 visas were cancelled - an increase of 671 compared to 2017.

Statistics showed that cancelled private sector visas dropped to 15,734 in 2018 compared to 16,141 in 2017, of which 63 percent were for non-Arabs and 32 percent for Arabs. Statistics showed that the majority of

cancelled visas in the government sector were for Arabs, with 1,769 visas cancelled in 2018 (70 percent).

Meanwhile, statistics showed that the current number of article 18 (private sector) visa holders is 1,531,000, including 957,000 Asians and 549,000 Arabs, while the remaining are from Africa, Europe, North and South America and Australia. The total number of expats holding article 17 (government sector) visas is 108,000, the lowest number since 2015. Arabs form the majority of expats working for the government at 57,124 (53 percent), while Asians number 47,754, in addition to 495 Africans and 58 from Australia and the Pacific.

KUWAIT: The National Assembly yesterday passed the 2019/2020 budget which projects a KD 6.7 billion deficit for the fifth year in a row as a result of the crash in oil prices in mid-2014. During the Assembly's last session for the current term, Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf survived a no-confidence vote by 32 votes against 16 following last week's grilling for not abolishing interest rates on loans taken by pensioners from the social security agency.

Revenues in the 2019/2020 budget, which began on April 1, are projected at KD 15.8 billion, most of them from oil, while spending is estimated at KD 22.5 billion, over two-thirds of which are for wages and subsidies. Oil income is projected at KD 13.85 billion, calculated at \$55 a barrel. The income from oil makes up some 88 percent of total public revenues.

Head of the budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad warned the country is faced with major challenges, adding that even if the government imposes taxes and raises charges on public services,



KUWAIT: Surrounded by MPs and ministers, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah greets Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf (left) at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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News in brief

Facial recognition at T4

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Directorate General of Civil Aviation marks one year since the launch of Terminal 4 allocated for Kuwait Airways today by using facial recognition technology at T4 for a trial period of three months. The biometric technology is part of a digital strategy put in place at the airport, where passenger and flight information will be available upon facial recognition, DGCA Director General Yousef Al-Fouzan said in a statement. Besides better passenger handling, the system will also be able to locate the whereabouts of passengers at all times, resulting in better airport services, he explained. — KUNA

Man threatens to blow up consulate

KUWAIT: An unidentified man was arrested yesterday at the Egyptian consulate in Salam after threatening to blow himself up, said security sources. The sources explained that according to eyewitnesses, one of the visitors to the consulate suddenly started shouting abusive words, then threatened to blow up the consulate. Security officers controlled him, and on searching him, found he only had a knife and no explosives. — By A Saleh

Sharjah prince buried, Amir condolences

DUBAI: A son of the ruler of Sharjah was buried in the emirate yesterday, as a three-day mourning period began after his unexpected death in London. Sheikh Khalid bin Sultan Al-Qasimi was reported to be 39. His father, Sheikh Sultan bin Mohammed Al-Qasimi, and other Emirati officials took part in the funeral procession as flags flew at half-mast. HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Sheikh Sultan, praying to Almighty Allah to bestow mercy on Sheikh Khalid. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. — Agencies

Minaj to perform in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: US rapper Nicki Minaj will perform in Saudi Arabia this month, organizers said, triggering a storm on social media. Minaj, known for her profanity-laced lyrics and raunchy music videos, will perform in Jeddah on July 18, organizers of the ongoing Jeddah Season cultural festival announced on Twitter on Tuesday. One Twitter user posted a picture of Minaj and wrote: "My dream has come true". But a woman said in a video posted on Twitter: "She is going to go and shake her backside and all her songs are about sex... and then everyone tells me to wear the abaya. What the hell!" — AFP

Dozens killed in strike on Libya migrant center

TRIPOLI: International condemnation mounted yesterday after more than 40 migrants were killed in an air strike on a detention center in Libya that the UN said could constitute a war crime. The UN Security Council was set to hold urgent talks about the situation in the North African country following what the European Union called a "horrific" attack that the UN-recognized government blamed on strongman Khalifa Haftar. Bodies were strewn on the floor of a

hangar in the Tripoli suburb of Tajoura, mixed with the belongings and blood-soaked clothes of migrants, an AFP photographer said.

"There were bodies, blood and pieces of flesh everywhere," a survivor, 26-year-old Al-Mahdi Hafyan from Morocco, told AFP from his hospital bed where he was being treated for a leg wound. Tuesday night's strike left a hole around three meters in diameter at the center of the hangar, surrounded by debris ripped from the metal structure by the force of the blast. At least 44 people were killed and more than 130 severely injured, the UN said. "This attack clearly could constitute a war crime, as it killed by surprise innocent people whose dire conditions forced them to be in that shelter," UN envoy to Libya Ghassan Salame said.

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TRIPOLI: Emergency workers recover bodies after an airstrike at Tajoura detention center east of Tripoli early yesterday. — AFP

Unhappy birthday: Hundreds fall sick at Imelda Marcos party

MANILA: Over 200 guests fell ill with suspected food poisoning yesterday after a meal at a birthday party for 90-year-old Imelda Marcos, the notorious former first lady of the Philippines. Ambulances rushed vomiting friends and supporters from a sports stadium in Manila where around 2,500 people gathered to honor the widow of late dictator Ferdinand Marcos. Although Marcos was chased from power by a 1986 peaceful uprising, the family is still revered by many in the Philippines and has made a political comeback in recent years.

"Our ambulances took people to hospital after they complained of dizziness and vomiting. They apparently suffered from food poisoning," Philippine Red Cross chair-



MANILA: Attendees are checked by medical personnel after they fell ill during a birthday celebration in honor of Imelda Marcos at a sports arena yesterday. — AFP

man Richard Gordon told AFP. Health secretary Francisco Duque told journalists the number of ill was 260. One of them, a woman who only gave her first name, Leonora, said she believed it was caused by the party food.

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Spectacular fall of India's 'dosa king'

CHENNAI: P Rajagopal's story has it all: rags to riches, the visionary creator of a trailblazing Indian restaurant chain - and having a romantic rival murdered after some fateful cosmic advice. On Sunday, the founder of Saravana Bhavan, the eatery found in India and beyond - from Leicester Square to Lexington Avenue via Singapore, Sydney and Stockholm - is due to begin a life sentence. Rajagopal, 71, always dressed in white with a strip of sandalwood paste on his forehead, is the pious son of a low-caste onion trader from a village in the southern state of Tamil Nadu.

In 1981, having opened a grocer's shop in Chennai - then known as Madras - he took the brave step of opening his first restaurant at a time when eating out was unusual for most Indians. The winning formula was,



CHENNAI: This photo taken on June 28, 2019 shows the image of P Rajagopal, founder of the Saravana Bhavan food chain, on a menu at one of the popular restaurants. — AFP

and remains, that the southern Indian vegetarian delights on offer - dosa pancakes, deep-fried vadas and idli rice cakes - taste homemade, and are affordable.

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Gandhi calls for change as he quits as Congress leader

NEW DELHI: Rahul Gandhi quit yesterday as head of India's main opposition Congress party, taking the blame for a second-straight election humiliation by right-wing Hindu nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi. "As president of the Congress party, I am responsible for the loss of the 2019 election," he said in a statement on his official Twitter account. "Accountability is critical for the future growth of our party. It is for this reason that I have resigned as Congress president."

The 49-year-old, who was seeking to become the fourth member of the Nehru-Gandhi dynasty to become prime minister, had only been Congress president since Dec 2017. Congress has dominated Indian politics since independence in 1948, but it has seen a spectacular collapse in support in the past decade. Gandhi said immediately after his party's defeat in the April-May national elections that he would not continue as leader, but party barons had hoped to change his mind and yesterday's official announcement still came as a surprise.

Congress won only 52 of the 543 seats in the lower house of parliament in the election. Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) took 303 seats, increasing its majority as it won a second consecutive five-year term.

Continued on Page 24



Rahul Gandhi

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive top officials at Bayan Palace



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah at Bayan Palace yesterday. His Highness the Amir then met National Assembly Speaker Marzouq

Al-Ghanem. His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad also received Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council and the Cassation Court, and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received Speaker, Justice Mutawaa, as well as His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince then received Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr

Mohammad Al-Hashel and Kuwait's Ambassador to Iran Majdi Al-Dhafiri. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi. —KUNA



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



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His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Governor of the Central Bank of Kuwait Dr Mohammad Al-Hashel.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the United Nations Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to Iran Majdi Al-Dhafiri.

Assistant Foreign Minister awarded French Legion of Honor

KUWAIT: French Ambassador to Kuwait Marie Masdupuy, on behalf of French President Emmanuel Macron, awarded Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, for his prominent role in strengthening relations between Kuwait and France. This was declared in a press release issued yesterday, following the ceremony of adorning Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser with the National Order of the Legion of Honor, France's top award, held at the diwan of the late Sheikh, Mohammed Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, in Shuwaikh.

During the ceremony, Sheikh Dr Ahmad thanked Macron, the French Government and those who attended the event, expressing full appreciation for the French gesture. He spoke highly of the deep friendship and distinguished relations between both countries. The medal was dedicated to Kuwait, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, "our mentor and guide on weaving the Kuwaiti network of relations with the world, preserving it in the darkest circumstances," he said. It was also granted to his father, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, "who is an inspiration, teacher, brother and father, therefore everything he learned about life was not from indoctrination but through his father's teachings," he said.

Kuwait has a vital issue that is considered an acquired right, which are the values of freedom, brotherhood and tolerance, he says, pointing out that they are the values in which France is based on. Every individual calls for freedom which is the basis of solidarity while equality is the application of justice, he added, noting that the diagnosis of worldly issues reveals that the reasons rest in the loss of one of these values and that the application of these values are the stability of communities. The distinctive aspects of these relations are the basis of the principles of freedom and equality, Sheikh Ahmad Nasser



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Assistant Foreign Minister Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah speaks during a ceremony in which he was awarded with France's National Order of the Legion of Honor. —KUNA

said. These values seem intuitive in their form, noble values found in all heavenly legislations, including Islam and the laws of other countries, he added. He noted that his family is "the rock" in which he based and derived all of his energy from, along with strength and determination, appreciating the influential role of his colleagues in the work they have contributed to strengthening diplomatic relations with other countries. Sheikh Ahmad dedicated the medal to his friends and colleagues who participated in strengthening diplomatic relations with other countries, along with anyone who had an influential role in his scientific and professional training.

Meanwhile, Masdupuy appreciated her presence with the gathering and spirit of Kuwait. She underlined

that Sheikh Ahmad Nasser is the prototype of total devotion to his country's service, noting that his studies in France did not prevent him from hearing his country's call during the invasion, to contribute and support Kuwait's freedom. Masdupuy said that his father was honored twice by the French Republic in 2006 with the Order of the Legion of Honor by a senior officer and in 2010 the National Merit Medal. She emphasized the role of Sheikh Ahmad Nasser in listening to cultural initiatives, ideas at the international and bilateral levels regarding the Palestinian issues, conflicts around the world and climate change. Masdupuy concluded her speech with the tradition of granting Sheikh Ahmad Nasser the Legion of Honor on behalf of French President Emmanuel Macron. —KUNA

US ambassador hails cooperation with Kuwait in medicine

KUWAIT: Relations between the State of Kuwait and the United States of America are witnessing great cooperation in health and medicine, US Ambassador Lawrence Silverman announced. During a recent visit to the Dhaman Primary Health Care Center in Hawally, Ambassador Silverman stressed the desire to further enhance cooperation between the two countries. The envoy, who was warmly welcomed by managers and staff, said he was pleased that Dhaman is working with US healthcare institutions to achieve its objectives. The visit of the Ambassador came, in part, due to his keen interest in ensuring excellent health service to the resident American community in Kuwait. He was warmly received by Vice Chairman of the Board Hamed Al-Bassam, Dhaman's Consultant of Operation Division Brian Flynn, Chief Medical Officer Dr Mohammad Al-Qenai and staff.

The Dhaman Center is located in Hawally; it will be part of a larger network. When that network is completed, Dhaman will provide Health Insurance Coverage that integrates healthcare services to all residents holding Article 18 residency and their families, some two million people. In his welcoming remarks, Bassam said that he looked forward to continued cooperation with the US institutions involved with the health sector. Appreciating the Ambassador's visit, Bassam said that the company's plan is to communicate with the diplomatic missions to familiarize them with the high quality of medical care and cutting-edge technological capabilities, which will be made available to non-Kuwaitis in the country.

Flynn reviewed the development of the company and the developmental objectives of the project to achieve sustainable health care that conforms to international standards. After receiving a detailed briefing from Flynn, the Ambassador toured the entire center, from the reception area through various clinics, radiology, analysis, treatment rooms, and the pharmacy, while receiving a briefing at each stop from the staff. The Ambassador welcomed these briefings from Dhaman's leadership and staff, and noted the important role of such centers in the evolving level of healthcare in Kuwait, in addition to the other major health projects underway. —KUNA

Local

Kuwait University to start Master's, DPT physiotherapy programs

KU inks accord with KOC on research cooperation

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Chairperson of the Kuwait Physical Therapy Association Hana Al-Khamees announced that Kuwait University (KU) will soon start its Master's and DPT physiotherapy programs. Speaking on the sidelines of a meeting with the dean of KU's College of Allied Health Sciences Dr Suad Al-Fadhli, Khamees said that both sides agreed to coordinate with the Ministry of Health (MoH) to set special studies for the new degree programs.

In other news, KU inked yesterday a cooperation agreement in strategic research and development with Kuwait Oil Company (KOC) for collaboration in oil traps and heavy crude and natural gas. KU President Hussein Al-Ansari said in a statement that the five-year accord sets the bases for cooperation on technology acquisition, know-how and enhancing researchers' potentials. The university backs up research and scientific progress through establishing partnerships, he said, affirming the approach toward excellence and creativity in research of social, economic and humanitarian values. KOC Deputy CEO Nayef Al-Enezi affirmed significance of such coordination for serving research and all-out development, praising the KU researchers' expertise in applied researches that serve the oil sector.



Temporary licenses for NGO headquarters

NGO headquarters
Minister of Social Affairs and Labor Saad Al-Kharraz issued ministerial decision number 51A/2019 pertaining legalizing various NGO headquarters and granting them temporary three-year licenses. The decision explained that every NGO should submit a list of its unlicensed quarters and branches so that the concerned bodies could be contacted to legalize their statuses.

Shuaiba incinerator
Well-informed sources said the cost of a tender to operate and maintain Shuaiba incinerator estimated by the Ministry of Health (MoH) increased by 64 percent to become KD 800,000 instead of the cost in the current contract, estimated at KD 487,100. The sources added that MoH justified the increase by changing the emission detector and linking it to the Environment Public Authority (EPA) control room, installing a device to treat liquid medical waste, installing a sewage treatment unit, installing surveillance cameras, increasing the number of times dioxin and furan samples are tested from once to four times a year as recommended by EPA, diesel cost increases and manpower instructions to increase minimum wages.

Ooredoo awards Ramadan Caricature Contest winners

KUWAIT: In alignment with its commitment to supporting youth, Ooredoo Kuwait awarded the winners of the Ramadan Caricature Contest which included more than 70 talented participants. Five winners were selected by a judging panel composed of board members from the Kuwait Cartoon Society. Starting this month, the Kuwait Cartoon Society started training courses and workshops aimed at developing caricature and technical skills with

the help of professional instructors and caricaturists. The Kuwait Cartoon Society aims to promote the caricature culture in Kuwait by launching activities and events related to the field of caricature, portraiture and animation. It also aspires to create a name for the Kuwaiti caricaturists by enriching the caricature library with the best creations from creative enthusiasts.

Commenting on this, Ooredoo Kuwait's Corporate Communications Senior Director Mijbil Alayoub underscored the company's commitment to supporting youth, noting that this stems from the company's deep-rooted values of caring, connecting and challenging. Worth to mention that Ooredoo Kuwait operates in accordance with a year-long program aimed at empowering youth and supporting them at various levels in cooperation with a number of institutions in the governmental and private sectors.



KUWAIT: Ooredoo and Kuwait Cartoon Society staff with the winners.

Kuwait's Deputy FM coordinates talks with Britain

LONDON: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah held a meeting yesterday with Kuwaiti groups partaking, along with British counterparts, in the 14th meeting of the Kuwaiti-British Guidance Committee. The two sides, during the session,

examined results of currently held meetings at this level, due to conclude by the weekend. Jarallah praised efforts that had been exerted by the various teams, forecast to contribute to putting the bilateral relations at higher levels. The joint commission was formed during the State visit to Britain by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2012. It is co-chaired by Jarallah and Andrew Morrison, the UK Secretary of State for the Middle East and North Africa. The common body, which meets twice per year, comprises a number of representatives of state departments from the two countries. Its tasks primarily focus on status of the bilateral relations between the UK and Kuwait. — KUNA



LONDON: Deputy Foreign Minister meets with Kuwaiti groups partaking in the 14th meeting of the Kuwaiti-British Guidance Committee. — KUNA

Kuwait Airways signs 'flying car' deal

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) recently signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Dutch Personal Air Land Vehicle (PAL-V) flying cars manufacturing company, according to which KAC will provide maintenance services for the flying vehicle in the Gulf and the Middle East.

The memo was signed by KAC Deputy CEO Abdul Halim Zaidan and PAL-V CEO Robert Dingemans, in a ceremony that was also attended by KAC Board Chairman Yousif Abdul Hameed Al-Jassem, the Netherlands Ambassador to Kuwait Frans Potuyt, KAC CEO Kamel Al-Awadhi, manager of the regional business center in Dubai Abdullah Al-Enezi, PAL-V's Deputy CEO in the Middle East Khalil Malaeb,

Speaking on the occasion, Ambassador Potuyt expressed his hap-

piness and hopes that the agreement would successfully benefit both sides. Potuyt also stressed that the agreement would cement both countries' economic, political and other relations. Meanwhile, Awadhi said that the MoU aims at providing KAC clients with various services, and to highlight KAC's role in utilizing the high skills of its engineering and technical staff to provide aircraft maintenance operations for both local and international airlines.

Also speaking on the occasion, Dingemans stressed that the MoU is 'historic' in the field of aviation, and marks the start of long term cooperation between both companies. Notably, the flying car will be on sale by 2021. It can easily be turned into an aircraft when needed, and can be used by state bodies such as the military, the national guard, firemen, paramedics as well as in the private sector. PAL-V is a two-seater with a maximum speed of 170 k/h using the same jet fuel used in normal planes. It needs a 180-meter-long runway to take off and only a 30-meter-long runway to land. It can take off from roads and fly at a 10,000-foot altitude.



The PAL-V 'flying car.'

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KUWAIT: A golden sunset over Kuwait City. — Photo by Nawaf Al-Hmoud (KUNA)

Sheikh Jaber Causeway, Kuwaiti project with local, regional benefits

Project to have positive impact on Arab countries, primarily Iraq and Syria



KUWAIT: Sheikh Jaber Causeway is a mammoth Kuwaiti and Arab development project that will have developmental and economic impacts on Kuwait and neighboring countries. The causeway, which is considered the world's fourth longest, would positively affect several Arab countries, primarily Iraq and Syria. Generally speaking, a causeway cannot only act as a geographical connection, but also a link for development, welfare and prosperity. Sheikh Jaber Causeway would link Kuwait City to the future Silk City project, which, in turn, would be a significant development landmark in the region, benefiting as many as 140 million people in Saudi Arabia, Iraq and Iran.

In May, Kuwait inaugurated the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway Project, one of the country's massive projects going down in history as the fourth longest causeway worldwide, used as part of the New Kuwait Vision 2035 of a residential and investment boom in the northern region. Sheikh Jaber Causeway shortens the distance between Kuwait City and Subiya area, initially driving 104 kilometers in 90 minutes, to a shortcut of about 37.5 kilometers in less than 30 minutes. The causeway starts from the intersection of Al-Ghazali Highway with Jamal Abdel Nasser Street at Shuwaikh Port to Al-Subiya Highway, ending at the new Al-Subiya City north of Kuwait Bay.

Construction works started on November 3, 2013 and were divided into two parts: the first one, Al-Subiya link, cost KD 738 million (approximately \$2.4 billion), covering a low 27-kilometer height causeway, with the main causeway for ships passing to Al-Doha port, across a shipping lane passage that is 120 meters wide, a navigational opening that is 23 meters high. The second part includes a 4.7-kilometer-long Doha highway, with five 725-meter-high causeways and a 7.7-kilometer-long sea causeway, three traffic lanes and a safety lane in each direction costing KD 165.7 million (about \$544 million). The sea causeway starts from Shuwaikh Port to the west and passes beside Umm Al-Namel Island to Doha

area and then connects to the Doha Highway. The causeway was built with over 1,500 pillars, each about three meters wide, while some of them with a depth of 72 meters at sea bottom.

The project contains the construction of two artificial islands, the first near Kuwait City and the second near Subiya to provide maintenance, emergency services and coast guards patrolling the bay leading to the coast of a length of six kilometers. Environmentally aware, the utmost structural techniques are applied in order to protect the marine environment in compliance with the standards and regulations implemented studiously by Kuwait's Environment Public Authority (EPA). — KUNA



Local

Five fire stations battle blaze at Shuwaikh Industrial shop

Police investigate box containing stolen firearm and ammo

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Agencies

KUWAIT: Firemen from five different fire stations tackled a blaze reported at a sea equipment company in Shuwaikh Industrial yesterday. Firemen put out the blaze that was in a warehouse and carpentry shop. The incident did not cause any injuries, and investigations are underway to determine the cause of the fire.

Child drowns

A seven-year-old child drowned in a swimming pool in the chalets area, Al-Rai reported yesterday. A Kuwaiti man informed Mina Abdullah police about the incident, so an ambulance was dispatched. The child was rushed to hospital, but was pronounced dead on arrival. A case was filed for investigations.

Stolen firearm

State security are interrogating a driver from Burkina Faso who was put into trouble by an unidentified person, who asked him to deliver a box containing a firearm, 60 rounds

and two magazines that were stolen from a military establishment, reported Al-Rai. A man handed a box to the driver in Fahd Al-Ahmad and told him he must take it to the weapons detectives department, and told him it contains food. When he arrived at the department, he did not find the man whose name he was given, so he called the man who gave him the box, but his phone was switched off. The driver took the parcel to his house and opened it, but found a locked box inside, so he went to the police and told them what happened. The investigator referred the matter to the explosives department, whose men found the pistol and the rounds. Investigations are underway to identify the man who handed the box to the driver.

Sexual assault

A Tunisian woman found screaming was the only way to seek help against a worker at a health club who groped her, reported Al-Rai. The woman was surprised by the man approaching her and putting his hand on her body, so she

screamed, prompting him to escape. She went to the police station and lodged a complaint.

Theft accusations

A Kuwaiti woman accused her friend of stealing an expensive watch when she visited her, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The woman discovered her watch was missing when her friend left, so she called her and asked about the watch, but she denied stealing the watch and insulted her. Police are investigating. Meanwhile, a Kuwaiti woman accused a flight attendant of stealing £7,500 while she was going for treatment in London. The woman said she fell asleep onboard the flight, and there was a flight attendant next to her. When she left the airport, she did not find the wallet which contained the £7,500 among other things. She said Heathrow airport authorities said the theft must have happened on the aircraft as their investigations did not reveal anything at the airport. The flight attendant was summoned to Jleeb police station and was released on a KD 200 bail.



Firemen fighting the blaze.

Legalese

Sick leaves

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



Dealing with medical issues is tough as it is. I hope all my readers are enjoying good health, both physical and emotional, but if for some reason you have to deal with medical issues, here are a few things to keep in mind that are commonly asked.

Question: How many days of medical leave am I entitled to? Is it true that it is just 15 days a year? And how do I prove that I am unwell?

According to the labor law, an employee shall be entitled to the following:

- First 15 days of sick leave - at full pay
- Additional 10 days - at three quarters of the pay
- Additional 10 days - at half pay
- Additional 10 days - at quarter pay
- Additional 30 days without pay.

Article 69 goes on to state the following: The worker shall provide a medical report from the doctor appointed by the employer or the doctor of the government medical center. In the event of conflict regarding the necessity of a sick leave or its duration, the report of the government doctor shall be adopted. Incurable diseases shall be excluded pursuant to a resolution issued by the competent minister, in which he shall specify the types of incurable diseases.

With that said, every company has a different process for dealing with medical leaves, so it is important for you to check your company's policies. A mistake that I see many expats make is that because they do not feel well, they do not go to work, but also do not notify their workplace. I understand that you may need to take long times off work for emergencies and that it might not always be easy to bring in the paperwork for the sick leave or a report, but it is still important to do it. If you are away from work for a while without informing your employer, you might be considered as retired or absconding.

For questions or queries, please email us at info@fl-legal.com.

AUB sets up booth at manpower authority

KUWAIT: In its commitment to support the Kuwaitization efforts, Ahli United Bank (AUB) announced the organization of a booth at the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) headquarter in Al-Rigai on Monday, in a step to attract and qualify promising national human resources and support Kuwaiti youths seeking outstanding job opportunities in the banking sector. Representatives of Ahli United Bank Human Resources Department were present at the bank's booth, highlighting the bank's employment policy and providing job hunters with extensive knowledge about the bank's job opportunities.

Commenting on this initiative, which reflects the bank's efforts to recruit qualified national human resources, Naqeeb Amin, Human Resources General Manager at the bank, said: "We are keen to organize the bank's booth at PAM to serve as an interactive platform for Kuwaiti cadres wishing to communicate directly with private employers in a pragmatic and realistic environment." He pointed out that the presence of AUB through its booth in PAM headquarter is an effective way to recruit national talents capable of enriching the bank's mechanism and work system to develop its human resources and prepare national leaders



Naqeeb Amin makes his presentation.

able to complete the development journey and maintain the bank's leading position.

Amin stressed AUB's commitment towards empowering Kuwaiti youth and promoting Kuwaitization efforts in the banking sector, confirming that the bank's management believes that investing in promising national human capital has become a matter of urgency for the institutions that aspire more success, adding that Kuwait, undoubtedly, is full of qualified talents and is very willing to join the labor market and engage in various economic institutions including banking institutions. "These talents have a significant role in contributing to raising the productive efficiency of the private sector, which has a key role to play in the country's development process," he said. Amin expressed his sincere thanks to PAM officials, stressing that AUB is keen to take advantage of all opportunities that allow it to meet the national talents and attract them to join AUB family.



KUWAIT: AUB's Naqeeb Amin with a number of Public Authority for Manpower managers.

News in brief

Panel slams govt hiring policies

KUWAIT: The parliament's budgets committee said that employment mechanisms are based on an unsound basis, pointing to the government's inability to operate its projects by its employees, and that it signs contracts with companies to run them and they do not commit to employing Kuwaitis. Committee Chairman Adnan Abdulsamad said the average monthly wage of an employee at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation is KD 7,177, compared to KD 1,493 per month for employees in other sectors. — Al-Qabas

2.6 percent expat employees

KUWAIT: Commerce and Industry Minister Khaled Al-Roudhan said the Public Authority for Industry has the least number of expatriate employees among state departments, with only 2.6 percent of the total number of workers being foreigners. The minister, in an answer to a parliamentary question, said the total number of employees at the authority is 1,047, 1,020 of whom are Kuwaiti (96.4 percent) and 27 non-Kuwaiti (2.6 percent). — Al-Rai

Rain damage

KUWAIT: The Ministry of Public Works faces more than 200 cases filed against it by Kuwaitis who were affected by the November rain deluge, yet it won a large number of them, according to the undersecretary for administrative, financial and legal affairs Hamad Al-Ghareeb. He said the ministry will complete its legal procedures towards the cases, adding that the ruling in favor of a citizen whose car was submerged to pay him KD 20,000 may be a first instance ruling, and it will appeal as soon as it reaches the ministry. He said tens of similar cases were filed against the ministry, but it won most of them. — Al-Rai

Palestinians' support

GENEVA: Kuwait is a major proponent of the International Labor Organization's (ILO) endeavors in Palestinian territories, its permanent delegate to the UN Jamal Al-Ghunaim said yesterday. The Kuwaiti diplomat's remarks came after an encounter with ILO's Director General Guy Ryder, where they held talks over bilateral ties. The bulk of financial aid the ILO receives from Kuwait is allocated for projects in Palestinian territories, said the envoy, which is crucial given the hardships Palestinians have had to withstand. — KUNA

New detour in Kuwait City

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: A detour will be opened on Saturday behind Al-Sanabel Tower in Kuwait City, going by Shaaban Mosque, a Public Authority for Roads and Transportation source said, noting that the opening will be held in cooperation

with the interior ministry's general traffic department. The project was done as part of the second stage of the First Ring Road development project. The detour links Abdullah Al-Ahmad Street with Abdullah Al-Mubarak Street, and Abdullah Al-Mubarak Street with Ahmad Al-Jaber Street, the source said.



KUWAIT: A Kuwait Times tour in Jahra around 2:00 pm yesterday revealed that most construction projects were complying with the ban on outdoor labor during the day, contrary to what has been detected in sites located in other governorates around the country. — Photos by Ben Garcia

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European Parliament chooses new president

Nine Bangladesh's opposition members sentenced to death



XINJIANG: Photo shows buildings at the Artux City Vocational Skills Education Training Service Center, believed to be a re-education camp where mostly Muslim ethnic minorities are detained, north of Kashgar in China's northwestern Xinjiang region. —AFP

China slams 'baseless' US, German accusations

People live happily in Xinjiang, Erdogan says

BEIJING: China accused the United States and Germany yesterday of making "baseless accusations" about its crackdown in Xinjiang during a closed-door meeting of the UN Security Council. Beijing has come under growing international criticism for placing an estimated one million ethnic Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities in internment camps in the northwest region.

China defends the facilities as "vocational education centres" aimed at teaching Mandarin and job skills to steer people away from religious extremism following a spate of deadly ethnic unrest in recent years. Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang confirmed a report that the United States and Germany raised the issue during a meeting related to Central Asia at the 15-member UN Security Council on Tuesday.

"The US and Germany deviated from the theme of this meeting, and made baseless accusations about China's Xinjiang policies. China is firmly opposed to this," Geng said at a regular press briefing yesterday. "China's ambassador to the UN, Ma Zhaoxu, severely refuted the wrong remarks of the US and Germany on the spot," Geng said. The spokesman said China will not allow "external forces" to interfere in its internal affairs, adding that the Security Council "should not become a political stage for certain countries."

Living happily in Xinjiang

Meanwhile, Chinese state media said Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan told President Xi Jinping that ethnic minorities live happily in Xinjiang, in what would be a stark reversal of Ankara's past criticism of Beijing's crackdown in the region. Erdogan met Xi at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing on Tuesday, four months after the Turkish foreign ministry called the treatment of mostly Muslim Turkic-speaking Uighurs "a great embarrassment for humanity".

China has come under growing criticism over its security clampdown in the northwest region, where more than one million Uighurs and other mostly Muslim minorities are believed to be held in a network of internment camps. Beijing denies forcibly holding people in what it describes as "vocational education centres" where "trainees" learn Mandarin and job skills in an effort to steer them away from religious extremism.

