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Kuwait cleared to compete in Olympics after IOC lifts ban

Amir, Crown Prince hail move • KOC chief calls on sportspeople to work sincerely

India hikes duty on gold imports

MUMBAI: India raised the import duties on gold and other precious metals on Friday in a surprise move that industry officials say could dampen retail demand and boost smuggling in the world's second-biggest bullion consumer. Lower demand from India could weigh on global prices that are trading near their highest level in six years. Jewelry trade associations have asked India's government to reduce gold import duties, which have caused a surge in smuggling.

The government instead hiked the duty to 12.5 percent from 10 percent



BANGALORE: A salesman arranges a gold necklace at a jewelry store on Friday. —AFP

as policymakers try to bring down the fiscal deficit and recapitalize banks. "This is a shocking move."

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PARIS: Kuwait has been cleared to compete in the 2020 Olympics after the International Olympic Committee (IOC) announced on Friday it was lifting the suspension it imposed on the Kuwait Olympic Committee (KOC) four years ago. In a statement, the IOC said the KOC had successfully implemented "a roadmap agreed between all parties". The announcement comes less than a week after Sheikh Fahd Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah was elected President of the KOC. This was the third and final step in the roadmap which also required revision and adoption of new statutes for sports clubs and federations, followed by elections.

HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah praised Friday HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah for his "relentless" efforts to reaffirm Kuwait's status at the international level. HH the Crown Prince, in a cable to HH the Amir to congratulate him after IOC permanently lifted the ban on Kuwait sport, described the end of the ban as "very good news for every Kuwaiti". The Crown Prince prayed to Allah the Almighty to bestow his blessings upon Kuwait.



HH the Amir thanked HH the Crown Prince and said the lifting of the ban brought joy for all Kuwaiti people. HH the Amir commended the relentless efforts of the legislative and executive authorities, the ministry of state for youth and the Public Authority for Sport which contributed to the permanent lifting of the ban. HH the Amir, in a cable to HH the Crown Prince, hoped the lifting of the ban would pave the way for sport achievements at regional and international levels.



Kuwait was suspended in Oct 2015 following "undue government interference after a sports law that was not compatible with the basic principles that govern the Olympic Movement was passed in the country". The new law had threatened the autonomy of the KOC and all other national federations while also meaning the country would no longer comply with the Court of Arbitration for Sport or the World Anti-Doping Agency.

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News in brief

Jordan bans online game PUBG

AMMAN: Jordan yesterday banned the hugely popular but brutal online game PlayerUnknown's Battlegrounds, citing its "negative effects" on the kingdom's citizens. PUBG pits marooned characters against each other in a virtual fight to the death, and has become one of the world's most popular mobile games. A source in Jordan's Telecommunications Regulatory Authority warned the game "had negative effects on its users, which led to its being officially blocked". PUBG is widely popular in Jordan and institutions in the kingdom have issued warnings to employees not to play it. Psychologists in the country have repeatedly warned the game encourages violence and contributes to bullying among youth. — AFP

Niqab banned in Tunisia gov't offices

TUNIS: Tunisia's premier on Friday banned the niqab Muslim face covering for women in government offices, citing security concerns after attacks in the North African country. Prime Minister Youssef Chahed signed a government circular "banning access to public administrations and institutions to anyone with their face covered... for security reasons," his office said. "They have the right to prohibit (the niqab) given the events we are currently witnessing," said Ilhem, a young Tunisian woman. "But in the end, it remains an individual freedom," she added. Lina questioned "why the woman must make sacrifices every time there are security measures to be taken". The Tunisian League for the Defense of Human Rights urged that the measure be only temporary. — AFP

Trump vows to reduce US drug prices

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump on Friday said his administration is working on an executive order to reduce US drug prices to match the lowest in the world. "We're working on a favored nations law where we pay whatever the lowest nation's price is," Trump told reporters from the White House South Lawn. The president accused pharmaceutical companies of having "taken advantage of the system for a long time", with US drug prices often exceeding those in neighboring Canada and Mexico as well as Europe. "Why should other nations like Canada - why should other nations pay much less than us?" Trump said, declaring that he would handle the matter "in the form of an executive order". — AFP

UK ship 'safe and well' after stop in Gulf

DUBAI: The UK-flagged supertanker Pacific Voyager that halted in the Gulf yesterday is "safe and well," a British official told Reuters, after Iran dismissed reports its Revolutionary Guards had seized the vessel. A Revolutionary Guards commander on Friday had threatened to seize a British ship in retaliation for the capture by Royal Marines of Iranian supertanker Grace 1 in Gibraltar.

The Pacific Voyager stopped in the Gulf en route to Saudi Arabia from

Singapore, before resuming its course. Refinitiv Eikon mapping showed. It stopped as part of a routine procedure to adjust its arrival time at its next port, an official at UK Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO) told Reuters. UKMTO, which coordinates shipping in the Gulf, had been in contact with the tanker, the official said.

Yesterday, an Iranian cleric said Britain should be "scared" about Tehran's possible retaliation for the seizure of the Grace 1, the Fars semi-official news agency reported. "I am openly saying that Britain should be scared of Iran's retaliatory measures over the illegal seizure of the Iranian oil tanker," said Mohammad Ali Mousavi Jazayeri, a member of the Assembly of Experts clerical body.

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GIBRALTAR: Supertanker Grace 1 is seen off the coast of Gibraltar yesterday. —AFP

UNESCO adds Bahrain burial mounds, Babylon to World Heritage List

DUBAI: The UNESCO World Heritage Committee voted yesterday to add Bahrain's Dilmun Burial Mounds to its World Heritage List, praising the tombs for their "globally unique characteristics". The burial grounds include "21 archaeological sites in the western part of the island" built between 2050 and 1750 BC, according to the global body. "Six of these sites are burial mound fields consisting of a few dozen to several thousand tumuli," it said in a statement. In all there were some 11,774 burial mounds, UNESCO said, while another 15 sites include 17 royal mounds built as two-storeyed towers.

The tombs were among a handful of nominations made yesterday as the World Heritage Committee



BABYLON, Iraq: In this photo taken on June 29, 2019, the Ishtar Gate is seen at this ancient archaeological site south of Baghdad. — AFP

meets in Azerbaijan's capital of Baku for its 43rd session. UNESCO said the burial mounds were evidence of the early Dilmun civilization, "during which Bahrain became a trade hub, whose prosperity

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Crews assessing damage as second quake hits Calif

RIDGECREST, California: Emergency rescue crews fanned out yesterday to assess damage from the second powerful earthquake to hit Southern California in as many days - a 7.1 magnitude tremor that revived fears of the so-called Big One the region has feared for decades. No fatalities or serious injuries have been reported from this second quake, the largest in Southern California in more than two decades. It hit Friday night in a remote and sparsely populated area around 240 km northeast of Los Angeles, where it was also felt.

But the earth's mighty twitch shook buildings, damaged roads and rattled people still jittery from a 6.4-



RIDGECREST, California: Firefighters battle an electrical fire in a mobile home park yesterday following a magnitude 7.1 earthquake on Friday. — AFP

magnitude earthquake in the same region on Thursday. Victor Abdullatif, owner of a small supermarket in the Mojave Desert town of Ridgecrest,

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Sudan protesters hail landmark deal with generals

KHARTOUM: Crowds of jubilant Sudanese took to the streets of Khartoum on Friday to celebrate a landmark deal between protest leaders and the country's ruling generals aimed at turning the page on months of political unrest. The power-sharing deal, reached in the early hours after two days of hard-won talks brokered by Ethiopian and African Union mediators, came after previous negotiations collapsed in May over who should lead the new body - a civilian or soldier.

"The two sides agreed on establishing a sovereign council with a rotating military and civilian (presidency) for a period of three years or little more," African Union (AU) mediator Mohamed El Hacen Lebat told reporters. Sudan has been gripped by political deadlock since the generals ousted longtime president Omar Al-Bashir in a palace coup in April following months of mass protests nationwide.

General Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, the ruling military council's number two, stressed the deal "does not exclude anyone". The group that initially launched demonstrations against Bashir in December hailed the agreement. "Today, our revolution has become victorious and our victory shines," the Sudanese Professionals Association said in a statement.

Tension between the two sides had soared after a brutal raid on a longstanding protest camp outside army headquarters in Khartoum that killed dozens of demonstrators and wounded hundreds on June 3. Lebat did not specify the exact make-up of the new ruling body.

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Local

Kuwait bids farewell to former health minister Dr Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi

Kuwait witnessed comprehensive health renaissance during his tenure

News in brief

Amir receives call from Egypt's president

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah on Friday received a telephone call from Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. During the call, the two leaders reviewed the sisterly relations between their countries and the latest regional and international developments. President Sisi also wished His Highness the Amir everlasting good health. His Highness the Amir thanked President Sisi for the call which embodies the deep-rooted ties between the two countries, wishing President Sisi perpetual wellbeing. —KUNA

Amir offers condolences

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah sent Friday a cable of condolences to Saudi King Salman bin Abdulaziz Al-Saud, expressing sorrow over the demise of Princess Al-Juhara bint Abdulaziz Al-Saud. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables. —KUNA

Kuwait welcomes agreement

KUWAIT: An official source at Kuwait's Foreign Ministry on Friday welcomed the agreement reached between Sudan's Transitional Military Council (TMC) and the Forces for Freedom and Change (FFC). The source praised the step, hoping that it would help begin a new stage to maintain Sudan's security and stability as well as meet the aspirations of Sudanese people. In addition, the source stressed Kuwait's support to all measures taken in order to preserve Sudan's sovereignty and security. —KUNA

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday lost the Former Health Minister, Minister of Planning and National Assembly member Dr Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi at the age of 83 years, who made major development in the health sector during his tenure. Minister of Health Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah expressed his deepest condolences to the deceased's family and the whole health sector, noting that Dr Awadhi had many prominent local, regional and international achievements.

Dr Awadhi was born on December 18, 1936, received his university education at the American University of Beirut, and received a Bachelor of Science in 1958. Dr Awadhi continued to receive post-graduate science, where he received his doctorate in medicine from the University of Aberdeen in the United Kingdom in 1963 and received a master's degree in public health from Harvard University, USA, in 1965. The late minister served as a resident doctor in the Ministry of Health between 1963 and 1965 and as a Rapporteur of the Planning Committee of the Ministry of Health in 1965 and a doctor registered at the Ministry of Health Hospitals from 1966 until 1969. He was Assistant Director of the Department of Preventive Services at the Ministry of Health in 1969 and Assistant Undersecretary of Preventive Services from 1970 to 1975.

Political career

As for his political life, the late Dr Awadhi started his political career in 1975 when he was elected to the National Assembly from 1975 until 1980 and was

appointed Minister of Public Health from 1975 to 1983. Dr Awadhi was Minister of Public Health and Minister of Planning from 1983 until 1986, Minister of Planning from 1988 to 1990 and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs in 1990 and 1991. While in the Ministry of Health for more than ten years, Kuwait has witnessed a comprehensive health renaissance where most hospitals were built and the medical mission for Hajj was developed. At the international and regional levels, Dr Awadhi held a number of positions, most notably the Chief Executive Officer of the Council of Arab Ministers from 1976 to 1987, the Chairman of the Kuwait Environmental Protection Council from 1980 to 1987 and the Executive Secretary of the Regional Organization for the Protection of the Marine Environment in 1981.

Honorary degrees

Dr Awadhi received a number of honorary degrees, most notably the Honorary Fellowship of the Royal College of Medicine, Ireland in 1977, his honorary doctorate from the University of St. Ceiligh Boon-Korea in 1977, the Honorary Fellowship at the Royal College of Surgeons and Physicians (Glasgow), 1982, and the Honorary Fellowship of the American Society of Public Health 1982. The late Dr Awadhi was honored by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in 2011 as part of the group of doctors who served Kuwait for 30 years and received the Sheikh Hamdan Bin Rashid Al-Maktoum Award for Medical Sciences in 2008. —KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah honors Dr Abdulrahman Al-Awadhi in 2011 as part of the group of doctors who served Kuwait for 30 years. —KUNA

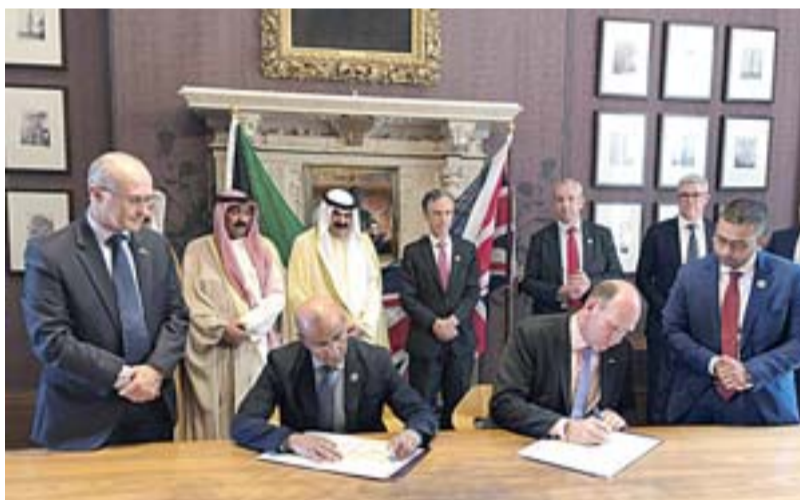
Deputy PM praises Kuwait-UK steering committee's work

LONDON: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah on Thursday praised the efforts of the Kuwait-British joint steering committee pointing to the meeting held every six months that demonstrate the official's keenness on strengthening

strategic relations. In a statement to the press after signing the joint plan for the 14th session of the next six months, Jarallah said the meeting in London coincides with the celebration of the 120th year since the treaty of friendly relations between both countries was signed.

The establishment of the steering committee in 2012 came during His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's visit, driving and welcoming the historical relations between both countries, he added. He also pointed to the committee evolving its relations in the fields of economics, business, investments, health, culture,

defense, security, and cyber security. Jarallah was satisfied with the outcomes of the committee's 14th session, which resulted in the signing of three agreements with the first being a memorandum between the Kuwait National Guard and the British Defense Ministry for training. The second was between Kuwait Institute of Scientific Research and the British Cultural Council on scientific and technologic research, as the third was between Kuwait's National Council for Culture and Arts also signing with the British Cultural Council to learn from their experiences in the economic industry. —KUNA



LONDON: Kuwait and the United Kingdom sign a memorandum between the Kuwait National Guard and the British Defense Ministry for training.



LOYAC 'KON' program kicks off with NBK as platinum sponsor

KUWAIT: As a platinum sponsor, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) welcomes the participants from LOYAC's program 'KON'. This social entrepreneurship program is co-created with Babson College, the most prestigious entrepreneurship college in the United States and the number one institution in the world for entrepreneurship education. The program aims to introduce young adults between the ages of 12 to 16 to the world business and to turn their ideas into action.

NBK will take part in the training sessions that will be ongoing until August 7, 2019. Throughout the six-week

program, leaders from NBK along with a group of professional mentors and trainers, locally and regionally will encourage the participants to create a profitable business that solves social challenges. NBK Public Relations Team Leader, Talal Al-Turki said, "NBK's sponsorship and participation in the program comes as a part of its strategic partnership with LOYAC. NBK is dedicated towards supporting talented young people and empowering them towards achieving their goals."

"KON" is one of these initiatives that help invest and support young youths. NBK is elated with the outcome of

the program last year and looks forward to seeing the participants moving into key leadership roles in their near future," Turki added.

"KON" students will experience different stages during the program, thinking, planning and doing. The experiential learning journey the students undertake throughout the six weeks supports them to learn skills that include creativity, critical thinking, problem solving, communication and collaboration. The students also learn technical skills to write up a successful business plan, and how to pitch their business ideas to investors. By the end of the

program, students will be able to present their business ideas before a jury panel, in addition to a professor from Babson College.

NBK believes that investing in human resources is investing in our future. The 'KON' program goes along with NBK's initiatives to invest in youth and support their aspirations. LOYAC is a nonprofit organization that runs several programs for the youth to develop their professional skills, enhance their personal growth and help them find their sense of purpose by extending themselves to others.



Local

Municipality ready to build temporary accommodations for projects' laborers

Land allocated to accommodate 25,000 Clean Fuel Project workers

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Following up the recent statements made by Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel concerning plans to build temporary prefabricated dormitories for expatriate workers at each project site so that they could be removed when the project is finished, Kuwait Municipality Director Ahmad Al-Manfouhi expressed the municipality's readiness to allocate special land for all government projects to use for building temporary accommodation sites, adding that the municipality had done the same by allocating land to accommodate 25,000 laborers at the Clean Fuel Project's site. Meanwhile, Manfouhi said that in a bid to fight the housing of 'bachelors' in private residential areas, the municipality had allowed various factories to build special accommodations for their laborers on a maximum of 10 percent of the factory's area.

Bedoons' hajj

The Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs contacted both the Zakat House and the awqaf secretariat general and asked them to provide financial support needed to contribute in making bedoons' low-budget hajj easier, Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Sholah said. Meanwhile, the Ministry of Justice announced yesterday that it had issued 1,742 governmental and non-governmental transactions and documents for bedoons in 2018, in cooperation with Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents. Undersecretary of Ministry of Justice Abdullatif Al-Suraiye said that legal documentation department has issued 1,121 marital documents, 547 divorce documents and 74 marital revision documents for illegal residents from January until December 2018. Suraiye affirmed that all documents were issued according to the terms and conditions of the ministry and in cooperation with the Central Apparatus for Illegal Residents.

Kuwaiti jobseekers

Minister of State For Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel said that the total number of Kuwaiti jobseekers registered with the Civil Service Commission (CSC) is 240,667 including 236,085 already nominated for jobs and 4,582 still waiting for employment. Responding to a parliamentary inquiry by MP Bader Al-Mulla, Aqeel stressed these numbers are variable, adding the numbers she mentioned are estimated until the date of the inquiry.

Excellent performance bonuses

Manager of the Financial Affairs Department at the Directorate General of Civil Aviation Fahd Al-Obaidli announced excellent performance bonuses had been deposited in deserving employees' bank accounts. Obaidli added 2,950 out of a total of 3,600 employees will get KD 250-1,500 according to their positions,



KUWAIT: This archive photo shows a laborer working at a project's site in Kuwait. This photo is used for illustration purpose only.

with a total value of KD 2 million.

Mail company

The Ministry of State for Services Affairs submitted a bill establishing the Kuwait Mail Company to the Fatwa and Legislation Department demanding shifting the supervision of this sector to the Communication and Information Technology Regulatory Authority (CITRA). According to the proposed law, CITRA will



Temporary housing helps fight 'bachelors' residence

be responsible to set mail policies, execute them, ensure provision of regular high-quality mail services at reasonable prices, supervise service providers, open the market for fair competition, encourage local and foreign private sector to invest in mail and issue the law's executive chart.

Universities' list

Well-informed sources said the board of directors of the National Bureau for Academic Accreditation and Education Quality Assurance (NBAQ) will meet next week to review updating the list of accredited universities in some countries. The sources added that the board will review reports by some delegations dispatched to foreign countries to visit a number of universities. The sources also expected the board to approve new lists of some European universities.

Legal action

The Public Authority for Housing Welfare announced taking legal action against users of government-owned land plots who had so far not paid the 'symbolic' price of the land nor checked with the Kuwait Credit Bank to finalize the procedures needed to utilize those plots. The authority's official spokesperson Ibrahim Al-Nashi stressed that in a measure meant to protect public funds, the authority found some users had been utilizing these lands for over 10 years without paying or checking with the Credit Bank to arrange for deducting the price from their loans they get to build their houses. "These land plots are still empty," Nashi added, noting owners are requested to check with the Kuwait Credit Bank within 60 days to sign their construction loan applications.

Firemen handle two fires, accident around Kuwait

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A fire broke out yesterday morning in a garbage container and two trucks parked in an open yard in Shuwaikh Industrial, said security sources. Firemen from Shuwaikh industrial area and Ardiya rushed to the scene and managed to control the flames, preventing the fire from spreading to other parked trucks. No casualties were reported. Further investigations are in progress to determine the cause of the fire.

Meanwhile, a fire broke out in a house in Siddiq, said security sources, noting

that firemen from Subhan and Farwaniya stations rushed to the scene, where they immediately evacuated the house and managed to control the blaze, which had started on the first floor. No casualties were reported. In the meantime, a water tanker truck turned over in Doha, said security sources, noting that on arriving at the scene, Sulaibikhat firemen found the driver trapped in the wreckage and suffering from various injuries. The driver was rushed to hospital while firefighters removed the truck from the road. An investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the accident.

Reports denied

Responding to recent social media reports about sand dunes accumulating along outer highways and allegations of the absence of interior and public works ministries' elements at the scene, the interior ministry's relations and security department strongly denied the report and stressed that its teams and traffic and security patrols are deployed at the scene



KUWAIT: Firemen battle a blaze reported in Shuwaikh Industrial yesterday.

in collaboration with the Ministry of Public Works to remove the sand and open the road to traffic, which has been already done. Meanwhile, the interior ministry strongly denied some press and social media reports on referring 80-100 investigators and public attorneys to retirement.



A fireman extinguishes a truck's fire.



Firemen seen battling the blaze in Shuwaikh.



A water tanker truck heavily damaged after it turned over in Doha.



The exterior of a building where a fire was reported in Siddiq.

local spotlight

Labor market



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Since the past few years, the Public Authority for Manpower (PAM) has tried to regulate the labor market in Kuwait by applying laws to achieve public interest, taking the necessary decisions to address the imbalance in demographics and preserve the rights of workers and Kuwait's international reputation in front of human rights organizations, especially with regards to visa traders.

However, the road is still long and there are those who exploit and violate the law, which is expected under the reality of corruption, but we should not be complacent. Inspection campaigns recently by the manpower authority at the worksites of the Ministries Complex led to the arrest of 43 workers in violation of article 18, seven workers in violation of article 20 and some other violators.

The deputy director general of PAM's planning and development division said the inspection campaigns are within the framework of the application of the provisions of labor law no. 6 of 2010 and the domestic employment act no. 68 of 2015 to prevent irregularities. He added the authority is working to intensify inspection campaigns at all worksites and commercial complexes to ensure the application of the provisions of the law and regulate and control the labor market.

It is worth mentioning that in the file of international relations, efforts exerted by Kuwait in regulating the labor market and protecting the labor force have been commended. Forty workers have been sent back home through the implementation of a voluntary repatriation project in cooperation between the shelter and the International Organization for Migration (IOM), and the creation of job opportunities through the shelter for 101 female workers who want to continue working in Kuwait.

I think Kuwait is still attractive for expatriate workers. In 2017, BMI International said in a study that Kuwait has a relatively safe operating environment. In the report, BMI, which is a subsidiary of Fitch, identified a number of attractive factors and challenges to improve operational risks in Kuwait. According to the report, the infrastructure is good, but needs constant development in the face of some challenges such as tightening of policies for foreign investment.

I believe it is unreasonable to establish a free economic zone that does not have facilities, services and logistical support, as well as the availability of public facilities and means of transportation, along with the absence of taxes that should be an attractive factor. I believe that the state should work to improve the business environment and facilitate procedures for small business owners as well as attract foreign investors and engage expatriate workers and citizens in an equal, just and beneficial manner.

As for the imbalance in the demographic structure, I do not believe expatriates have a hand in it. This issue of imbalance in the population structure has been on the table since the 1970s. It is known that demographic imbalance is caused by government policies supported by visa trade, and expatriates and citizens are both victims of such policies. The solution is easy - by monitoring companies and workers' rights, especially financial and humanitarian.

I think that one of the most important achievements of the authority is the electronic link between the authority and official bodies for queries and data extraction, which helps in checking the conditions of workers and busting false guarantees. In addition, approximately 450,000 Kuwaitis under the age of 20 are entering the labor market, so the improvement of the work environment is important. The needs and skills needed by the state should be considered, whether for expatriates or citizens.

I think that the National Assembly should work to develop a system of economic legislation in conjunction with the legislative authority and the private sector. The efforts of the public authority for manpower are good, but continuing cooperation with all official authorities is necessary to regulate the labor market.



KUWAIT: Kuwait City's skyline during sunset. — Photo by Bashir Al-Khalirallah (KUNA)

KFH announces 'Journey of 12 Million Miles Begins With a Card' winners

Exclusively for KFH Oasis Club prepaid MasterCard holders



KUWAIT: Officials of KFH, KAC and MasterCard in a group photo.



The winners receive their awards.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has announced the winners of the 'Journey of 12 Million Miles Begins With a Card' Campaign. Exclusively for KFH Oasis Club prepaid MasterCard holders, this offer was in collaboration with Kuwait Airways and Oasis Club.