Muslim countries had been largely silent about China's

treatment of Uighurs until Turkey's statement in February, but the official Xinhua news agency reported nicer words from Erdogan on Tuesday. "Turkey stays committed to the one-China policy, Erdogan said, stressing that residents of various ethnicities living happily in Xinjiang Uighur Autonomous Region thanks to China's prosperity is a hard fact, and Turkey will not allow anyone to drive a wedge in its relations with China," Xinhua reported. "He also expressed the readiness to deepen political mutual trust and strengthen security cooperation with China in opposing extremism," it added.



Don't count on US, China warns 'naive' Canada

China warns 'naive' Canada

In another development, China yesterday warned Canada not to be "naive" and believe that US pressure could help

resolve thorny issues plaguing relations between Ottawa and Beijing. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said Tuesday he was "confident" US President Donald Trump had brought up the cases of Canadians detained in China during weekend talks with President Xi Jinping at the G20 in Japan.

"Don't be naive and mistakenly think that mustering a certain so-called ally to put pressure on China will have an impact," Chinese foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang said at a regular press briefing. Ottawa "should not naively think its so-called ally will really exert itself on Canada's behalf", he said. "At most the (Americans) will move their lips a bit, because in reality this is an issue between China and Canada," Geng said at a regular press briefing. Relations deteriorated between China and Canada following the December arrest in Vancouver of Meng Wanzhou, a top executive at Chinese telecom giant Huawei, who is wanted by the United States for allegedly circumventing sanctions on Iran.

In moves widely seen as retaliation, Chinese authorities arrested two Canadians on national security grounds and blocked imports of Canadian agricultural products. Trudeau said he had spoken to Xi about ex-diplomat Michael Kovrig and consultant Michael Spavor during brief, informal exchanges on the sidelines of the G20 summit last week. Geng blamed Ottawa for the fraught relations. "Canada knows clearly what the crux of the issue is between the two countries," he said. "We hope that Canada will take measures to put China-Canada bilateral relations back on track as soon as possible," Geng said. —Agencies

200 corpses found in Raqa mass grave

BEIRUT: Two hundred corpses, including those of people believed to have been executed by the Islamic State group, were found near the Syrian city of Raqa, a local official and a war monitor said yesterday. The mass grave contained the bodies of five middle-aged men in orange jumpsuits of the kind typically worn by IS hostages, Yasser al-Khamees and the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. "They were shackled and shot in the head," said Khamees, who heads a team of first responders.

They were believed to have been killed more than two years ago, he said, adding that his team was not immediately able to identify them. The grave also included the bodies of three women who were believed to have been stoned to death, Khamees and the Observatory said. "Their skulls were

severely fractured and displayed signs of stoning," the local official added. The digger said his team first discovered the mass grave early last month on the southern edges of Raqa, IS's former Syria capital.

As many as 800 people could be buried there in total, he said. Its discovery could help identify even more of the several thousand people whose fates remain unknown, including foreigners imprisoned by IS. IS took full control of the city of Raqa in early 2014 and made it the de facto Syrian capital of its infamous cross-border "caliphate". US-backed forces ousted IS from the devastated city in October 2017, leaving the Raqa Civil Council (RCC) to run it.

The RCC has been retrieving bodies from the rubble across Raqa, left in ruins by the months-long assault to oust IS. In February, an exhumation team uncovered a mass grave holding an estimated 3,500 people in Raqa's Al-Fukheikha agricultural suburb—the largest to date. Several other mass graves have already been identified around the city, including one in the neighbourhood known as "Panorama," from which more than 900 bodies were exhumed. —AFP



RAQA: Members of Raqa Civil Council (RCC)'s first responders team work at the site of a mass grave in the northern Syrian city's Al-Fukheikha agricultural suburb. —AFP

Iran TV blasted over report on secret oil sales

TEHRAN: Iranian officials slammed the country's state television yesterday for airing a programme on oil sales to China that contravene US sanctions, saying the report went "against national interests". Washington abandoned a landmark 2015 nuclear deal between Tehran and world powers last year and reimposed sanctions on the Islamic republic's crucial oil sales as well as other parts of the economy. The "Hello, Good Morning" talk show featured on Tuesday a programme on the Salina, an Iranian-flagged tanker under US sanctions that reportedly had delivered 1 million barrels of crude oil to China's Jinzhou port in late June.

China-along with Britain, France, Germany and Russia—is one of the partners in the nuclear deal and has rejected US President Donald Trump's administration's efforts to cut Iranian oil exports to zero. "This shows that sanctions are ineffective and Iran's path to sell its oil is not blocked," the programme's host said, showing what he claimed were satellite photos of the tanker berthed at the Chinese port. The state broadcaster immediately came under fire from local media who called the programme "suspicious", with officials weighing in the next day.

"This will hurt (Iran's) national interests," semi-official ISNA news agency quoted Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif as saying. "Thank God I don't watch TV." Oil Minister Bijan Namdar Zanganeh said that the programme "has undone what the ministry set out to do". He had said previously that Iran was keeping up oil sales through "unconventional" means kept secret to skirt US sanctions. State television responded by saying the information was already public, pointing to a Financial Times report published last week.

"If the Americans were going to track the tanker, they would have last week and did not need Hello, Good Morning to remind them in Farsi", it said in a statement. Zanganeh said republishing reports by foreign media—some of which are Iran's "enemies"—is "inappropriate" and state television should only report "news on oil export confirmed by the oil ministry", ISNA reported. As part of its "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran, Washington has vowed to reduce Iran's foreign currency earnings via blocking its oil, petrochemical and metal exports. —AFP

The Gandhi dynasty's first failure

NEW DELHI: Being born a Gandhi is traditionally a guaranteed ticket to the Indian prime minister's office, but the magic ran out for Rahul, the latest scion of the country's most famous and powerful family. The 49-year-old son, grandson and great-grandson of Indian prime ministers, resigned as head of Congress, the main opposition party, yesterday acknowledging a humiliating defeat by Narendra Modi, India's new powerbroker.

Congress has appeared increasingly tired in the past decade while Gandhi has struggled to overcome the expectations of being the latest flag-bearer for India's equivalent of the Kennedy clan in the United States. He has never overcome an image as a footloose princeling and political lightweight.

No relation to independence hero Mahatma Gandhi, Rahul was born in 1970

when his grandmother Indira Gandhi — daughter of India's first prime minister, Jawaharlal Nehru — was premier. In 1984, Indira was shot dead by her Sikh bodyguards and she was succeeded by her son Rajiv Gandhi, Rahul's father. Rajiv was assassinated in 1991 by a Tamil suicide bomber when Rahul was 20.

Rahul was enrolled at Harvard but dropped out after a year, following his father's death. He later graduated from Rollins College, Florida and in 1994 earned a master's degree from Cambridge. While in his 20s, he lived in London, where he worked at a management consultancy for a time. His Italian-born mother Sonia Gandhi, widow of Rajiv, took charge of the Congress party in 1998 before handing over to her eldest child in 2017.

'Empty suit'

Ten years earlier, in 2007, leaked US diplomatic cables described Rahul as an "empty suit" and "lightweight", with little known about his political beliefs. But by 2009, the US assessment was that Gandhi sounded like a "practiced politician who knew how to get his message across and...

was comfortable with the nuts and bolts of party organization and vote counting".

"He was precise and articulate and demonstrated a mastery that belied the image some have of Gandhi as a dilettante," a leaked cable by senior US diplomat Peter Burleigh said. While Sonia remained party leader, Rahul Gandhi was mastermind of the 2014 election campaign in which Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) crushed Congress. Afterwards he sought to revive the party.

'Not foolish'

At the end of a widely praised speech in parliament last year, Gandhi walked over to give an uncomfortable-looking Modi a surprise hug. Gandhi tried to reach out to minority Muslim voters who felt alienated by Modi, and stressed his secular credentials. Congress won three key state elections in December and it looked like Gandhi was a serious contender. Election adverts show him hugging an emaciated peasant woman, while Gandhi's leftist manifesto pledges to end abject poverty by 2030 and give cash transfers to 50 million families.

But the BJP leader openly mocked

Gandhi's privileged upbringing as a "shahzada" (crown prince) at rallies across the country, comparing it to his own rise from being "a son of soil". Modi's mud stuck, while Gandhi's attack on Modi's poor record on helping farmers, creating jobs or his supposed close ties to business tycoons had no impact.

Modi won their social media war, while Gandhi's attempts to score points over allegations of dodgy dealings related to India's purchase of Rafale jets from France also failed. In his resignation letter Gandhi said he had no "hatred" for the BJP but "every living cell in my body instinctively resists their idea of India."

He said Modi's party had taken over and turned "the entire machinery of the Indian state" against the opposition. While some analysts said Gandhi could yet return for a new try to get the key to the prime minister's office, not everyone agreed with his view of the election. Gandhi "appears to be clinging to the socialist ideas of his grandmother and doesn't realise that people have changed, that even the poor have changed", Parsa Venkateshwar Rao, a veteran journalist and political commentator said. —AFP

International

Nine in ten Palestinians distrust US economic plan: Opinion poll

Trump 'very fond' of Abbas, willing to engage on peace plan

RAMALLAH: Nine in ten Palestinians do not believe or trust the US government's claim that its recently unveiled economic plan aims to improve their economic wellbeing, a poll published yesterday found. President Donald Trump's administration presented the economic part of its Israeli-Palestinian peace proposals, dubbed 'Peace to Prosperity', in the Bahraini capital Manama on June 25-6. But the poll, carried out by the Palestinian Center for Policy and Survey Research and the first since the Manama conference, found overwhelming distrust of Washington.

The Palestinians refused to attend the conference, accusing the US of systematic pro-Israel bias. Ninety percent of the 1,200 people polled said they did not believe or trust Washington's claim that the Bahrain meetings aimed to improve Palestinians' economic conditions. Trump's son-in-law and senior advisor Jared Kushner, who is leading the peace plan, has said he is seeking to reach out to ordinary Palestinians, bypassing their leaders.

But the survey also found 79 percent of the Palestinian population supported their leaders' boycott of the conference, while just 15 percent were opposed to that position. More than three quarters believed the US plan would not bring prosperity to the Palestinian economy. The poll also found three quarters of Palestinians wanted their leaders to outright reject the US plan. Fifteen percent said the plan should be accepted with reservations and just four percent wanted to accept it without reservations.

The Trump administration has taken a series of steps that have stoked Palestinian anger, including recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital in December 2017. Palestinians consider the eastern part of the city the capital of their own future state and Trump's move broke with decades of consensus. Both the Palestinian Authority and its rival Hamas—the Islamist group that runs the Gaza Strip—have lambasted the US economic plan as an attempt to buy them off, in return for foregoing any claim to their own state.

Despite Turkey's assurances, US still targets sanctions

WASHINGTON: The Trump administration still plans to impose sanctions on Turkey and remove it from a critical fighter jet program if the NATO ally acquires Russian air defenses, US officials told Reuters, despite

Sudan revolt: Deja-vu for Egyptians driven out by repression

KHARTOUM: Egyptians exiled in Sudan, who fled after their elected Islamist president was deposed by the military, say the current standoff in Khartoum reminds them of their own broken dreams. "It's the same young people that are trying to carry out the same revolutionary action," said Abdelaziz, an Egyptian student who has been in Sudan since 2016. "They have read the same books, lived the same experiences", he added.

For him and other Egyptians once close to the Islamist Muslim Brotherhood movement, the popular uprising in Sudan reminds them of events in their own country, even if there are some clear differences. Sudan's uprising has been led by liberal movements and unions of professionals, which spurred the military to overthrow Omar-al Bashir's Islamist regime. In Egypt itself, the Brotherhood polarised the youth movements that spearheaded the 2011 revolt. But Mohamed Morsi, Egypt's first democratically elected president, was likewise ousted by the army after mass protests against the Islamist's divisive year in power. Like Abdelaziz, many supporters of the Muslim Brotherhood ended up in Sudan after fleeing a deadly crackdown launched in 2013 in Egypt.

He fled to escape a 15-year prison sentence for "protesting" and "acts of vandalism". In Khartoum, sitting in the courtyard of his house and dressed in a traditional white Sudanese robe, he spoke to AFP using a pseudonym to protect the fragile stability of his new life. His host country has been swept up by the same revolutionary fervour that Egypt once experienced. Post-Bashir Khartoum in 2019 has much in common with Cairo after January 2011, when president Hosni Mubarak was toppled by a popular uprising.

On the walls of the city, the slogans are the same: "Down with the military government". The graffiti depicting Bashir is accompanied by the clarion call of the Arab Spring that once reverberated across Egypt, Tunisia and

Over 100 civilians killed in fresh South Sudan violence: UN

NAIROBI: The UN said yesterday that conflict had intensified in a region of South Sudan since a peace deal was signed, with hundreds of civilians raped or murdered by warring factions. The United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) said civilians had been "deliberately and brutally targeted" in Central Equatoria since the agreement was inked in September. At least 104 people had been killed in attacks on villages in the southern region, it said. A roughly similar number of women and girls were raped or suffered other sexual violence between September and April, it said in its latest human rights report.

Many were taken captive by armed groups to serve as "wives," it said. The surge in violence has forced more than 56,000 civilians to flee their homes, becoming displaced in South Sudan itself, while another 20,000 have crossed the border into Uganda and the Democratic Republic of Congo. South Sudan descended into war in 2013 when President Salva Kiir accused his former deputy and fellow

'Very fond' of Abbas

Meanwhile, White House adviser Jared Kushner said yesterday the United States is willing to engage with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas but hinted a new peace plan might call on Palestinian refugees to settle where they are and not return to lands now in Israel. At a workshop in Bahrain last week, Kushner unveiled a \$50 billion economic plan for the Palestinian territories, Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon.

Sometime later this year, he is to outline a 50- to 60-page plan that will offer proposals on resolving the thorny political issues between the Israelis and the Palestinians. Palestinians have harshly criticized the economic plan. In a conference call with reporters, Kushner said US President Donald Trump is "very fond" of Abbas and willing to engage with him at the right time. "Our door is always open to the Palestinian leadership," Kushner said.

He said he believes Abbas wants peace but "certain people around him are very uncomfortable with the way we've approached this, and their natural reaction is to attack and say crazy things" that are not constructive. But Kushner's comments on Palestinian refugees are likely to raise concerns among Palestinians. Whether the hundreds of thousands of refugees from the 1948 war of Israel's founding, which with their descendants now number around 5 million, will exercise a right of return has been among the thorniest issues in decades of difficult diplomacy.

Israel has long ruled out any such influx as destabilising, arguing that refugees should stay where they are or in a future Palestinian state. But prospects of such a state arising in the occupied West Bank and the Gaza Strip are themselves in doubt. Asked by a Lebanese reporter whether the United States hoped Arab countries hosting Palestinian refugees would accept them permanently in exchange for funding, Kushner declined to answer directly, saying the matter would be addressed later. But he suggested a comparison between Jews dis-

placed from Middle Eastern countries in 1948, many of whom Israel took in.

"Look, you have a situation when this whole thing started where you had 800,000 Jewish refugees that came out of all the different Middle Eastern countries and you had 800,000, roughly, Palestinian refugees," he said.



KHARTOUM: An Egyptian student who fled political repression in Egypt and moved to Sudan is pictured in Khartoum. —AFP

Syria: "get out". "A very enthusiastic person asked my opinion of the situation in Sudan... I laughed and said 'we did the same thing as you and here we are sitting by your side'", said Abdelaziz, who is in his twenties. "Let's not be too optimistic, let's stay realistic", he added.

If he is cautious, it is because in his country, the democratic moment ended with the removal of Morsi, and paved the way for the repression of not only Islamists but also secularists. Detained for almost six years and kept in isolation, the ex-president died after collapsing during a court appearance on June 17. His Muslim Brotherhood was branded a "terrorist organisation", and thousands of his supporters were sentenced to years in prison or handed down the death penalty.

In August 2013, security forces dispersed a pro-Morsi sit-in at Cairo's Rabaa al-Adawiya square, killing more than 700 people in one day. "Sudan appeared to be something of a safe haven at a particular time for Islamist opponents of the Egyptian regime", said H.A. Hellyer, senior associate fellow at the Royal United Services Institute in London. Bashir consistently denied that his country granted asylum to members of the Brotherhood. In 2017, Sudan and Egypt signed an agreement not to host any opposition groups hostile to their respective governments. —AFP

former rebel leader Riek Machar of plotting a coup. The conflict has been marked by ethnic violence and brutal atrocities, and left about 380,000 dead while some four million have fled their homes. UNMISS said overall there had been a "significant decrease" in violence across the country since Kiir and Machar signed the deal. "However, Central Equatoria has been an exception to this trend, particularly in areas surrounding Yei, where attacks against civilians have continued," the report said.

The report identified government forces, fighters allied to Machar and rebel groups who did not sign the peace agreement, as responsible for atrocities in their quest to take territory in Central Equatoria. In the first phase of fighting, that coincided with the signing of the peace agreement, at least 61 civilians were killed in deliberate attacks or caught in indiscriminate crossfire. "At least 150 civilians were also held in captivity by these groups, including women and girls taken as 'wives' by commanders or raped and beaten by multiple fighters," the report said.

The second outbreak of violence began in January, when government forces punished those believed to be rebel collaborators with "sexual violence as well as looting and destroying homes, churches, schools and health centres". Under the peace deal, Kiir agreed to set up a unity government with longtime rival Machar, who is to return from exile. But this new government, initially scheduled to take office on May 12, was postponed for six months. —AFP



BUREIJ: A Palestinian protester wearing a Guy Fawkes' mask on the back of his head watches as another flees from tear gas fired by Israeli forces across the fence during clashes along the border in the central Gaza Strip. —AFP

placed from Middle Eastern countries in 1948, many of whom Israel took in.

"Look, you have a situation when this whole thing started where you had 800,000 Jewish refugees that came out of all the different Middle Eastern countries and you had 800,000, roughly, Palestinian refugees," he said.

it takes delivery of the Russian S-400 system, as expected.

"The United States has consistently and clearly stated that Turkey will face very real and negative consequences if it proceeds with its S-400 acquisition, including suspension of procurement and industrial participation in the F-35 program and exposure to sanctions under the Countering America's Adversaries through Sanctions Act (CAATSA)," a State Department spokeswoman said. At the Pentagon, spokesman Air Force Lieutenant Colonel Mike Andrews said: "Nothing has changed."

"And what's happened to the Israeli - to the Jewish - refugees, is they have been absorbed by different places whereas the Arab world has not absorbed a lot of these refugees over time," he said. "I think that the people of Lebanon would love to see a resolution to this issue, one that is fair," he said.—Agencies

"Turkey's purchase of the Russian S-400 air and missile defense system is incompatible with the F-35 program. Turkey will not be permitted to have both systems," Andrews said. If the United States removes Turkey from the F-35 program, and imposes sanctions on the NATO ally, it would be one of the most significant ruptures in recent history in the relationship between the two nations. Trump, who has shown a rapport with Erdogan, could still try to change course by seeking to issue a waiver and postpone sanctions. Such a move would please Ankara but upset some of Trump's allies in Congress. —Reuters

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International

European Parliament chooses new president, completing top EU jobs

Parliament elects an Italian social democrat as new president

STRASBOURG: The European Parliament yesterday elected an Italian social democrat as its new president, filling the final top EU job a day after Brussels named two women to key posts for the first time. Italy's David Sassoli, a 63-year-old former journalist, won the absolute majority of ballots he needed at the second round of voting, seeing off German Green Ska Keller, far-left Spaniard Siria Rego and Czech conservative Jan Zahradil.

The new MEPs elected in May's European polls took office on Tuesday during a brief inaugural session before voting by secret ballot to choose Sassoli as successor to Antonio Tajani, a conservative from Italy. The 751-seat parliament-based in Strasbourg, France-is more fragmented than ever after the May election saw solid gains by the liberals and Greens as well as the far right and eurosceptics.

The vote for president completes the roster of the EU's five most important jobs, with the others settled on Tuesday at the end of three days of negotiation among the EU's 28 national leaders in Brussels. Sassoli's election to a two-and-a-half year term as parliament president-effectively the speaker of the chamber-is a sought-after post by the major

European political families, though less coveted than that of president of the European Commission or European Central Bank.

The EU leaders on Tuesday nominated German Defence Minister Ursula von der Leyen as commission chief and IMF chief Christine Lagarde to head the European Central Bank, though their appointments still need confirmation. The national leaders also suggested that the chamber's presidency should be shared for the next five years by the Socialists and Tajani's centre-right EPP. Sassoli's election completes the first part of this, but it remains unclear whether he will make way in due course. Von der Leyen is expected to visit parliament in the afternoon to court MEPs, whose approval is needed to confirm her position as commission chief.

'Disappointing'

Germany's Manfred Weber, head of the EPP group, took note of the outcome of the Brussels summit by renouncing a run for parliament head, after having already thrown in the towel in the race for the Commission's presidency. "It is normal, that after two and a half years of an EPP president, now it is up to the

Socialists to present a candidate," Weber told a press briefing in Strasbourg. "We are ready to check with the Socialists for a candidate and to give our support," he said. But the Social Democratic group in the European Parliament, second only to the EPP in terms of seats, put forward Sassoli after criticising the agreements reached between the 28, which it described as "deeply disappointing". They had wanted the commission head spot to go to their leading candidate, the Dutchman Frans Timmermans.

Brexit and Catalonia

On Tuesday, the opening of the Parliament's session was marked by the return of Nigel Farage, a veteran of the EU chamber since 1999, whose Brexit Party MEPs turned their backs when asked to stand for the EU anthem-Beethoven's Ode to Joy-at the start of the session. As Brexit has still not taken place, there are again 73 British MEPs, who will be able to sit temporarily until the divorce goes through. The new deadline is October 31. It also saw the demonstration of some 10,000 Catalans who came to Strasbourg to support three secessionists elected at the end of May but prevented from sitting by Spanish authorities. — AFP



STRASBOURG: Italian MEP David-Maria Sassoli (S&D Group) delivers a speech after being elected new president of the European Parliament during the first plenary session of the newly elected European Assembly yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Heavy rain prompts evacuation

TOKYO: Japanese authorities have issued evacuation orders for more than one million people as heavy rain hits southern parts of the country, a year after deadly floods that killed over 200 people. Small landslides were already being reported in parts of the affected area, public broadcaster NHK reported. It said a total of 1.12 million people in Kagoshima and Miyazaki prefectures had been ordered to evacuate to shelters, and that landslides had swept away several cars and buried a house in Kagoshima. No injuries have so far been reported, and there were no official details yet on how many people had heeded the warnings to leave their homes. The evacuation order is issued when a natural disaster is highly likely to occur and municipalities repeatedly urge residents to evacuate, although the instruction is frequently ignored. — AFP

US Navy SEAL 'not guilty'

LOS ANGELES: A decorated US Navy SEAL was found not guilty Tuesday of murdering a captive teenage militant in Iraq, the most serious of the charges brought against him during a two-week war crimes trial in San Diego. Edward Gallagher, 40, was likewise acquitted of two counts of attempted murder against Iraqi civilians, but was convicted of posing for a photograph beside the corpse of the captive Islamic State (IS) group fighter. The maximum sentence he could face is four months imprisonment, meaning he is set to walk free following Tuesday's verdict on account of the nine months he has already served in pre-trial confinement. The jury found Gallagher "not guilty of murder, not guilty of stabbing, not guilty of shooting, not guilty of all those things, they found him guilty of taking a photograph," Timothy Parlatore, one of Gallagher's attorney's, told journalists outside the courthouse. — AFP

Militant blows himself up

TUNIS: A wanted militant wearing an explosive belt blew himself up in the Tunisian capital after being surrounded by police, the government said yesterday, but there were no other casualties. The third such incident within a week comes months ahead of an election and at the peak of a tourist season in which Tunisia is hoping for a record number of visitors. Witnesses had told Reuters the man blew himself up in the Intilaka area of the capital, Tunis, after being surrounded by the police. Residents heard a loud explosion. An interior ministry spokesman said police opened fire on the man, whom authorities described as a wanted militant called Aymen Smiri, without giving further details. "Following a long chase, special forces surrounded the terrorist," the interior ministry said in statement. "When forces began shooting, he blew himself up with an explosive belt he was wearing." — Reuters

Italy population shrinks again

ROME: The number of babies born in Italy hit a new record low in 2018, the population shrank and the average age crept higher, national statistics office ISTAT said yesterday. Italy's demographic crisis, with a shrinking population and ageing workforce, is one reason for its chronically stagnant economy, economists say-and the situation is getting worse. Births dropped by some 18,000 to 440,000 last year, the lowest level since the unification of Italy in 1861, ISTAT said, while deaths totalled 633,000. The total population fell by 124,000 to 60.36 million, the fourth straight year of decline, meaning that since 2014 Italy has lost some 400,000 residents, the equivalent of its seventh largest city, Bologna. The anti-austerity government which took office a year ago has boosted welfare spending and vowed to cut taxes in a bid to improve families' stagnant incomes which it says contributes to their reluctance to have babies. — Reuters

Croatians outraged after British soldiers 'terrorise' seaside

ZAGREB: Urinating in the streets, unleashing a fire extinguisher in a cafe and getting into brawls - the UK is probing reports that British soldiers "terrorised" a Croatian seaside resort, media and officials said yesterday. After a military exercise in Croatia, around 100 British soldiers have spent the past ten days partying in Zadar, a city on Adriatic coast, where their rowdy behaviour has outraged locals, local media reported. "Violent, drunk, arrogant - British soldiers terrorise Zadar citizens for days," read a headline from the local daily Slobodna Dalmacija.

The soldiers, most of them reportedly drunk, peed in the streets, fled cafes without paying bills, fought with locals and vulgarly teased women, according to local



Croatia's Prime Minister Andrej Plenkovic

media. Croatian police told AFP they had received several complaints over the unruly behaviour and briefly detained five of the British soldiers, who were fined. The British embassy in Zagreb said "investigations are being under-

taken". In a statement, a UK army spokesperson said "We apologise to anyone affected in Zadar".

"We do not tolerate poor behaviour and will deal with anyone who falls short of the Army's high standards appropriately," the statement added. A cafe manager in Zadar told a local newspaper that one of the soldiers "activated the fire extinguisher (while he) was half naked" inside his cafe. "We had to close the cafe and did not manage to clean it yet. No one of them apologised or offered to pay for the damage. They simply left," the man, whose identity was not revealed, told Slobodna Dalmacija newspaper.

The soldiers "behaved like hooligan fans.... I heard they fled several bars without paying, beat one guy, urinated wherever they could," he was quoted as saying. Young British tourists already have a reputation for bad behaviour in Croatia, with previous incidents of travellers vomiting in public or walking around scantily clad have led some resorts to introduce fines. Tourism is a key economic sector for Croatia, which welcomed nearly 19 million visitors last year to its stunning Adriatic coast, which boasts more than 1,000 islands and islets. — AFP



TEXAS: A US Border Patrol agent interviews immigrants after taking them into custody in Los Ebanos, Texas. — AFP

'Dangerous overcrowding' decried at Texas migrant detention centers

WASHINGTON: The inspector general for the US Department of Homeland Security warned on Tuesday about "dangerous overcrowding" in migrant detention facilities in Texas. The report by the agency watchdog came a day after a group of Democratic lawmakers toured detention centers for undocumented immigrants in the state bordering Mexico and denounced "horrifying" conditions there.

"We encourage the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) to take immediate steps to alleviate dangerous overcrowding and prolonged detention of children and adults in the Rio Grande Valley," acting DHS Inspector General Jennifer Costello said in a memorandum to acting Homeland Security Secretary Kevin McAleenan.

The report included images taken at several Texas sites, showing dozens of migrants including young children packed shoulder to shoulder into cage-like holding areas or cells. The acting DHS inspector general said one senior manager at a detention facility described the situation as a "ticking time bomb" and raised security concerns for agency staff and detainees.

Costello said her office had toured five Border Patrol holding facilities in Texas's Rio Grande Valley in early June and observed "serious overcrowding and prolonged detention of unaccompanied alien children, families, and single adults." "Specifically, Border Patrol was holding about 8,000 detainees in custody at the time of our visit, with 3,400 held longer than the 72 hours generally permitted," she said. "Of those 3,400 detainees, Border Patrol held 1,500 for more than 10 days."

"Border Patrol's custody data indicates that 826 (31 percent) of the 2,669 children at these facilities had been held longer than the 72 hours generally permitted," she added. Children at three of the five Border Patrol facilities had no access to showers and few spare clothes while two facilities had not provided hot meals, only sandwiches. Most single adults had not had a shower in a month and were being given wet-wipes. Some detainees were suffering from constipation after a diet consisting only of bologna sandwiches. According to Border Patrol figures, 223,263 people were detained in the Rio Grande Valley sector between October 2018 and May 2019, up 124 per-

cent from the same period a year earlier. US Democratic presidential hopefuls denounced the conditions depicted by the report. "No human being deserves to be treated like this," Senator Kamala Harris wrote on Twitter. "This is abuse, it's dehumanization, and it's not who we are as a country."

'Nothing short of horrific'

"Sickening. Human beings are being herded like animals right now in our country," Senator Elizabeth Warren tweeted, while Senator Bernie Sanders wrote that those in charge of the detention centers "do not respect basic human rights." Mayor Pete Buttigieg tweeted that he was "outraged by these photos," and Senator Corey Booker wrote that "this report is nothing short of horrific." The report comes as the White House and Customs and Border Protection (CBP) officials pushed back against criticism from the Democratic lawmakers who toured migrant detention facilities on Monday.

Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who visited two such centers in Texas, described the conditions as "horrifying" and said migrants were being subjected to "systemic cruelty." "There's abuse in these facilities," the outspoken Democratic congresswoman from New York told reporters. "They put them in a room with no running water and these women were being told by CBP officers to drink out of the toilet."

White House counselor Kellyanne Conway told Fox News that was an "outrageous claim." "Everybody who has control over that facility, or control for the Border Patrol, has said that's not true, they've not heard of this," Conway said. CBP deputy commissioner Robert Perez, appearing on CNN, said the detention centers were "never designed to deal with the volume of migrants coming our way" and the Border Patrol is doing its best to deal with "absolutely oversaturated conditions." In addition to criticism over detention conditions, the Border Patrol is also under fire following the revelation of a secret Facebook group for current and former agents that is filled with racist memes and posts mocking migrants. For example, a news story about a 16-year-old Guatemalan who died in Border Patrol custody elicited comments such as "Oh well" and "If he dies, he dies." — AFP

Black French MP leads fight against racist online trolls

PARIS: Laetitia Avia, a black French MP whose proposals to tackle online trolling go before parliament yesterday, suffers so many racist insults on Twitter that she once thought an abuse-free day was due to a technical problem. "It happened once or twice when I really didn't receive anything and I wondered if there was a bug," the former corporate lawyer told AFP in an interview. "It's incredibly rare that I don't get anything." Since swapping her successful private sector career to be part of President Emmanuel Macron's ruling party in 2017, Avia has regularly publicised the most abject abuse and death threats she receives online.