Announcing their names on KFHgroup account on Instagram, the prizes of 1,000,000 Miles, 500,000 Miles, 250,000 Miles went to Mohammed Mutlaq Al-Deghem, Hilal Mohammed Al-Hammadi, Jarrah Khalifa Al-Attal respectively, while Ashraf Azmi Ramadan and Tahani Dumaitheer Al-Enezi won 125,000 Miles each. In addition, 200 winners got 50,000 Miles.

The ceremony was held at KAC 'Oasis' Club office in the presence of KFH Group General Manager Retail Banking, Fadi Chalouhi, Group Deputy General Manager Cards, Nimer Yasin, Deputy General Manager Sales and Distributions at KFH Khaled Al-Subaiei as well as KAC and MasterCard officials. Subaiei extended his congratulations and expressed his pleasure at the success of the 3-month campaign which included 12,000, 000 miles and 205 winners.

"KFH Oasis Club card is a prepaid card issued in cooperation between KFH and Kuwait Airways 'Oasis Club.' In

addition to the privileges and discounts, it offers chances to gain extra miles from 'Oasis Club' with every transaction. Accumulated miles can be later exchanged for special promotions and privileges from Kuwait Airways," Subaiei said. "The customer wins 2,000 free miles upon card activation with the issuance being free in the first year during the campaign period," he added.

Exclusive benefits

Subaiei mentioned that the offer included many exclusive benefits to 'KFH Oasis Club' cardholders, including free miles from Kuwait Airways (Oasis club) with every purchase transaction to win free tickets or booking upgrades. The client gets two miles from 'Oasis Club' in reward of every KD 1 in domestic purchases, and three miles for every KD 1 international purchases during the campaign period until mid-June. The client has a chance to enter the draw for every KD 100 of local purchases and 2 chances to enter the draw for every KD 100 of international purchases.

He added that the 'KFH Oasis Club' card allows holders to increase the points with their purchases, convert the points to miles and upgrade the class in addition to many



Deputy General Manager Sales and Distributions at KFH Khaled Al-Subaiei speaks to the media.

other benefits. For example, a client who accumulates one million miles can travel to the United States 10 times in first class and to Europe 20 times, worth about KD 20,000.

"Due to the successful 'Journey of 6 Million Miles Begins With a Card' in 2017, KFH has launched a new offer with

multiple benefits. KFH keeps launching new campaigns that meet the expectations of customers and strengthen KFH's position in the market," Subaiei confirmed.

Collaboration and partnership

He pointed out that collaboration with Kuwait Airways in introducing the KFH Oasis Card aimed to serve their joint customers, stressing that KFH is keen through its products and services to support the activities of the national companies. This can help develop the Kuwaiti economy, strengthen companies and their competitive capabilities in favor of the citizens and improve the quality of performance, services and economic development in society.

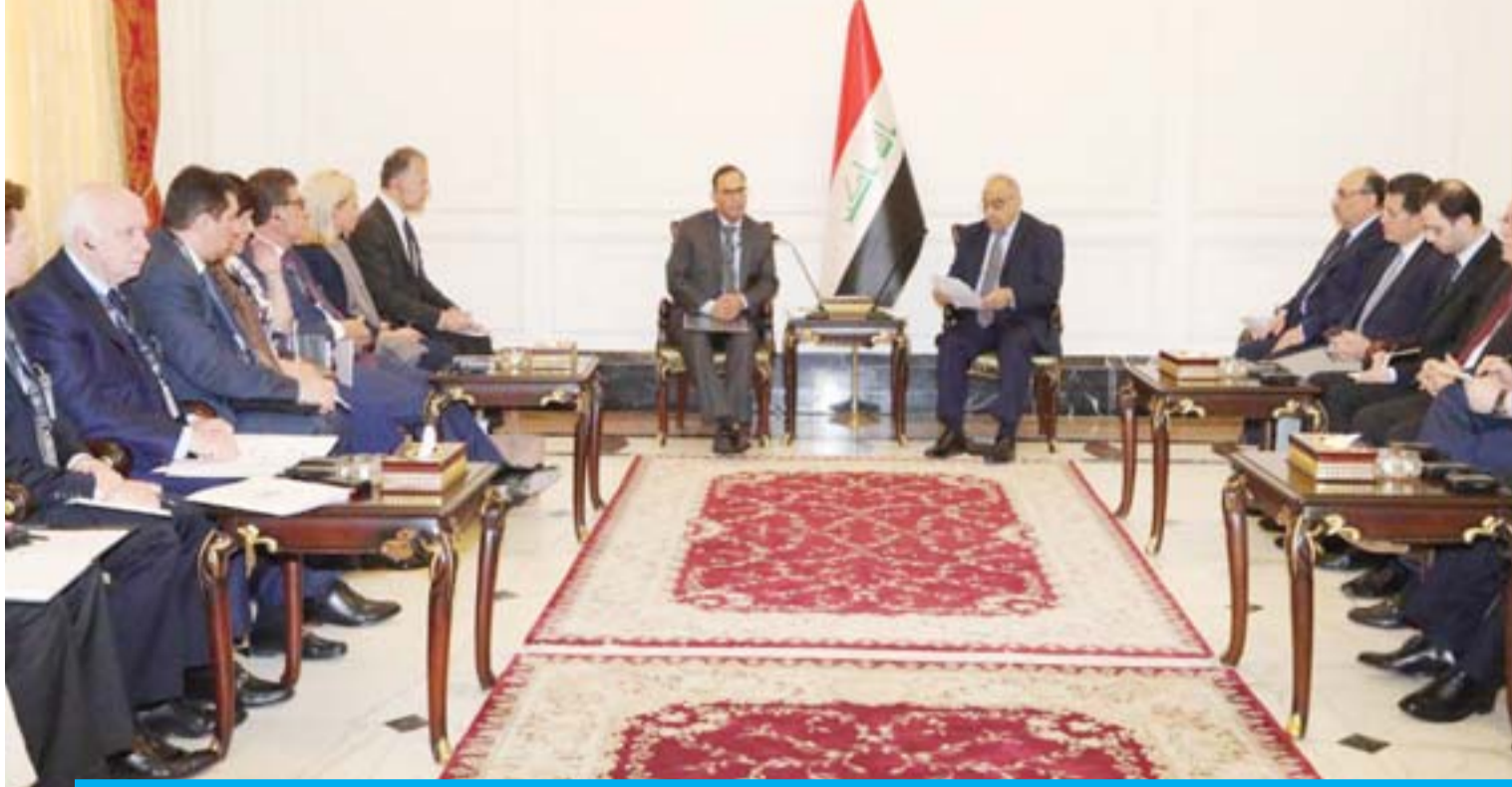
Meanwhile, the winners expressed their pleasure at winning the miles, which would enable them to travel to many different destinations. They valued the campaign's features and timing by making the announcement coincided with the summer season and travel. They also recognized the benefits of the KFH Oasis Club card and praised the excellence of KFH in offering services, products and promotions that meet the needs and expectations of customers.



The winners receive their awards.



Local



Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi meets with the UN Security Council delegation members during their visit to Baghdad. — KUNA



GENEVA: Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN Jamal Al-Ghunaim delivered Kuwait's donation to the International Labor Organization to support Palestinian workers. — KUNA photos

Kuwaiti aid continues to help people in hardship worldwide

Kuwait calls for action regarding 'thousands of people' missing in Syria

KUWAIT: Kuwait maintained its unwavering approach of humanitarily supporting nations on the field and politically as well. On the political level, Kuwait called on the UN Human Rights Council to take serious action over the whereabouts of thousands of people who have gone missing in Syria since the beginning of the country's civil war. The UN Human Rights Council should contact all parties concerned for information on the fate of the missing people, Kuwait's permanent delegate to the UN Jamal Al-Ghunaim said amid talks involving a UN commission investigating facts in the war-torn nation. He lamented the 'systematic and deliberate' nature of attacks on civilians in Syria, which has left the country's infrastructure heavily destroyed, said the diplomat. "Kuwait prioritizes the matter of missing people in armed conflict given the fact that we lived through that harrowing experience," he added, citing the Gulf state's Security Council-adopted draft resolution on missing persons during armed conflicts. The Kuwaiti envoy went on to describe the humanitarian situation in Syria as catastrophic, where some 11.7 million people are in dire need of urgent assistance. He reiterated Kuwait's support for a political solution as the only feasible way out of the eight-year old conflict, urging the UN Security Council to intervene and stop further bloodshed.

Meanwhile, Head of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Syrian Arab Republic Paulo Pinheiro praised Kuwait's initiative to urge the United Nations Security Council to adopt resolution 2474. In his report on human rights violations in Syria,

Pinheiro expressed satisfaction over the success of the initiative, extending his thanks and gratitude to the State of Kuwait for the effort. He called on all parties involved in the Syrian crisis, especially the ruling regime, to take immediate steps to provide information about detained and missing families. He also stressed that it is unacceptable that the fate of tens of thousands of people remains unknown. The UN Security Council had adopted resolution 2474, which was submitted by Kuwait, on missing persons in armed conflicts.

Fighting disease

On another level, Kuwait showed keenness to support the objectives of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria. Ambassador Ghunaim delivered a statement in Geneva on the matter following his meeting with the fund's Executive Director Peter Sands at the headquarters of the Fund in Geneva. Kuwait has provided a voluntary contribution of \$500,000 to the fund in continuation of Kuwait's approach to support humanitarian action in the world, especially since a large part of the fund's work is directed towards combating these epidemics in many developing countries and Islamic countries, Ghunaim said. Kuwait was a pioneer in financing the operations of the fund immediately after its establishment with UN resolution in 2001, he added. Recent reports refers to outbreaks of tuberculosis and cholera in a number of countries such as Yemen, Somalia or Afghanistan, which requires urgent intervention to prevent their spread in the region. He also stressed need to take into

account the existence of some of these epidemics and infectious diseases in refugee camps and displaced in a number of countries in the region, which requires a rapid access to a preventive intervention to avoid its spread. He added that Kuwait will spare no effort to support the affected countries, stressing that cooperation between Kuwait and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria will continue to serve the international humanitarian agenda in the future. Ghunaim also handed over a \$500,000 donation from Kuwait to the International Labor Organization (ILO) to support Palestinian workers.

UN Security Council

Kuwait's global humanitarian efforts was also appreciated by international organizations such as

the UN Security Council. Members of the UN Security Council paid a visit to the State of Kuwait and the Republic of Iraq on June 28-29 in a mission co-led by the Kuwait and the United States, as members were grateful to the Governments of Kuwait and Iraq. The members of the Security Council noted that the visit underscored their support for Iraq's continued post-conflict recovery, stabilization, reconstruction and reconciliation efforts to meet the needs of all Iraqis, and emphasized the importance of the sovereignty, unity, territorial integrity and security of Iraq. Kuwait's Ambassador to the UN headquarters in New York Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi was head of the delegation in addition counterparts from other nations. — KUNA



Kuwait donates \$500,000 for anti-disease fund

State Audit Bureau marks 55 years of establishment

KUWAIT: The State Audit Bureau of Kuwait (SAB) marks today its 55th establishment anniversary as an entity in charge of monitoring public wealth. The bureau was founded on July 7, 1964 to be the chief audit authority to provide and propose solutions to dilemmas of financial nature for state and government bodies. According to article 151 of the Kuwaiti Constitution, the country must establish a body to monitor financial matters. The body is connected to the National Assembly and must present an annual report on the state's income, spending and management of accounts.

SAB's assistant undersecretary for financial and administrative affairs Essam Al-Mutairi noted that the bureau aims to achieve its strategic vision 2016-2020 themed 'sustainable professional excellence' to develop SAB's monitoring tasks. SAB monitors min-

istries, administrations, public authorities, municipalities, companies that the government has a percentage of no less than 50 percent in their capital and companies that use or run public properties, he said.

Meanwhile, Mutairi underlined SAB's achievements in 2018 including winning the first place in the elections for the Governing Board members of the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) in Vietnam. The bureau also signed six cooperation agreements with its counterparts in Poland, South Africa, the US, the Maldives, Morocco and Turkey. Moreover, SAB organized about 12 regional and international events including seminars, training program and hosting international forums, he added. — KUNA



ديوان المحاسبة
State Audit Bureau
Since 1964 م. منذ عام 1964 ك. الكويت



Dr Adam Al-Mullah

allocated to the fifth group, he said, indicating that Kuwait won one of the seats in the elections, with participation of 12 countries, he added. Kuwait joined the IOC on November 13, 1974 and was elected as a member of the Executive Council in 2017, he added. Dr Mullah pointed out that the committee established by UNESCO in 1960 had

strengthened international cooperation and program coordination in marine research and ocean and coastal resource management. He expressed gratitude for the confidence of the member states in Kuwait, stressing the commitment to cooperate with all in the IOC to achieve the goals of sustainable development. — KUNA

Kuwait wins int'l environmental organization's membership

PARIS: Kuwait won a seat on the Executive Council of the Intergovernmental Oceanographic Commission (IOC), Kuwaiti Permanent Representative to UNESCO Dr Adam Al-Mullah said on Friday. In a statement to the press, Dr Mullah noted that the committee is composed of 150 member states and divided into five groups, with Kuwait participating in the fifth group with 46 countries. The executive board of the committee includes 40 seats, including nine seats



ANNOUNCEMENT

The Public Authority for Roads & Transportation announces that as of 16 / 07 / 2019

and in accordance with the PART DECREE No. (16 / 2019) published in the official Gazette on 16 / 06 / 2019 , TOLL will be collected from the Trucks using the Main and Doha links of Sheikh Jaber Al Ahmad Al Sabah bridge.