"It's to educate people," explained the 33-year-old who has family roots in Togo in West Africa and grew up in a low-income suburb of Paris. "They can't imagine what it's like." "I sometimes think that I should lend my Twitter account to people from time to time so they can see for themselves." But her real fightback, which could have consequences beyond France, began yesterday when French MPs start debating a draft law to tackle hate speech online which she has been preparing for the last year.

Inspired by German legislation that came into force in 2018, she hopes the new law will form the foundation of a wider European push to tackle racism, anti-Semitism, sexism and homophobia peddled by usually anonymous users of social media. Cleaning up the internet, she believes, is the responsibility of her generation, which was the first to grow up with the social media phenomenon. "There's a growing awareness in our society at large. No-one wants to accept the status quo," Avia said. "No-one wants to leave the big platforms to regulate themselves. Self-regulation has failed."

Her draft law proposes two main ways to tackle the scourge of what it terms as "obviously hateful content." The first plank will require social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram or YouTube to create a button that will be "accessible, simple and clear" to report abusive messages. The button will be the same across all platforms and should be easy to find - unlike the mechanism to report abuse on German sites, which Avia believes is too difficult to locate. "I want to make the user experience easy," she said, while acknowledging the networks themselves will have to invest in teams of adjudicators to assess, block and remove reported content if necessary. "It's a financial investment, absolutely. That's what we are asking for," she said.

The second major part of the draft law will also increase the liabilities and potential penalties for social networks, who have long argued they are unable to police the billions of people who use their highly-profitable products. The draft law proposes creating a new crime - failing to remove abusive content - and the platforms will have just 24 hours to take down "obviously hateful" messages or videos, or face fines of up to 1.25 million euros (\$1.4 million).

But critics say the law places too much power in the platforms' hands by making them arbiters of online speech - which could lead to the closing down of free speech, as well as tackling abuses. Avia says the role of the French media regulator, the CSA, will be key because it will assess whether companies are being too lax or too restrictive. Offenders could face a potential fine of up to 4.0 percent of global sales. — AFP

International

Hand signals and shields: How HK's parliament was stormed

Hong Kong's protesters besieged the city's parliament

HONG KONG: With makeshift shields zip-tied to their wrists, a trolley converted into a battering ram and rehearsed hand signals, Hong Kong's protesters showed remarkable levels of do-it-yourself savvy as they besieged the city's parliament. Throughout the last three weeks of unprecedented anti-government demonstrations, the largely young students at the frontlines of the protests have displayed a flair for innovation in their battle with the authorities.

But Monday's storming and vandalising of the legislature was their most brazen operation to date - an hours-long siege and eventual breach of a heavily fortified building using whatever tools came to hand. The protests have been leaderless - unlike previous mass demonstrations where key figures have been jailed in recent years for leading or encouraging civil disobedience. Many of the current generation of largely young protesters proudly repeat the phrase "be like water", a philosophy of adaptability and unpredictability espoused by martial arts master and local legend Bruce Lee.

Hand signals

In an inventive move that proved key in supporting those on the front lines, protesters created a string of hand signals to communicate equipment requests. A guide to the signals was shared among social media - a triangle an appeal for more helmets. Other gestures alert the crowds for cling film, umbrellas,

scissors, even asthma medication.

The equipment is then ferried to the front by long, snaking lines of protesters. Yesterday police announced that a 35-year-old man named Lau had been arrested during the early hours of Monday morning after they found supplies in his van. "Officers seized a batch of scissors, cutters, hexagon keys, helmets, masks, gloves and industrial grade baking soda from a parked van," the police said.

'We have to support each other'

The South China Morning Post reported that the decision to storm the parliament was taken after some 200 hardcore protesters put various options to a vote earlier on Monday, as the city was marking the anniversary of its handover to China.

Tosi Kwan, a 29-year-old teacher, was among those helping to ferry equipment to the front before the parliament was breached. "I'm not too sure about the ultimate goal tonight," he told AFP. "Maybe those on the front lines have discussed this, I don't know. But as resisters, we have to support each other, and those on the front lines." While Kwan was not taking part in the break-in, he said he understood those who were because years of peaceful protests had failed to achieve political reform.

"Such resistance is necessary. It's been clear: two million people marching was useless," he said, referencing a record-breaking

rally on 16 June. The first successful breach of the building's heavily reinforced windows came after protesters filled a street vendor's trolley with heavy debris and then used it as a battering ram. It looked like something out of a medieval siege. Inside the building stood rows and rows of riot police with shields, pepper spray and gas masks.

On the other side protesters slammed the trolley against the glass for some two hours as others protected them from police pepper spray with a shield wall of umbrellas. Some of the protesters had strapped makeshift armour to their bodies, comprised of thick magazines or cork padding. One of the most persistent assailants wielded an eye-catching orange shield that was made out of one half of a plastic suitcase. Others assembled long paint rollers to cover CCTV cameras on the ceiling.

'Don't destroy'

But it was steel poles, taken from nearby construction sites and unscrewed from street fencing, that proved the most reliable at defeating the toughened glass. As the sun set, protesters discovered they could make much better progress against the glass by attacking its edges, creating a hole that could quickly be widened. The riot police then retreated behind steel shutters that placed the building on complete lockdown. But they were little match for the protesters who again used the polls to prise the shutters up high enough to place



HONG KONG: The Main Chamber is seen during a media tour of the Legislative Council in Hong Kong yesterday, two days after protesters broke into the complex. — AFP

metal barricades underneath and allow people to flood through.

At that point police abandoned the parliament to the protesters who swarmed the building, spraying the walls with graffiti, tearing down portraits of city leaders and hanging a colonial-era flag in the debating chamber. But even the storming showed careful levels of

coordination with notes left by protesters telling their fellow assailants to leave books and display cabinets with expensive trinkets unharmed. "Preserve cultural objects", "Don't destroy", read two notes next to a display cabinet. Another sign was stuck to a fridge containing drinks. "We are not thieves," it read. "We won't take without asking." — AFP

Nine Bangladesh's opposition members sentenced to death

DHAKA: A court in Bangladesh yesterday sentenced to death nine opposition activists over an attack on a train carrying current Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina 25 years ago, a prosecutor said. A further 25 activists from the main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) were jailed for life and 13 other members jailed for 10 years by the court in Pabna, prosecutor Akhtaruzzaman Mukta told AFP.

"Thirty-four of the convicts were present when the judge delivered the verdict. Others have been fugitive for years," Mukta said. The BNP, whose leader Khaleda Zia was jailed last year for corruption in a case that her supporters say is politically motivated, said the new verdicts were aimed at crippling the party. "It is a fabricated case and the verdict is a farce," BNP spokesman Rizvi Ahmed told AFP, adding the judgement was "stage-managed" by the government to inject fear among the opposition.

The prosecutor said BNP activists shot at a train carrying the then opposition leader Hasina and attacked it with molotov cocktails in September 1994 when it reached Iswardi Rail Station where Hasina was scheduled to



DHAKA: This picture shows a general view of the city of Dhaka under the rain. The monsoon rains sweep across the subcontinent from June to September. — AFP

address a rally. At least half a dozen people including a minister now in Hasina's current cabinet were injured, prompting police to open fire to bring the situation under control, he said. Hasina returned to power in 2009 and has since led the country for more than a decade. In December she won a third consecutive term in a vote observers said was flawed. Hasina insists she won fairly. In recent years

the prime minister has been accused of increasing authoritarianism and overseeing a crackdown on the opposition and dissent, with tens of thousands of BNP officials and activists and their allies detained by police. Scores of opposition activists have also gone missing - feared abducted by security forces - and top journalists have been detained for criticising the government. — AFP



KASHMIR: An Indian police vehicle patrols in Srinagar. — AFP

Modest rise in Indian military spending likely, modernisation on hold

MUMBAI: India is likely to stick to a modest rise in defence spending in the 2019/2020 budget due on Friday because of tight government finances, officials said, further delaying a long-planned military modernisation programme. India's air force desperately needs hundreds of combat planes and helicopters to replace its Soviet-era aircraft while the navy has long planned for a dozen submarines to counter the expanding presence of the Chinese navy in the Indian Ocean.

The army, a large part of which is deployed on the border with traditional foe Pakistan, has been seeking everything from assault rifles to surveillance drones and body armour. But these plans have been on hold for years because governments have not been able to set aside large sums and most of the defence expenditure goes on salaries and pensions for a 1.4 million standing military, the world's second largest after China.

In an interim budget announced in February before national elections, the government allocated 4.31 trillion rupees (\$62.27 billion) for defence, a 6.6 percent rise over the previous year, raising concern at the time it wouldn't be enough for modernisation. But a finance ministry official told Reuters there was unlikely to be any change to that allocation when Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman presents the federal budget in parliament. "Defence is our major spending and we give it as much as the budget allows. But this year, a significant rise to what has already been allotted looks difficult," the official involved in the budget preparations said.

China, by contrast, in March announced defence spending of around \$180 billion, a 7.5% increase over 2018 and faster than the economic growth target. While China doesn't give much break-up, it is largely assumed that a substantial portion of it goes towards modernisation, helped also by a cutback in maintenance costs. Since Chinese President Xi Jinping took office in late 2012, he has made strengthening and modernising the military a very key part of his policy platform. Part of that has been reduction in troops by about 300,000 and the money saved in this is invested in much more advanced equipment and research and development.

Bloated military

Indian military planners have also considered restructuring the forces for the last couple of years to reduce manpower costs, but have not moved fast enough. There are 2.4 million defence pensioners at the moment, with approximately 55,000 being added every year.

"We need a lot of funds but it is not very likely to come," a defence ministry official said. Laxman Behera, a research fellow at the government-funded Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses in New Delhi, said the military's spending on pay, allowances and pensions had risen from 45% to 56% in the last four years. Share of capital procurement had come down to 18% from 21% during the same period. "Pensions take away a major chunk of India's defence expenditure every year," he said.

The Modi government has also tied military modernisation to its Make-in-India drive to build a domestic industry which has been slow in taking off. Global defence companies such as Lockheed Martin and Boeing are bidding for a contract to supply the air force 114 combat planes which will be made in India in a deal estimated to be over \$15 billion. There will be little movement on the jet contract and another on submarines if no new funds are announced, the defence ministry official said. — Reuters

In blow to Singapore's expansion, Malaysia bans sea sand exports

SINGAPORE: Malaysia, Singapore's biggest source for sea sand, has banned the export of the commodity, according to officials in Kuala Lumpur, a move that traders said could complicate the island-state's ambitious expansion plans on reclaimed land. Those plans include the development of the Tuas mega port, slated to be the world's biggest container terminal. Singapore has increased its land area by a quarter since independence in 1965, mostly by using sand to reclaim coastal areas.

Malaysian Prime Minister Mohamad Mahathir, who came to power in a shock election last year, imposed a ban on all sea sand exports on October 3, two senior government sources with direct knowledge of the decision said. The government sources, asking not to be named due to the sensitivity of the matter, said Mahathir was upset that Malaysia's land was being used to increase the size of its wealthier neighbour. He was also concerned corrupt Malaysian officials were benefiting from the secretive business.

Endie Shazlie Akbar, Mahathir's press secretary, confirmed that the government had put a stop to sand exports last year. However, he denied that it was aimed at curbing Singapore's expansion plans, saying it was a move to clamp down on illegal sand smuggling. The ban was never made public because of the potential diplomatic fallout, the sources said. Singapore has not made any public comment on the ban. Singapore and Malaysia were part of British-ruled Malaya and became distinct countries in 1965. They often have strained relations due to disputes over territory and shared resources, such as water.

Singapore's Ministry of National Development, which oversees sand imports, did not directly respond to questions about a ban by Malaysia but said it had multiple sources of sand and was cutting back its use of the commodity. "Sand is imported on a commercial basis from various countries to ensure resilience in our sand supply," the ministry said in response to questions from Reuters.

"The government has also been encouraging the industry to reduce the reliance on sand." Two traders importing sand to Singapore, who both asked not to be named, said the commodity is becoming scarcer and driving Singapore to source sand from as far as India, which would push up costs. Shipping is the biggest single cost in acquiring sand. The traders added Singapore has been stockpiling sand in recent years which could provide a buffer against any immediate bottleneck in supplies. The sand industry is opaque with no international price index, making it difficult to gauge the financial impact of a ban by Malaysia. Sea sand is mostly used for land reclamation, while river sand is a core component in construction materials like cement. Singapore imported 59 million tonnes of sand from Malaysia in 2018, at a cost of \$347 million, according to United Nations Comtrade data, which is based on information provided by individual countries' customs offices. — Reuters

News in brief

Professor doused in kerosene

CHITTAGONG: Teachers demonstrated in Bangladesh's Chittagong port city yesterday after a student doused a top professor with kerosene to protest against his allegedly lewd lectures, police and officials said. Masud Mahmud, a professor of English literature at private University of Science and Technology, escaped unhurt Tuesday after other students and police came to his rescue. Local police chief Pranab Kumar Chowdhury said a student had been arrested and remanded in custody. The Bengali daily Prothom Alo said the professor was chased by around half a dozen students before two of them shoved him, and another doused him with kerosene. — AFP

India accused of killing 5

MUZAFFARABAD: The Pakistani military accused India yesterday of killing five soldiers along the de facto border in Kashmir, just months after the nuclear-armed neighbours nearly went to war over the disputed Himalayan region. The soldiers were killed in a blast in Barnala, on the Pakistan-administered side of Kashmir, just a few meters from the so-called "Line of Control" that divides the region, the military said in a statement. It was not immediately clear when the blast happened. "The incident is evident of state sponsored terrorism by India violating bilateral ceasefire agreement and the international rules," the statement said, though it also added that the nature of the blast is still being investigated. — AFP

6 killed in factory blaze

DHAKA: Fire tore through a textile factory in central Bangladesh killing at least six people, officials said yesterday. The fire brigade took 12 hours to control the blaze at the huge factory in Sreepur, near the capital Dhaka, which cast fresh attention on safety in Bangladeshi factories after a series of disasters. The fire spread quickly late Tuesday as water supplies to the fire hydrant ran out, local fire chief Akhter uz Zaman said. The fire brigade said six bodies had been recovered. With about half of the complex destroyed, emergency services were searching for other victims, Zaman added. Authorities have launched an inquiry into the cause of the blaze. Bangladesh, the world's second largest clothes maker after China, has faced international criticism over lax factory safety standards. — AFP

8 dead, 15 missing in India

MUMBAI: Eight people were killed and at least 15 were missing yesterday after the heaviest monsoon rains in a decade breached a dam in the western Indian state of Maharashtra, authorities said. In the state capital Mumbai, the death toll from a wall collapse in a slum on Tuesday following the torrential downpour reached 24, with more rain expected in coming days. Heavy rain continued to lash the coastal city of 20 million people yesterday, bringing it to a virtual standstill as flooding cut train lines, closed the airport's main runway and caused traffic misery. Building collapses and dam breaches are common during the monsoon in India due to dilapidated structures that buckle under the weight of continuous rain. — AFP

8 arrested over cyberattacks

HONG KONG: Hong Kong police said yesterday they have arrested eight people for stealing and disclosing personal information of officers online, as the city grapples with the aftermath of unprecedented anti-government protests that saw its parliament ransacked. The semi-autonomous city has been plunged into crisis by massive demonstrations since last month against its Beijing-backed government, sparked by a law that would have allowed extraditions to the mainland. The anger spilled over on Monday as groups of mostly young, hardline protesters stormed Hong Kong's Legislative Council, spraying graffiti on the walls of its main chamber and defacing the city's seal before police regained control of the building. — AFP

Analysis

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Trump's dance with autocrats keeps open diplomatic doors

For those who accuse US President Donald Trump of being more at home in the company of dictators, autocrats and authoritarian rulers than with democratic leaders, the past week has provided ready ammunition. As protesters took to the streets in Hong Kong calling for democracy and human rights, Trump's most successful meetings at the Group of 20 summit in Osaka last week appear to have been with leaders accused in the West of denying those liberties.

With Chinese President Xi Jinping, the focus was on easing the trade war between Beijing and Washington, while with Russian President Vladimir Putin, Trump joked of "getting rid" of troublesome journalists.

Trump is hardly the first US president to make polite small talk with autocrats although he does seem to seek out and enjoy such encounters more than any recent predecessor. That was evident with his historic few steps into North Korea on Sunday when he became the first sitting US president to visit the isolated state. North Korean President Kim Jong-un welcomed Trump's assertions of a personal connection between the two men, and agreement was reached on restarting stalled nuclear talks despite widespread skepticism in the US national security establishment. In many respects, what was most striking about Trump's activity in Osaka was how much of it will have been contrary to the advice of the US government apparatus, including his own political appointees. On a host of issues in recent weeks and months, the US president has shown a deep distrust of even many of his inner circle.

It's an approach that was also seen in the confrontation with Iran, when Trump appeared to shock many of even his closest advisers last month by stepping back from a military strike following the shooting down of a US drone. This pointed to a schism with National Security Advisor John Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo. Both are hawkish figures who want a tougher line on Tehran and other perceived US foes. According to the Wall Street Journal, Trump complained that some of those around him were trying to push him into war with Iran, something he described as "disgusting". "We don't need any more wars," the newspaper quoted him as saying. This incident, the G20 meetings and the North Korea visit point to the same paradox of the Trump presidency. It is not just that Trump relishes ignoring advice and upending the expectations of those around him. It is that while he tends towards more aggressive, disruptive action than most of his advisers recommend, he is also more conciliatory. It's a dynamic that is easily interpreted simply as being unpredictable, but it does contain some logic. It also opens the door to diplomatic "off-ramps" at times when rising tensions have otherwise seemed unstoppable.

Amid all the criticism of Trump over North Korea, it's easy to forget that in his first year in office he was roundly blamed for talking up tensions. As Pyongyang tested ever more powerful rockets and warheads, the US president appeared to be doing everything in his power to suggest he was considering military action. Only an unexpected diplomatic breakthrough by South Korea at the 2018 Winter Olympics - which opened the door to the first Trump-Kim meeting - provided a reason to ease the tension. North Korea almost certainly will not give up its nuclear warheads, but that is not the outcome the United States is realistically seeking. What Washington most set its sights on was a halt to Pyongyang's trajectory towards having long-range rockets and warheads capable of hitting the continental United States - and the hiatus in testing such weapons since last year appears to have done just that, at least for now.

Rather than achieving some improbable disarmament deal, Trump's focus now appears to be on simply keeping dialogue going, ensuring Kim feels secure enough to avoid restarting those tests. It may not be a true long-term solution, but it has reduced the risk of war. Indications are growing that Trump wants a deal with China on the economy. As with North Korea - and indeed Iran - Trump created much of the current crisis with China himself, starting a trade war that few around him felt was wise.

But it may also be true that as with Iran, Trump is unhappy with the wider trend in Washington of simply seeing China as an enemy - a position increasingly common in the Pentagon. Having until now been more aggressive than the Washington consensus, Trump seems open to showing greater openness to China than many think wise - including easing restrictions on US firms trading with Chinese telecoms company Huawei, seen by many Western security experts as a major security risk.

In contrast to Barack Obama's presidential administration, Trump has little or no interest in allowing relationships to be defined by democracy or human rights. Pompeo had said Trump would specifically raise the issue of Hong Kong with China, but it appeared largely to be swept under the carpet. Khashoggi's killing also appears not to have been a huge irritant during talks with the Saudi crown prince. With Putin, Trump seemed envious of the Russian leader's level of domestic control.

That's unsettling on a number of levels. But it will make those countries less nervous of US interference and potential "regime change" - worries that have contributed to tensions over the past decade. Betting global peace on the outcome of Trump's moods and temperament might seem a risky bet but for now, that's what is happening. Last week - indeed, last month, over Iran's shooting down of a US drone - showed him in a conciliatory phase. —Reuters

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(Left) Picture taken on Feb 4, 2019 shows a blown-up ATM in a devastated bank branch in Langenhagen, eastern Germany. (Right) Picture taken on May 2, 2019 shows a blown-up ATM in an underground station in Berlin. —AFP



Germany is EU's Eldorado for ATM raiders

"Search for black Audi after attempt to blow up a cash machine", "Neighbors hear loud bang, perpetrators flee in Audi", "Car chase through three federal states": headlines like these have become commonplace around Germany as raids on cash machines have increased in number. Some 369 ATMs were destroyed by explosions last year, a 38-percent increase compared with 2017 and 10 times more than a decade ago, according to data from the Federal Criminal Police Office (BKA).

Most of the crimes follow the same pattern, with perpetrators using an electric detonator or fuse to set off a mixture of gases pumped into the machine - or more rarely a solid explosive. Carried out late at night, perpetrators often plan the attacks "months in advance", according to Europol. The crimes can be risky, with one man killed in Oct 2018 while attempting a similar attack on a ticket machine at a local train station in Halle, southwest of Berlin.

But successful attacks on ATMs are highly lucrative. In May, raiders who blasted open a Commerzbank cash machine in Eschborn, near Frankfurt, made off with €190,000 (\$215,000). The police managed to grab one suspect who returned to the scene of the crime in the small hours, but his accomplices and the cash have disappeared without trace, Frankfurt prosecutor Christian Hartwig said. Many cash

machine crackers come "from the Netherlands and central Europe" to Germany simply because of its favorable geography, he added.

'Audi gang'

Germany's geographical position at the centre of Europe and its dense web of motorways, much of which is not covered by a speed limit, means that criminals can more easily shake off police than elsewhere - driving German-made sports cars, naturally. One particularly notorious group has plagued the state of North Rhine-Westphalia, which shares a border with the Netherlands and where the largest number of bank raids are carried out.

The press dubbed the group the "Audi gang" because their getaway car of choice tended to be rented or stolen vehicles of that particular high-end brand. Three members of the gang were hauled before a court in state capital Duesseldorf in June, accused of stealing more than €600,000 and causing €100,000 of damage in 2017-18. Last year, a total of 128 suspects were arrested over cash machine robberies, most of them from the Netherlands, the BKA said.

Even so, Germany accounts for more than one-third of the attacks recorded across 11 large European countries sur-

veyed by the European Association for Secure Transactions (EAST). The nation's 58,000 machines make up just 16 percent of the installed base across all the countries in the study.

Fighting back

While cash machine attacks have mounted in Germany, the number reported in the other 10 nations studied by EAST, including France and Britain, fell 15 percent to just under 700 altogether. Such data highlight how banks can work together with government support to reduce the incentives to blast open ATMs. In the Netherlands, lenders created the "Geldmaat" network, agreeing to hold less cash in each machine but refill them more regularly in order to reduce the potential payoff for any one raid.

France ordered banks in 2015 to fit ATMs with systems that stain banknotes if they are forcibly removed. Europol credits the move with sharply reducing the number of attacks in France, which fell from 304 in 2013 to just 58 in 2018, according to National Gendarmerie figures. Even in Germany, criminals fail to secure any banknotes in 60 percent of cases thanks to well-protected machines, the BKA said. But successful attacks can be highly lucrative. On average, €130,000 are stolen in each German crime, compared with just €17,100 across the 11 countries surveyed by EAST. —Reuters

Under pressure from Trump, OPEC embraces Putin

When Vladimir Putin announced at the weekend that OPEC would extend oil production cuts, broadcasting a deal before the group had even met to approve it, the move angered some member nations. They were dismayed at the leading role non-OPEC Russia, once seen as the group's rival in oil markets, was playing in shaping the group's policies. But reality soon set in, and the acceptance that Moscow could help OPEC in its goal of propping up oil prices at a time when it is facing intensifying heat on another front: from US President Donald Trump.

Trump is putting unprecedented pressure on OPEC and its de-facto leader Saudi Arabia, demanding they pump more crude to drive down fuel prices - a key domestic issue for him as he seeks re-election next year. Iranian Oil Minister Bijan Zanganeh initially expressed outrage about Russian President Putin's pre-announcement of the extended output cuts. "OPEC is going to die with these processes," he declared on Monday morning, before OPEC oil ministers met to effectively rubberstamp a done deal, bemoaning the Russia-Saudi dominance of the group's affairs. But by Monday evening, he had thrown his support behind the deal: "The meeting was good for Iran and we achieved what we wanted."

OPEC and Russia have become unlikely bedfellows, forging an "OPEC+" alliance to reduce global crude supply to counter soaring output from the United States and a weakening world econ-

omy. It is a marriage of convenience as both want higher oil prices to shore up their finances, while the alliance could also strengthen OPEC's position in the face of Trump's demands. "I don't think Russia is calling the shots," said Saudi Energy Minister Khalid Al-Falih when asked if Putin was now OPEC's boss. "I think Russia's influence is welcome."

Iran's veteran OPEC governor Hossein Kazempour Ardebili concurred, echoing his boss Zanganeh's conciliatory tone. "Russia is a big player. If it announced something in agreement with the rest of OPEC, this is most welcome," he said. "We are working together." Iraq, which has overtaken Iran as OPEC's second-largest producer after Saudi Arabia and has taken its market share in Europe and Asia, also said Moscow's rising role was positive.

Such a chorus of approval is a sharp reversal for relations between OPEC and Russia that have been characterized by antipathy and distrust for decades. Back in 2001, Russia agreed to cut production in tandem with OPEC but never delivered on its pledges and instead raised output. That severely damaged relations, and other attempts at cooperation were unsuccessful - until the recent alliance. In his book "Out of the Desert", former Saudi Oil Minister Ali Al-Naimi wrote that his 2014 meeting with Russian officials lasted just minutes. Upon learning Russia would not cut output, he gathered his papers and said: "I think the meeting is over."

Changing dynamics

Putin announced on Saturday that he had met Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman on the sidelines of a G20 meeting in Osaka and they had agreed to extend the OPEC+ production cuts. Gary Ross, chief executive of Black Gold Investors, said that even if it was "indelicate" for Saudi Arabia to let Putin announce the deal, it showed the changing oil market dynamics. "Trump has one interest

Japan whale restaurants cheer hunt resumption

"Two sashimis, three steaks," cries the waitress at one of Tokyo's most famous whale restaurants during a frantic lunchtime service where Japan's resumption of commercial whaling has cooked up new hope. Mitsuo Tani has spent 46 of his 64 years preparing and cooking whale meat and hosts a mixed clientele at his restaurant: Salarjemen in white shirts gulping down a quick lunch before heading back to the office, single women, retired couples.

Whale steak is the most popular dish at 980 yen (\$9). A thin rectangular piece of meat with as much rice, miso soup, vegetables and iced tea as the customer can eat. Also flying out of the kitchen is whale sashimi - raw slices of whale flesh, skin or liver. Japan's resumption of commercial whaling has prompted fury from other countries and campaigners, with activists saying that one of the three species targeted is threatened with extinction and sub-populations of the other two are depleted.

But veteran whale chef Tani is keen to promote the health benefits of whale meat. "It is five times lower in calories than beef, 10 times lower in cholesterol, two times less fat than chicken. It's packed with iron. But abroad, people do not know this," he told AFP. Not all would agree with Tani's health based sales-pitch, however. In 2015, when the Environmental Investigation Agency tested the mercury levels of whale meat sold in Japan, they found it riddled with the substance. Whipping up a "whale roast beef" at the pass, Tani explained that he had to move from the northern city of Sendai after the 2011 tsunami and the price of whale meat soared amid a significant drop in supply. In Tokyo, he has never had any problem procuring meat. While Japan was still part of the International Whaling Commission, the whales caught in Antarctic waters for "research" purposes still ended up as sashimi and steak on plates around the country.

Ironically, with Japan leaving the IWC and resuming commercial whaling off its own coast, the quantity of meat may decline. Japan set an annual quota of more than 600 whales while in the IWC. The cap now stands at 227 until the end of the year - 52 minke, 150 Bryde's and 25 sei whales. It is not the only country carrying out hunts, with Norway and Iceland conducting them in recent years and indigenous people from Alaska to Greenland allowed exemptions to the moratorium. Hitting back at those who fear the resumption of commercial whaling further endangers whales, Japanese authorities say the quotas have been set carefully "to keep the whale population at a sustain-



This July 2, 2019 picture shows a chef holding a whale meat at a restaurant in Tokyo. —AFP

able level". "I'm scared that the quantity of whale meat will go down," admitted Tani.

'Well cooked'

Another whale restaurant boss, Sumiko Koizumi, hailed the resumption of whaling as "an excellent thing" and said it was down to chefs to promote the meat and dream up new recipes. Removing the stigma around whale meat will make it easier for consumers, she said, "first because supermarkets will be more inclined to offer it and wholesalers will listen more to our needs and be in a position to meet them".

Kenta Yodono, sales manager at the Kyodo whaling firm that operates Japan's flagship whaling boat, said the commercial hunts would catch different species of whales, which would taste slightly different. "The commercial species will be different and certain people might be concerned that they will not have the same taste. But in general, I think the quality will improve and we can respond to restaurants' needs," Yodono told AFP.

He acknowledged activists' concerns over the cruelty of the whale hunt and said "the fishermen are conscious of the fact that the time the animal suffers should be reduced". Tani does have some fears however over the immediate future of his industry, with few chefs training to acquire the specialized cooking skills required. "With commercial whaling halted for more than 30 years, no one has got into the business and that will not happen overnight," he said.

"Even if some people get into it now, it will take 30 years. And if they find the work too hard, they will stop. Whale needs to be well cooked otherwise no one will start to eat it again," added Tani. Japan has defended the controversial whale hunt as a key part of its tradition and rich culinary heritage. And Tani agreed. "A country that does not preserve its food culture has no future." —AFP

Is July 7 vote last stand for Tsipras?

Greeks vote on Sunday in a general election that is the first in the country's post-ballot era, which looks set to oust leftist Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras after a record-setting four years in power. Greece's first avowed atheist and longest-serving crisis premier, as well as the youngest in over a century, Tsipras is battling to overcome a 10-point deficit in opinion polls, mainly caused by widespread dissatisfaction with his government's tax policies. Tsipras's Syriza party "broke a number of promises and dashed hopes among party voters. They were forced to follow a policy of austerity" that badly hit the middle class, says political analyst George Flessas. Tsipras stormed to power in 2015 with promises to eliminate austerity. Instead, Greece's creditors forced him to accept a third bailout following a disastrous six-month negotiation that nearly saw the country pushed out of the euro.

Now, the 44-year-old vows to make "the biggest comeback in modern Greek history", despite suffering successive defeats to conservative challenger Kyriakos Mitsotakis in the last two months. In campaign speeches, Tsipras has accused Mitsotakis - who was part of a 2012-2014 crisis government - of "disastrous" mismanagement that brought hundreds of thousands of job losses and business failures. Tsipras has touted his Syriza party's track record in reducing unemployment by around eight points and raising the minimum wage for the first time since 2012. His government also rolled out a batch of last-minute tax cuts in May.