Accordingly, all trucks drivers who desire to use Sheikh Jaber Bridge as an alternative to the existing land road, are obliged to be directed towards the Weigh Stations that exist at the bridge entries, where TOLL will be collected using the available electronic KNET payment facility.

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Child rape case sparks protests in Myanmar

Hell in high water: Braving the monsoon to save India's rhinos



AT SEA: German migrant rescue NGO Sea-Eye shows their vessel 'Alan Kurdi' during an operation during which they rescued 65 people from an overloaded rubber boat in international waters off the Libyan coast. —AFP

Fate of refugees trapped in Libya

Forced labour, starved, tortured and bombed

PARIS: Acute malnutrition, forced labour, torture: NGOs have sharpened their tone against the shocking conditions endured by refugees and migrants in Libya, where over 40 people were killed in an air strike on a detention centre. Tuesday night's strike on the centre at Tajoura near the capital Tripoli, in which 70 people were wounded, underscored the vulnerability of the mainly African migrants trapped in conditions the UN has called "ghastly".

Their plight has been blamed by NGOs on an agreement between EU nations and the Libyan coastguard to prevent the migrants from reaching Europe's shores by boat. Since January, over 2,300 people have been intercepted at sea and brought back to Libya, according to the UN. Once back in Libya, they are transferred to detention centres like the one in Tajoura.

The situation has deteriorated further since Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar, whose forces have been blamed for the airstrike, launched an offensive in April to capture Tripoli, triggering a wave of violence in which over 700 people have been killed. "There is a certain blindness among European countries among the situation of migrants in Libya," Vincent Cochetel, special envoy for the Central Mediterranean at UN refugee agency UNHCR told AFP.

"The recent fighting has created an even worse situation. It cannot be business as usual in terms of this cooperation (with the EU) on returns to Libya," he argued. The levels of despair among the migrants are such that in May, a man in a rickety boat who spotted the coastguards approaching jumped into the sea rather than be captured - a scene captured on video by German NGO Sea-Watch. The man was later rescued by a passing ship.

EU on the defensive

Excruciating footage filmed inside hidden prisons run by human traffickers that was broadcast by Britain's

Channel 4 in February gives some idea of the brutality inflicted on migrants by militia members who use them to try to extort money from their families. In one clip, a man is seen lying on the floor, screaming in agony as his captor burns his feet with a blowtorch. Another man, wearing a bloody t-shirt, is suspended from the ceiling by his feet, a gun pointed at his head.

A third is bound and lying face down, a huge concrete block crushing his back and arms as someone flogs the soles of his feet. According to figures from the International Organization for Migration, at least 5,200 people are currently trapped in official detention centres in Libya, mostly from troubled countries such as Sudan, Somalia and Eritrea. There are no figures for the number of people held in illegal centres run by human traffickers.

The EU has fended off criticism of its pact with the Libyan coastguard on the ground that it has dramatically reduced the flow of migrants seeking to reach Italy, which began turning away rescue boats a year ago. Questioned by AFP, the European Commission defended its record, saying that since 2014 it had raised some 338 million euros for programmes linked to migrants in Libya and helped with the repatriation of 38,000 people in the past 16 months.

"We are extremely concerned by the deterioration of the situation on the ground," Commission spokeswoman Natasha Bertaud recently said. The Commission, she said, was hamstrung by the failure of EU members to agree on common approach towards migrants and asylum-seekers. When NGO vessels rescue people in the Mediterranean, "it effectively falls on the Commission to ring round nearly 28 capitals to find places for people to disembark," she said, adding: "That is not sustainable!"

The dead piling up

Ten NGOs working in Libya, including the Danish

are on the verge of famine. Thousands of civilians, including hundreds of children, have been killed and tens of thousands wounded. Essential health, education and other services have all but collapsed, especially since a Saudi-led coalition intervened in March 2015 in support of the government.

In Amran, rebels carrying automatic rifles remain vigilant day and night, while revolutionary slogans are daubed everywhere on the old city's brown buildings made of clay and stones. "Death to America, Death to Israel, Curse on Jews and victory for Islam," reads one slogan. Two Yemeni government officials told AFP that when Amran fell into the hands of the Houthis, no one was aware of the rebels' plans to take their military campaign to Sanaa and other regions.

Beyond the city limits, Amran is a key province in Yemen historically, boasting important archeological landmarks, including the 100-year-old Shaharah Bridge - meaning the 'bridge of sighs' - which links two mountains. It is also home to Raydah town, where the last of Yemen's Jews lived, before they made their way to Israel in 1949-1950 in a secret airlift dubbed "Operation Magic Carpet". Amran occupies a strategic location between Sanaa and the rebels' stronghold of Saada in the far north. It is also home to the Hashid, Yemen's most powerful tribe.

'Almost unimaginable'

The Houthis overran government forces in Amran after a two-month siege and then moved south, capturing the capital in September 2014 before pushing into other parts of Yemen. Sixty months after seizing the city, the rebels still hold the upper hand on the battlefield, despite major military campaigns by the government and airstrikes by the Saudi-led coalition. The rebels still hold a firm grip on Sanaa and most cities in northern, central and western regions including the strategic Red Sea port city of Hodeida.

They have made strong use of their fighting experience in mountain ranges. But the war has devastated

Refugee Council, the International Rescue Committee and Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI), decided in May to break their silence on the catastrophic conditions there. They called on the EU and its member states "to urgently revise their policies on migration", saying they were "gravely concerned about the human cost" of such policies which were encouraging "a system of criminalization and detention". "Migrants and refugees, including women and children, are at risk of arbitrary and indefinite detention in Libya" where they are held in "appalling" and "inhumane conditions", they said.

Benjamin Gaudin, who heads the Libya operations of French NGO Premiere Urgence Internationale (PUI), called on the EU to stop sending migrants back to Libya altogether. Describing conditions in the six official detention centres where PUI works, Gaudin said: "At times, the migrants are literally piled up on top of each other, in appalling sanitary conditions with huge problems getting access to water - sometimes there is no drinking water at all."

"They don't receive enough food; in some centres, there is absolutely no way to protect yourself from the cold or the heat. Some don't even have an outside area so the migrants there never see the light of day," Human Rights Watch, which visited many detention centres in 2018 and spoke to about 100 migrants, documented the "cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment" suffered by migrants in a report earlier this year.

"The bodies are piling up inside Libyan detention centres," Julien Raickman, who heads the Doctors Without Borders (MSF) mission in Libya said. "The people who are detained there, mostly refugees, are continuing to die from sickness, hunger and are victims of all sorts of violence, of rape and the arbitrary treatment of the militias," he said. And now, he added, "they have found themselves trapped by the ongoing conflict."

'Locked up for a year'

Their plight was taken up last month by the Council of Europe, a pan-European rights watchdog whose human rights commissioner asked European countries to suspend their cooperation with the Libyan coastguard on account of the "torture, rape, slavery, exploitation or indefinite and unlawful detention" suffered by migrants.

The UNHCR on June 7 denounced the "ghastly conditions" in the centres, with spokesman Rupert Colville saying 22 people had died in an outbreak of tuberculosis at a facility in the western Libyan town of Zintan since September. MSF, which has recently begun operating in Zintan as well as Garyan, a city south of Tripoli, spoke of a "sanitation catastrophe". According to the NGOs and the UNHCR's Cochetel, the vast majority of those trapped in these centres are bona fide refugees, who would be granted asylum in a developed country.

The UNHCR has, however, struggled to find safe countries in Europe or elsewhere willing to take in the refugees. "There is a strong sense of despair over this impasse: in centres where we have been working in the region of Misrata and Khoms, people have been locked up for a year," MSF's Raickman said. General Ayoub Kacem, spokesman for the Libyan navy, which is in charge of the coastguard, argued that Libya was a "victim" of the migration flows.

Calling the migrants a "burden" for the country he accused the EU of "lacking concern" for their fate and urged EU members to finally adopt a common approach to the issue. For MSF's Raickman it is long past time for talking. "European states have a scandalous level of responsibility for all these deaths and this suffering," he said. "What we need is action: the urgent evacuation of refugee and migrants who are trapped in extremely dangerous conditions in Libya." —AFP

5 years into war, Yemen at 'rock bottom'

SANAA: Like most residents of Amran, a strategic gateway to Yemen's capital Sanaa, Mohammed Al-Najri thought the capture of his city by Houthi rebels five years ago would not last long. But fighting quickly spread to most areas of the country, plunging the Arab world's most impoverished nation into a devastating conflict that is yet to end. Fifty kilometres north of Sanaa, Amran was taken by the Iran-backed Houthis on July 8, 2014.

It was the first major city to fall, in a military campaign that saw the rebels seize vast swathes of Yemen from the internationally recognised government. At the education ministry office in Amran where he works, Najri has gone without his salary ever since the beleaguered government two years ago moved the central bank from Sanaa to Aden, its makeshift capital.

"Five years have passed since the war broke out, but we know there is still a long way to go," the 40-year-old civil servant told AFP by telephone. "Our situation has deteriorated ... We have reached rock bottom. Everything has collapsed," he said. Mohammed Taha, 48, a journalist from Amran who has continued to cover his home city since the Houthis seized it, does not even consider the possibility of peace. "Five years of war were sufficient for me to adapt and adjust my life and that of my family accordingly," Taha said. "Yes, we were affected by the war at the start, but we were able to live with its consequences. I no longer care if it continues or ends," he said.

'Dangerous' plot

The United Nations says Yemen is experiencing the world's worst humanitarian crisis, warning that millions



SANAA: Yemenis inspect the rubble of destroyed houses in the village of Bani Matar, 70 kilometers (43 miles) West of Sanaa. —AFP

Yemen. It "has fragmented the country down the lines of identity, geography and ideology in ways that were almost unimaginable before it began." Peter Salisbury, a Yemen analyst at the International Crisis Group, told AFP. The rebels and the government have participated in several rounds of UN-sponsored talks, the last held in Sweden in December, but they failed to strike a deal to end the bloody war.

The United Nations says that 3.3 million Yemenis are

displaced, while at least 24 million - some two-thirds of the population - need assistance. "The country is not on the verge of collapse, it is collapsing. It is collapsed actually," Fabrizio Carboni, the International Committee of the Red Cross regional director for the Near and Middle East, said in Geneva on Thursday. For Salisbury, "it will take a lot more than five years to get us back to even 2014 levels of internal cohesion, if at all, (in terms of) service delivery and economic development." —AFP

International

UN calls for Libyan ceasefire as death toll climbs to 1,000

Security Council condemns attack on Tajoura detention camp

TRIPOLI: The UN Security Council has called for a ceasefire in Libya as the death toll from a three-month offensive on Tripoli reached 1,000, including scores killed in an air strike that hit a detention centre for migrants. The council condemned the late Tuesday attack on the Tajoura detention camp east of Tripoli and "stressed the need for all parties to urgently de-escalate the situation and to commit to a ceasefire", said a joint statement.

Libyan commander Khalifa Haftar, whose forces hold eastern Libya and much of the country's south, launched an offensive in early April to wrestle the capital from forces loyal to the UN-recognised Government of National Accord (GNA). Air strikes and ground fighting have since left nearly 1,000 people dead and some 5,000 wounded, the UN's World Health Organization said. The fighting has forced more than 100,000 people to flee their homes and threatens to plunge Libya into deeper conflict.

Among the dead are 53 migrants killed Tuesday night in an air raid on a detention centre in the Tripoli suburb of Tajoura, held by the GNA, which accused Haftar's forces of carrying out the strike. A Geneva-based spokesman for the International Organization for Migration said six children were among the migrants killed. Joel Millman said that 350 migrants, including 20 women and four children, were still detained at the centre, one of five air hangars hit in the raid.

World powers have been divided over how to respond to Haftar's offensive, with the United States and Russia refusing to condemn the Libyan strongman. The British-drafted council statement condemned the attack on the migrant camp, called for a return to political talks and for full respect of the arms embargo on Libya. It followed a closed-door council meeting on Wednesday during which US diplomats said they needed more time to consult with Washington on the proposed text.

The United Nations has called for an independent investigation to determine who was responsible for the strike on the centre, which housed some 600 migrants, mainly from African countries. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of Turkey—which backs the GNA—called for an end to "unlawful attacks" by Haftar's forces during a meeting with Libyan Prime Minister Fayeze al-Sarraj in Istanbul on Friday, the Turkish presidency said.

UN shared coordinates

UN agencies and humanitarian groups have repeatedly voiced concern over the plight of thousands of migrants and refugees held in detention centres near combat zones in the capital. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed outrage over the attack and said the United Nations had shared the coordinates of the detention centre with the warring sides to protect the civilians. The carnage in Tajoura was "a tragedy that should have never happened", said Charlie Xaxley, spokesman for the UN's refugee agency.

Libya has become a major conduit for migrants seeking to reach Europe and remains prey to numerous militias vying for control of the country's oil wealth. Rights groups say migrants face horrifying abuses in Libya, and their plight has worsened since Haftar launched the offensive against Tripoli. According to the UN, some 5,700 refugees and migrants are being held in detention centres in Libya, 3,300 of whom are vulnerable to fighting in and around Tripoli.

Plane downed

An initial lightning assault in early April saw Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army steam towards the capital. But they have since been bogged down on its southern outskirts, where frontlines have been frozen for months. GNA forces launched a surprise counter-attack late last month, seizing the strategic town of Gharyan, the main supply base for Haftar's offensive.



TAJOURA, Libya: An image grab taken from CCTV video footage shows the aftermath of an airstrike on the detention camp for migrants in the capital Tripoli's eastern suburb of Tajoura. —AFP

After the setback, Haftar's forces threatened to intensify strikes against their rivals. Both sides have launched daily air raids throughout the fighting and

each lost several planes. The rival camps have remained convinced that with the help of their backers, they can win the battle. The GNA receives support from Turkey and Qatar, and Haftar is backed by the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, and according to experts, to some degree by the United States. —AFP

Bombings kill 14 civilians in Syria

BEIRUT: Syrian regime bombardment has killed 14 civilians including seven children in north-western Syria, a war monitor said yesterday, in the latest deadly raids on the embattled opposition bastion. Warplanes and helicopters late Friday carried out air strikes on Mahabel village in Idlib province, killing 13 civilians including the seven children, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

A woman was also killed yesterday in regime rocket fire on the outskirts of the town of Khan Sheikhun in the south of the province, the Britain-based war monitor said. Idlib, a region of some three million people, many of whom fled former rebel-held areas retaken by the government, is the last major bastion of opposition to the Russia-backed Damascus government after eight years of civil war.

The region on Turkey's doorstep is administered by Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat

Tahrir al-Sham, but other jihadist and rebel groups are also present. Idlib is supposed to be protected from a major regime assault by a September deal between Moscow and Ankara, but Damascus and its Russian ally have ramped up their deadly bombardment of the region since late April.

More than 520 civilians have been killed since then, according to the Observatory. The United Nations says 25 health facilities in the region have been hit, the latest including the second attack in two months on an underground hospital in the town of Kafranbel on Thursday. "The attacks happened despite the fact that the coordinates of this hospital had previously been shared with the parties to the conflict in a deliberate, carefully planned effort to prevent any attacks on it," an UN official said on Friday.

"I am horrified by the ongoing attacks on civilian areas and civilian infrastructure as the conflict in northwest Syria continues," said Mark Cutts, UN deputy regional humanitarian coordinator for the Syrian crisis. Syria's war has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it started in 2011 with a brutal crackdown on anti-government protests. —AFP

Albanian justice on pause as judges fall victim to graft probe

TRIRANA: Inside the halls of Albania's quiet Supreme Court building, a clock on the wall has stopped. It is an apt symbol for a tribunal that hasn't held a hearing since May, after all but two judges were dismissed as part of a sweeping graft review that is cleaning out notoriously corrupt courts—but also crippling Albania's judicial system in the process.

"In 2014 there were 17 (judges), in 2019 there remain only two," explains Ida Vodica, a Supreme Court spokeswoman. One of the remaining judges, the president, is under review. The country launched the intensive vetting process three years ago under pressure from the European Union, which the Balkan state aspires to join.

An independent body has been tasked with

screening judges and prosecutors on three criteria: their assets and income, any links with Albania's powerful organised crime groups, and their professional and ethical conduct in the past. It's a deep scrub of a system where lawyers have said the bulk of their work is acting as "brokers" to negotiate the size of a bribe. But it is also leaving the country, whose government happens to be mired in a political crisis, lacking a key pillar of democracy.

So far, 140 out of 800 judges and prosecutors have been reviewed. Out of that figure 88 have either been dismissed—mostly for issues related to unjustified assets—or resigned just before they were set to be scrutinised, according to a May report from the European Commission. At a hearing before the independent commission last month Gurali Brahimllari, a judge in a criminal appeal court in Tirana, said he was "surprised" by their analysis that his assets greatly exceeded his income. He provided paperwork to explain the imbalance. But the commission was not convinced, and he was dismissed.

It was a similar story for a prosecutor who in November failed to convince the panel that thousands of euros (dollars) in income was the result of a lucky streak in sports betting. Meanwhile, a judge from the Constitutional Court tried in vain to explain

that he received 15,000 euros worth of gifts on the occasion of his daughter's marriage. The net has even caught one of Albania's most feared men—former Attorney General Adriatik Lalla, whose assets have been seized as he is under investigation for money laundering. The EU has applauded the results of the probe as "crucial to restoring public trust in the judiciary". But ordinary people like 62-year old Ruze Iso are victims of the judicial stagnation. Since 2018 she has asked the Supreme Court to annul the seizure of her house over a debt, claiming that the ruling was based on fake documents forged by corrupt legal officers. "My husband is ill, we're 'all on the street,'" she says, explaining that they now live in an abandoned garage. Her case is likely among the mountains of paperwork that are filling up archive rooms, empty offices and dark courtrooms and collecting dust. "Currently, there is a stack of 32,000 files awaiting review, and we don't even have a place to deposit them," said Vodica. The court's president Xhezair Zaganjori assures that "in late summer or early September four or five new judges will probably arrive to take over the files." Authorities claim the Constitutional Court could be functional again in early 2020. At present, only one of nine judges has evaded the probe. —AFP

Alaska's heat wave shatters city record, disrupts jobs, lives

LOS ANGELES: Temperatures in Alaska's largest city Anchorage have soared to a sweltering all-time record of 90 degrees Fahrenheit (32 centigrade) as a heat wave grips the US state which straddles the Arctic Circle. Fourth of July fireworks were canceled due to risk of wildfires caused by "extreme dry weather conditions," as temperatures matching those in Miami highlighted rapid warming in a region considered particularly vulnerable to climate change. "At 5pm this afternoon, Anchorage International Airport officially hit 90 degrees for the first time on record," tweeted the National Weather Service (NWS) late Thursday. The previous record was 85 degrees, set in June 1969. The average high temperature for July 4 in Anchorage, located in southern Alaska, is a far cooler 65 degrees.

Giant high-pressure ridge

The abnormally warm weather is being caused by a "giant ridge of high pressure sitting right over us," NWS meteorologist Bill Ludwig told the Anchorage Daily News. Alaska had earlier broken tempera-

ture records throughout a hot spring, particularly in the Arctic zone which is especially sensitive to fluctuations in climate.

All 30 days in June had above-average temperatures, the NWS said. According to scientists, Alaska is warming at twice the rate of the global average. "From 1901 to 2016, average temperatures in the mainland United States increased by 1.8 degrees Fahrenheit... whereas in Alaska they increased by 4.7 degrees," Rick Thoman, a climate specialist at the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy, told AFP in April.

Fast-melting ice

The dramatic warming Alaska has experienced in recent years - linked partly to a decline in sea ice and Arctic ocean warming - has wreaked havoc on local communities, wildlife and the state's economy. Permafrost - the frozen ground that covers almost 85 percent of Alaska - is thawing, affecting everything from building foundations to wildlife habitats and the picking of berries that grow on the tundra. Frozen rivers usually serve as transport routes in winter, as two-thirds of communities in the state are not accessible by road. But higher temperatures have made the ice dangerously thin and unsafe for truck or car travel.

Many recreational sled-dog races have had to be canceled this year, and the famed Iditarod race had to be re-routed as what is normally solid sea ice



was open water on part of the race course. Crab fishing has also been affected as the sea ice that fishermen use as a platform is non-existent or too thin in some areas. Alaska's seal population is likely to be affected this summer, as some species give birth on solid ice, Thoman said.

Global warming has led to the lowest ice levels in the Bering Sea - which connects with the Arctic Ocean - since 1850,

when sea ice records were first kept, he added. While it is unprecedented for the mercury to hit 90 degrees in coastal Anchorage, temperatures as high as 100 degrees have been recorded in Alaska's interior. The high-pressure system causing the current spike in temperatures is expected to shift north to inland areas in the coming days, with further records likely to be broken, according to AccuWeather. —AFP

Elephants: Jumbo surprise outside Nigeria megacity

LAGOS: The jungle was so thick that Emmanuel Olabode only found the elephants he was tracking when the great matriarch's sniffing trunk reached out close enough to almost touch. "She flapped her ears, blocking us to guard her family, then left in peace," recalls Olabode. "It was extraordinary." The elusive elephants are just 100 kilometres from downtown Lagos, Nigeria's economic capital, home to over 20 million people. "They are scared of humans," says Olabode, who leads the Forest Elephant Initiative, a conservation

group in the Omo Forest, northeast of Africa's biggest city. "So they are active at night."

Forest elephants are the shy relations of their larger savannah cousins and are experts at hiding; so skilled, in fact, very few in the city know about them. The crowded concrete jungle of Lagos is better known for wild nightlife than nighttime wildlife. "When people hear about the elephants, they do not believe it," says Joy Adeosun, a government scientist working with Olabode. "They are in shock," adds Adeosun, fixing a motion-sensitive camera that has not only snapped elephants, but antelope, buffalo and chimpanzees too.

Omo, spreading across some 1,325 square kilometres of southwestern Ogun state, was protected as a government reserve nearly a century ago. A UNESCO "biosphere reserve" of global importance, it is one of the last patches of pristine rainforest left in Nigeria. Nigeria's deforestation rates are among the highest in the world, according to the

UN's Food and Agriculture Organization. "Chopping down trees is easy," says Olabode, whose team of eight community rangers are overstretched. "But if the forest goes, the whole ecosystem changes. The rains reduce, then the farms lose fertility. Everyone suffers." Half of the forest, a 650-square-kilometre area, is reserved for wildlife and logging is banned.

But corruption is rampant. "There are so many trees here," says Ibiyinka James, on one of dozens of trucks illicitly laden with ancient hardwoods, off to become planks for the booming construction market in Africa's most populous nation. "The birds can fly to another forest," he adds. And with trees cleared, farmers plant crops. "I need to provide for my family. What else can I do?", cocoa grower Christopher Shadrach says, from Ose-Eke, one of the villages hacked out of the reserve, each one home to hundreds of people. But to the elephants, the crops are tasty treats, which angers forest farmers. —AFP

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International

Sri Lanka president vetoes military deal with the US

American troops not to get free access to island's ports

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's President yesterday announced he will not allow his government to conclude a proposed military deal that would allow US troops free access to the island's ports. Maithripala Sirisena said he was opposed to the draft Status of Forces Agreement (SOFA) that the two countries are negotiating to further strengthen their military ties.

Sirisena is at loggerheads with his pro-Western Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe. "I will not allow any agreement that undermines our independence and sovereignty," Sirisena told a public rally in the island's south. "Several agreements currently being discussed are detrimental to our country."

"I will not allow the SOFA that seeks to betray the nation. Some foreign forces want to make Sri Lanka one of their bases. I will not allow them to come into the country and challenge our sovereignty."

The SOFA seeks to ensure reciprocal access to port facilities and allow freer entry to military personnel and their contractors. Sirisena said there will be no bilateral agreements "against Sri Lanka's national interest" as long as he was in office. His term ends in January.

He did not name the powers he accused of trying to gain a military foothold in his Indian Ocean island republic of 21 million people. However, it was a thinly

veiled reference to the US which is keen on strengthening their existing military cooperation.