But the majority of the electorate seem unmoved. "In 2015, Syriza represented hope and political renewal. Now it's a party like any other," says Andreas Tsanavaris, a former party activist. Christos Maravelis, who voted for the once-radical leftists in 2015, says many will be seeking to "punish Syriza for betraying the Greek people" with false promises. Tsipras himself in June called for the snap election after a stinging defeat to Mitsotakis' New Democracy party, which secured a margin of nearly 9.5 points in May's European Parliament elections. New Democracy later carried off the bulk of the country's regions in local elections a few days later.

Mitsotakis is a hard-nosed reformer and political dynasty scion. He is the son of former prime minister Constantine Mitsotakis, one of the country's longest-serving parliamentarians. His sister, Dora Bakoyannis, is a former minister and Athens' first female mayor. And new Athens mayor Costas Bakoyannis, elected in May, is his nephew. His election as prime minister would mark the return of family politics to Greek government, says Tsipras, whose modest background interrupted this long-running political tradition. —AFP

Business

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IMF chief Lagarde to chart new ECB course

First woman ECB chief's political background may raise questions

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: IMF chief Christine Lagarde may be the first woman to be nominated head of the European Central Bank, but her political background and lack of central bank experience raises important questions about the independence of monetary policy in today's highly uncertain times, analysts said.

A former corporate lawyer and French finance minister with a polished public image and confident command of English, the 63-year-old provides a sharp contrast to the long line-up of besuited male technocrats whom ECB watchers had all seen on the shortlist in recent months. Taking over the ECB a decade after the global financial crisis, the International Monetary Fund director is expected to push on with the easy money policies and ultra-low rates that outgoing ECB chief Mario Draghi employed to stimulate the economy.

While Lagarde has stopped short of issuing recommendations to central bankers from her Washington seat, she "has always been supportive of the ECB's unconventional policies," said Frederik Ducrozet, a strategist at Pictet Wealth Management. Since the financial crisis and subsequent sovereign debt battered the eurozone, the central bank has entered uncharted territory in its battle to coax inflation back towards its preferred goal of just below 2.0 percent.

Looking to boost the flow of credit through the economy to support activity and prices, it has set interest rates at historic lows and pumped 2.6 trillion euros (\$2.9 trillion) into the financial system via its "quantitative easing" (QE) bond-buying scheme between 2015 and 2018.

Looking ahead, the eurozone is still suffering sluggish growth and inflation, meaning "in the absence of improvement... additional stimulus will be required," Draghi said last month. That could mean Lagarde could quickly have to lower rates still further and relaunch QE purchases.

Political crossfire

The ECB's massive interventions have not escaped controversy. In Germany, conservative politicians and economists accused the central bank of printing money to prop up shaky eurozone members.

"The key thing about the appointment of Christine

Lagarde... is that she is not Jens Weidmann," the Bundesbank (German central bank) governor who notoriously voted against QE, said Andrew Kenningham of Capital Economics. "Lagarde has consistently supported monetary policy loosening in general and QE in particular," he added.

Her political background raises questions as central bankers increasingly come under pressure from politicians. US President Donald Trump, for example, has not only put pressure on the head of the US Federal Reserve on interest rates, but last month accused Draghi of trying to manipulate the euro.

Michael Hewson, analyst at CMC Markets UK, called Lagarde "a controversial choice at a time when central bank independence is increasingly being questioned."

He noted that if her appointment is confirmed, there will be two ex-politicians at the top of the ECB—the vice president, Luis de Guindos, previously served as Spain's economy minister. This calls "into question the political impartiality of what is probably the most important position in Europe," Hewson said.

But Pictet's Ducrozet said that Lagarde "has frequently insisted on the importance of central bank independence".

'Brain drain'

Another question raised by the choice is the level of expertise needed to run a central bank. With the departure of former chief economist Peter Praet and Draghi, the ECB's six-strong executive board is losing two PhDs in the field this year. The change of the guard amounts to a "monetary policy brain drain", ING bank economist Carsten Brzeski said.

"Lagarde would probably be more of a moderator than an intellectual mastermind on monetary policy," he added—potentially amplifying the role of the 19 national central bank governors who sit on the ECB's governing council. Nevertheless, the president is backed up by a massive staff of experts and former Central Bank of Ireland head Philip Lane, who has stepped into Praet's shoes.

"A continuation of a pragmatic monetary policy stance,



BARI: In this file photo, Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde (right) chats with the President of the European Central Bank (ECB) Mario Draghi before a family photo on the second day of a G7 summit of Finance Ministers in Bari. — AFP

as well as a confirmation of 'whatever-it-takes' looks likely," Brzeski predicted, in a reference to Draghi's infamous pledge to take possibly radical measures to save the euro.

Other analysts also pointed out that a non-economist is running the US Federal Reserve on the other side of the Atlantic. "Jay Powell is a lawyer as well, even if the difference is that he has been a Fed governor for a number of years," said Quincy Krosby, strategist at Prudential Financial. As for Lagarde, the important thing is "she has proven herself during a difficult time globally, a global downturn, a synchronized recovery and now a global slowdown," she added. — AFP

Oil prices tumble even as producers extend supply cuts

NEW YORK: Oil prices fell sharply even as leading crude exporters extended a supply agreement, while global equities mostly nudged higher in the aftermath of the weekend's US-China trade detente.

Benchmark crude prices tumbled more than four percent following the latest agreement among oil producers, confirmed at meeting of the Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries in Vienna and supported by Russia and other exporters. Analysts still see the commodity as vulnerable to oversupply as the outlook for global growth weakens.

The structural outlook for oil remains "soft," said a note from Morgan Stanley, a position echoed by other experts. "While the production cut news from OPEC offered decent support yesterday, it wasn't enough to dampen the major concerns regarding demand globally," said a note from BMO Capital Markets.

"There are legitimate market concerns that if demand is truly an issue going forward, then what can OPEC do beyond further cuts." Meanwhile, equity markets were generally benign as investors continued to express relief that the United States and China had agreed at the G20 to hold off on additional tariffs.

In Europe, the French blue-chip CAC 40 index and Frankfurt's DAX 30 were slightly higher at the close, as London's FTSE index outperformed the pack thanks to a weaker pound boosting exporters. US stocks also finished modestly higher, with the S&P 500 winning its second straight record.

But trade concerns lingered, limiting gains, especially after Washington proposed tariffs on \$4 billion in European imports on items such as cheese and whiskey over European subsidies for commercial aircraft. "Sentiment appears a bit cautious following the release of disappointing global data and after the US threatened new tariffs on the EU," said Forex.com analyst Fawad Razaqada.

"But with G20 and OPEC meetings behind us, the focus is turning back to economic data for market participants."

More central bank easing?

Observers said weak data could put further pressure on central banks to provide support to economies with fresh stimulus. Australia's central bank on Tuesday lowered the cost of borrowing for the second-straight month, bringing interest rates to a new historic low.

In the United States, the Federal Reserve is widely tipped to cut interest rates at its next policy meeting this month but economists say markets may be overconfident of this. A key datapoint will be Friday's US employment report for June. The European Central Bank too has expressed openness to additional measures to spur growth. On Tuesday, European leaders nominated International Monetary Fund Managing Director Christine Lagarde to be the next head of the ECB. —AFP

US-China trade talks 'back on track': White House advisor

WASHINGTON: US-China trade negotiations are now headed in a positive direction following this weekend's meeting between President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping, a top White House aide said Tuesday. But trade advisor Peter Navarro said Chinese telecoms giant Huawei remains blocked from participating in the development of 5G wireless networks in the United States even though Washington has softened its stance toward the company.

"We're reengaged. We're talking on the phone already. There will probably be visits. It's all good," Navarro told CNBC. "From an investor's point of view, here is all you have to know: Talks are back on track with the work that has been done to date."

The US trade delegation has been led by Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer and Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin. After talks nearly collapsed in May, Trump and Xi on Saturday agreed at a meeting in Japan to resume negotiations toward ending their year-long trade war.

Trump accused the Chinese side of renegeing on commitments made during the talks and jacked up duty rates on a \$200 billion tranche of Chinese imports.

Markets were encouraged by Saturday's developments, which averted further deterioration in a trade conflict already weighing on the global economy. Stocks were struggling on Tuesday, in part because Washington threatened heavier tariffs on European goods in a dispute over subsidies to aircraft maker Airbus. And the tariffs put in place since last year by both Washington and Beijing—which currently cover more than \$360 billion in two-way trade—remain in place.

Navarro said a 150-page document developed during the US-China trade talks since December remained the basis of discussion. He also said all that was at issue in Saturday's agreement on Huawei was "a small amount of chips" with negligible implications for spy craft.

"President Xi requested some relief on Huawei," he said. "Here is the important thing: US policy on Huawei with respect to 5G in this country has not changed."

"All we've done, basically, is to allow the sale of chips to Huawei. These are lower tech items which do not impact national security whatsoever," he added.

Trump triggered a backlash on Capitol Hill over the weekend by agreeing to soften some US export restrictions on crucial components to Huawei. US officials say Beijing exploits Huawei for espionage. However Trump stipulated that officials would take care to avoid creating new risks to national security. — AFP



LONDON: Vodafone UK's Chief Technology Officer (CTO), Scott Petty speaks during the launch of Vodafone UK's 5G mobile data network in London yesterday. — AFP

Vodafone joins EE in offering 5G in Britain

LONDON: Vodafone yesterday launched its 5G service in the UK, but without smartphones from controversial Chinese technology giant Huawei. By sidelining Huawei phones, Vodafone has mirrored action by EE, the first UK provider to roll out the technology that offers almost instantaneous data transfer with its own launch at the end of May. "5G will transform the way we live and work," Vodafone UK Chief Executive Officer Nick Jeffery said yesterday.

"Our customers are streaming over 50 percent

more content today than they did last year, and with 5G the demand for data is only set to increase." Vodafone has launched in seven UK cities, including London and Birmingham, but will not be offering the service on the Huawei Mate 20 X 5G smartphone, as is the case with EE.

Huawei faces pushback in some Western markets over fears that Beijing could spy on communications and gain access to critical infrastructure if allowed to develop foreign 5G networks. The Chinese company flatly denies what it describes as "unsubstantiated claims" about being a security threat.

While Vodafone does not use Huawei in its core UK network, it does rely on a mixture of Ericsson and Huawei technology in its radio access network or masts. Vodafone has meanwhile stressed that there are "multiple" layers of security between the masts and the core network. — AFP

Business

NBK Macroeconomic Outlook Markets on UAE

UAE non-oil economic growth expected to hit 3.6% by 2021

Pro-investment reforms to provide impetus for stronger economic performance

KUWAIT: UAE economic growth should trend higher over 2019-2021, led mainly by ongoing gains in non-oil sector activity and by a pick-up in the oil economy. We foresee real GDP growth edging up from 2.2 percent in 2018 to around 3.0 in 2021.

Real oil sector growth is projected to remain capped by OPEC+ production cut agreement, which has been recently extended until March 2020. But with some increase in oil production to reach the quota set in the current agreement, growth could average 1.2 percent over the forecast period.

The non-oil economy is forecast to maintain a stronger growth momentum, as the transport, construction and tourism sectors (large contributors to non-oil GDP growth) gather pace, including in the run-up to the Expo 2020 event in Dubai. The non-oil sector will be further supported by growth-boosting initiatives launched at the federal level, including the adoption of a new investment law to facilitate investment inflows and the issuance of long-term visas for highly skilled workers and high-net worth individuals. This, the authorities hope, will lead to the retention of expertise and investment and boost longer-term growth.

Some high frequency data bode well for future performance. The recent Markit Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) surged to a multi-year high, led by robust gains in new orders and output. However, hiring remains sluggish, which continues to limit gains in domestic demand.

Real estate sector prices continue to decline

Residential property prices in Dubai have been in

UAE economic performance is expected to steadily improve, with non-oil economic growth reaching 3.6% by 2021; inflation should remain subdued over the coming two years. Accommodative monetary policy, supported by the low global interest rate environment, improving public finances, policy-making agility and pro-investment reforms will provide the impetus for stronger economic performance. A possible global slowdown, reduced housing activity and lower oil prices could temper the outlook.



decline since 2014 due mainly to oversupply and somewhat tighter regulations. Besides presenting some credit risks, the fall in real estate prices could eventually lead to lower activity in the sector over the medium term, affecting non-oil growth.

Price growth slips into deflation

Consumer price growth in the UAE has been in deflationary territory since the start of 2019, as the effects of 2018's tax/fuel hikes waned and as housing costs fell more steeply than expected. We are likely to see prices beginning to rise again only slightly towards the end of 2019, but inflation will be restrained by continued declines in the housing component. As such, we have revised down our inflation forecast for 2019 from 2.0 percent previously to -1.0 percent. Inflation will likely pick up to 1 percent and 1.5 percent in 2020 and 2021, respectively.

Fiscal position on the mend

The fiscal balance should improve and return to surplus in 2020 on the back of higher oil and non-oil revenues, the latter helped by higher taxes and fees due to a pick-up in economic activity. Last year, the UAE embarked on a fiscal adjustment and reform program: VAT was introduced; subsidies were cut; and fees on certain services were levied. Thanks to its sizeable fiscal buffers, the UAE is well placed to withstand negative shocks, and both Dubai and Abu Dhabi should be able to sustain high levels of public spending, particularly on infrastructure.

Current account surplus

The surplus on the current account is gradually recovering, as both oil and non-oil export earnings increase. We expect the CA surplus to rise to an average of 9 percent over 2019-2021. In tandem with

improvements in business activity, credit growth remained relatively firm at 4.4 percent y/y in April. With the US Fed holding off on tightening monetary policy, the cost of funding will remain low, providing further support to lending and non-oil sector growth.

Good outlook but some risks remain

In view of its relative openness, the UAE economy will be affected by trade tensions and any slowdown in global economic growth. Transport, logistics, tourism, and foreign investment could all be impacted. Besides the ever-present geopolitical dimension and sensitivity to oil price movements, a slowdown in construction activity over the medium term is another risk. However, recently announced growth-enhancing structural reforms across the UAE are likely to temper these risks and support economic growth going forward.

Ford's car hacks for millennials: How to change a wheel

DUBAI: While many young drivers love the freedom that comes from getting behind the wheel, few possess knowledge of simple, practical car repair skills that can get them out of a jam. But knowing how to go about easy jobs, like changing a wheel, means that young drivers needn't feel helpless if they find themselves with a problem.

Ford Middle East has produced a series of videos aimed at giving young drivers the tools they need to enjoy their time behind the wheel more. The latest video in the series focuses on what you need to do when you discover you've got a flat tire. "Flat tyres never happen at a convenient time - and some drivers don't have any idea what they need to do," said Grant Fitzpatrick, Ford Middle East's Customer Service director. "Some people think it's very complicated or physically demanding, and many people prefer to call in recovery services or someone they know to help out."

"But it's actually fairly straight forward when you've been shown what to do, and how to do it safely. With a little know-how, you can switch out your flat with the spare and be on your way before you know it, in case you have to do it yourself," he added.

The tips in the video are simply a guideline, and all drivers should familiarize themselves with the owner's guide instructions, the location of their spare wheel, jack and other equipment before attempting to safely change the flat tire on their own car. "This is an extremely valuable skill for every driver to have," added Fitzpatrick. Ford's RoadSide Assistance is a perfect backstop for any driver, and a quick phone call away. But being able to change your wheels on your own means you can be on your way a little sooner."



What sets the Huawei Mate 20X 5G apart from other 5G devices?

KUWAIT: Thanks to the developments in the connectivity sector, 5G connectivity has now become the next step of modern networking. With 5G connectivity slowly but surely rolling out in the region, users have started looking at getting their devices upgraded. Huawei has already taken the first step towards providing its customers with the all-new Huawei Mate 20X 5G. But what makes this phone different from other 5G devices? Customer centric innovations, features and powerful hardware that make it the 5G smartphone you are looking for.

Authentic 5G experience

The key focus of the Huawei Mate 20X 5G is its 5G capabilities, which by itself sets the bar high for 5G devices. Powered by two chipsets, the Huawei Mate 20X 5G packs twice the power with the Balong 5000 and Kirin 980, Huawei's first 5G multi-mode chipset and the first commercial

7nm mobile AI SoC respectively. While the Kirin 980, a chipset that is reputed for its speed and efficient processing, powers the phone, the next generation Balong 5000 allows for exceptional and unprecedented 5G connectivity with compatibility for multiple network technologies ranging from 2G to 4G/LTE.

[1] Actual user experience is based on telecom operators' networks and associated deployments. Please contact your local telecom operator for more information.

Ultra-large OLED display

The HUAWEI Mate 20X 5G comes packed with a massive 7.2-inch Dewdrop Display complemented by extremely slim bezels paving the way for a superior viewing experience. Paired with the 5G connectivity and high speed downloads, this massive display is perfect for movie streaming or online gaming scenarios creating an immersive multimedia entertainment experience.

Powerful Matrix camera system

On the back of the Huawei Mate 20X 5G, you can see the Matrix camera system that promises stunning shots in any scenario ranging from macro to ultra-wide. The powerful setup houses three Leica cameras, a 40MP wide angle, 20MP Ultra-Wide angle and the 8MP telephoto cam-

era, all of them which work together with the powerful on-board AI to deliver stunning photos.

Long lasting battery

Such powerful hardware requires a large battery to run all-day and Huawei delivers on this aspect as well. Under the hood of the Huawei Mate 20X 5G rests a massive 4200mAh high density battery that can last for extended periods of use. This is further supported by the 40W Huawei SuperCharge and certified by TÜV Rheinland, an authoritative and independent international organization that provides product safety assessment and certification services. Additionally, the Huawei Mate 20X 5G also features an AI-powered battery optimizer that intelligently manages and regulates power consumptions in the background.

Improved cooling solutions

While concerns of smartphones heating up are all over the news, the Huawei Mate 20X 5G comes built with a groundbreaking cooling solution that utilizes graphene film and vapor chamber that keeps the phone cool. This technology ensures that even during high performance or extended use, the phone remains cool and responsive, not creating any hiccups in performance.



US trade deficit hits 5-month high as imports from Mexico soar

WASHINGTON: America's politically-sensitive trade deficit jumped to a five-month high in May as imports of automobiles hit the highest on record, according to government data released yesterday. The trade deficit with Mexico, a country President Donald Trump threatened with stinging tariffs, rose to its highest in a decade,

according to the Commerce Department report.

Financial markets in May were whipsawed by the shifting uncertainties of Trump's trade wars, and fears of the impact of more tariffs on the US economy. This data should prove frustrating for the president, who has made eliminating the deficit a signature goal of his administration, saying it is a sign other countries are stealing from the United States. The US trade gap jumped 8.4 percent to \$55.5 billion, seasonally adjusted, well above analyst forecasts. That surge combined with the April trade gap, which was revised higher than originally reported, could weigh on growth forecasts for the second quarter. May was another challenging month for global trade, as Trump threatened to stifle commerce with major partners: Trade talks with China nearly collapsed, and Trump threatened to impose duties on all Chinese imports — and on all goods from Mexico in a dispute over migrants at the southern border.

Reorienting trade

Those dangers have receded for the moment following truces with Beijing and Mexico City, but while those positive turns remained uncertain importers may have rushed in to lock in lower prices and rebuild inventories. Imports of goods and services rose 3.3 percent to \$266.2 billion in the latest month, the largest jump in more than four years as Americans bought more passenger cars, crude oil, semiconductors and consumer items, the report said.

Economists John Ryding and Conrad DeQuadros of RDQ Economics, question whether the trade will impact US growth in the April-June quarter. "It is not trade that is subtracting from growth but domestic supply constraints that are holding back growth," they said in an analysis. "Imports have surged over the last three months but these imports are vital for domestic production." —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.		Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL		Arab	
EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES		Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate	CURRENCY	BUY	SELL	
US Dollar Transfer	304.250	US Dollar	303.640	British Pound	0.377253	0.391153	0.036918
Euro	345.020	Canadian Dollar	231.025	Czech Korune	0.005473	0.014773	0.003803
Sterling Pound	384.570	Sterling Pound	386.455	Danish Krone	0.041928	0.046928	0.000017
Canadian dollar	233.320	Euro	346.375	Euro	0.335851	0.349551	0.002723
Turkish lira	54.430	Swiss Frank	298.070	Georgian Lari	0.106544	0.106544	0.000250
Swiss Franc	310.780	Bahrain Dinar	807.490	Hungarian 0.000971	0.001161	0.001161	0.070242
US Dollar Buying	296.900	UAE Dirhams	83.070	Norwegian Krone	0.031397	0.036597	0.002677
ASIAN COUNTRIES		Qatar Riyals	84.310	Romanian Leu	0.055599	0.072449	0.001370
Japanese Yen	2.827	Saudi Riyals	81.865	Russian ruble	0.004818	0.004818	0.005827
Indian Rupees	4.422	Jordanian Dinar	429.550	Slovakia	0.009097	0.019097	0.001370
Pakistani Rupees	1.946	Egyptian Pound	18.210	Swedish Krona	0.028486	0.033486	0.028922
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.724	Sri Lankan Rupees	1.719	Swiss Franc	0.301743	0.312743	0.001352
Nepali Rupees	2.758	Indian Rupees	4.379	Australia Dollar	0.204069	0.216069	0.009695
Singapore Dollar	225.200	Pakistani Rupees	1.933	New Zealand Dollar	0.196717	0.206217	0.009875
Hongkong Dollar	39.021	Bangladesh Taka	3.596	America	0.226362	0.235352	0.010140
Bangladesh Taka	3.587	Philippines Peso	5.904	Canada Dollar	0.300250	0.305550	0.000210
Philippine Peso	5.951	Cyprus pound	18.065	US Dollars	0.300750	0.305550	0.002270
Thai Baht	9.970	Japanese Yen	3.825	US Dollars Mint			0.000210
Malaysian ringgit	77.813	Syrian Pound	1.590				0.009875
GCC COUNTRIES		Nepalese Rupees	2.739				0.010140
Saudi Riyal	81.187	Malaysian Ringgit	74.225				0.00013
Qatari Riyal	83.620	Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.515				
Omani Riyal	790.773	Thai Baht	10.825				
Bahraini Dinar	808.420						
UAE Dirham	82.891						
ARAB COUNTRIES							
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.750						
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.278						

Business

Burgan Bank issues \$500,000,000 Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities

Successful issuance follows roadshows in London, HK, Singapore, Abu Dhabi and Dubai

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank K.P.S.C., the second largest conventional bank by assets size in Kuwait, announced it has successfully placed Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities in the international debt capital markets. The securities comply with the Basel III regulatory framework that's adopted by the Central Bank of Kuwait.

The transaction came on the back of a comprehensive global roadshow, covering the key financial centers in London, Hong Kong, Singapore, Abu Dhabi and Dubai. Following strongly positive feedback from the roadshow, the orderbook saw strong momentum from investors globally, which allowed the Bank to ultimately place \$500,000,000 Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities at a yield of 5.750 percent (which translates to a margin of 400.7bps over the 5-year US Treasury Rate).

The transaction saw strong demand from a diverse investor base, which allowed for a balanced distribution. More specifically, the securities were allocated to investors across the Middle East (51 percent), Asia (22



Majed Essa Al-Ajeel

commented: "The success of this issuance is a testament to the strength of Kuwait's financial market and Burgan's credit story. We would like to extend our sincerest gratitude to the Central Bank of Kuwait and Kuwait's Capital

Markets Authority for their diligence and professionalism throughout the transaction process". Burgan's Group Chief Executive Officer, Masaud Hayat stated: "The diverse and high quality orderbook, which was 4.4x oversubscribed reflects the confidence that regional and international investors have in the Bank's strategy, prudent financial management and prospects for growth and development".

The issuance was part of a wider financing exercise. More specifically, it was undertaken in conjunction with a tender buy-back offer on the Bank's existing \$500,000,000 Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities, after which Burgan accepted \$230,185,000 worth of securities for purchase at 100.85 percent of their nominal value.

The value of the Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities repurchased represented 46.04% of their overall outstanding amount. This liability management exercise which was undertaken in relation to the Bank's existing Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities is the first of its kind

from the region. Raed Al-Haqhaq, the Bank's Chief Executive Officer - Kuwait commented: "The transaction demonstrates Burgan's on-going strategy to support the Bank's balance sheet with long-term funding, and meet regulatory liquidity and capital requirements. The support provided by the Bank's advisors was indispensable to the transaction's success".

HSBC Bank plc and J P Morgan Securities plc acted as Joint Global Coordinators and Joint Lead Managers along with Arab Banking Corporation, Citigroup Global Markets Limited, Emirates NBD Capital Limited, First Abu Dhabi Bank P.J.S.C., Standard Chartered Bank and Watani Investment Company K.S.C.C. who also acted as Joint Lead Managers.

HSBC Bank plc and J P Morgan Securities plc acted as Dealer Managers on the tender offer. Burgan has affirmed credit ratings of A+ by Fitch, A3 by Moody's and BBB+ by S&P underlying the credit strength of the Bank.

Hoping to boost spending, Japan tries to sell shoppers on cashless purchases

TOKYO: When the baseball season kicked off in Japan this spring, fans of the Tohoku Rakuten Golden Eagles were faced with an inconvenience they'd never encountered before: the food and drinks stalls did not accept cash. The team's owner, internet commerce firm Rakuten Inc., was trying to promote its QR code mobile payment system. But the marketing ploy quickly turned out to be much more than that.

In April and May, food, beverage and merchandise sales at the Eagles' stadium in the northeastern city of Sendai jumped 20 percent from the same two-month period of 2018, in part because taking cash out of the equation changed spending habits.

"We consider it to be a success story," said Hayato Morofushi, marketing manager for Rakuten's mobile payments. "Using QR codes for payments has only just started in Japan, so we don't expect everyone to jump on the bandwagon. As we get more success stories, this will win more people over."

Experts say that when queues move faster, more people join. Customers don't see cash leaving their wallets and focus on the satisfaction of a purchase, so they spend more. That psychology could be crucial for Japan's economy, locked for decades in a deflationary mindset, where consumers delay spending in hopes of stable or lower prices. The Bank of Japan has spent more than \$3 trillion since 2013 on bonds and other assets to attain a two percent price growth rate, without success.

A scheduled increase in the sales tax to 10 percent from 8 percent in October could hurt spending. Aware of that risk, the government is betting big on mobile payments, an industry only just taking root in Japan. As soon as the tax increase kicks in, the government will offer points redeemable for future discounts to shoppers who use QR codes and other cashless payments for nine months.

The project has a six-month budget of 280 billion yen (\$2.6 billion), which will be reassessed in the new fiscal year. "If we change how we pay, we can change society as a whole," said Masamichi Ito, director of the Japanese Economy Ministry's cashless promotion office, set up in October with the goal of doubling cashless transactions to 120 trillion yen by 2025.

Cash settles 80 percent of Japan's transactions, with the rest shared among credit cards, mobile and pre-paid



Shoppers crowd the streets of Takeshita Dori in Harajuku

swipe cards. That is the highest cash usage rate in the developed world after Germany.

Low crime rates - Japanese are comfortable carrying large amounts of cash - and an ageing population seen as the main obstacles for deeper adoption. In India and China, two of the world's most voracious spenders, mobile payments are 30-35 percent of transactions, according to Statista. On average, cashless payments increase per-customer sales by 1.6 percent, according to the Nomura Research Institute (NRI). Domestic consumption in Japan has grown an average of 0.5 percent each year in the past six years. The government says going cashless could alleviate other major economic headaches, such as a labor shortage and the falling profitability of banks, simply by virtue of being more efficient. Cashiers spend on average more than two hours a day managing cash, while Japanese banks spend around 1 trillion yen a year on their ATM network and physically moving cash, NRI says.

Chinese shoppers

Tourism spending, especially from China, has been one of the few economic bright spots in Japan, and Chinese tourists use the mobile payment system Alipay, run by Ant Financial Services Group, at over 300,000 Japanese merchants. Some duty-free counters at big department stores deposit tax refunds directly into Alipay accounts. The app

uses targeted advertisements to help users find what they want to buy and recommends related products nearby. When users return to China, they get a recommendation to buy similar Japanese goods online.

South Korean mobile payment firm Kakao Pay is looking to enter Japan, betting on Tokyo's push to go cashless. Ryu Young-joon, chief executive of Kakao Pay, told Reuters in a May interview. "When I go to Japan, they do not accept credit cards in many stores," Ryu said. "So I thought if I can use Kakao Pay in Japan, it's going to be good." PayPay, a Japanese QR code system launched in October, is compatible with Alipay, which may smooth the path toward local adoption. Satoshi Komiya, 39, who runs a Tokyo curry restaurant, got PayPay three months ago - signing a deal that guaranteed he would be charged no fees for three years - and since then, said he had noticed a "slight" increase in sales. "So far, so good," Komiya said.

But other Japanese payment providers, including Origami, messaging app Line and auction site Mercari, typically charge fees of about 3 percent. Because smaller retailers in Japan have average profit margins of around 2 percent, such fees are a major obstacle for adoption, says Yuki Fukumoto, a researcher at NRI Research Institute. Japan also has a network of ubiquitous vending machines and meal ticket dispensers that relies on cash and cannot be replaced or upgraded overnight. — Reuters

Agility expands Oman operations with new office in Duqm

KUWAIT: Agility, a leading global logistics provider, opened a new office in Duqm, Oman, expanding its storage, freight forwarding, custom brokerage, road and transportation, and project and heavy lift capabilities. The new office, located in the Special Economic Zone Authority (SEZAD), will service key customers in the, oil & gas, chemicals, manufacturing and engineering goods sectors during their start-up stage and provide logistics support. It will also service FMCG and retail business, sectors that are fast developing to cater to this growing city. The new Duqm facility adds to Agility's expanding network across Oman, where it has existing operations in Muscat, Sohar, Nizwa, Salalah and Wajajah Border.

As one of a few global freight forwarders with its own customs brokerage license in Oman, Agility provides brokerage services for a number of local and multinational organizations. Agility is also a leading provider of cross-border transportation, owning and operating a fleet of more than 56 vehicles to move goods to and from Oman's ports, airports, industrial areas and logistics services area.

"Oman is a key market for Agility in the Middle East. With an expanding population in the GCC and an increasing demand for integrated logistics services, Agility's investment in Duqm, which is ideally located as a gateway to Middle East, Africa and Indian markets, will help us better serve our national and international clientele in Oman," Agility CEO Tarek Sultan said.

Agility currently employs 160 people in Oman. The new investment in Duqm will significantly increase Agility's Oman workforce as the company develops operations within SEZAD. Local hiring is in line with the government's vision to develop Omani talent and create a diverse workforce that will contribute to the economic growth of the Sultanate. Oman has significantly improved its logistics competitiveness, ranking 12th globally in logistics competitiveness and fourth for business fundamentals among emerging markets, according to the 2019 Agility Emerging Markets Logistics Index.

Nigeria will sign landmark Africa free trade pact

LAGOS: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will sign a landmark deal to scrap trade tariffs among African countries at an upcoming summit of the continent's leaders, his office said. Africa's most populous country has been one of only three African states to hold back on inking the accord, after local manufacturers said they would be badly hit by liberalization.

But in a tweet the presidency said Buhari would sign the pact when leaders of the 55-nation African Union meet in Niger's capital Niamey from this weekend.

The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) aims at spurring business across Africa, a market of 1.2 billion people-expected to reach 2.5 billion by 2050 — and a current GDP of \$2.5 trillion (2.22 billion euros).

The agreement would progressively eliminate tariffs among AU members, creating the world's largest free-trade area since the formation of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Nigeria had been a key backer when talks on the AfCFTA got underway in 2002. But it abruptly changed course shortly before the draft deal was signed last year, amid pressure from unions and businesses fearful of the impact of lowered trade barriers.

But the presidency announced late Tuesday that Nigeria would now join the club. "Nigeria is signing the #AfCFTA Agreement after extensive domestic consultations, and is focused on taking advantage of ongoing negotiations to secure the necessary safeguards against smuggling, dumping and other risks/threats," it said. Last week, a special government panel formed to study the potential impact of joining AfCFTA recommended that Buhari sign Nigeria up.

The trade deal "provides immense opportunities for Nigeria's manufacturing and service companies to expand to Africa", the panel's chair, Desmond Guobadia, said.

AU Trade Commissioner Albert Muchanga welcomed Nigeria's decision as a "good and important development" and urged the two remaining non-signatories, Benin and Eritrea, to follow suit.

"Two more to go and an All Africa Market will start shaping up," he wrote on Twitter. In addition to signing the agreement, Nigeria will still need to ratify it if it wants to emulate Africa's other economic heavyweights, Egypt,



LAGOS: Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari will sign a landmark African free trade agreement during the upcoming African Union meeting in Niger. — Reuters

Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa. The AfCFTA formally came into force at the end of May after it crossed a threshold of ratification by at least 22 countries.

However, key details still have to be thrashed out to make it operational, including the creation of institutional structures and key regulations such as rules of origin. At present, only 16 percent of trade by African nations is with continental neighbors. One reason is that average tariffs on intra-African trade, of 6.1 percent, are higher than on exports outside of Africa.

The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) estimates AfCFTA "has the potential both to boost intra-African trade by 52.3 per cent by eliminating import duties, and to double this trade if non-tariff barriers are also reduced", the AU says on its website.

Charles Robertson, the global chief economist with Renaissance Capital, said signing "the deal is a step forward for the efficiency of the Nigerian economy". He said Nigeria "has taken a protectionist approach to development, more similarly to Latin America than Asia, but this is a step away from protectionism which will make Nigeria more competitive". Nigerian business operators also hailed the decision to sign the agreement. "It is a welcome development. Though it is coming rather late. It's better late than never," said Muda Yusuf, the head of Lagos Chamber of Commerce and Industry. "Signing the deal will reaffirm Nigeria's prime position in Africa," he said. "The Africa free trade agreement provides an opportunity to assert ourselves on the continent." Yusuf said the initial concerns by manufacturers of not being part of the negotiations were being addressed. — AFP

Tesla deliveries surge as automakers report dip in 1H 2019 US sales

NEW YORK: Tesla reported a surge in second-quarter deliveries on Tuesday, while other US automakers suffered drops in sales for the first half of 2019, with higher vehicle costs weighing on consumers. Shares of Tesla shot higher in after-hours trading after it reported delivering 95,200 vehicles during the quarter ending June 30, a record and an increase of more than 50 percent over the prior quarter.

The company, which has faced worries about weakening demand for its electric vehicles, said in a securities filing, "we believe we are well positioned to continue growing total production and deliveries in Q3." Earlier, General Motors, Fiat Chrysler and Toyota were among the companies that reported drops in sales through the year's midpoint, although Fiat Chrysler won a modest gain in sales in June.

Sales at Honda and Nissan also fell through the first half of the year. The results were roughly in line with analyst forecasts and reflective of an auto market that has cooled somewhat, even as demand has stayed strong for larger autos. Higher interest rates on auto loans have added to the drag on consumers, who already face higher vehicle costs, said Michelle Krebs, head of automotive relations at Cox Automotive.

Cox is forecasting 2019 sales of 16.8 million, down three percent from last year, with a drop to 16.5 million expected in 2020. Annual sales have been above 17 million the last four years. "We have seen retail sales weakening for some time," Krebs said in an interview, adding that the effect has been mitigated somewhat by higher sales from companies who are taking advantage of tax incentives to refresh their fleets. "The consumer has got a lot of debt and wages have stagnated," she said. General Motors reported a 4.2 percent drop in first-half sales of 1.4 million following a 1.5 percent dip in second quarter.

The company's fleet of larger crossover vehicles sold well, along with fully available versions of the Chevrolet Silverado and GMC Sierra, two popular pickups that were recently revamped. However, overall sales of both the Sierra and Silverado fell compared with the year-ago period because some versions of the vehicles are still not

widely available. A GM spokeswoman said more vehicles would be on the market in the second half of 2019.

"The US economy continues to grow at a healthy pace," said GM Chief Economist Elaine Buckberg. "If the Fed cuts rates, as widely expected, lower financing costs will provide further support to auto sales."

Fiat Chrysler bucks trend

Fiat Chrysler's auto sales for the first half of the year were down two percent at 1.1 million.

A two percent gain in June was propelled by a 45 percent surge in Ram truck sales, which offset declines in the company's other brands, including Jeep, Chrysler, Dodge and Fiat. The results suggest Ram has gained market share from GM's Silverado during the latter's launch period, Krebs said in a note from Cox. Toyota North America reported a 3.1 percent drop in first-half sales to 1.2 million, with a 3.5 percent decline in June sales.

The company pointed to higher June sales of its RAV4 crossover vehicle. But sales of the Corolla and Camry sedans have fallen for the first six months so of the year. Sales of the company's luxury Lexus brand fell during the quarter but rose slightly during the first half of the year. — AFP



SEOUL: Visitors look at a Tesla Model 3 during a press preview of the Seoul Motor Show in Goyang, northwest of Seoul. Tesla reported a surge in second-quarter deliveries on Tuesday while other US automakers suffered drops in sales for the first half of 2019. — AFP

Business

Nissan achieves an all-time high market share of 16.9% in Gulf

Nissan Patrol is Mideast's favorite SUV; Nissan Sunny and Nissan Kicks lead their segments

DUBAI: Nissan yesterday announced its fiscal year 2018 (FY18) business results in the Middle East, recording a highly successful performance across the region. Nissan's market share in the Gulf reached a record high of 16.9 per cent, a gain of 2.9 points over the last two years. Nissan also witnessed strong growth momentum across the wider Middle East region, with its overall market share standing at a healthy 15.7 per cent.

Nissan continued to strengthen its performance in the region with a firm commitment to customer satisfaction and service, as well as the brand's ongoing efforts to drive customer 'delight' experiences with targeted and customized offerings. The result was key models topping their segments as the Middle East's favorite cars.

- The Nissan Patrol range continued its segment domination in the UAE with a 45.2 per cent market share. It has retained its position as a majority contributor to Nissan Patrol's global sales.

- Regional icon the Nissan Patrol Safari also saw a steady growth in annual sales with an increase of 28.4 per cent thanks to the introduction of exciting new variants like the Nissan Patrol Gazelle and Falcon.

- The Nissan Sunny maintained its segment leadership with a 58 per cent growth in sales and 52.1 per cent market share.

- The Nissan Kicks' dual-tone variant launch accelerated the car's upward trajectory to a 32.4 per cent market share, also ranking first in its segment.

"Recognizing the dynamic nature of the industry, Nissan remains committed to bringing innovation and excitement to all our customers in the Middle East. Our strong, growth in FY18 is a testament to this commit-

ment. Over the past year, we have maintained operational excellence across our product line-up, while finding new ways to connect and engage with our customers, which has led to our record-breaking market share," said Thierry Sabbagh, Managing Director Nissan Middle East.

Performance across regional markets was further spurred by innovative launch campaigns, including the Middle East debut of the GT-R50 by Italdesign, a collaboration between Nissan and Italdesign that reimagined Nissan's GT-R as a custom-bodied, ultra-limited supercar. FY18 also saw the all-new Nissan Altima launched in the Middle East. The Nissan Altima plays a key role in the region, being one of the most important nameplates with over 27,000 units of the previous 5th Generation of the Nissan Altima sold across the region over the last five years.

Other major milestones for Nissan in FY18 were industry recognition with the 'B&W Report Client of the Year' Award, as well as several other awards at Dubai Lynx. Along with 'Advertiser of the Year', Nissan also took home three Grand Prix, eight Silver, and four Bronze awards for various campaigns, including CamellPower. The CamellPower campaign was an innovative idea that helped Nissan own the conversation around performance of cars and off-road vehicles on sand.

Nissan Middle East also gained global appreciation for breaking the Guinness World Records title for 'Largest Synchronized Car Dance'. With 180 Nissan Patrols driving in the shape of a dancing falcon.

Joni Paiva, Regional Vice President, Marketing and Sales, Nissan Africa, Middle East and India, said,



Thierry Sabbagh, Managing Director, Nissan Middle East, gives a presentation

"Entering into the second year of Nissan's six-year mid-term plan, Nissan M.O.V.E. to 2022, we are confident in meeting our commitment for Africa, the Middle East

and India. This includes driving overall excellence throughout the GCC, accelerating brand power in key markets, and maintaining top-level customer service."

Canon launches the new Océ Colorado 1650



DUBAI: Canon Middle East yesterday launched the new Océ Colorado 1650 printer, extending customer choice by expanding the series of roll-to-roll large format devices featuring Canon UVgel technology. The Océ Colorado 1650 introduces a new flexible ink and Océ FLXfinish, meeting the needs of customers wanting increased media versatility to fuel business growth.

The new 64" production printer builds on the breakthrough productivity, output quality and media versatility of the Océ Colorado 1640, while delivering optimal performance for print service providers (PSPs) producing high volumes of applications such as self-adhesive vinyls, wall coverings, canvases, soft signage and front- and back-lit graphics requiring a high degree of flexibility for mounting and framing. Ayman Ali, Senior Regional Marketing Manager, at Canon Middle East commented, "At Canon, we have consistently aimed to provide for high productivity without compromising on print quality. Our unique UVgel technology addresses the challenges of shorter runs and increased customization while also offering the added benefits of precision quality and durability. Following the positive response that the Colorado series has received, the Océ Colorado 1640 unveiled at FESPA takes innovation one step further by bringing together Océ FLXfinish technology and UV Gel ink. This product is an obvious choice for PSPs all over the world looking to improve their business potential." The Océ Colorado 1650 works with a new version of Canon UVgel ink, designed for maximum flexibility by increasing the 'stretchability' of each cured ink droplet. Output from the printer can be bent and folded for soft signage applications, without risk of cracking.

In addition, the Océ Colorado 1650 incorporates Océ FLXfinish, a new approach to LED curing which allows the user to choose between matte or gloss modes for each individual print to achieve different aesthetic finishes, without the need to change inks or media. A gloss finish gives visual impact to applications such as banners and posters, while a matte appearance is particularly appealing for high quality indoor applications viewed in artificial light, such as wall coverings or premium instore Point-Of-Sale (POS) materials. Océ FLXfinish technology also enables printing on porous media, such as uncoated papers, as well as soft signage materials such as textiles and silicon edged graphics, by enabling each ink droplet to be 'fixed' immediately on jetting, preventing absorption by the substrate.

The Colorado Series features exact positioning enabling near perfect registration for double-sided printing and 'inside out' printing for media wound with the printable surface facing in, further boosting productivity and versatility. Michele Tuscano, Vice President, Large Format Graphics, Canon EMEA, explains: "When we launched the Océ Colorado 1640 at FESPA in 2017, we were convinced that our Canon UVgel technology had to be a platform for an extended family of products, designed to give customers the optimal blend of high productivity, broad color gamut, wide applications range and low cost of ownership." "Based on the positive feedback from our customers and channel partners, we have channeled our R&D efforts over the last two years into delivering a second 64" printer that maximizes the very popular production advantages of the gel technology, while elevating performance for media and applications such as self-adhesive vinyls, which account for an increasing proportion of customer output."

Gulf Bank congratulates winner of second Al-Danah quarterly draw of the year

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the winner of the second Al-Danah quarterly draw of the year. The lucky winner, Jennifer Suleiman, will take home a cash prize of KD 250,000.

The draw, which took place live at Q8 Pulse 88.8 FM (Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout & Al-Ansari show) in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, is the second Al-Danah quarterly draw of 2019.

"It was a great call to receive while at work, especially when Khaled Al-Ansari told me we were live on air!" said Jennifer Suleiman, the winner of Gulf Bank's second quarterly Al-Danah draw. "He initially let me know that I had won a KD 1,000 prize, which was itself a wonderful surprise. I had just started planning my summer vacation when he delivered an even bigger surprise: that the amount I had won was actually KD 250,000. I couldn't believe it!"

She continued: "I have been a Gulf



Ahmad Al-Amir

Bank client since 1993, and I have been saving with Al-Danah since 2004 because it is the only account that rewards you for your loyalty by allowing you to accrue your chances to win, year after year. I would like to thank Gulf Bank for this prize and highly recommend opening an Al-Danah account."

Commenting on the second quarterly Al-Danah draw of the year, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager of External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "We look forward to the Al-Danah draws every quarter, as they give us a chance to join our customers on one of the happiest days of their lives. We are excited to continue to reward our customers for saving with their Al-Danah accounts, and encourage everyone to continue depositing into their accounts



KUWAIT: Jennifer Suleiman, the winner of a cash prize of KD 250,000, receiving the prize.

to increase their chances of winning the upcoming draw!"

The third draw of the year will be held on September 25, 2019 with a prize of KD 500,000. The fourth and final draw will take place on January 16, 2020 and will culminate in the announcement of the 2019 Al-Danah Millionaire, who will receive a grand prize of KD 1 million.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at

any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the daily draw within two days. To take part in the upcoming Al-Danah quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Al-Danah chances are added on a daily basis, meaning the more customers save and the longer they save for, the higher their chances are of winning! Furthermore, loyal customers are always rewarded, with the chances accumulated during the previous years rolling over to the next year's draws. Terms and conditions apply.

MIT Technology Review lists Huawei in 50 smartest companies

KUWAIT: Huawei was named one of the 50 smartest companies by MIT Technology Review on June 29, 2019. Since 2010, the MIT Technology Review, a globally influential technology media outlet, has annually published a list of the 50 companies that best combine innovative technology with an effective business model around the world.

MIT Technology Review picks the 50 smartest companies based on what the companies did over the last year, what methods they used, and what achievements they made. They evaluate the companies' core competence with emerging technologies and any breakthroughs and innovation the companies have achieved for themselves, their industries, or even the world. Huawei was included in the list this year for its outstanding capabilities in innovation.

William Xu, Huawei's Director of the Board and President of the Institute of Strategic Research, delivered a speech about Huawei's innovation strategy at the 50 Smartest Companies 2019 China Summit. He stated, "Over the past 30 years, Huawei mainly made technical and engineering innovations as well as innovations in solutions based on customer needs. We call that Innovation 1.0. In the future, Huawei will pursue Innovation 2.0, which refers to theoretical breakthroughs and inventions driven by vision. Huawei sticks to open innovation and inclusive development. Open innovation means innovating together with global experts. In this process, resources and capabilities are shared. Inclusive development means the fruits of any innovation should be shared and used by all humanity and industries. This can lighten the future of the world and industries."



Awarding ceremony at the 50 Smartest Companies 2019 China Summit

William Xu added that academia is a source for theoretical breakthroughs and inventions, while industries drive progress through raising challenges, addressing customer needs, and funding the research conducted by universities. Huawei will continue to support the research of universities and institutions, and is committed to exploring and identifying future-proof technologies along the whole information process, from information generation, storage, computing, transmission, and presentation, to information consumption.

The MIT Technology Review celebrated the 50 Smartest Companies for the first time in China this year, with the list containing entries for Chinese companies and international companies that operate in China.



William Xu, Huawei's Director of the Board and President of the Institute of Strategic Research, speaking at the 50 Smartest Companies 2019 China Summit.

Science & Technology

Orphaned Thai baby dugong becomes conservation star

Mariam ignites interest to care about marine animals

TRANG, Thailand: Cuddles at feeding time are one of many techniques vets in Thailand are using to raise an orphaned baby dugong named Mariam, and which have helped spread interest in ocean conservation in the process. Found stranded on a beach in May at six months old, the ocean mammal has been receiving daily care from park officials, local conservation groups, and veterinarians at Phuket Marine Biological Centre.

Her star took off after photos showing her being cradled by the vets went viral on social media, and the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) has posted frequent updates on her condition. Vet Pathompong Kongjit said that Mariam—who now lives in the waters around Ko Libong island of Trang province—has become a symbol of the dire need for a clean-up in Thailand's plastic-choked seas.

"Mariam has ignited the interest among Thai people to care about marine animals, Thai seas and nature in general," he said. But so far, her biggest challenge is feeding herself, as she has trouble digging out the seagrass buried in the ocean floor. "Mariam can only eat the protruding seagrass," he said, adding that she's "getting better" at it. Female dugongs also usually breastfeed their babies while they are swimming—something the vets cannot do.



TRANG, Thailand: This picture shows Mariam the dugong as she is cared for by park officials and veterinarians from the Phuket Marine Biological Centre on Libong island, Trang province in southern Thailand. —AFP

"So we hold her while feeding her milk, and after that we have to get her to swim around to exercise her digestion system," Pathompong said. Her caretakers also use an orange canoe—nicknamed "Mother Orange"—for her to follow around in the water for exercise. Despite Mariam's

seeming dependence on her human friends, Pathompong said she's "learned to adjust to the environment" and no longer gets stranded on the beach. But "it doesn't matter how many marine animals we can save... if their sea homes are in bad conditions," said the vet, adding that Mariam



will likely be under their care for at least another year.

The avalanche of public interest in Mariam's progress has prompted the DMCR to set up a livestream for the growing baby, expected to be broadcast at the end of this week. Another baby

dugong was also found stranded in Krabi earlier this week. The Phuket Marine Biological Centre said in a statement that dugongs get stranded on beaches because of fishing and other human activities. Southern Thailand's waters are home to about 250 dugongs. —AFP

Bald eagles stir US patriotism as web-cam stars

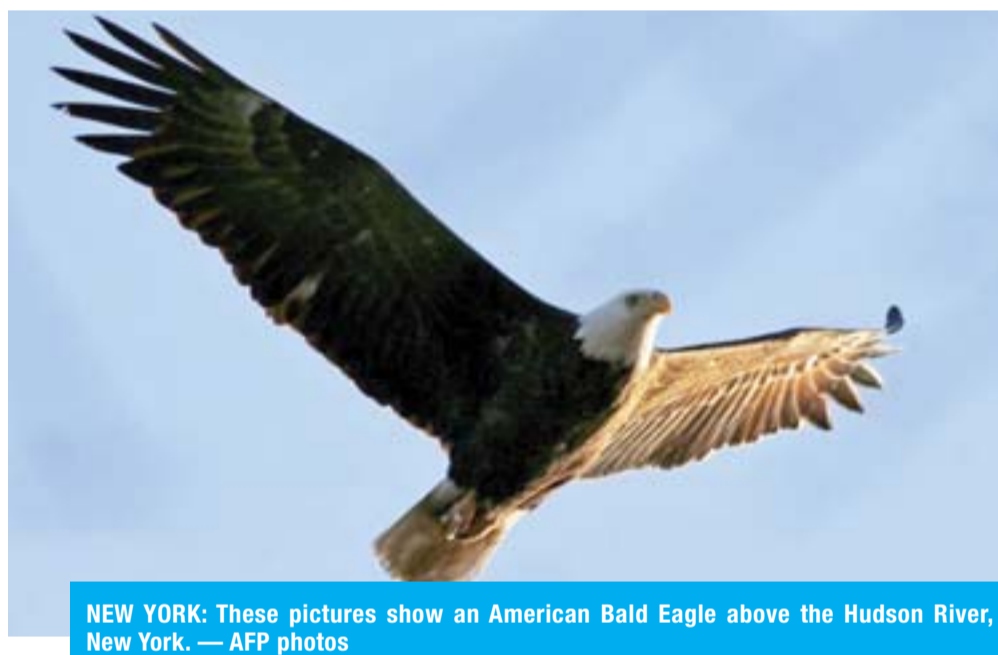
WASHINGTON: On the brink of extinction a half-century ago, the bald eagle is thriving in the internet age, fascinating a devoted corps of Americans who regularly monitor the majestic birds of prey via web-cams set up at more than a dozen nests in the wild. The bald eagle, designated as the national emblem of the United States in 1782, has long symbolized the American ideal of freedom. For people like Kevin Fossett, a US Navy veteran who likes to check up on a nest in Florida, the sight of the birds stirs feelings of patriotism, especially with the approach of Independence Day.

Fossett said in recent years he has watched several eagle eggs as chicks inside peck through the shells and emerge as newborns, usually in the winter or early spring. By July 4, the eaglets typically have taken flight and left the nest. "Flying free, as they should be," said Fossett, 50. "Total independence, just like our national holiday." Fossett clicks on an "eagle-cam" daily using a tablet on his screen porch in St. Petersburg, Florida, or at his fishing equipment business. He watches a nest more than 220 miles away, near Jacksonville.

At least 15 cameras focused on bald eagle nests around the United States are streaming live images 24 hours a day, seven days a week, said Shawnlei Breeding, EagleWatch Program manager at the Audubon Center for Birds of Prey. "Bald eagles inspire a lot of passion in their fans," Breeding said. "They become like family to the people who watch them." The birds typically mate for life and use the same nest year after year to raise their young.

An eagle-cam in Decorah, Iowa, went viral in 2011 with 280 million views, and the site has drawn in many more over the years, said Amy Ries, spokeswoman for Raptor Resource Project, a non-profit organization that runs it. Seven eagle-cams at Explore.org saw a 223% increase in views in 2018 compared with 2017. High-definition images streamed from the roosts allow the eagle fans to see close-ups of the birds.

Viewers are able to count feathers, observe iris patterns or identify the bird's prey before it is consumed. "We can see the tiny eyelashes



NEW YORK: These pictures show an American Bald Eagle above the Hudson River, New York. — AFP photos



of an eagle," said Veronika Soul, 74, a retired filmmaker who lives in New York's Harlem neighborhood and watches two Decorah bald eagle nests daily. "We see things happen at nest level that people on the ground never see." The technology allows cameras to be rotated remotely, providing glimpses of life beyond the nest. Viewers say it is especially fun to see fledglings take their first flights.

Viewers of the Iowa nest recently saw an eaglet who was accidentally knocked off the nest. It managed to jump and flutter high enough up the branches of an adjacent tree to drop back into its family's nest. Pesticide poisoning and human encroachment on their habitat threatened eagles with extinction, with only an estimated 487 pairs remaining by

1963, according to the federal wildlife website. After decades of federal protection, the eagle started a comeback. The turning point came in 1972 when the Environmental Protection Agency banned the pesticide DDT. The population has soared since then, and in 2007 the bald eagle was removed from the endangered list. Ten years ago, there were 143,000 bald eagles in the United States, according to a 2009 US Fish and Wildlife Service (FWS) survey, the most recent data available.

Updated numbers are expected to be released next year and preliminary data indicate the population is rising, said FWS spokeswoman Vanessa Kauffman. Most bald eagles are found in Alaska, while Minnesota, Wisconsin and Florida also have large populations, according to Breeding. Worldwide, the bald eagle population is 250,000, with 88 percent spending part of the year in the United States, 31 percent in Canada and 8 percent in Mexico, said Patricia Leonard, spokeswoman for Cornell Lab of Ornithology in Ithaca, New York.

Eagle-watching can be a source of patriotic pride or a therapeutic way to ease the pain of illness, loss and even dying, avian experts say. "In an eagle's nest, life goes on," Ries said. "When we look into the nest, we see something of ourselves staring back at us, but we also see something wild beyond our comprehension." —Reuters

potentially irreversible environmental harm both at the mine sites and throughout broader ocean areas," Greenpeace said in a report. "Opening up a new industrial frontier in the largest ecosystem on Earth and undermining an important carbon sink carries significant environmental risks ... Deep sea mining could even make climate change worse."

A growing number of countries are eyeing the ocean floor as a source of wealth, scattered with vast beds of minerals key to making modern gadgets, from smartphones to solar panels. But climate campaigners are worried about disrupting one of the last pristine areas of the planet and potentially putting species we barely understand at risk, as well as releasing planet-warming carbon dioxide.

India is investing heavily in underwater technology after winning four of 29 exploration licenses awarded by the UN's International Seabed Authority (ISA), which aims to agree rules on exploitation by 2020. N H Khadge, a scientist at India's National

Institute of Oceanography (NIO) that carries out sea floor surveys and tests environmental impacts of India's deep ocean exploration program, said Greenpeace's report was "exaggerated".

He said seabed operations would be significantly less harmful than mining on land, and that environmentally-friendly technologies were being developed in line with ISA guidelines. "It is not exploitation, it is friendly collection of the commercial deposits," he said. Greenpeace called on the UN to secure a strong Global Ocean Treaty, prioritizing conservation, at talks in New York next month about oceans beyond national boundaries — an area of global governance that experts say has been neglected.

Richard Mahapatra, managing editor of India's highly-regarded Down To Earth magazine, supported Greenpeace's stance. "In the absence of a binding global treaty, it will all be about individual interests," he said. "And that could ultimately lead to the destruction of our last frontier." —Reuters

Fox crosses Arctic to reach Canada from Norway in record time

OSLO: Covering some 3,500 kilometers over the polar ice sheets in only 76 days, an arctic fox has reached Canada after setting off from Norway in an unprecedented feat of endurance. The journey is not only a testament to the fox's stamina but also highlights the important role ice sheets serve for the migration of Arctic wildlife and the threat global warming poses to the ecological balance. Arnaud Tarrow, one of the researchers behind the study recording the fox's trek published by the Norwegian Polar Institute, warned that "less ice... will mean less opportunities for this type of migration".

The arctic fox was equipped with a

satellite tracker in July 2017 and set off from the island of Spitsbergen in the Norwegian Svalbard archipelago, about 1,000 kilometers from the North Pole, on March 26 2018. On June 10, 76 days after leaving Norway, the fox reached Ellesmere Island, one of Canada's northernmost communities, completing a journey of 3,506 kilometers. "This species is even more enduring and faster than what has been observed in the past," Arnaud Tarrow told AFP Wednesday.

"It's a young female, less than a year old, therefore relatively inexperienced, literally going out to discover the world and surviving an Arctic crossing on her first attempt," he continued. Adding to the impressive feat is that the young vixen covered the first 1,512 kilometers to reach Greenland in just 21 days. "This is the first observation that shows in detail that an arctic fox has migrated between different continents and ecosystems in the Arctic, and one of the longest migrations ever recorded for an arctic fox in such a short period of time," the Norwegian Polar Institute noted in a statement. —AFP

Man's best friend is a robot dog to some with dementia

CALIFORNIA: A robot dog under development in California is vying to be a best friend to people with Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia, offering comfort by responding to human touch with life-like motions. Entrepreneur Tom Stevens recently presented a test version of the robotic yellow Labrador puppy to residents of a nursing home in Thousand Oaks, California.

Stevens said his company Tombot, in the northern Los Angeles suburb of Santa Clarita, partnered with Jim Henson's Creature Shop, a firm founded by the late Muppets creator, to give the robot realistic movements. "It didn't just have to look real and feel realistic but it had to behave realistically as well," Stevens said.

Snow leopard cubs spotted at English sanctuary

LONDON: Two rare snow leopard cubs have taken their first steps outside their den to bask in the sun and creep through the leaves in a southern English sanctuary. The two as yet unnamed brothers are the first products of four

Stevens believes the Tombot dog, which moves its head from side to side, grunts and wags its tail, is lifelike enough to help people with dementia. It also is easier to look after than a real dog, he said. The robot has 16 motors to control its movements and is loaded with sensors to respond to voice commands and detect how people are touching it, such as the difference between a slow caress and a vigorous pet.

Stevens said he came up with the concept for the robot after his mother was diagnosed with Alzheimer's in 2011. "Of the many bad days that we had early on, by far the worst was when I had to take away her dog," Stevens said. His mother had "a beautiful two-year-old Goldendoodle" but Stevens said the dog ended up being aggressive towards her caregiver.

Japan's Sony Corp pioneered the use of robot dogs in 1999 with the AIBO, billed as a pet that behaves like a real dog using artificial intelligence. Unlike the AIBO, which looks robotic, the Tombots closely resemble real dogs. Stevens had a background in investing in robotics and he wondered whether the technology could help in providing companionship to people like his mother. His test version has the name "Jenny." The puppy cannot walk and is carried on a small bed. —Reuters

years of attempts to breed the endangered animals at the Kent centre and keep up the genetic diversity of the captive population.

"These guys are two very different boys. One is very bold and one is quite a bit shyer," said Briony Smith, head keeper at the Big Cat Sanctuary between the towns of Maidstone and Ashford. "One of them focused much more around play and the other one around eating and sleeping, but both are hitting targets that we would want them to hit and progressing absolutely beautifully." Smith and other staff have been keeping a close watch on the cubs and their mother Laila on CCTV cameras since they were born on April 26. —Reuters

Deep sea mining could destroy 'last frontier'

NEW DELHI: As India readies for the United Nations to give a green light to deep sea mining and boost its economy, the environmental group Greenpeace said yesterday that drilling the seabed could cause irreversible harm and worsen climate change. Without proper governance of the seas, mining could remove entire habitats and species, release toxins and create pollution in areas that have been undisturbed for millennia, it said.

"Deep sea mining could cause severe and

Science

South Americans marvel at total solar eclipse

LA HIGUERA, Chile: A rare total solar eclipse plunged a vast swath of Latin America's southern cone into darkness Tuesday, briefly turning day into night and entralling huge crowds in much of Chile and Argentina. Hundreds of thousands of people flocked to Chile's northern Coquimbo region near the Atacama desert-festooned with some of the planet's most powerful telescopes-which was situated directly on the eclipse's 100-mile-wide "path of totality."

Large crowds congregated in the town of La Higuera, some 2,400 meters above sea level and near the landmark La Silla Observatory, operated by the European Southern Observatory. "I don't believe there's a better place in the world to see an eclipse than La Silla," said Australian tourist Betsy Clark. Clark and her family were among thousands who flocked to the craggy peaks around the observatory on Tuesday.

They were not disappointed. The eclipse had its longest duration as it made to La Silla: 2.36 minutes. "It was an experience to last several lifetimes," said Chilean tourist Rene Serey. Solar eclipses happen when the Sun, the Moon and Earth line up, allowing the Moon to cast its shadow on Earth. The area where the observatory is located, with its dry weather, crystal-clear air and low light pollution, is a stargazers' paradise.