A year ago, Washington announced it was granting \$39 million to boost maritime security in Sri Lanka as China developed its strategic hold on the Indian Ocean island. Increased US interest in Sri Lanka comes as China is upping investment in ports and other building projects on the island, which is a key link in Beijing's ambitious "Belt and Road" infrastructure initiative.

The US had stopped arms sales to Sri Lanka during the height of the island's Tamil separatist war that ended in 2009. The global power has also been highly critical of the human rights record of the former government of strongman president, Mahinda Rajapakse. Several senior military commanders from the Rajapakse regime have been denied visas to visit the US.

China has vowed to keep providing financial help, including loans, to Sri Lanka despite warnings about the island nation's mounting debt. Sri Lanka in 2017 granted a 99-year lease on a strategic port to Beijing because of it could not repay Chinese loans for the \$1.4 billion project. The port in Hambantota straddles the world's busiest east-west shipping route and also gives a strategic foothold to China in a region long dominated by India. — AFP



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena (center) waits next to Navy officers for a group photo during a ceremony commissioning P 626 ship, US gifted to the Sri Lankan coastguard at the main port in Colombo yesterday. The vessels are to be used to help merchant shipping and protect the islands coastline. — AFP

Fear and defiance mark life for Pakistan's minority Hazaras

HAZARA TOWN, Pakistan: High walls around the neighborhoods of Pakistan's embattled Hazara community in the southwestern city of Quetta are designed to protect them from extremist militants, but also serve as a constant reminder of the threat they face.

Soldiers and security checkpoints greet visitors to Hazara Town, one of two large guarded neighborhoods in the capital of Baluchistan, a province where religious and sectarian groups often target the mostly Shia Hazaras with bombs and guns. Despite improved security in recent years, partly because most Hazaras have moved into the guarded enclaves, hardline Sunni militants keep up attacks, such as a blast in April that killed 24 people, among them eight Hazaras.

"We are living under siege for more than 1-1/2 decades due to sectarian attacks," said Sardar Sahil, a Hazara lawyer and rights activist. "Though all these checkpoints were established for our security, we feel we were ourselves also cut off from other communities."

Sahil carries a pistol whenever he leaves home, and relies on his faith as a second layer of security.

"I kiss my mother's hand and she kisses me too and says goodbye with her prayers and good wishes," Sahil told Reuters at his home. Hazaras, said to be descendants of the Mongols who swept out of central Asia to rule the subcontinent for many centuries, are easily distinguishable in Pakistan by their facial features.

That has made them vulnerable to attacks by groups such as Pakistan's banned Lashkar-



HAZARA TOWN, Pakistan: Pakistan's embattled Hazara community protest in the southwestern city of Quetta. — Reuters

e-Jhangvi (LeJ), and Sunni militant group Islamic State, which has attacked them in both Pakistan and neighboring Afghanistan, also home to many Hazaras. Many community businesses that flourished in Quetta's bustling wholesale markets have shuttered and relocated to Hazara Town or Mari Abad, another Hazara neighborhood.

But the community is defiant. Some still venture out into Quetta in search of work, while others keep businesses running. The Quetta community held its first Hazara Culture Day this week to celebrate and showcase its history, music and traditions.

The community strives to keep its protests peaceful, despite unrest stirred up by militants looking to pit people of different sects against each other, said Abdul Khaliq Hazara, chairman of the Hazara Democratic Party (HDP), which

has two provincial assembly representatives.

Domestic media often portray the Hazaras as targets of sectarian attacks or holding sit-ins to demand greater protection, but the community is developing and growing, said martial arts specialist Nargis Hazara. "Every one of us has a dream, a target and aim in our heart, to change the image of Hazaras in the world, and especially in Pakistan," added the 20-year-old who last year became Pakistan's first winner of an Asian Games medal in karate.

Many Hazaras have joined the armed forces in Pakistan, where the community's past and future will stay rooted despite any violence, said another martial arts expert, Mubarak Ali Shan. "We want to serve Pakistan and despite suffering tragedies and incidents, our love for peace has not diminished," he added. — Reuters

14 killed as mortars hit Afghan market

KABUL: At least 14 people were killed and dozens more wounded when a busy market in northern Afghanistan was hit by mortar fire, officials said yesterday.

Several Taliban shells hit the market Friday morning in the Khwaja Sabz Posh district of Faryab province, according to Hanif Rezaee, an Afghan army spokesman. "Fourteen civilians were killed and 40 — including women and children — were wounded," Rezaee said.

He said the Taliban had been trying to hit an army checkpoint near the market. The insurgent group did not immediately comment. Naem Musamim, Faryab's public health director, said 14 bodies and 39 wounded people including four children had been taken to local hospitals. Some victims with critical injuries were airlifted to hospitals in Mazar-i-Sharif in Balkh province.

Also Friday, a bomb detonated inside a Shia mosque in Ghazni city in central Afghanistan, killing two worshippers and wounding 20 more, according to Ghazni governor spokesman Aref Noori.

Baz Mohammad Hemat, the director of Ghazni hospital, told AFP that one of those killed and 14 of the wounded were children. Friday is Afghanistan's day off and many children attend mosque for prayers on the day of worship. The Islamic State group's Afghanistan affiliate, which has a grow-

ing footprint in the country, claimed responsibility. The Sunni extremists have conducted frequent prior attacks on Shia targets. While Afghanistan is a mainly Sunni country, it has a sizeable Shia minority, mainly represented by the Hazara community.

The deadly incidents come as the war between the Taliban and Afghan security forces rages on, even as Taliban officials are meeting with US negotiators in Doha in a bid to bring about an end to the conflict.

An agreement with the Taliban is expected to have two main points—a US withdrawal from Afghanistan and a commitment by the militants not to provide a base for terrorists, the main reason for the US invasion nearly 18 years ago. Today, the insurgents will meet in the Qatari capital with various representatives from Afghan society as part of a potential peace process.

Meanwhile, Islamic State fighters claimed responsibility yesterday for the deadly overnight attack in a mosque in central province of Ghazni in Afghanistan. At least two people were killed and 20 others sustained injuries as a bomb planted by the hardline Islamist militants inside the Mohammadiya mosque, used by Shiites, went off on Friday night, said Aref Noori, a provincial government spokesman.

Islamic State frequently targets Afghanistan's Shiite minority, which it calls "apostates". The militant group said 40 people were injured in the explosion. The explosive device was planted ahead of the Friday prayers, government officials said. Ghazni has recently been the scene of heavy clashes between government forces and Taliban militants. — Agencies

Hell in high water: Braving the monsoon to save India's rhinos

NEW DELHI: The monsoon may bring respite from the scorching heat, but for the rangers and animals at Kaziranga National Park it also brings danger as poachers take advantage of greater camouflage and flooding.

The UNESCO-recognized reserve, home to two-thirds of the world's one-horned rhinos, draws hunters who can earn as much as \$150,000 for one horn on a black market serving foreign demand for its use in traditional Chinese medicine. Three rhinos have been killed so far this year. And in rainy season, it can be an especially gruelling battle—the grass reaches head-height, providing perfect cover for poachers and flooding forces the animals to move to higher ground, sometimes to the outskirts of the park.

"We are always on our toes in this season. There is hardly any rest for us. Information about poachers entering the park comes any time and we have to respond immediately," explains ranger Gopi Kanta Deka.

He and his dedicated colleagues-on duty constantly for weeks at a time in this period, sometimes sleeping out in the open-must follow the animals to protect them from harm.

"We walk in groups from one anti-poaching camp to another or paddle boats during high floods to reach those areas from where the information has come in and get to the job quickly," he adds.

Vulnerable to extinction

The one-horned rhinos used to be wide-



A picture taken on May 28, 2019 shows a trio of white rhinoceros grazing at Ol-Pejeta conservancy at Laikipia's county headquarters, Nanyuki. — AFP

spread in the region but hunting and habitat loss has slashed their numbers to just a few thousand, almost all in the north-eastern state of Assam. Their main haven now is Kaziranga, with 2,413 of the animals living there, according to a 2018 count.

Although hunting them was outlawed in 1910, poaching has proliferated. Today the creatures—also known as the Indian rhinoceros and the greater one-horned rhinoceros—are listed as vulnerable on the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Red List that assesses species' threat of extinction.

"We really feel bad when something bad like poaching happens to the animals," says ranger Manoj Gogoi. The 850-square-kilome-

tre (330-square-mile) park, created in 1908 after the wife of the British viceroy visited and complained there were no rhinos, is also home to tigers, elephants and panthers, all under threat from poaching. But it is the rhinos that are the big draw.

"There is huge demand for the horns and international rackets are pumping in huge amounts of money, prompting poachers sometimes to risk their own lives," wildlife activist Somyadeep Datta warns. Prized in some forms of traditional Chinese and South East Asian medicine, acolytes believe the horns containing keratin—the same protein in human hair and nails—can cure anything from cancer to cures, or can be used as an aphrodisiac. — AFP

Thousands protest amid outcry over Myanmar child rape case

YANGON: Thousands of protesters marched to a police office in the north of Myanmar's largest city, Yangon, yesterday, demanding speedy and transparent justice in a child-rape case that has sparked national outrage.

Police said this week they had arrested a suspect in the rape of a toddler - nicknamed Victoria - at a private nursery school in the administrative capital, Naypyitaw, in May.

Social media users have criticized the speed and professionalism of the police response after the girl's family filed a complaint more than a month ago, underscoring a lack of trust in authorities in a country still emerging from decades of military rule. A government led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi took power after sweeping elections in 2015, but key institutions such as the police remain under military control and efforts to strengthen the rule of law have floundered.

Organizers estimated as many as 6,000 protesters gathered on Saturday at the Yangon office of the Criminal Investigation Department

(CID) wearing white t-shirts, some printed with the words "Justice for Victoria". One banner read: "We don't want any more Victorias."

"We need an explanation that people can accept and justice for the kid," said 33-year-old protest organizer Aung Htike Min. The protesters also called on the government to create a safe environment for Myanmar's children.

The police force's deputy director general, Aung Naing Thu, said on Friday in a news conference broadcast live on Facebook and watched by thousands of people that police had filed a case at court against a driver at the victim's nursery, who was in custody. A thorough investigation was conducted, he said, but efforts to identify the perpetrator had been delayed because officers were waiting to speak to the victim, a 3-year-old girl who was recovering from medication she was given after the assault.

"We filed the lawsuit against the suspect based on the testimony of the child and technical records," said Aung Naing Thu, referring to security-camera footage that he said implicated the driver. The nursery had also been closed because it lacked the correct license to operate, he said. Demonstrators were sceptical about the account given by Myanmar police, a force that is widely perceived as corrupt or incompetent.

Ye Myint Win, 37, who joined Saturday's protest along with his wife and 2-year-old daughter, told Reuters authorities should take child rape cases more seriously. "I found it very suspicious and I don't trust the investigation of CID," he said. — Reuters

International

Released Australian student was 'spying,' says North Korea

Sigley freed and sent to Japan on Thursday

SEOUL: An Australian student who was released after being held in North Korea had been "spying" in the reclusive country, state media said yesterday. Alek Sigley, 29, disappeared around two weeks ago prompting deep concern about his fate, but was freed and flew to Japan on Thursday.

Official North Korean news agency KCNA said Sigley had admitted "he had been spying by collecting our internal information and sharing with others and repeatedly asked for our forgiveness for infringing on our sovereignty". It said Sigley—one of just a handful of Westerners living and studying in North Korea—had been detained on June 25 for promoting propaganda against the country online, including on specialist website NK News, which rejected the accusations.

"Sigley, upon request by anti-DPRK news outlets such as NK News, on numerous occasions transferred information that he gathered while travelling to every corner of Pyongyang using his status as an international student, including photographs and analysis," it said, using the initials of North Korea's official name. "The government of DPRK has exercised humanitarian forbearance and deported him from our grounds on July 4."

Sigley's detention came just days before a G20 summit and a landmark meeting between President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. Trump was closely involved in the case of University of Virginia student Otto Warmbier, who was imprisoned during a tour of the authoritarian state in 2016.

Doctors said Warmbier suffered severe brain damage while in detention, fell into a coma and died days after arriving back in the United States, aged 22. Sigley

was much more familiar with the country and spoke fluent Korean. He organized tours to North Korea, and ran a number of social media sites, which usually had a stream of apolitical content about life in one of the world's most secretive nations.

His blog posts focused on everyday Pyongyang—everything from the city's dining scene to North Korean app reviews—and he married his Japanese wife there last year.