To the west, in the coastal town of La Serena, thousands of people on the beach cheered and clapped at the moment when the Moon closed over the Sun and blocked it out completely. "Oh my God, it's incredible!" shouted some, while others chanted "more, more, more!" Many remained silent, enchanted and moved by one of nature's spectacles. "The truth is that even if one knows what's going on, it is shocking the minute that the shadow of darkness begins to come and that silence begins," said astronomer Sonia Duffau, as she



choked back tears. Total solar eclipses are rare, but what is even rarer about Tuesday's event is that it occurred directly over an area of the Earth most prepared to study the heavenly bodies. "Very seldom has it happened that the whole of an eclipse is seen over an observatory, the last time this happened was in '91" at the Mauna Kea observatory in Hawaii, said Matias Jones, an astronomer at La Silla. Both Chile and Argentina were situated under the narrow, 6,000-mile long band of Earth that experienced the eclipse. The eclipse began at 13:01 (17:01 GMT) in the Pacific Ocean, and a 95 mile (150 kilometer)-wide band of total darkness reached Chile's coast at 4:38 pm (20:38 GMT), before crossing into southeastern Argentina and into the wastes of the South Atlantic.

Eyes of humanity

Chile's President Sebastian Pinera joined the crowds at La Higuera to witness the eclipse. "Today is a very important day and one we have waited for so long," said Pinera. Pinera said Chile was "the capital of the world in terms of astronomy, we are the eyes and the senses of humanity, being able to look, observe and study the stars and the Universe." The La Silla observatory and its fleet of powerful telescopes live streamed the event and opened the site to the public, hosting school tours along with talks and workshops.

In the capital Santiago, crowds flocked to rooftops, downtown parks and squares to witness the event. Schools closed early so that children could prepare for the viewing. Over the



LA HIGUERA, Chile: Solar eclipse as seen from the La Silla European Southern Observatory (ESO) in La Higuera, Coquimbo Region, Chile. — AFP

border in Argentina, people massed to look into the sky in the western Cuyo wine-producing region, which had the country's longest exposure to the eclipse. However little could be seen in the Argentine capital Buenos Aires, where overcast weather blocked the view.

La Silla was one of the first international observatories installed in northern Chile. Today the region has today almost

half the world's astronomical observation capacity. Scientists and astronomers will use data collected from studying the eclipse to verify theories and carry out experiments. "Eclipses are a chance to study the outer part of the atmosphere, which is the corona, since the moon is covering the entire central part of the Sun," said Jones. The next total eclipse will be visible in southern Chile on December 14, 2020. — AFP

CLINIC

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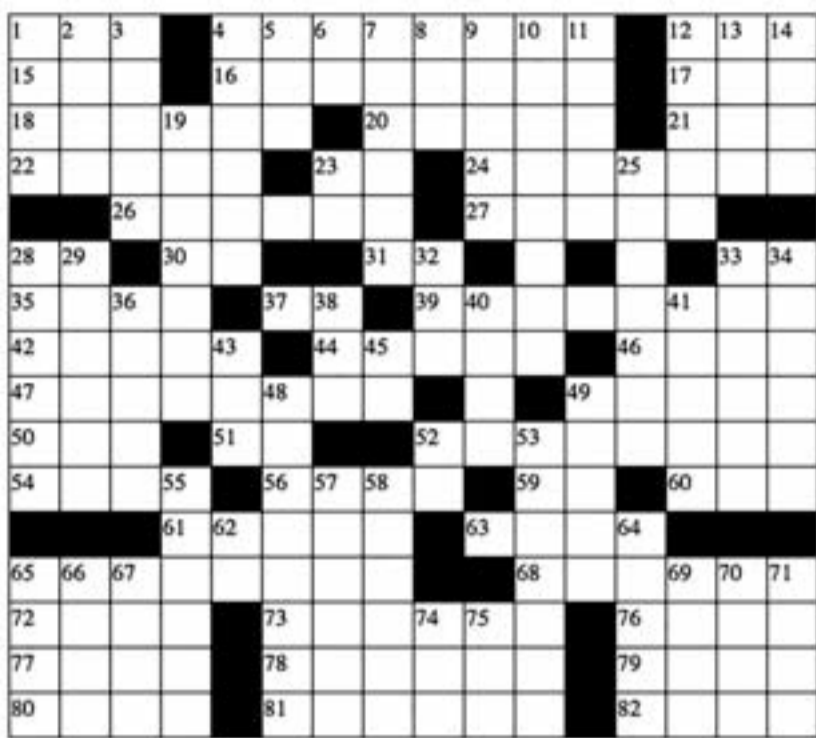
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Stars

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- ACROSS**
- A decree that prohibits something.
 - The value of a coordinate on the horizontal axis.
 - Syndrome resulting from a serious acute (sometimes fatal) infection associated with the presence of staphylococcus.
 - South American wood sorrel cultivated for its edible tubers.
 - Not gained by merit or labor or service.
 - (computer science) A coding system that incorporates extra parity bits in order to detect errors.
 - Any movable possession (especially articles of clothing).
 - (Scotland) A landowner.
 - The cry made by sheep.
 - The lofty nest of a bird of prey (such as a hawk or eagle).
 - The stipend assigned by a cathedral to a canon.
 - Type genus of the Alaudidae.
 - Egyptian statesman who (as President of Egypt) negotiated a peace treaty with Menachem Begin of Israel (1918-1981).
 - The syllable naming the fourth (subdominant) note of the diatonic scale in solmization.
 - A silvery malleable metallic element that resists corrosion.
 - Being ten more than one hundred forty.
 - A bachelor's degree in library science.
 - A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.
 - A quotation at the beginning of some piece of writing.
 - Being of or having to do with the northern United States and those loyal to the Union during the Civil War.
 - Submerged aquatic plant having narrow leaves and small flowers.
 - A Loish language.
 - A person who eats human flesh.
 - A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
 - A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
 - Capital and largest city and economic center of Peru.
 - A member of an Algonquian people living in central Canada.
 - A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
 - Thickening of tissue in the motor tracts of the lateral columns and anterior horns of the spinal cord.
 - A distinct feature or element in a problem.
 - The sediment from fermentation of an alcoholic beverage.
 - United States civil rights leader whose college registration caused riots in traditionally segregated Mississippi (born in 1933).
 - Atlantic coast round clams with hard shells.
 - A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
 - Soviet physicist who worked on low temperature physics (1908-1968).
 - Plant with an elongated head of broad stalked leaves resembling celery.
 - A male monarch or emperor (especially of Russia prior to 1917).
 - Naked freshwater or marine or parasitic protozoa that form temporary pseudopods for feeding and locomotion.
 - On or toward the lee.
- DOWN**
- A wine bottle made of leather.
 - A dull persistent (usually moderately intense) pain.
 - The basic unit of money in Nigeria.
 - Extremely dirty and corrupt.
 - A bachelor's degree in naval science.
 - A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
 - A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
 - A self-funded retirement plan that allows you to contribute a limited yearly sum toward your retirement.
 - Hand shears for cutting sheet metal.
 - Marine food sport fishes mainly of warm coastal waters.
 - Combined or joined to increase in size or quantity or scope.
 - The fourth month of the civil year.
 - The act of scanning.
 - Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
 - Swedish operatic soprano who played Wagnerian roles (born in 1918).
 - A doctor's degree in religion.
 - Ephraim of Siva.
 - A member of the Algonquian people of Maine and southern Quebec.
 - Flower arrangement consisting of a circular band of foliage or flowers for ornamental purposes.
 - Sloping upward.
 - Greek philosopher and astronomer (who predicted an eclipse in 585 BC) who was said by Aristotle to be the founder of physical science.
 - A herbaceous plant genus of the family Linaceae with small sessile leaves.
 - (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
 - A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
 - Jordan's port.
 - Horny projecting mouth of a bird.
 - A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 - Formed like a bacillus.
 - A farewell remark.
 - A chronic inflammatory collagen disease affecting connective tissue (skin or joints).
 - Not equal in amount.
 - Regional and archaic.
 - Small genus of mediterranean shrubs.
 - People of the same race or nationality who share a distinctive culture.
 - A public promotion of some product or service.
 - The capital and largest city of Yemen.
 - Any of several related languages of the Celts in Ireland and Scotland.
 - Being or occurring in fact or actuality.
 - An interior passage or corridor onto which rooms open.
 - An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
 - (Greek mythology) Goddess of the earth and mother of Cronus and the Titans in ancient mythology.
 - The last (12th) month of the year.
 - A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Don't be surprised if someone younger turns to you for guidance today. Their admiration of you may be revealed. You may find you have had an impact on their life you didn't even realize. You never know who is watching and living by the example you set. You are an inspiration to others. You have overcome obstacles in your life and others truly admire you for this.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Today may find you in a very serious mood dismissing all that you find trivial in this world. You have a no-nonsense attitude and a strong desire to succeed. You may find yourself in an extremely strict and disciplined mode and very ambitious. You are driven and passionate about your career and this is being noticed in the workplace to the point you may be approached to take on a special project. You are an excellent manager of yourself and your time and this may lead to an opportunity to excel as a manager of others. Taurus, you are on a prosperous and successful path. This is a great time for you to surround yourself with friends and family. This may lead to a more relaxed environment for you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

A friend will seek your advice today. What she really wants is your approval for what she has decided to do. If you tell her what to do, it may lead to a rift in your friendship. You can give your opinion, but make it clear that she has to make the decision for herself. You might offer some options and point out the possible consequences of each. That mean she takes responsibility for her action. Regardless of how her decision turns out, your friendship will be strengthened. Being the friend to others that you desire a friend to be is the key to happiness in your world.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have a special place in your heart for those close to you. You seem to be the one the younger generation in your life look up to and admire. Your advice and guidance maybe sought from someone who looks to you as a mentor. You may feel as if your greatest growth comes when you are helping others. Today may be one of those days you are spinning your wheels getting physical tasks accomplished. Before frustration takes hold, stop and realize your shoulder to lean on and your listening ear and wonderful advice may be a much greater accomplishment that a completing a simple chore. Cancer, be proud of who you are and what you mean to others.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You crave all that is new and different. What has been great motivation to you in the past may seem meaningless. You have been a creature of habit as long as your friends can remember. This new you and the new path you have chosen may catch others off guard. Follow your heart. This is your journey and your journey alone. Do what makes you happy and put yourself first for a change. You can not change the way others see you. Chase your dreams and do what sets your soul on fire.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have become a more emotional person. Being more in touch with your emotions has led you to nurture and care for those surrounding you. You may find yourself especially drawn to those younger and children. This is mostly driven by an "if I knew then, what I know now?" type of attitude. You feel as if you could help so many others and wish someone would have been around to mentor and guide you. You may find yourself signing up to volunteer to work with children or find some other role to step in where your knowledge may be beneficial to others. You will benefit in many ways from helping those close to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

If you have been debating on a new business approach, today is the day to make it happen. Much success will come your way. Make the pitch, present the proposal. Today is a day you will get the results you have been dreaming of. You are convincing and have a way with your words today. You will be able to make others see things your way. By the time you are through, those involved will see things your way and have the exact desires you do. Stay on top of news about money matters. This is a very profitable time for you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You may be faced with a career opportunity that goes against what you value. You have always prided yourself for clearly seeing things in life in black and white. There is no room for a grey area. If an opportunity that presents itself to you seems to good to be true, it probably is. Be sure you are able to lay your head down at night and sleep peacefully. You know right from wrong and this is a time for you to make the right choice. Actions have consequences and these consequences will have a lasting effect on your world. Do what satisfies your soul.



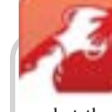
Sagittarius (November 22-December 18)

You may be feeling a need for change. A deep desire for emotional security takes hold now and you feel your most content when surrounded by family and those closest to you. Relationships are a priority in your world now. You feel as if things in your life are monotonous and you are ready to spice things up. This may mean a shiny new car purchase, a vacation, or simply surrounding yourself with a new group of friends. Any direction you choose, this will be a time of excitement and give you a fresh start and a more focused outlook. We all need a bit of change from time to time. Keep life interesting and exciting.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may find this a great time to reflect and gain understanding of your own situation. How did you get to this point in your life? You know that everything happens for a reason and you have learned to have a positive outlook on adversity. You have learned lessons from obstacles that have been placed in your path in the past. This a great time for you to gain a sense of understanding for those around you. A deeper connection is possible for your relationships. This is a good time for you to spend with a loved one. Capricorn, you may find yourself at peace today.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Far from reality is where you may find your thoughts today. Dreaming of what the future holds can lead to peace and clarity in your life. Set a goal. Picture yourself accomplishing this goal. Imagine how you will feel once your dream becomes a reality. Make a list of everything you need to do to accomplish this. Today is the first day of the rest of your life. Make it happen. Dedication and determination can lead you to the position in life you wish to be. Love to learn and learn to love. The world has much more to offer you. Know this and own it!



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find yourself in a bit of a conflict when it comes to balancing your Home Life and work life. You may find yourself passing an opportunity by at work because it will interfere with time with your family. This may be a hard decision to make at this time, but the payoff with your family will be well worth it. In a time for you to make sure your priorities are straight. You have a strong appreciation of your past. You are able to reflect and realize the obstacles and problems of your past talk to the lessons that made you and you are today. You are able to appreciate hardships and look at them in a more positive manner knowing you will come at a stronger person in the end.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Horse Breeds

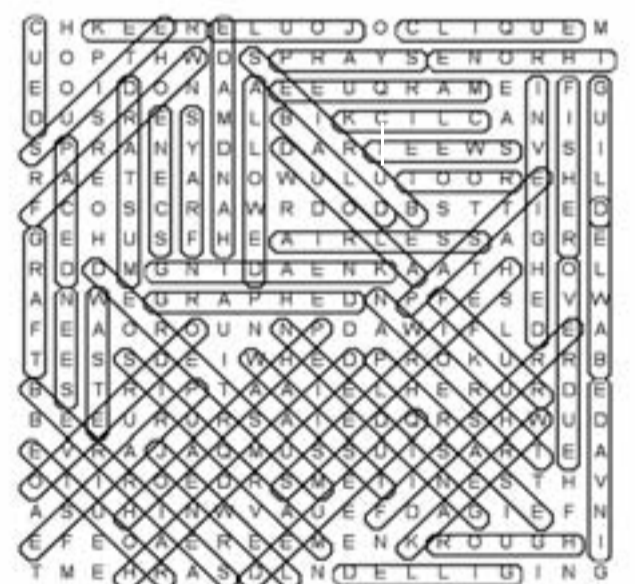
Find and circle all of the Horse Breeds that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a quote by Herman Melville.



- | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-----------|--------------|
| AKHALTEKE | FALABELLA | LIPZZANER | PERCHERON |
| ANDALUSIAN | FJORD | LUSITANO | QUARTER |
| APPALOOSA | FRIESIAN | MARIYARI | SADDLEBRED |
| ARABIAN | GYPSY | MINIATURE | SENNER |
| ARDENNES | HACKNEY | MISAKI | SHIRE |
| AZTECA | HAFLINGER | MONGOLIAN | STANDARDBRED |
| BARB | HANDOVERIAN | MORAB | SUFFOLK |
| BLACK FOREST | HOLSTEINER | MORGAN | THOROUGHBRED |
| CASPAN | ICELANDIC | MUSTANG | TRAKEHNER |
| CLYDESDALE | IRISH SPORT | MORAB | SUFFOLK |
| CRIBLO | JUTLAND | OLDENBURG | WALER |
| CURLY | KATHAWARI | PAINT | WELSH COB |

Yesterday's Solution

Homophones



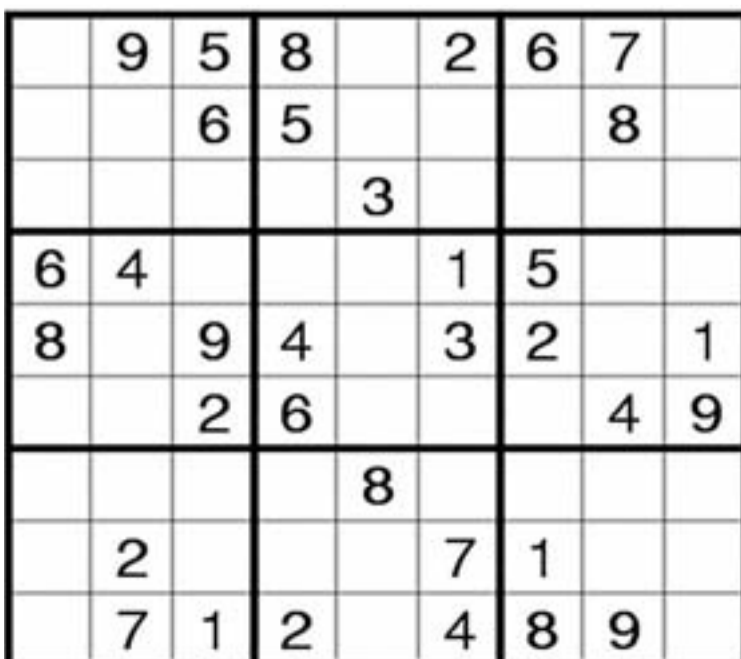
- | | | | |
|---------|----------|----------|--------|
| AIRLESS | FISHER | KNEADING | ROOT |
| HEMLESS | FISSURE | NEEDING | ROUTE |
| ALLOWED | FRAYS | MARQUEE | ROUGH |
| ALLOU | PHRASE | MARQUEE | RUFF |
| BALED | GILLED | MUSTARD | SCENE |
| BAWLED | GULD | MUSTERED | SEEN |
| BERNICE | GRAFF | OVERDO | SUITE |
| BURIES | GRAFFED | OVERDUE | SWEET |
| CLICK | HANDMADE | RACED | THRONE |
| CLIQUE | HANDMADE | PASTE | THROWN |
| CLUED | INVADE | PRASE | WASTE |
| QUEUED | INVEGHED | FRAYS | WASTE |
| FARROW | JEWEL | REEK | WREAK |
| PHARAOH | JOLEE | WREAK | |

Hidden sentence: HOMOPHONES ARE WORDS THAT SOUND ALIKE BUT HAVE DIFFERENT MEANINGS

Yesterday's Solution



Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JULY 4, 2019



This photo shows participants playing in foam mixed with chili pepper water during an event, held to attract tourists to the region which is famous for spicy food, in Ningxiang county in China's central Hunan province. — AFP

From a lake high in Madagascar, Africa's own caviar



Workers of the Rova Caviar Madagascar company pull the nets, at the Acipenser factory.

Madagascar, renowned for its unique wildlife and vanilla production, has a new claim to fame—the island nation is Africa's first and only source of caviar. The business is an unlikely project in a country beset by grinding poverty, but its owners are determined that luxury foods can play a part in improving Madagascar's economy. "A lot of people laughed at us," says Delphyne Dabezies, the head of Rova Caviar, admitting that the enterprise was a big gamble. "But we took the time to prove that this is serious. Madagascar caviar is now the only caviar produced in Africa and the Indian Ocean."

The island off the coast of Mozambique is still only a minor player in terms of global production, which is dominated by China, Italy and France—though producers in the Caspian Sea still boast the most prized caviar, from Beluga sturgeon. Last year Mozambique produced a ton of caviar in a world market of about 340 tons a year. But its ambitious promoters hope to soon increase production to five tons. The unusual plan is the brainchild of Dabezies, her husband Christophe and their partner Alexandre Guerrier—all of them French entrepreneurs based in Madagascar.

white boots, tells AFP: "You have to take care of the spawn and avoid giving them too much or not enough food, to have the lowest possible mortality rate." Sturgeon are imported from Russia in the form of fertilized eggs, which hatch in a special nursery facility in Mantasoa.

When they reach seven grams (a quarter of an ounce), they are moved to freshwater ponds, and then into large cages in the lake when they weigh 500 grams (around a pound). At 1.5 kilograms, the males are killed and only the females are kept on until their eggs are ready.



Color, taste and smell

The process demands patience and skill. The first imported eggs arrived in Mantasoa in 2013, and the first grams of caviar did not go on sale until June 26, 2017, Madagascar's independence day. The quality of the harvest depends on the dexterity of one man, 23-year-old Gaston Soavan'i Thomas. Knife in hand, Thomas has no margin for error as he extracts eggs from the entrails of each sturgeon. "At first, I was afraid to destroy or contaminate the eggs, but now everything comes automatically," he said. The eggs are kept in a refrigerated room at 0 degrees Celsius (32 degrees Fahrenheit).

Expert taster Georges Heriniaina Andrianjatovo taps each box with a small hammer to detect any air bubbles, which are removed as soon as possible. Color, taste and smell are all important. "A good caviar rolls in the mouth and exudes an odor of fresh butter," he says.

Once it is judged up to standard, the precious output is sold to high-end shops and restaurants on the island and to its neighbors of Mauritius, Seychelles and Reunion. Its price is a relative bargain — 100 euros (\$144) per 100 grams—far cheaper than in Europe. According to Guinness World Records, a kilogram of the costliest caviar from albino sturgeon off the coast of Iran regularly fetches over \$25,000. Last year Rova Caviar's stock sold out in just a few weeks. Among those impressed is prominent Malagasy chef Lalaina Ravelomanana. "I prefer to serve it in its natural state, with salmon or oysters on ice," he says. —AFP

A worker of the Rova Caviar Madagascar company holds a sturgeon after pulling it from the net, at the Acipenser factory in Mantasoa, Madagascar, in order to extract caviar from it. — AFP photos



Workers from the company Rova Caviar Madagascar grade and analyze the caviar extracted from a sturgeon.



A worker from the company Rova Caviar Madagascar packs in a metal box the caviar extracted from a sturgeon.

Learning skills

"At the time, our business in luxury ready-to-wear clothes had become sustainable, and we were seeking to diversify our activities," Dabezies said. "We are all gourmets, so this idea served our purposes." Madagascar has an exceptional environment that produces rare crops such as cocoa, vanilla, organic shrimp and lychees—we thought we could add caviar." The sturgeon that produce unfertilized caviar roe are kept in Lake Mantasoa, perched at an altitude of 1,400 meters (4,600 feet) east of the capital Antananarivo.

Training the staff has been a major part of the project. "Caviar professionals have come from abroad," said Ianja Rajaobelina, now assistant director of the production plant, which employs 300 people. "I had to learn everything on the job." Staff member Say Sahemsa, wearing



Workers of the Rova Caviar Madagascar company pull a trolley with sturgeons.



WITCHES WERE FIRST FEMINISTS, SAYS PARIS HAUTE COUTURE STAR

French designer Julien Fournie hailed witches as proto-feminist trailblazers who sent shivers through the patriarchy as he staged his Paris haute couture show in a church on Tuesday. The flamboyant couturier who believes that women should learn to love their curves, and knows how to make the best of them, sent out a run of models of all ages and shapes in corsets, killer heels and hip-hugging skirts. Calling his collection "First Spell", he said he took his inspiration from witches who "knew how to control their destiny". Women "can be beautiful at any age", he told AFP.

"Men have always wanted to strangle women's destiny and emancipation. We can no longer accept that," he added, railing against the recent passing of restrictive abortion laws by some states in the US. "I have always found witches stimulating," Fournie said. "Haute couture and magic share a taste for accumulated experience and tricks of the trade. Official education often does not appreciate this kind of knowledge," said the designer, who studied anatomy and trained as a doctor before finding his true passion in fashion.



Models present creations by Julien Fournie during the Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris. — AFP photos



French fashion designer Julien Fournie acknowledges the audience at the end of his Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



Gothic noir
Fournie transformed a Protestant church in a chic street in central Paris into a catwalk, with fashionistas huddled on wooden pews. They watched a mix of striking silhouettes and gothic noir, padded-shouldered military jackets paraded alongside billowing Edwardian skirts, with Fournie encouraging his models to flounce, twirl and show their personalities to the cameras. As the spectacle drew to a close, paper snowflakes appeared to fall from the heavens as the designer emerged from backstage to dance with a woman in a corseted wedding dress.

The French creator's show came the day after female creators dominated the Paris catwalks, with Dior's staunchly feminist designer Maria Grazia Chiuri taking the bold step of ditching heels in favor of elasticated spartan sandals. Fournie said fashion's feminism moment was no passing fad. "We're living in a time of truth, of freedom, of 'Expose your pig,'" he declared, slapping the wall for emphasis.

The #BalanceTonPorc (Call out your pig) social media campaign, dubbed "France's #MeToo", has touched a nerve in a country that has long been seen as too soft on

sexual harassment. Fournie is one of the elite band of haute couture designers who are allowed to show their handmade creations in the French capital. He served his time at iconic French houses including Dior, Givenchy and Nina Ricci before launching his eponymous label in 2009.

Haute couture shows only happen in Paris, with some of the world's richest women paying thousands to be dressed by the little more than a dozen designers who are allowed to use the label under French law. "You don't come to me just to buy a dress, you come to buy your own style," Fournie said of haute couture. — AFP



Models present creations by Elie Saab during the Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris.



Lebanese fashion designer Elie Saab acknowledges the audience at the end of his Women's Fall-Winter 2019/2020 Haute Couture collection fashion show in Paris yesterday. — AFP photos



Kyrgyz band 'Cholpon & Akak'



Kyrgyz band "Cholpon & Akak" perform during a cultural festival for children and young people held at the Abdullhussain Abduredha theatre in Kuwait City. — AFP photos

Oscar winner Malek sought reassurances over Bond film role

Oscar winner Rami Malek has revealed he thought twice before signing up to play the lead villain in the latest long-awaited James Bond film opposite Daniel Craig. The US actor, who won the Oscar this year for his performance as Freddie Mercury in "Bohemian Rhapsody", said he feared his Egyptian ancestry could lead to the part being a caricature of a Middle Eastern terrorist. Malek told reporters in New York that he raised his concerns with the film's director Cary Fukunaga and received reassurances that was "not his vision", according to Britain's Daily Mirror tabloid.

"That was one thing that I discussed with Cary," he said. "I said, 'We cannot identify him with any act of terrorism reflecting an ideology or a religion.' "That's not something I would entertain, so if that is why I am your choice then you can count me out." "But that was clearly not his vision. So he's a very different kind of terrorist," the actor added. Malek, who was born in Los Angeles in 1981 to parents who immigrated to the United States from Egypt three years earlier, has said he identifies strongly with his Egyptian heritage.

"I am Egyptian. I grew up listening to Egyptian music," he told GQ magazine last year. "These are my people. I feel so gorgeously tied to the culture and the human beings that exist there." Malek will star alongside Craig—who is set to bow out after five films and eight years as 007 — in the 25th edition of one of the world's most enduring franchises. However, the as-yet untitled film has been besieged by problems, most recently with Craig undergoing minor ankle surgery after an injury on set.

The production was repeatedly delayed over script disputes and after Oscar-winning director Danny Boyle quit the project. The film is now due to open in cinemas in the United States, Britain and France on April 8, 2020. Malek revealed that he has already filmed some scenes in Norway—though without Craig—and praised the latest installment in the 007 spy series. "It's another extremely clever script from the people who have figured out exactly what people want in those movies," he said. "But I feel a substantial weight on my shoulders. I mean, Bond is something that we all grow up with." — AFP



Oscar winner Rami Malek

Woody Allen debuts at Milan's world-famous La Scala

Woody Allen is making his debut at Milan's legendary La Scala opera house directing a Puccini production before a European audience apparently unswayed by historic sex abuse allegations. Journalists at a press conference were told to limit questions to the production of Giacomo Puccini's "Gianni Schicchi" which debuts on Saturday. Amazon put Allen's latest film "A Rainy Day in New York" on ice over decades-old sex abuse allegations against the US director, but another distributor will release the film in Europe later this year. When asked why he thought he was better received in Europe than in the US, 83-year-old Allen said "I don't know."

"When I started making movies 50 years ago... I always had a very warm and affectionate following in Europe and even when films of mine were not as well received in the United States, in Italy, France and Germany they received my films." The opera will run until July 19, performed by students at the world-famous Scala. Allen's production was first performed in Los Angeles in 2008. "The students are just fantastic and they are doing a great, great job making the opera exactly the way I wanted and also fulfilling Puccini's goals," Allen said. "One of the great pleasures in my life has been able to take a break from doing movies and movies and coming to La Scala and staging an opera at this iconic opera house," he said.

In February, Allen filed a \$68 million (60 million euros) suit against Amazon for breach of contract, accusing the streaming giant of cancelling the film because of a "baseless" accusation that he sexually abused his daughter. Allen has been accused of molesting Dylan Farrow, his adopted daughter, when she was seven years old in the early 1990s. He was cleared of the charges, first leveled by his then-partner Mia Farrow, after two separate months-long investigations, and has steadfastly denied the abuse. But Dylan, now an adult, maintains she was molested. — AFP



(From left) German stage director Grischa Asagaroff, Hungarian conductor Adam Fischer, US director Woody Allen and Scala director Alexander Pereira attend a press conference for the presentation of La Scala's stage production of two one-act operas, one by Salieri and the other by Puccini at the Scala Opera House in Milan. — AFP photos



US director Woody Allen looks on within a press conference for the presentation of his stage production of Giacomo Puccini's one-act opera "Gianni Schicchi".

Germany hands back Nazi-looted painting to Jewish heirs

Germany yesterday returned a painting looted by the Nazis which ended up in the spectacular art hoard of Cornelius Gurlitt, the son of a Third Reich-era art dealer. "Quai de Clichy" by Paul Signac was handed back to the family of French real estate broker Gaston Prosper Levy, in the sixth such return from Gurlitt's trove. Investigators looking into the provenance of paintings in the stash left behind by Gurlitt found eyewitness accounts of German soldiers seizing the Signac work from Levy's property in France in 1940.

"A countless number of the mostly Jewish collectors of art and cultural goods like Gaston Prosper Levy were

persecuted, robbed or expropriated by Nazis," said Germany's Culture Minister Monika Gruetters. "Others have had to sell their property far below its value or leave it behind while fleeing or emigrating. We can never make good on the suffering and injustice." Such returns are important, the minister said, as they offer "at least a little bit of historical justice".

More than 1,500 artworks were discovered in 2012 in the possession of Munich pensioner Gurlitt. His father, Hildebrand Gurlitt, had worked as an art dealer for the Nazis from 1938. The discovery of the stash made headlines around the world and revived an emotional debate about how thoroughly post-war Germany had dealt with art plundered by the Nazi regime. When Gurlitt died, the Bern museum accepted the collection, though it left about 500 works in Germany for a government task force to research their often murky origins. Determining their provenance has been slow, and it remained unclear how many of the works were stolen. —AFP



German Government's Commissioner for Culture and the Media Monika Gruetters hands over the painting "Quai de Clichy" by French Neo-Impressionist Paul Signac to Agnes Sevestre-Barbe, representative of the heirs. — AFP

Classifieds

Thursday, July 4, 2019

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DAY: Wednesday 03/07/2019 Valid From 7 PM To 7 AM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot with light to moderate freshening at times over coastal areas north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 40 km/h.

BY DAY: Very hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 40 km/h with a chance for rising dust over open areas.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 03/07/2019 1200 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	47 °C	34 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	32 °C			
ABDALY	47 °C	31 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	48 °C	34 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	31 °C			
SALMIYAH	41 °C	33 °C			
AHMADI	42 °C	36 °C			
NUWASIB	45 °C	31 °C			
WAFRA	47 °C	32 °C			
SALMY	45 °C	30 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	07/04	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	48 °C	32 °C	NW	20 - 40 km/h
Friday	07/05	Very hot and Dusty	47 °C	34 °C	NW	25 - 55 km/h
Saturday	07/06	Very hot and Dusty	48 °C	35 °C	NW	25 - 60 km/h
Sunday	07/07	Very hot	50 °C	36 °C	NW	15 - 40 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:18
Sunrise	04:53
Zuhr	11:52
Asr	15:26
Sunset	18:51
Isha	20:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	46 °C
MIN. Temp.	34 °C
MAX. RH	22 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 68 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UPO 2019/07/03 14:36 UTC V1.00 T2.4 8-1 ع ل ع ق

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

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I, Robin Kadanenkottu Mathew S/o Mathew Kadanenkottu Thomas, holder of Indian Passport No. S4164643 issued in India has changed the given name in passport from Mathew Robin Kadanenkottu to Robin Kadanenkottu Mathew, resident of Chittar PO, Pathanamthitta, Kerala. Solemnly declare. (C 5651)

I, Kasim holder of Passport No. H8470593 issued in Kuwait hereby Change name on my Passport from given name Kasim to surname Bhotvavala and given name Kasim Yusuf. (C 5653)

I, Lancy Thomas D Cunha, holder of Indian Passport No. J7413137, having permanent address in India at Bethel House, Derebail Konchady Cross Road, Near Vishwa Geeth Complex, Mangaluru - 575006, Karnataka, India, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare that henceforth my name will be read as under: Given Names: Lancy Thomas and Surname: D Cunha (C 5654) 3-7-2019

I, GILBERT LUCAS FERNANDES, DOB 01/01/1997, Passport No. T1942816, issued in Kuwait on 24/01/2019. Currently my surname on the passport is GILBERT LUCAS and my given name is FERNANDES. I, hereby declare that my given name(s) is GILBERT LUCAS and my surname is FERNANDES. (C 5652) 2-7-2019

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Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw) DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 4/7/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 4/7/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	IRA	600	Tehran	14:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	FDB	5060	Dubai	15:05
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:15
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:20
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	JZR	1233	Taif	16:25
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KAC	619	Doha	16:25
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KNE	532	Jeddah	16:55
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	FDB	052	Dubai	17:10
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC	151	Istanbul	17:35
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	KAC	503	Beirut	17:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:30	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	FEG	242	Alexandria	17:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	KAC	343	Chennai	17:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR	253	Amman	18:00
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
BAW	157	London	06:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:25
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	JZR	733	Cairo	18:35
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:40
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
QTR	8511	Doha	07:05	KAC	691	Muscat	19:35
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	07:05	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	RJA	641	Amman	20:05
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC	357	Kochi	20:05
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:30
IRA	601	Tehran	08:10	NIA	162	Cairo	20:30
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	FDB	058	Dubai	20:50
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	DLH	624	Dammam	20:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	333	Trivandrum	21:05
KAC	384	Delhi	09:45	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	RBG	214	Sohag	21:10
IAW	157A	Al Najaf	10:00	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:25
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	QTR	1089	Doha	21:50
JZR	1220	Jeddah	10:55	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:10
JZR	410	Delhi	11:50	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	383	Delhi	22:35
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	KAC	551	Cairo	23:00
IRA	667	Esfahan	13:00	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	RBG	556	Alexandria	23:10
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	QTR	1083	Doha	23:20

Iran to bypass uranium enrichment maximum despite calls for rethink

TEHRAN: Iran ignored US and EU warnings yesterday and vowed to exceed within days the maximum uranium enrichment level it agreed to in the landmark 2015 nuclear accord. Iran is acting on its May 8 threat to suspend parts of the agreement in response to US President Donald Trump's reimposition of crippling sanctions after withdrawing from it in May last year. President Hassan Rouhani said yesterday's decision was in response to failure by other parties to the deal to keep up their promises and provide Iran relief from the US sanctions.

"On July 7, our enrichment level will no longer be 3.67 percent. We will put aside this commitment. We will increase (the enrichment level) beyond 3.67 percent to as much as we want, as much as is necessary, as much as we need," Rouhani told a cabinet meeting. The enrichment maximum set in the agreement is sufficient for power generation but far below the more than 90 percent level required for a nuclear warhead.

France reacted quickly by warning Iran that it would "gain nothing" by leaving the deal and said "challenging the agreement would only increase tensions already high" in the Middle East. Iran insists that it is not violating the deal, citing terms of the agreement allowing one side to temporarily abandon some of commitments if it deems the other side is not respecting its part of the accord.

Rouhani stressed that Iran's action would be reversed if the other parties to the nuclear deal made good on their side of the bargain - relief from sanctions. "We will remain committed to the (nuclear deal) as long as the other parties are committed," he said. "We will act on the JCPOA 100 percent the day that the other party acts 100 percent (too)," he added using the deal's acronym. Iran has sought to pressure the other parties - Britain, China, France, Germany and Russia - to save the deal.

On May 8, Iran announced it would no longer respect the limits set on the size of its stockpiles of



TEHRAN: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani chairs a cabinet meeting yesterday. — AFP

enriched uranium and heavy water, and threatened to abandon further nuclear commitments, including exceeding the agreed uranium enrichment maximum from July 7. Rouhani said Iran will also deliver on its threat to resume construction of a heavy water reactor after July 7 and will bring it to the condition that "according to you, is dangerous and can produce plutonium". But all these measures can be reversed in "hours" if the other parties "live up to their commitments", he said.

US President Donald Trump warned Monday that Iran is "playing with fire" after Tehran said it had exceeded the limit set on its enriched uranium stockpile. Rouhani said it was the US that started the fire and Washington has to "put it out" by returning to the nuclear deal. His adviser, Hesamodin Ashena, warned Trump against listening to hawks in his administration, hinting aggression against Iran could make him a "one-term president". "We have unseated an American president in the past, we can do it again," he tweeted, referring to Jimmy Carter whose bid for a second term was marred by the Iran hostage crisis in 1980. —AFP

The UAE, Egypt and Saudi Arabia are seen as Haftar's key supporters while he accuses Turkey and Qatar of supplying weapons to his rivals. The GNA accused pro-Haftar forces of having carried out a "premeditated" and "precise" attack on the migrant center. No-one has so far claimed responsibility, but pro-Haftar media reported Tuesday night a "series of air raids" in Tripoli and Tajoura. The suburb of Tajoura, which has several military sites belonging to pro-GNA armed groups, is regularly targeted in air raids by Haftar's forces.

"Migrants and refugees must NOT be detained; civilians must NOT be a target; Libya is NOT a safe place of return" for migrants and refugees, the head of the UN refugee agency (UNHCR), Filippo Grandi tweeted. The European Union had also called on the UN to launch an investigation. "Those responsible should be held to account", EU diplomatic chief Federica Mogherini, enlargement commissioner Johannes Hahn and migration commissioner Dimitris Avramopoulos said in a statement.

UNHCR spokesperson Charlie Xaxley told AFP in Geneva that the agency had asked to have the centre evacuated a few weeks ago after "a near miss from a similar air strike". The center was thought to have been used to store weapons, he added, reiterating "that using civilian infrastructure like that constitutes a violation of international humanitarian law". The UN's mission in Libya has said around 3,500 migrants and refugees held in detention centers near the combat zone are at risk.

Wracked by chaos since the 2011 uprising against dictator Muammar Gaddafi, Libya has become a major conduit for migrants seeking to reach Europe. — AFP

tions at Al-Zour refinery, violations at the health ministry, illegal distribution of state-owned agricultural land and severe damage by heavy rains last year.

Moreover, the financial status of the country was discussed in a closed session as demanded by the government to provide MPs with information about the performance of Kuwaiti assets abroad. At the end of the debate, speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem said it was decided to refer the issue to the Audit Bureau. At the end of the session, Ghanem closed the current term of the Assembly until the end of October. Questioned about whether Putin's Russia calls the shots now, he replied: "I don't think so. I think Russia is very respectful of the nature of its role, Russia is certainly very respectful of Saudi Arabia, and they have compromised on certain positions." Falih added that Riyadh wanted to achieve a market balance for supply and demand - but that it needed non-OPEC players to step in. "OPEC was trying to do it for a while, but let's face it: we are less than 30 percent of global supply, so bringing more non-OPEC together with us has given a big boost."

Vienna-based OPEC, which pumps a third of global crude, decided three years ago to hook up with non-cartel members to form OPEC+ to combat slumping prices. In recent years, the cartel has lost valuable market share to the United States - whose booming shale output has transformed it into the world's biggest oil producer and a net exporter. The expanded group - comprising 24 crude producers including Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mexico, Oman and Russia - accounts for almost half of world oil supplies.

SEB analyst Bjarne Schieldrop noted that Moscow and Riyadh needed other cartel members on board. "If there is disagreement within OPEC, then Russia-Saudi cannot push or force through a decision," he told AFP. "On the other hand given the size of Russia and Saudi Arabia there won't be a deal unless those two are in on it." Saudi Arabia and Russia could of course go it alone and flex their production together and skip the rest of OPEC. Saudi do not want to do that," Schieldrop said. "They know that size matters in the global oil market. OPEC has become too small. OPEC+ on the other hand is big enough to matter and impact the global oil market."

US auto industry legend Iacocca dies aged 94

WASHINGTON: Automobile industry legend Lee Iacocca, who is credited with creating the iconic Ford Mustang and saving Chrysler from bankruptcy, died Tuesday at the age of 94, US media reported. Iacocca died at his home in Bel-Air, a neighborhood of Los Angeles, from complications of Parkinson's disease, his family told local media. Chrysler said in a statement that the company "is saddened" by news of Iacocca's death. "He played a historic role in steering Chrysler through crisis and making it a competitive force," the statement read. "Lee gave us a mindset that still drives us today - one that is characterized by hard work, dedication and grit. His legacy is the resilience and unshakable faith in the future that live on" in the company's employees.

Iacocca began his career in 1946 at the Ford Motor Company, first as an engineer and then in sales. It was his talent in marketing that helped realize his full potential. Iacocca's first sales campaign in the mid-1950s was so successful that it attracted the attention of company executives and brought him to the Ford headquarters in Dearborn, Michigan. Iacocca had reaped in massive sales over his career, particularly with the Ford Mustang that he designed in 1957. However he was accused of plotting against Chairman Henry Ford II in a quest to reach the top company position. In a 1992 interview, when Iacocca was asked about the seemingly Machiavellian scheme, he snapped back with characteristic sharpness: "Machiavelli my



Lee Iacocca

**!" Ford fired him in 1978 - so Iacocca moved to the floundering Chrysler Corporation.

In 1979, the US government bailed Chrysler out of a potential bankruptcy with \$1.5 billion in secured loans. Iacocca took the reins once more and implemented a painful restructuring process. He had twisted Congress's arm for the loan, and he successfully brought Chrysler back from the brink - then paid off the loan ahead of schedule. Under his leadership, Chrysler invented the minivan and later the suburban utility vehicle (SUV). His famous line in Chrysler ads - "If you find a better car, buy it!" he would say, pointing at the viewer - turned him into a legend.

Iacocca's fierce anti-Japanese views - he viewed their commercial practices as detrimental to US - at the time earned him support from Democrats and labor unions. But by the late 1980s Chrysler took a downturn, and thousands of employees were laid off in order to save the company. He left Chrysler at the start of the 1990s, and later launched an ultimately unsuccessful hostile takeover bid of the company with billionaire Kirk Kerkorian. —AFP

Spectacular fall of India's 'dosa...

Continued from Page 1

"If a lower middle class family wanted an outing, a good treat, a place to celebrate something, Saravana Bhavan was the choice," G C Shekhar, a journalist in Chennai, told AFP. "This man sort of democratized restaurants." The concept spread beyond India, with around 80 outlets abroad today catering mostly to the homesick Indian diaspora in the United States, the Gulf, Europe and Australia. He also treats his staff generously, giving even the lowest-ranking employees benefits like health insurance. In return, they adoringly call him "annachi" ("elder brother").

Alongside Hindu gods, the restaurants invariably have two pictures of him on the wall: One with his sons, who now run the business - and one with his trusted spiritual guru. But his beliefs, by no means unusual in

India, proved to be his undoing. In the early 2000s, Rajagopal reportedly took an astrologer's advice to make a fateful decision - to take as his third wife the daughter of an employee he had his eye on. "He was obsessed with her," D Suresh Kumar, another local journalist, told AFP.

The young woman in question was already married and rejected his advances, but Rajagopal is not a man used to taking no for an answer. Threats, beatings and exorcisms directed at the woman, her husband and her family over months all failed, and in 2001 - after one failed attempt - the husband was murdered on Rajagopal's orders. In 2004, he was found guilty and sentenced to 10 years. On appeal, he was convicted of murder and the sentence increased to life, a decision then upheld by the Supreme Court in March.

He is meant to surrender by July 7 and spend the rest of his life behind bars. "Rajagopal is an example of how you can really come up in the society through hard work and thinking out of the box," said Shekhar. "What led to his downfall was his weakness for women and his belief that he was so powerful that he could get somebody murdered and get away with it." — AFP

Unhappy birthday: Hundreds...

Continued from Page 1

"I wasn't that hungry so I only ate the egg and a little steamed rice. I vomited and an ambulance took me to the Rizal Medical Centre where I was given an IV drip," the woman told AFP. "I blame the cook. Everyone knows Madam (Imelda) is blameless since she was not the one who cooked it," she added.

The party featured singing and speeches, as well as water bottles adorned with Imelda's name and meals in plastic boxes. There were no immediate reports that the guest of honor was taken ill. The family later issued an apology while pledging to help those who were sick and cooperate with an official investigation. "I offer my apologies ask for your understanding. Rest assured

that we will continue to help until everyone is fully healed," her son Ferdinand Junior said in a statement.

Family matriarch Imelda was convicted in November in a corruption case stemming from the time of her husband's brutal dictatorship. Although currently free on bail pending an appeal, she faces decades behind bars after being found guilty of funneling around \$200 million through Swiss foundations decades ago. Ferdinand Marcos, who along with his cronies was accused of pilfering \$10 billion from the Philippines, fled with his family to the US after his dictatorship fell in 1986. He died in exile three years later, but his heirs later returned to Manila and the political scene.

Imelda Marcos just finished a term as a congresswoman, her son Ferdinand Junior has also served as a senator while eldest daughter Imee won a Senate seat in May's elections. The family has a powerful ally in President Rodrigo Duterte, who ordered the late dictator's remains interred at Manila's Heroes' Cemetery despite public protests. — AFP

Dozens killed in strike on Libya...

Continued from Page 1

He urged the international community to punish those who ordered, carried out and provided arms for the strike - the second time the facility has been attacked. "The absurdity of this ongoing war today has led this odious bloody carnage to its most hideous and most tragic consequences," Salame said. Around 600 migrants and refugees were held in the Tajoura detention center, the head of the compound Nouredine Al-Grifi said, adding that other people were wounded in another hangar.

In a statement, the Tripoli-based internationally recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) denounced the attack as a "heinous crime" and blamed it on the "war criminal Khalifa Haftar". Turkey, which backs the GNA, called for an international probe into what it called a "crime against humanity". Qatar's foreign ministry said the attack was a "flagrant violation of international laws that protect human rights, and may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity". Haftar, who controls much of eastern and southern Libya, launched an offensive to take the capital in April. But yesterday evening a spokesman for the strongman said "the (pro-Haftar) forces deny their responsibility in the attack on the migrant center of Tajoura". Ahmad Al-Mesmari blamed the attack on the GNA.

MPs pass budget with deficit...

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it will not be able to bridge the budget shortfall. The persistent budget deficit comes after 16 years of surpluses during which Kuwait built assets worth over \$600 billion managed by Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA), mostly outside the country (the returns of which are not included in the budget).

Also, according to Kuwaiti law, 10 percent is deducted from revenues every year regardless of whether there is surplus or deficit in favor of the Kuwait Fund for Future Generations. This year's contribution is KD 1.58 billion. The budget was passed by 36 votes in favor with 20 against. During the debate on the budget, MPs called on the government to stop squandering public funds and to employ more Kuwaitis.

Following the renewal of confidence in the finance minister, Hajraf thanked the Assembly and said he will continue to serve the country and the people. But he warned against what he called a "deviation" in the debate of grillings, which could undermine democracy. Before the voting, two lawmakers spoke in favor of the motion and two others defended the minister. MP Nayef Al-Merdas said he did not hear the minister promise to scrap interest on loans taken by pensioners. The minister was grilled twice last month over alleged violations and squandering public funds.

HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable to Hajraf, congratulating him on the renewed confidence. He commended the minister's efficient performance while replying to parliament queries, along with the elevated democratic practice which reflected the civilized image of the dear homeland. HH the Amir wished everybody success in serving the dear nation. HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent a similar cable to Hajraf, and wished everyone success in serving the dear nation under the leadership of HH the Amir.

The Assembly also unanimously voted to refer the outcome of four investigations to the public prosecutor for legal action. These include probes on alleged viola-

privileged, dynastic scion. He even lost his constituency in Amethi, Uttar Pradesh, that had been a family bastion for decades. He was allowed to contest a second seat, however, and won in southern India.

Gandhi's efforts at rebuilding the so-called Grand Old Party also seemed to flounder with the senior members refusing to yield space to the younger generation. Media reports said party baron, 90-year-old Motilal Vora, would become interim chief. "Rebuilding the party requires hard decisions and numerous people will have to be made accountable for the failure of 2019," Gandhi said. "It would be unjust to hold others accountable but ignore my own responsibility," he added. Analysts said Gandhi's resignation was likely to throw the party into fresh turmoil. "Rahul Gandhi's resignation is an important point, but the bigger thing is what comes after this," Manisha Priyam, an independent political analyst, told AFP. "Is it going to be a substitute who is going to be placed as the president?" she said indicating that making a Gandhi family pawn as new leader would not end its troubles. Rahul Gandhi's mother, Italian-born Sonia, remains party chairperson. His sister Priyanka also took an increased role in this year's election.

Many Congress officials have not yet given up hope that Rahul Gandhi will reconsider his resignation. "We request Rahul Gandhi to lead from the front to take on the upcoming political challenges," Sachin Pilot, Congress leader from western Rajasthan state, told reporters. "Not just Rajasthan, but the people of India, have asked him to change his mind, take back his resignation and work as president again," he added. — Agencies

Gandhi calls for change as he...

Continued from Page 1

The BJP's huge victory stunned the opposition and political pundits who had predicted a reduced majority for Modi's party. While saying he could not avoid his share of the blame, Gandhi launched a virulent attack on the BJP's tactics, hinting that the vote had not been free and fair and saying that the Indian press, judiciary and election commission had all been turned against the opposition.

"We didn't fight a political party in the 2019 election. Rather, we fought the entire machinery of the Indian state," he said. Gandhi also accused the BJP of seeking to "destroy the fabric of our nation" and vowed to protect the country until his "last breath". "I have no hatred or anger towards the BJP but every living cell in my body instinctively resists their idea of India," he said. Critics accuse the BJP of stoking religious tensions and trying to undermine the country's secular credentials. The BJP denies the accusations, insisting it believes in equality for all. Around 80 percent of India's 1.3 billion population is Hindu, but it is also home to large numbers of Muslims, Christians and Buddhists.

The great-grandson, grandson and son of three past premiers of the world's biggest democracy, Gandhi had set out to rejuvenate the party after it lost to BJP in the 2014 election. But he struggled to shed his image as a

Sports

'Respect, nothing else': Kyrgios sets the tone for Nadal Wimbledon blockbuster

'I get along with people. Some people I don't get along with'

LONDON: Nick Kyrgios set the tone Tuesday for a Wimbledon blockbuster with bitter rival Rafael Nadal by stating: "We have mutual respect — but that's about it." Kyrgios opened his Wimbledon campaign with a 7-6 (7/4), 3-6, 7-6 (12/10), 0-6, 6-1 win over fellow Australian Jordan Thompson. However, all attention was on his second round duel with Nadal after the two-time champion defeated Japanese qualifier Yuichi Sugita 6-3, 6-1, 6-3.

"Not sure that me and Rafa could go down to the Dog and Fox and have a beer together. I don't know him at all. I know him as a tennis player," said Kyrgios. "I get along with people. Some people I don't get along with. "We have a mutual respect — but that's about it, I think." Nadal and Kyrgios have been involved in a bitter war of words this year since the Australian defeated the 18-time major champion in a stormy clash in Acapulco. It was the Australian's third win over Nadal in six meetings.

Nadal accused his opponent of "lacking respect" after serving underarm, while Kyrgios described the Spaniard as "super salty" and being his "polar opposite". Kyrgios then became involved in a slanging match with Toni Nadal, the world number two's uncle and former coach, who lambasted the Australian for his on-court behavior. Toni Nadal suggested it was the action of a man who lacks education. "Bro, I did 12 years at school you idiot — I'm very educated. I understand you're upset that I beat your family," Kyrgios hit back in an interview. However, Nadal refused to add fuel to the fire on Tuesday ahead of today's clash.

"Being honest I'm too old for all this stuff. What I said I said. That's all. I'm not a guy who will be in a fight with anybody," he said. "I will keep doing things I love. After

tomorrow I will be back in this amazing place." Nadal later added: "My thoughts are very clear. I play against a top talent player, very dangerous player when he wants to play tennis.

"Normally against the best players, he wants to play tennis. When that happens, he's a very dangerous opponent." Kyrgios admitted he was excited about the chance to prove himself against Nadal. "I can't wait. As soon as the draw came out, I was super happy that I saw him in my section. "When you're a kid, you want to play the best players in the world on I think it's the best court in the world. "This is something that I can't take for granted. There's no guarantee I'm going to be here again in this position. "Could have an injury or something like that. I'm going to grasp with both hands, go out there, give it my best shot." Kyrgios, who famously stunned Nadal as a 144-ranked wildcard on his Wimbledon tournament debut in 2014, put in a typically raucous and charismatic display on Court Three on Tuesday.

In a match where he fired 23 aces and 63 winners, the 24-year-old argued with the umpire, slumped over the net and played dead. He also shaped to imitate a forward defensive cricket shot and celebrated a point by running around madly in a circle. After dropping the second set, he needed a medical timeout for a leg injury before attempting — and failing — to finish the third set with an underarm serve. He eventually took the set on an eighth set point before conceding an 18-minute fourth set in which he collected just five points. However, two breaks in a more composed decider settled the tie and set the stage for one of the most anticipated matches of the tournament. — AFP



LONDON: A combination of pictures created on July 3, 2019 shows Spain's Rafael Nadal (L) during his first round match on the second day of the 2019 Wimbledon Championships tennis tournament on July 2, 2019 and Australia's Nick Kyrgios (R) during his first round match on July 2, 2019 both at the All England Tennis Club in Wimbledon, southwest London. — AFP

Future is now: Bernal being tipped for Tour greatness

BRUSSELS: Fast-emerging Colombian all-rounder Egan Bernal can take centre stage at the 2019 Tour de France in the absence of his injured Team Ineos leader Chris Froome with even the race organizers backing the 22-year-old for a tilt at the title.

Bernal joined Sky, now Ineos, in 2018 and on the back of an immediate win at the Tour of California was drafted into last year's Tour de France, where he vowed to learn everything he could from four-time winner Froome. Impressed with his astonishing progress, Ineos made Bernal team leader for May's Giro d'Italia but a fall ruled him out, and when Froome himself suffered a dreadful fall in June, Bernal's stock took a sharp rise.

"They've been talking about him since he won the Tour de L'Avenir two years ago," Tour de France chief Christian Prudhomme told AFP this week. "Then at Paris-Nice in March, Bernal took the yellow jersey and was presented with it by (all time great) Eddy Merckx! "It was a hugely significant moment, and made one think about what might come in the future, and now the future is coming, it's this July."

Prudhomme pointed out that it was 50 years since Merckx won his first Tour, and that he felt maybe Bernal could take up the baton the great Belgian once carried so bravely. "I also noted how marvellously polite he is," Prudhomme said of the 22-year-old. "Of course he's brilliantly talented too, there's no doubt about it. "There is the question of how will he do over three long weeks with the colossal pressure that you can't imagine until you actually have the yellow jersey on your back. I'm not sure how he might feel. "But I can tell you that last year, in the final week he was still there, at just 21 years old, helping Chris Froome at altitudes over 2000m."

Froome disciple

Once considered a pure climber, Bernal has proved he can cut it not only with the burlier riders in a rolling section in a cross-wind, but also in a time-trial, and seems to be able to preserve energy to close out key stages. A coach at his former team Androni Giocattoli, where he turned professional at 19, said of the Colombian: "An Egan Bernal comes along every twenty years". When Sky signed and raced him on the 2018 Tour AFP asked him what he expected from it. "I'm going to learn a lot," he said of joining the lineup that included Froome and Geraint Thomas. "I'm here with a good team, I'm with guys with a lot of experience. "I'm really attached to Froomey and I want to help him, make him proud.

"One day, when he's finished, maybe he'll see that I



Egan Bernal

learned from him and he will feel proud," Bernal said. "That's what I want." On Saturday, Bernal starts on his second major tour where he can become the youngest post-war winner of the Tour, 100 years after the introduction of the yellow jersey and 50 years after Eddy Merckx won his first Tour. He will also be just one of 176 riders from 22 eight-men teams on a fascinating journey that promises to stretch well beyond three weeks around France. — AFP

Smith-Schuster backs London Academy to produce NFL talent

LONDON: Pittsburgh Steelers star JuJu Smith-Schuster believes the NFL's ground-breaking academy in London could turn into a production line for British talent in American Football. Around 150 teenagers travelled to the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium on Tuesday to take part in the final try-out for the first intake into the landmark NFL Academy, which is the first of its kind outside the United States and will start in September.

There have been five British-born players who have played roles on Super Bowl-winning teams, including Jay Ajayi with the Philadelphia Eagles just two seasons ago. But none of that group spent their entire childhood or teenage years in the United Kingdom, all benefitting from exposure to the NCAA college football that serves as a breeding ground for future NFL talent.

However, the NFL is becoming increasingly popular in the United Kingdom, with up to four regular-season games per year played in London since 2007. And, speaking in his role as an ambassador of the new Academy, Smith-Schuster sees encouraging signs that Britain has the potential to bring through genuinely homegrown players who can shine in the NFL.

"I see a lot of potential. One guy jumped higher than me in the trials," he told reporters after working with the youngsters during their trials. "There are a lot of guys who are out here who just don't know what they can achieve. "I didn't know how big it was in the UK until I came out here today." The trialists were put through their paces in a series of combine-style drills replicating the evaluation tests college football players are put through before entering the NFL draft. The lucky students, aged 16-18, who are selected for the Barnet and Southgate College-based Academy, will be given pathways to employment and further education, with the most talented potentially landing an opportunity to play college football in the States.

Attention to detail

Smith-Schuster is the Steelers' top wide receiver and in just his second season, he took the NFL by storm with 111 receptions for 1,426 yards and seven touchdowns. The 22-year-old's superb form last season earned a Pro Bowl nomination for the former second round draft pick from the University of Southern California.

While Britain's aspiring gridiron hopefuls aren't up to his high standards just yet, Smith-Schuster was impressed with the way they responded to his advice. "The biggest thing I took away is these guys, if they listen, the attention to details, they do the technique and they execute it," he said. "I was telling one guy how to adjust his 40 yard dash technique. He did and he was faster. It's just those little details.

"Hopefully one day they have a London team and they trade me here. That would be lit!" Former England rugby union international Christian Wade is already trying to make it in the NFL after signing a contract with the Buffalo Bills in April. He was back in London to help coach and mentor the Academy trialists and he agreed with Smith-Schuster that the outlook is promising. "There's great talent out there and the future is looking bright for everyone," Wade said. "This is a great opportunity for the guys in the UK, having this option now. "They are going to have two, three, four years to start developing the game, just the fundamentals. So they have an easier transition." — AFP

Sheikh Saad Olympic Shooting Academy of Clubs tournament

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The first tournament of Sheikh Saad Olympic Shooting Academy of Clubs will be held from July 5th to 6th, 2019 and will be organized by Kuwait Shooting Sport Club. The tournament will have 10m Air Pistol and Rifle and Olympic Archery for beginners and juniors from the academy.

Secretary General of Kuwait and Arab Shooting Federations Obaid Al-Osaimi said the club pays close attention to beginners and juniors in order to bring up a new generation that is able to continue making achievements in the name of Kuwait. He said the board of directors approved the organization of several tournaments during the summer for new entrants in the academy. These are planned to be held in the main premise or at the club's Jahra and Sabahiya Youth Center branches.

Al-Osaimi said the board of directors is also working hard on making shooters of both genders comfortable to compete in order to reach outstanding international levels, besides bringing in coaches and specialists of the higher caliber in order to bring up a new generation of shooters according to international standards. A ceremony to distribute prizes to winners will be held on Sunday 14th July at the Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Olympic Complex at 7pm.



Obaid Al-Osaimi



Kuwaiti Olympic Committee vows limitless support for athletes

KUWAIT: President of the Kuwaiti Olympic Committee Sheikh Fahad Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah affirmed yesterday that Kuwaiti sports leaders will do everything possible to remove all snags facing the national champions on the international arenas. "The committee will put all resources at the disposal of the athletes, scheduled to partake in the World Beach Games, due in Qatar in October", said Sheikh Fahad

Nasser, as he emerged from a meeting with the two Karate champions, the brothers Salman and Mohammad Al-Musawi. All sports officials ought to shoulder the responsibility of supporting the karate champions, he added, hoping that the two brothers would qualify for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. Sheikh Fahad Nasser also visited headquarters of the national sports unions on Tuesday.

MLB to open India office in bid to gain a foothold

NEW DELHI: Major League Baseball plans to open an office in New Delhi that will focus on growing the game in cricket-obsessed India through fan engagement and baseball development. Well aware of the technical similarity of throwing, hitting and catching that link cricket and baseball, MLB is ready to showcase America's pastime with a game broadcast on Facebook each week in India through the end of the regular season. "The country has huge potential for us, and we want to make sure that India is an important part of the ever-growing

brand that is MLB," Jim Small, MLB Senior Vice President of International, said in a statement on Tuesday. As part of the initiative MLB said Million Dollar Arm, a contest that began as a reality TV show and was the basis of the 2014 movie of the same name, will run this year with thousands of participants competing to earn a tryout with an MLB team.

The MLB First Pitch grassroots program will also be introduced and give primary school children across New Delhi, Bangalore and Mumbai an opportunity to learn the sport through workshops led by MLB International coaches. Indian Premier League team Delhi Capitals' assistant coach Mohammad Kaif was present at the announcement and said he looked forward to introducing a new generation to baseball.