No interviews

Chad O'Carroll, director of the NK News, said in a statement on Saturday that Sigley's columns for the site "presented an apolitical and insightful view of life in Pyongyang". "The six articles Alek published represent the full extent of his work with us and the idea that those columns, published transparently under his name between January and April 2019, are 'anti-state' in nature is a misrepresentation which we reject," he said. On Friday, Sigley said he was planning to "return to normal life" but offered no details of his detention, adding he would not be conducting any interviews or holding a press conference.

"I just want everyone to know I am OK, and to thank them for their concern for my wellbeing and their support for my family over the past week," he said in a statement released by representatives of his family on Friday. However Sigley gave no indication of why he was held, how he was treated or why he was released. It said he would not make any further comment "at this time or later".

The case was also complicated by Australia's lack of



BEIJING: Alek Sigley arrives at Beijing International Airport after being released from detention in China — Reuters

diplomatic representation in North Korea.

Sigley specifically thanked Sweden's envoy to North Korea, who helped negotiate his release. Also on Friday, Australia's Home Affairs Minister Peter Dutton cautioned Sigley against returning to Pyongyang.

"My advice will be pretty clear—I would stay in Japan. I would go back to South Korea. I would come back to Australia. All of those would have to be better options before he returns to North Korea," Dutton told broadcaster channel Nine. — AFP

First charges against HK anti-govt protester

HONG KONG: A Hong Kong street artist was charged on Friday with assaulting a police officer and criminal damage, the first prosecution against an anti-government protester since the city was rocked by unprecedented demonstrations.

Sparked by a law that would have allowed extraditions to mainland China, the city has witnessed three huge peaceful rallies as well as civil disobedience and violence from a hard core of younger protesters who have besieged the police headquarters and on Monday stormed the city's parliament.

Authorities have vowed to hunt those behind the unrest that has plunged the semi-autonomous city's Beijing-backed government into crisis. Pun Ho-chiu, 31, appeared in court on Friday over his alleged involvement in the blockade of the city's police headquarters on 21 June.

He was also charged with disorderly behavior for throwing eggs at police outside the headquarters during the six-hour siege. A well-known activist nicknamed "Painter" for his street art, Pun was remanded in custody and faces up to ten years in jail if convicted.

He was one of the only protesters during the police siege to show himself unmasked.

In court his lawyer said he was assaulted by police who spoke to him in Mandarin—the predominant language on the Chinese mainland. The judge said the court could not investigate the claims and directed him to the police complaints procedure. Forensic investigators have been combing through the trashed parliament for fingerprint and DNA evidence to help identify protesters who stormed the building and left its walls daubed with slogans such as "HK is not China" and a



SHENZHEN: Policemen hold hands to line up and surround protesters during a demonstration in the north-western district of Tuen Mun, near the border with the Chinese city of Shenzhen, in Hong Kong yesterday. — AFP

colonial-era flag pinned to the legislature's podium. An AFP tally shows at least 66 arrests have been announced by police since the protests began. But it is not clear how many of those people have been charged and police did not respond to requests for a breakdown.

'Mothers rally'

The unrest presents the most severe challenge to Beijing and Hong Kong's leaders since the city's handover to China. Critics say Beijing has ratcheted up control over the city in recent years, stamping down on dissidents and refusing calls for universal suffrage.

While the current protests were sparked by huge public opposition to the extradition bill they have since morphed into a broad anti-government movement. On Friday evening thousands of Hong Kong mothers rallied at a park in the commercial district of Central in support of those who ransacked parliament. Didi Cheng, who has a 25-year-old daughter, told AFP the protesters who stormed the building "had no other choice".

"After two mass rallies, the cold-blooded government had no response," the 53-year-old said. "I have to come out to show my support for the youngsters, to tell them I stand with them."

City leader Carrie Lam has postponed the extradition legislation but has failed to quell public anger. Protesters have demanded she withdraw the bill entirely, launch an independent inquiry into police use of tear gas and rubber bullets, and step down.

Chief secretary Matthew Chueng-Lam's de facto deputy-held talks with pro-democracy lawmakers which he said were "constructive" but there was no suggestion of a breakthrough.

"My meeting with the pan-democrats just now was very useful in the sense that it's the first time we've really had an opportunity to sit down and talk candidly and frankly over the issues," he told reporters. Since the parliament siege Beijing has vocally thrown its support behind Lam, calling on Hong Kong authorities to pursue all those involved in the ransacking. — AFP

Indonesia jails woman reporting sexual harassment

JAKARTA: Indonesia's Supreme Court has jailed a woman who tried to report her employer for alleged sexual harassment, in a ruling that rights groups said on Friday risked turning victims of sexual abuse into criminals. The Supreme Court found Baiq Nuril Maknun, who was a teacher on the island of Lombok, guilty of violating strict anti-pornography laws. It overturned her acquittal by a lower court and jailed her for six months.

She was also ordered to pay a 500 million rupiah (\$35,383) fine. The Supreme Court's Thursday decision cannot be appealed. "We are concerned about the impact of this decision because it opens a door for perpetrators of sexual violence to criminalize victims," said Ade Wahyudin, executive director of the Legal Aid Foundation for the Press.

Maknun had complained of getting lewd phone calls from the principal of a high school where she worked from 2012, court documents showed. She recorded some of the phone calls without the knowledge of the headmaster and gave a recording to a third person, and distributed it on an electronic device, which resulted in the principal losing his job, the documents showed. — Reuters

China briefed by US on latest Trump-Kim meeting

BEIJING: China has received a briefing from the United States on the latest meeting between US President Donald Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, China's Foreign Ministry said yesterday, in a call between two senior diplomats.

Trump became the first sitting US president to set foot in North Korea on Sunday when he met Kim in the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) at Panmunjom between the two Koreas and agreed to resume stalled nuclear talks. Chinese Vice Foreign Minister Luo Zhaohui and US Special Representative for North Korea Stephen Biegun discussed that meeting in a telephone call on Friday, China's Foreign Ministry said in a short statement.

"Biegun introduced the meeting between the US and North Korean leaders at Panmunjom, and said the US side is willing to strengthen communication

and coordination with the Chinese side on the peninsula issue," the ministry added. Luo told Biegun the recent "positive interactions" on the North Korean issue by all parties had important meaning for the peace talks process, the ministry said.

"China supports US-North Korea exchanges and dialogue and hopes that the two sides will meet each other halfway and follow the consensus of the leaders of the two countries to resume consultations at the working level as soon as possible," it added. Trump's meeting with Kim came around a week after Chinese President Xi Jinping met Kim himself during a state visit to Pyongyang.

While China has not officially announced it, Luo is likely China's new special envoy for the North Korea issue, after predecessor Kong Xuanyou became China's new ambassador in Tokyo in late May.

Luo was also involved in a briefing to Chinese reporters on Xi's visit to North Korea before Xi went, according to state media. Luo is an urbane career diplomat who speaks good English, according to diplomats who have met him. He previously served as China's ambassador in Canada, Pakistan and India, and also worked in the Chinese embassy in Washington from 1996-2000. — Reuters

US lawmakers urge sanctions over China's Xinjiang crackdown

WASHINGTON: US lawmakers on Friday renewed their call for sanctions against China's top official in the Xinjiang region on the anniversary of riots that left nearly 200 dead.

China cracked down hard after the July 5, 2009 rampage in Urumqi, the region's capital. Around one million Uighurs or members of other mostly Muslim, Turkic-speaking communities have been detained in a vast network of camps in the name of counterterrorism. More than 40 US lawmakers across the political spectrum on April 3 called on the Trump administration to slap sanctions on Chen Quanguo, the Communist Party secretary in Xinjiang. But the chairs of the Congressional-Executive Commission on China, a US government body that monitors human rights in the country, said the administration has not yet responded to the letter.

"On this sad anniversary, we reiterate that call to hold Chinese officials accountable," said the chairs, Republican Senator Marco Rubio and

Democratic Representative Jim McGovern. "The Chinese government has operated with impunity in (Xinjiang) for far too long," they wrote.

The Trump administration has repeatedly denounced China's treatment of Uighurs, with Secretary of State Mike Pompeo likening the mass detention to Nazi-era concentration camps.

Rubio and McGovern wrote: "The rhetoric has been tough, but it's not enough, given the egregious scope of abuses." Administration officials say they are studying sanctions, but the issue comes as Trump is already embroiled in a range of disputes with China, including a simmering trade war.

China describes its camps as vocational training centers where Uighurs learn job skills and Mandarin and are dissuaded from embracing extremism. But former detainees say they were indoctrinated for merely following Islamic traditions, such as wearing long beards or face veils. — AFP

Japan PM Abe's coalition on track to win solid majority

TOKYO: Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe's coalition is on track to win a solid majority in a July 21 upper house election, and his dream of revising the pacifist constitution could still be alive if enough allies also win, a survey showed yesterday.

Abe's Liberal Democratic Party (LDP) and its coalition partner Komeito are expected to win more than 63 seats, a majority of the 124 seats contested, the poll taken by the Kyodo news agency on Thursday and Friday showed. They could win as many as 77 seats, it said. Other surveys, including those taken by the Asahi and Sankei newspapers, also showed Abe's coalition parties with a good chance of

winning a majority of the seats up for re-election.

However, many voters are still undecided and the outcome could change. Upper house elections are held every three years, with members' terms running for six years. The LDP won a landslide victory in 2013 but fared less well in 2016. Reforms last year increased the number of seats in the upper house by three to 245.

Attention will also focus on whether the ruling bloc, along with the smaller Japan Innovation Party and independents, retain a two-thirds "super majority" needed to revise the post-war pacifist constitution, a long-held goal for Abe.

Abe is highlighting his call to revise the post-war constitution to further legitimise Japan's Self-Defense Forces, as its military is known.

Media reports said pro-revision forces needed to win 85 of the seats being contested to have a two-thirds majority. A constitutional revision requires approval by two thirds of both chambers of parliament and a majority in a public referendum. — Reuters



TOKYO: Japan's Prime Minister and ruling Liberal Democratic Party leader Shinzo Abe (left) speaks beside Constitutional Democratic Party of Japan leader Yukio Edano (right) during seven party leaders' debate at the Japan National Press Club in Tokyo. — AFP

Analysis

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(Left) A boy rides an electric scooter in front of the Pyramid of The Louvre Museum as the sun sets in Paris on July 3, 2019. (Right) A man rides an electric scooter in Medellin, Colombia, on July 2, 2019. —AFP



E-scooters: Not so eco-friendly after all?

E-scooters touted as zero-carbon urban transport are flooding city streets worldwide, but just how green they are remains an open question. The companies - from multinationals to local startups - distributing them insist the omnipresent two-wheel vehicles are a boon for the environment and a curb on global warming. "Bird was founded to help create a cleaner and more hospitable world that prioritizes people over cars," the American firm, one of the global leaders in e-scooters, says on its website. "Scooters cut the use of vehicles and reduce the volume of traffic on the road," it said. "They also help reduce pollution and improve air quality."

Shared scooters that do not require docking ports can be driven door-to-door, avoid stressful searches for parking spaces, and have zero-emission motors. On paper, they have the potential to radically reduce urban car traffic: 70 percent of car trips between home and work in France, for example, are five kilometres or less, according to the French National Institute for Statistics and Economic Research (INSEE).

"Micromobility could theoretically encompass all passenger trips of less than eight kilometres, which account for as much as 50 to 60 percent of today's total passenger miles travelled in China, the European Union, and the United States," consulting firm McKinsey said in a report. In the US, riders made nearly 40 million trips on shared scooters last year, according to the National Association of City Transportation Officials. Lime, a major player financed by Uber and Google-parent Alphabet, found that roughly one in every three Lime rides in 26 cities around the world replaces a trip by car. "From this shift, we estimate that our riders have avoided 15 million miles (24 km) of car travel and prevented 6,220 metric tons of carbon emissions" over a two-year period, the company noted.

No long-term data

But do e-scooters live up to all the hype? With regard to Lime's claims, a survey by research group 6t of 4,500 commuters in Paris, Lyon and Marseilles revealed that only 19 percent used scooters to go to work or school - more than 40 percent of usage was by out-of-town visitors. Without access to e-scooters, 44 percent of respondents said they would have walked, 12 percent said they would have biked, and 30 percent would have used public transport.

Cars barely entered into the picture. "But this doesn't mean that we should get rid of e-scooters - absolutely not!" said Jeremie Almosni, head of mobility at the Ademe, the French government agency for energy efficiency. "The fact that half of usage is recreational is striking," he acknowledged. "But at least this favors a more mixed use of transport. It's definitely a way to get people out-and-about more, and perhaps a way of encouraging them to give up cars."