"Cricket and baseball have quite a few things in common. Growing up playing cricket, we always knew there was a similar sport played in the United States, but never imagined it would come to India one day," said former India cricketer Kaif. —Reuters

Sports

An inspired Rohit Sharma is India's World Cup heartbeat

The opener is in the form of his life

BIRMINGHAM: Rohit Sharma is renowned for his hunger for big hundreds and his soaring self-belief is driving India forward as they seek a third World Cup triumph. The opener is in the form of his life, hitting his fourth century of the tournament in the win against Bangladesh on Tuesday that took India through to the semi-finals.

With an attacking 104 at Edgbaston, Sharma took his overall tally of World Cup hundreds to five, second only behind batting great Sachin Tendulkar, who hit six centuries in as many tournaments. He is also the second player after Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara to register four hundreds in a single World Cup. "Fifth century in 15 World Cup innings for Rohit Sharma. Amazing hunger and consistency," former India opener Virender Sehwag wrote on Twitter.

The attacking opener, who led his Indian Premier League side Mumbai Indians to their fourth title in May, is now the tournament's leading run-scorer with 544 runs in seven matches at an eye-watering average of more than 90. "I have been watching Rohit for years now, he is the best ODI player around," India captain Virat Kohli said after the win against Bangladesh. "He is a joy to watch and is having the tournament of his life. When he plays well we know we are heading for a big score. He gives everyone confidence to go out and bat."

Sharma strokes

Kohli has admitted more than once that he does not have the repertoire of strokes of Sharma, whose elegance combined with his hunger for runs makes him such a compelling batsman to watch. Sharma, who started his

World Cup campaign strongly against South Africa with a battling 122 not out on a tough batting wicket, says he has learned to curb his instincts and finishing off a game gives him "immense satisfaction".

The India vice-captain explained his approach after scoring a century in a losing cause against England on Sunday. "Every game for me is a new game, and I try and do the same, try and see if I have the portion to finish the game or bat as long as possible and get the team in a good position, things like that," he said.

Former India batsman Sanjay Manjrekar says Sharma is showing great maturity in his ability to convert fifties to centuries. The 32-year-old is the only batsman to score three double centuries in the 50-over format, with his highest score of 264 coming against Sri Lanka in 2014. Sharma has amassed 8,554 runs at an average of nearly 49 in 213 ODI matches since making his debut in 2007. He has a strike-rate of over 88 and has hit 26 centuries and 42 fifties in his glittering career. The batsman, who gives the impression of having a devil-may-care attitude, recently credited his run of form to a happy family life, saying his baby daughter had put him in a "good space". That good space could turn into a great space if he can inspire the team to World Cup glory at Lord's on July 14.

Rayudu retires

In related news, India batsman Ambati Rayudu has announced his retirement from all forms of cricket, the Indian cricket board (BCCI) said yesterday. Rayudu, who last played a one-day international (ODI) in March, was not picked in India's 15-man squad for the World Cup. The 33-year-old was not considered as a replacement



BIRMINGHAM: India's Rohit Sharma celebrates making his century during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between Bangladesh and India at Edgbaston. — AFP

when India lost opener Shikhar Dhawan and Vijay Shankar to injuries, with Rishabh Pant and Mayank Agarwal called up instead.

"I have come to the decision to step away from the sport and retire from all forms and levels of the game," Rayudu said. "It has been a wonderful journey of playing

the sport and learning from every up and down it brought upon for the last 25 years at various different levels." Rayudu, who played over 200 Twenty20 matches, scored over 4,500 runs including one century and 24 fifties. He played 55 ODIs, amassing 1,694 runs with three centuries at an average of 47. —Agencies

Pandya now the fab fifth bowler in India's attack

LEEDS: For someone as flamboyant off the pitch as on it, it is fitting that Hardik Pandya's transformation into India's reliable fifth bowler has been nothing less than spectacular at this year's Cricket World Cup. The 25-year-old, known for his flash clothes and love for bling, arrived in England with many wondering if he was good enough for the fifth bowler's job in his maiden World Cup.

The seam-bowling all-rounder has since effortlessly dispelled any shred of doubt with a string of stellar performances with the ball. He bowled his full 10 overs against Australia, Afghanistan, England and Bangladesh. India's opening fixture against South Africa was the only match where the opposition lasted 50 overs and Pandya did not complete his quota.

He now inspires so much confidence in Virat Kohli that the India captain went with only five bowlers in Tuesday's victory against Bangladesh which secured their place in the semi-finals. "We experienced that Hardik, when put under pressure has, come back really well in this tournament..." Kohli said of what prompted his "gamble" with the bowling attack. "He finds a way to contain the runs and get you wickets. He's really looking forward to do stuff for the team, that's really helping his cricket." Pandya claimed 3-60 on Tuesday and his victims included Bangladesh talisman Shakib Al Hasan, who top-scored for his side with 66, and Liton Das, who he dismissed with a trademark short ball.

Wiser Pandya

The all-rounder has fine-tuned his bowling and



BIRMINGHAM: India's Hardik Pandya (R) celebrates with teammates after taking the wicket of Bangladesh's Soumya Sarkar for 33 during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between Bangladesh and India at Edgbaston. — AFP

appears to have returned wiser from a brief suspension earlier this year for his comments about women on a television show in January. Kohli suggested that underneath Pandya's casual exterior lies a cerebral cricketer who draws from his experience as an all-rounder to outwit batsmen.

"When he comes to bowl, he thinks like a batsman," Kohli said. "He actually wants the ball under pressure because he thinks like a batter, so he can check their body language and know what to bowl and when. He's bowling really well for us."

Bowling coach Bharat Arun had earlier explained how much Pandya had evolved to fit the fifth bowler's role. "It was a big challenge for him to bowl those 10 overs, and he realised that to be able to bowl those 10 overs I need to develop a certain armoury in my bowling," Arun said in Manchester last month. "And that's what he's worked on. He's worked on his slow balls, his slow bouncers, and he's also worked on perfecting his bouncers. "All these put together have given him the confidence to go through those 10 overs." — Reuters

Asian Boxing Championship extends registration time

By Abdellatif Sharaa

KUWAIT: The organizational committee of Asian Boxing Championship which Kuwait will host from August 1st to August 9th, extended the registration time to 8:00 pm July 10th. This was done in order to allow other national teams in Asia that have not yet registered to do so. So far, 24 teams have expressed their wish to participate.

Treasurer of Boxing Federation Adel Al-Azmi said the time extension came at the request of some Asian teams that could not meet the deadline to register due to procedures in their respective countries. "Out of our keenness to organize the championship in a way that is worthy of Kuwait and its sports reputation besides being the first championship organized by KBF at his level, sub-committees were asked to start preparations early all the way until the opening day at Kuwait club hall", Al-Azmi said.

Al-Azmi valued the confidence of the Asian Boxing Association in Kuwait, giving it the right to organize the championship. He added that the executive board of the International Association is following up on preparations and lauded the support of Public Authority for Sport (PAS) headed by Dr Humoud Fulaiteh. Al-Azmi said Jaber Hizam and Mishal Numan, Abdelrahman Basheer, Hamed Zayed, Jassim Buftain and Saad Al-Hajraf will participate in the training camp in Azerbaijan starting next Saturday along with 20 other boxers that will also be part of the tournament.



Adel Al-Azmi

NBK gives customers chance to attend FIFA eWorld Cup

KUWAIT CITY: The National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) continues to introduce unique and unprecedented offers, launching an exclusive campaign for its young customers of Al Shabab Package holders to give them a chance to win one of four trips to London to watch the FIFA eWorld Cup 2019 (tm) Grand Final, courtesy of Visa. Launched in partnership with Visa, NBK is the only bank in the Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEMEA) region to launch a campaign in support of the FIFA eWorld Cup 2019(tm), which is sponsored by Visa.

Speaking of the new campaign, Mohammed Al Othman, General Manager of Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said: "We are very excited to be introducing a special new campaign to a tournament that has become an awaited global event. We are always focused at NBK at providing unique services and offers that satisfy the needs of our customers and their diverse lifestyle, especially our Al Shabab Customers whom we ensure to offer benefits and advantages to enhance their banking experience with NBK."

Al Othman added: "We continue to collaborate with Visa to develop advanced payment solutions that meet the highest standards of technology and security, and satisfy our customers' needs while rewarding them along the way. Our previous partnerships rewarding customers have received great responses and we look forward to continue introducing new ones under our strong partnership."

"Visa's aim through our various global and regional sponsorships is to enable our clients and



Mohammed Al Othman

Visa cardholders to enjoy memorable, one of a kind fan experiences. Visa has a long and proud history of supporting football, having been a sponsor of the FIFA eWorld Cup since 2007. The FIFA eWorld Cup 2019 is an exciting virtual offshoot of the physical sport and we are proud to be able to work with

NBK to reward fans in Kuwait with this incredible opportunity," said Mohammed Ismael, Senior Vice President and Head of Marketing for the Central and Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa (CEMEA) region, Visa.

The campaign extends until July 15, giving Al Shabab Customers who transfer their monthly allowance to their NBK Account five chances to enter the draw, while Al Shabab Customers who transfer their allowance and hold an NBK Al Shabab Visa Prepaid Card receive ten chances to the draw. Furthermore, Al Shabab Customers receive an addition entry in the draw for every KD 1 spent with their NBK Al Shabab Visa Prepaid Card.

Each of the four winners will receive two tickets to London for themselves and a companion, hotel accommodation, two tickets to watch the FIFA eWorld Cup 2019 Grand Final, transportation, a schedule of activities and more in partnership with Visa. NBK and Visa have jointly developed customer-centric products tailored to match customers' banking and payment solutions requirements in Kuwait, providing innovative banking products, payment solutions that are at the forefront of new banking technologies, advantages and rewards all-year-long which include cashback, discounts and unique campaigns to international tournaments.

Palestinian FA postpones cup final after Israel denies travel

RAMALLAH: The final of the Palestine Cup has been postponed after Israel denied Gaza-based players permits to travel, the Palestinian Football Association said yesterday. The second leg of the final between Balata FC and Khadamat Rafah, the winners of cups in the West Bank and Gaza respectively, was due to take place yesterday, PFA vice president Susan Shalabi said.

Gaza-based team Khadamat Rafah requested travel permits to the West Bank for 35 people, but Israel granted just four, three of them to club officials, Shalabi said. "The Israelis are very adamant in their refusal," she added, saying they had cited security concerns they did not specify.

A Khadamat Rafah official told AFP the club were still waiting for final decisions and were hopeful of securing more permits in the coming days. "We are ready at any moment. If we got the permits now, in 30 minutes we will be there," Hodaifa Lafi said. "The game has to go ahead." She said it was impossible to discuss a date for the second leg until Israel granted more permits.

There was no immediate comment from COGAT, the Israeli defense ministry body responsible for Palestinian civil affairs. The first leg, played on Sunday in Gaza, ended 1-1. The West Bank and Gaza are separated by Israel, and Palestinians looking to travel between the two must apply for Israeli permits. The tournament faces problems every year with permits for players to leave the Hamas-run Gaza Strip, which Israel has kept under crippling blockade for more than a decade. — AFP

Tomic faces fine after defeat in 2nd shortest match

LONDON: Bernard Tomic shrugged off the prospect of being stripped of his 45,000-pound (\$57,000) prize money after losing the second shortest match at Wimbledon on Tuesday. The controversial Australian, who has been accused of not trying previously in his career, lost 6-2, 6-1, 6-4 to France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga in just 58 minutes. It was only four minutes longer than it took Roger Federer to defeat Alejandro Falla of Colombia in 2004.

"I think I played as best as I could. It's just I played terrible," said the world number 96, who was a top 20 player in 2011 but has been dubbed "Tomic the tank engine" by a critical Australian media. When he was asked if he was happy with the effort he was making on court, he snapped: "Next question please." Tomic has run foul of the Wimbledon authorities in the past. Two years ago, he was fined after admitting he had faked an injury and complained of being bored in defeat to Germany's Mischa Zverev. His racquet sponsor Head dropped him as a client. "I expected a match like this," said Tsonga. Tomic would not be the first player to be fined for alleged lack of effort in recent weeks. America's Anna Tatishvili was stripped of her first round prize money at Roland Garros for "not playing at a professional standard".

She lost to Greece's 33rd-ranked Maria Sakkari, 6-0, 6-1 in just 55 minutes, only three minutes fewer than Tomic who had played a set more. Tatishvili had returned to competition following a 31-month absence due to a serious ankle injury and multiple surgeries. She is appealing the ruling, claiming she is the victim of discrimination. — AFP

Sports

Jesus, Firmino send Brazil into Copa final as Messi fails again

The uneven pitch looked like it had been trampled by a herd of wildebeest

BELO HORIZONTE: Gabriel Jesus and Roberto Firmino scored the goals as Brazil beat arch-rivals Argentina 2-0 on Tuesday to qualify for the Copa America final. Jesus and Firmino netted a goal apiece in each half to give Brazil a victory which ensured Lionel Messi's frustrating wait for a major international tournament title with Argentina continued. It was the first time these age-old rivals had met in a major competition since Brazil beat Argentina 3-0 in the 2007 Copa final. English-based Jesus and Firmino were the stars, each creating the other's goal, although captain Dani Alves had a major say in the opener.

"It was another step towards our objective. We're achieving all the goals that we're setting ourselves," said Alves. "A lot of people doubt us but we have a lot of faith in ourselves, in our plan, in our hard work." "We're reaping the fruits of the seeds we're sowing every day." But it was a miserable night for Messi, whose hopes of landing a major international honor with Argentina ended in disappointment once again.

He will get another opportunity next year, though, with the fourth Copa America in the last five years, due to be played in Argentina and Colombia. "We should have been the team going to the final because we deserved it, no doubt about that. But sometimes football is unfair," complained Argentina coach Lionel Scaloni.

Tackles flying

In what was always expected to be a feisty affair there were some wild early tackles flying in, and Argentina's Nicolas Tagliafico was first to be booked for a lunge at Jesus. The uneven pitch looked like it had been trampled by a herd of wildebeest before kick-off and both sides struggled to play flowing football. Brazil's Casemiro was even jeered after sending a long crossfield ball straight out of play.

The first chance came when Argentina's Leandro Paredes let fly from 30 yards but the ball whistled just over the top of goalkeeper Alisson's goal. Brazil took the lead on 19 minutes after a piece of individual brilliance from Alves. He beat three players on a mazy run before sending Firmino clear down the right with a no-look pass, the Liverpool forward crossing for the unmarked Jesus to tap home.

Two-footed lunges were flying in as the match threatened to descend from niggly to dirty. Argentina almost leveled on the half hour when Sergio Aguero headed Messi's free-kick onto the bar, the ball bouncing down just in front of the line before Brazil scrambled it clear. Messi then burst into life, driving at heart of the Brazil defense and playing in Aguero, who took advantage of a Thiago Silva slip to make space for himself but Marquinhos was quickly across to block the Manchester City striker's shot. Moments later, Messi beat two men on the right, won back the ball with a sliding tackle after overrunning it, but then wastefully shot high and wide. At the other end, Arthur shot powerfully, but straight at goalkeeper Franco Armani.

Pirouetting Jesus

Argentina pushed Brazil back at the start of the second half and Aguero picked out Lautaro Martinez in the box but he didn't catch his left-foot volley cleanly and Alisson gathered comfortably. Another promising attacking move ended with Rodrigo de Paul blazing over from 20 yards. But Jesus produced a beautiful piece of skill, including a pirouetting drag-back, before teasing up Philippe Coutinho who should have done better than shooting over.

Moments later, though, a blocked shot from Martinez looped over to Messi who lashed a shot from an angle against the post, with Alisson beaten. Alisson



BELO HORIZONTE: Argentina's Lionel Messi (R) is marked by Brazil's Casemiro (C) and Arthur during their Copa America football tournament semi-final match at the Mineirao Stadium. —AFP

was alert to clutch a Messi free-kick on 66 minutes that looked destined for the top corner. By then, Scaloni had already gone for broke, bringing off midfielder Marcos Acuna and sending on speedy winger Angel Di Maria, with Messi dropping into a deeper role.

Just as Argentina looked capable of finding a way

back into the match, Brazil stung them on the counter-attack with Manchester City's Jesus getting away from two defenders and teeing up the unmarked Liverpool striker Firmino for a tap in on 71 minutes. Scaloni threw on another forward in Paulo Dybala but there was no way back for Argentina. —AFP

USA into World Cup final as Houghton penalty miss costs England

LYON: Alex Morgan scored what proved to be the winner but hailed goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher after her late penalty save from Steph Houghton allowed holders the United States to claim a dramatic 2-1 victory over England in their women's World Cup semi-final on Tuesday.

On her 30th birthday, USA co-captain Morgan headed home her sixth goal of the World Cup just after the half-hour mark in this last-four showdown to put her team back in front after Ellen White had cancelled out Christen Press's early opener.

But after an open first 45 minutes, the second half was dominated by more VAR controversy, with England having another White goal disallowed for the tightest of offside calls following a review by the Brazilian referee. Phil Neville's team later benefited from Edina Alves Batista's decision to award them a spot-kick when Becky Sauerbrunn made the slightest of contact with White in the box, yet Houghton's 84th-minute kick was stopped by Naeher diving low to her right.

England finished with 10 players after Millie Bright was sent off for a second yellow card late on, and the USA held out to reach the final, despite being without the injured Megan Rapinoe. "Alyssa Naeher, she should be the player of the match today. She saved our butts today," said Morgan. They will now go on to face Sweden or the Netherlands in Sunday's final, as they aim to win the trophy for the fourth time in eight editions. It is their third straight final, and they will hope to have Rapinoe back in time.

"Megan's got a slight strain to her hamstring so wasn't available today," said US coach Jill Ellis. "I feel we have a really good deep bench, so I called upon other players and I think they did a fantastic job." It is another bitterly disappointing way for



LYON: United States' forward Alex Morgan (L) is congratulated by teammates after scoring a goal during the France 2019 Women's World Cup semi-final football match between England and USA, on July 2, 2019, at the Lyon Stadium. —AFP

England to lose, as they go out of a third consecutive major tournament in the semi-finals. Their players cut dejected figures on the pitch at full-time. "Football can be cruel. We have had a fantastic ride. When we got the penalty I turned to my bench and said 'we were going to win it,' but it wasn't to be," Neville told the BBC.

Rapinoe absence not felt

Perhaps Nikita Parris should have been given the chance to make up for her penalty misses against Argentina and Norway earlier in the competition? Ellis's side will not be too worried about that, as fortune favored them. That England could not take advantage of Rapinoe's absence said much about the strength in depth available to the USA, with the excellent Press taking her place.

Unperturbed by the change, the Americans came flying out of the blocks like they have in every match at this tournament. They had scored no later than the 12th minute in all of their previous five matches, and here they required only 10 minutes to take the lead, Tobin Heath finding Kelley O'Hara whose

cross from the right was headed in by Press at the far post.

Replacing the injured Karen Bardsley in goal, Carly Telford could do nothing to stop it, and England were stunned. However, they were back level on 19 minutes as Beth Mead's pinpoint delivery picked out White and she steered the ball in off the frame of the goal for her sixth of the tournament. Yet it was the holders who went back in front just after the half-hour, Morgan stealing in front of Demi Stokes and heading home Lindsey Horan's delivery. She celebrated by miming sipping on a cup of tea.

As the USA tried to soak up pressure in the second half, England thought they were level in the 68th minute when Jill Scott's flick picked out White to score, but VAR denied them the equalizer and her a seventh goal of the tournament. Yet even when VAR came to their rescue, England failed to capitalize, and Bright's late sending-off for a second yellow card as she scythed down Morgan summed up their frustration. They must now try to lift themselves for the third-place play-off on Saturday. —AFP

Tunisia, South Africa complete Cup of Nations last-16 line-up

CAIRO: Tunisia and South Africa filled the final two places in the Africa Cup of Nations last-16 draw Tuesday after a tense finish to the group stage in Egypt. Already-qualified Mali defeated Angola 1-0 in Ismailia through an Amadou Haidara thunderbolt to win Group E and eliminate the losers from the competition.

Tunisia, ranked second in Africa behind Senegal, could only draw 0-0 with debutants Mauritania in Suez but the point secured second place behind Mali. Mali won the group with seven points followed by Tunisia with three and Angola and Mauritania with two each. Angola losing meant South Africa sneaked into the knockout phase, joining Guinea, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Benin as the best four third-place teams.

Mali will face the Ivory Coast in the round of 16 while Tunisia meet Ghana, who are chasing a seventh consecutive top-four finish in the Cup of Nations. Highlight of the round is the clash of defending champions Cameroon and Nigeria, who have won the competition

eight times between them. Hosts Egypt, Algeria and Morocco, the three countries who finished first in groups with perfect three-win records, all face opponents who came third.

Mohamed Salah-inspired Egypt meet South Africa in a fixture sure to fill the 75,000-capacity Cairo International Stadium this Saturday. Morocco face Benin in Cairo Friday in the first of the eight last-16 fixtures and Algeria tackle Nigeria Sunday, also in the Egyptian capital.

Fairytale qualifiers

Fairytale qualifiers Madagascar stay in Alexandria, where they stunned three-time former champions Nigeria to win Group B, for a showdown with DR Congo. Boosted by a Sadio Mane brace against Kenya, Senegal will face another east African nation, Uganda, for a quarter-finals place. In Ismailia, Mali made eight changes from the team that drew against Tunisia with captain Abdoulaye Diaby and ace striker Moussa Marega among those on the bench. —AFP



SUEZ: Tunisia's defender Oussema Haddadi (up) fights for the ball with Mauritania's defender El Mostapha Diaw during the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Group E football match between Mauritania and Tunisia at the Suez Stadium. —AFP

Tottenham smash transfer record on Ndombele

LONDON: Tottenham smashed their club transfer record on Tuesday with the signing of French international midfielder Tanguy Ndombele from Lyon for a fee that could rise to 70 million euros (\$79 million, £63 million). Lyon confirmed that the initial fee will be 60 million euros with 10 million euros more in add-ons. Tottenham's previous record deal was the £42 million (\$53 million) they spent on defender Davinson Sanchez in 2017.

"We are delighted to announce the signing of Tanguy Ndombele," Tottenham said in a statement. "The France international central

midfielder has signed a contract with the Club until 2025." Ndombele's arrival came just hours after Spurs made their first signing in 18 months by securing teenage winger Jack Clarke from Leeds. Clarke, 18, will spend next season back on loan at Leeds in the Championship.

However, securing Ndombele, a player coveted by a host of top clubs around Europe, is a sign of intent from Tottenham, who moved into a new 62,000 capacity stadium last season. Spurs boss Mauricio Pochettino has challenged the club to match his ambition after reaching the Champions League final for the first time.

"We need to make that step," Pochettino said after finishing fourth in the Premier League. "We realize we can continue in this process, we can put Tottenham with the best teams in the world." Pochettino has transformed Spurs' fortunes in five years in charge with next season a fourth consecutive cam-

paign in the Champions League. However, the Argentine is yet to win a trophy in his managerial career.

Tottenham have been in need of midfield reinforcements since Mousa Dembele's move to China in January. Ndombele, 22, starred as Lyon reached the last 16 of the Champions League last season and finished third in Ligue 1. The fee represents a massive profit for the French side, who bought Ndombele from Amiens for only eight million euros 12 months ago after a successful season on loan at Lyon.

"OL thanks @T_Ndombele for his involvement with the club since his arrival in 2017 and congratulates him for his professionalism and his performances which have enabled him to join the French national team," Lyon said in a statement on Twitter. Ndombele made 96 appearances in total for Lyon, scoring four goals and providing 16 assists, and has been capped six times by world champions France. —AFP

Mexico end Haiti fairytale to reach final

PHOENIX: Mexico booked their place in the final of the CONCACAF Gold Cup on Tuesday after a controversial penalty in extra-time handed them a 1-0 win over Caribbean minnows Haiti. Haiti, who had stunned Canada with a come-from-behind 3-2 victory in the quarter-finals, threatened to pull off another shock after a battling defensive display frustrated the seven-time Gold Cup winners.

But after holding Mexico to 0-0 through 90 minutes, Haiti were undone with a harsh penalty early in extra time at the State Farm Stadium in Phoenix, Arizona. The flashpoint came in the sec-

ond minute of extra-time when Haiti defender Jems Geffard was adjudged to have shoved striker Raul Jimenez in the area. Wolves striker Jimenez flopped to the floor and the referee pointed to the spot despite protests from Haiti's players.

Jimenez then dusted himself down and calmly sent Johnny Placide the wrong way with his spot-kick as Mexico breathed a collective sigh of relief. Mexico goalkeeper Guillermo Ochoa was barely tested all game, but was given a late scare when a curling effort from Haiti substitute Mikael Cantave crashed off the cross bar in the 119th minute. The defeat was cruel on Haiti, who failed to qualify for the tournament in 2017 and had never gone further than the quarter-finals in six previous appearances since the tournament was rebooted in 1991. Mexico meanwhile will advance to the final at Chicago's Soldier Field on Sunday where they will face either the United States or Jamaica. —AFP

25 Kyrgios sets the tone for Wimbledon blockbuster



26 An inspired Rohit Sharma is India's World Cup heartbeat



27 Jesus, Firmino send Brazil into Copa final as Messi fails again



CHESTER-LE-STREET: England's Ben Stokes (L) celebrates after New Zealand's Ross Taylor (R) is run out for 28 during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between England and New Zealand at the Riverside Ground. — AFP

Bairstow stars as England book semis

The first time England have reached this stage since 1992

CHESTER-LE-STREET: Jonny Bairstow's second successive hundred laid the foundation for England's 119-run thrashing of New Zealand that saw the tournament hosts secure their place in the semi-finals of the World Cup on Wednesday. It is the first time England have reached this stage since 1992, when they made the last of their three losing appearances in the final.

England, yet to win the World Cup, were set for a huge score at 194-1 off 30 overs before managing just 111 in the last 20 against a New Zealand attack missing injured fast bowler Lockie Ferguson. But, with Bairstow making 106, a total of 305-8 proved more than enough at Chester-le-Street. New Zealand could only manage 186 in reply as they suffered a third successive defeat of the tournament following losses to Pakistan and champions Australia — the team that beat them in the 2015 final.

One consolation for the Black Caps is that they should still join Australia, India and England in the last four as it will take a colossal change in net run-rate for Pakistan to overtake them even if Sarfaraz Ahmed's side beat Bangladesh at Lord's on Friday. "I am really pleased," said man-of-the-match Bairstow. "We knew these two games were must-win to give ourselves the best opportunity of reaching the semi-final. "We knew the performances in the last couple of games weren't up to scratch. To play the way we have and hopefully keep it going into the semis is pleasing." England are now guaranteed to finish third in the standings and so will play in the second semi-final at Edgbaston on July 11.

As things stand, they are in line to face India, currently second, but it is still possible for Virat Kohli's men to leapfrog Australia at the top of the standings. If

England do play India it will be a repeat of Sunday's match at the Birmingham ground when, following back-to-back defeats by Sri Lanka and Australia, they inflicted a first reverse upon Kohli's side. The opening semi-final between the first and fourth-placed sides is scheduled for Old Trafford next Tuesday.

New Zealand stumble

New Zealand, who would have reached the semi-finals had they won this match, saw their chase start badly when Henry Nicholls was lbw for a golden duck to Chris Woakes and decided against a review that would have reprieved him. Martin Guptill, the leading run-scorer at the 2015 World Cup, then fell cheaply but worse followed for New Zealand when senior batsmen Kane Williamson and Ross Taylor were dismissed by contrasting run-outs.

Black Caps skipper Williamson, who came into this match with a tournament average of 113.50, fell for 27 in unlucky fashion when fast bowler Mark Wood got his fingertips to a Taylor drive and deflected the ball onto the non-striker's stumps with Williamson out of his ground. Taylor was far more responsible for his own exit when, deciding to go for a risky second run on 28, he failed to beat Adil Rashid's throw from fine leg to Buttler.

After a brief stoppage when a stalker ran onto the field, the Black Caps lost Tom Latham, caught behind for 57, to leave them all but beaten at 164-7. Earlier, Bairstow and Jason Roy (60) got England off to a flyer with an opening partnership of 123 — their third century stand in a row. Bairstow reached his ninth one-day international hundred off 95 balls, including 14 fours and a six. — AFP

Wawrinka falls for tall tale as Djokovic waits

LONDON: Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka was knocked out of Wimbledon yesterday, falling in five sets to 6ft 11in (2.1m) Reilly Opelka as defending champion Novak Djokovic waited to push his bid for a fifth title. Two-time quarter-finalist Wawrinka, 34, was beaten 7-5, 3-6, 4-6, 6-4, 8-6 by his American opponent, the tallest man in the sport and 13 years his junior.

Opelka fired 23 aces and 59 winners and goes on to face either 2016 runner-up Milos Raonic of Canada or Robin Haase of the Netherlands. Opelka will be appearing in the third round at a Slam for the first time having never won a grass court match in his career prior to coming to

Wimbledon. Wawrinka won warm applause for giving a line judge a warm embrace after accidentally colliding with her as he sprinted to hit a backhand.

"I was a bit too far to return a serve. I think I went against her, so I was sure she had some pain and was not happy, so I gave her a little hug," said the genial Swiss. Also feeling the pain was Russia's Margarita Gasparyan who was forced to retire when just two points from victory against Ukraine eighth seed Elina Svitolina. World number 62 Gasparyan was 7-5, 5-4 ahead when she collapsed to the ground on Court Three, suffering with cramping. Although she bravely tried to continue, the Russian, who has undergone three knee surgeries in her career, was forced to quit.

'Unfortunate for her'

"I was a little bit shocked, it's never nice to get this when someone is injured like that," said Svitolina who goes on to face Greece's Maria Sakkari for a place in the last 16. "It's really unfor-

tunate for her." Czech third seed Karolina Pliskova reached the last 32 with a 6-0, 6-4 win over Puerto Rico's Olympic champion Monica Puig. Pliskova, one of four players who could end Wimbledon as world number one, will face Hsieh Su-wei of Taiwan for a spot in the fourth round. In a match which opened proceedings on Centre Court, 52nd-ranked Puig was clearly over-awed, winning just nine points in a 20-minute first set. Former world number one and double Australian Open winner Victoria Azarenka swept past Australia's Ajla Tomljanovic 6-2, 6-0.

Azarenka, now at 40 in the world, was a semi-finalist at the All England Club in 2011 and 2012. Next up is a last-32 clash with either fellow ex-world number one Simona Halep or Mihaela Buzarnescu. It's the first time that 2018 French Open champion Halep has ever met a fellow Romanian at a Slam. Djokovic's path to a fifth title was eased on Monday when potential title rivals Stefanos Tsitsipas and Alexander Zverev were knocked out of his section of the draw. — AFP



LONDON: US player Reilly Opelka celebrates beating Switzerland's Stan Wawrinka during their men's singles second round match on the third day of the 2019 Wimbledon Championships at The All England Lawn Tennis Club. — AFP