There is also a lot of uncertainty as to the lifespan of shared e-scooters, which varies with hardware and intensity of usage. It's a key question, because how long they last is a major part of what determines environmental impact. "As of today, it is impossible to say whether e-scooters are good or bad for the environment because we lack long-term statistics on life cycles," said Denis Benita, a transportation engineer at Ademe. One study from Louisville, Kentucky put the average life span at 28 days. Another said it was closer to three months.

'We learned a lot'

Across what has already become a multi-billion dollar industry, companies are trying to make the machines more robust, and thus more profitable. "An electric scooter lasts twice as long today as when we first came to France in June 2018," a Lime France spokesman told AFP. The company also recycles the hardware - "every piece, down to the last screw, is reused," according to the spokesman. The learning curve has been equally sharp for Bird, said Kenneth Schlenker, head of Bird France. "We've only been operating in cities for about a year and a half," he told AFP. "We've learned a lot in that time."

By consolidating parts from engines, for example, the company plans to expand their life span two years, he noted. The company aims to make travel by Bird carbon neutral by reducing emissions and through carbon credits. Batteries are another issue. The electric scooter and motorcycle market - which could be worth \$14 billion by 2025, according to Markets & Research - has mostly shifted to lithium-ion (li-ion) batteries, which are lighter and last longer than other kinds. But lithium is not problem-free either: It poses an environmental risk related to both sourcing and waste. Lime has recently partnered with a French company that claims it can recycle 70 percent of spent batteries. —AFP

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E-scooter 'tsunami' flooding cities worldwide

They appeared in June last year as Paris was waking up from its annual all-night Festival of Music: hundreds of green-and-black electric scooters dotting the pavements of the capital. The timing was perfect, with the city struggling with a botched revamp of its main bike-sharing service that left countless frustrated users looking for a new form of transport. Cheap, widely available and easily unlocked with a smartphone app, e-scooters checked all the boxes, becoming wildly popular overnight.

"It's happened very quickly and a bit of an anarchic way," admitted French Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne in May. "It's effectively been the law of the jungle." Over the course of a year, a total of 13 operators piled into the Paris market, putting 20,000 scooters on the streets in a chaotic free-for-all that left legislators at a loss in a country normally known for its rigorous rules and regulations.

The backlash wasn't long coming - pedestrians terrorized by silent riders speeding down pavements, randomly-parked scooters cluttering curbs and the city's historic squares, and a growing number of accidents. This practical and fun form of transport, seen from Boston to Bangkok, has posed major regulatory problems, with city officials worldwide taking different approaches, from laissez-faire in Paris to a virtual blanket ban in London.

Transportation tsunami

Electric scooters were first launched in California in Sept 2017 by a startup called Bird, followed eight months later by competitor Lime. By half-way through 2018, they had both hit Europe, moving swiftly on into the Middle East, Asia and Latin America. Today, Bird and Lime are the largest shared-scooter operators in the world. "Any city in the world that has been working on its transportation policy, even 18 months ago, wasn't anticipating this tsunami," said Joel Hazan, a partner at the Boston Consulting Group. "It has been the fastest rollout in the history of mobility

E-scooters zip into traffic chaos in Latin America

Electric scooters promised to revolutionize transportation in Latin America's traffic-clogged, smog-choked cities, but critics say they have only added to the free-wheeling chaos. Like metallic mushrooms sprouting overnight, electric scooters from ride share companies appeared by the thousands last year on streets and sidewalks from Bogota and Lima to Sao Paulo and Mexico City. For around half a dollar, plus a per-minute charge of about 10 US cents, anyone with a smartphone and a bank card can unlock these scooters and zip silently through the pandemonium of Latin America's biggest cities - some of the world's most congested.

They then leave the mini-vehicles at their destination. As an added bonus, "monopatines" - as they are known in Spanish - help cut down on the notorious pollution plaguing the region's mega-cities by giving commuters an electric alternative, advocates say. But, as it did in Europe and

Tel Aviv takes a ride to scooter 'paradise'

Matan Ben Ari was among the many taking to one of Tel Aviv's main streets on a recent day - not with a car or public transport, but with an electric scooter. He uses them all week, including on Saturdays, the weekly Sabbath or Jewish day of rest, when no public transport is allowed. "There is no public transport and taxis are expensive," said the 28-year-old. "That leaves this solution. Also it's fun to travel with it." Israel's in the country's economic capital Tel Aviv have embraced electric scooters and their smart-phone rental systems, using them to zip along Mediterranean beaches and avoid heavy traffic. They provide the added benefit of serving as a transport option on the Sabbath as well.

But, like in other cities, the growing popularity of electric scooters has not come without complaints from those who say they are a dangerous nuisance. Wind at their backs and phones in their hands, Ben Ari and others were riding along Ibn Gavirol street, stretching north-to-south across the city and where they compete for space with bicycles. "It's convenient, accessible," said 20-year-old Inbal as she leaned on the handlebars of her scooter. An app on her phone tells her where the nearest available scooter is located. "It's easy," she said. "I go to the beach, I stop there, I use the app and that's all."

Tel Aviv, with its reputation for modernity, openness and list of high-tech firms, seems especially likely to embrace the trend. Its sunny weather, flat landscape and traffic jams also make the scooters an appealing option. Bird, a US-based firm, was the first to deploy in August last year with 2,500 electric scooters, followed by Wind, Lime and Leo. There are now around 7,500 available, in addition to the thousands of

services and the quickest wave to spread across the world. It's basically gone global over the past two years."

For cities, the main headache is safety, but experts say that can only be addressed with a rethink of urban planning. Elderly people knocked flying, pedestrians with broken bones, riders killed in a crash - though the horror stories exist, there is "no reliable data on collisions", a European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) says. Nippy and speedy, scooters zip along at up to 25 km an hour, making them too fast for the pavement but problematic on roads.

Most cities would like to allow e-scooters on bike lanes, but that space often doesn't exist. "Cities are designed for car usage and the new question we face is how do we split the space that we've been dedicating to cars to create more space for pedestrians, for bikes and e-scooters," says BCG's Hazan. "Security will only work if we can segregate the space," he said.

'Geofenced' parking

Space is also a problem with issues like parking, said Philippe Crist, an advisor to the International Transport Forum at the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). "A tremendous amount of the city is devoted to on-street parking, and if there is clutter on the pavement, it's because there is very little space elsewhere," he said. Cities are now re-allocating on-street parking space to bikes and scooters, he said.

"It doesn't actually require much - some have just started painting lines on pavements" as designated parking bays, he said, while others are experimenting with GPS technology to keep parking to a designated area. Known as "geofencing", it can stop a user logging off and finishing a ride if left in the wrong place. "If not left in the right place, the operator can charge an extra fee or not allow the trip to finish, so it will keep (charging the user)

the United States, the scooters' arrival has also sparked controversy - amplified, in the case of Latin America, by the sheer size of its cities and the anarchy on its roads.

Riding down sidewalks, up one-way streets and into accidents - at speeds of up to 40 km per hour, typically with no helmets and little experience - scooter users have exacerbated the very chaos the new technology was supposed to alleviate, critics say. Protests have erupted over the fact that riders tend to leave the vehicles in the middle of the sidewalk or even the street when they are finished - sometimes blocking doors, driveways, ramps for the disabled or the streets themselves.

"Part of the problem in this city is that nobody respects anything," said Oscar Barrio, 44, a scooter user in the trendy Roma neighborhood of Mexico City, a sprawling capital of 20 million people. He himself makes an effort to exercise good scooter safety and etiquette, he hastened to add. But the same cannot always be said of his fellow riders. A Google search for "monopatines accidentes" - using the Spanish - returns ample video evidence.

In March, a scooter user in Mexico City riding the wrong way up a one-way street was sent flying through the air by a car making a left turn. A similar accident in February killed a 28-year-old rider in the Mexican capital's Zona Rosa neighborhood. In Lima, Peru, a 63-year-old

bicycles and electric bikes already on the streets. "Micromobility was already big (in Tel Aviv) and Bird has accelerated the process," said Yaniv Rivlin, head of Bird in Israel, using the word to describe lightweight vehicles like electric scooters and bikes. With 60 percent of its residents under 40, Tel Aviv is "scooter paradise," he said. But the trend has not only drawn in young people. Electric scooters have been a life-changer in the congested city for Adi Krispin, 43. He uses them at least an hour and a half per day to bring his daughter to the playground, go to work and grocery shopping, he said. "It's difficult to maneuver a bike to bring it into the house or the office," he said. "It's simple with a scooter."

City officials note positive benefits from the trend. Meital Lehavi, deputy mayor in charge of transport, said scooters have helped fill a void in public transport, which "does not meet the real needs" of residents in a city that tends to be more progressive than the rest of the country. She notes the influence of ultra-Orthodox Jews on Israel's right-wing government and the Sabbath ban on public transport. The scooters also have a positive environmental effect when they are used in place of cars, she added. However, Tel Aviv is like other cities across the world in struggling with the downsides. Lehavi says separate lanes for bicycles and scooters are lacking as well as racks where they can be stored. Riders often ride freely on sidewalks and leave scooters wherever they feel, creating obstacles that can pose a danger. "It's a new trend that no one really knows what to make of," she said.

Taking a cue from other cities worldwide, Tel Aviv has decided to regulate their usage. It has given operators until mid-September to put in place dedicated racks and to share their data with city officials. Bird's Rivlin said those requirements were "reasonable". "Thanks to the scooters, there are fewer cars and we will continue to cooperate with the city to further this revolution in the months and years to come," he said. —AFP

E-scooter market charges ahead but faces bumpy road

The E-scooter market has exploded over the past two years but operators are by no means assured of finding a long-term niche in the urban transport sector. Participants, jumping on a bandwagon which saw US firm Bird first out of the blocks in 2017, must above all ensure their own survival as they confront the thorny issue of longevity of gear mostly made in China.

Among the best known companies having joined the two-wheeled party are US firm Lime, Mexico's Grow Mobility and Germany's Flash, who have between them raised \$1.5 billion in funding according to The Boston Consulting Group (BCG). Last year alone saw global growth in the market of 76 percent according to a report by France's Federation of Micro Mobility Professionals (FP2M) and the Smart Mobility Lab. Bird and Lime have both muscled in on more than 120 cities worldwide and claim a combined 10 million users to date. The BCG calculates that by 2025, the global market will be worth \$40 to \$50 billion.

Self-service E-scooter providers do not publish financial data but it is widely accepted that they are still a long way off turning a profit. The BCG study calculates that four months of use covers the cost of making a scooter but rented ones tend to last for only three. "As of today, the economy of the E-scooter does not work," says Tyler Barrack, one of the authors of the BCG report. "We are above the four months put forward by the BCG," insists, however, Arthur-Louis Jacquier, director general of Lime France.

He highlights efforts by Lime to extend the life of their machines, a crucial issue given the

until it's in that area," he said. Another innovation automatically throttles down the speed within a designated zone, he said.

Ban to plan

Not everyone has jumped on the bandwagon, with London the only major city in Europe where e-scooters are banned unless a rider has a driving license, insurance, road tax, a helmet and a number plate. Although new regulations are under consideration, for the moment the law is strictly enforced. Last year, a 15-year-old boy got six points on his future driving license after being caught on a scooter riding at high speed.

"The best policymakers in the world are banning e-scooters, not forever, just to launch it in an organized, controlled and efficient way that is synchronized with the rest of the transportation modes," said BCG's Hazan. Singapore is one such example, where new laws came into force on July 1 following a pilot involving three local startups. Now only the 85,000 registered e-scooters with a license plate are allowed on the city's bike paths, with offenders facing a fine of 1,500 US dollars or three months in jail.

There is a 10 km-per-hour speed limit, which is carefully monitored by officers with speed guns, and members of the public are urged to report any speeding or reckless riding. Using GPS tracking, riders are fined for parking illegally and the city offers a Safe Riding program. "Cities are trying to impose much more rigorous standards on how they are deployed and what information is required from them," said Crist, pointing to the rapid turnaround in Paris. In recent months, the city banned riding and parking on pavements, and has imposed a code of conduct under which operators will eventually have to geofence parking spots and enforce automatic speed curbs. Five or six of the city's 13 fleet operators have pulled out in the past week, Crist said. —AFP

woman ended up with both arms broken when an electric scooter ran her over on the sidewalk last April. And in Sao Paulo, Brazil, authorities have registered 125 accidents involving electric scooters from January to May.

'Attack vehicle neutralized'

With politicians slow to impose regulations, locals have started taking matters into their own hands. In Mexico City, angry residents scraped off the QR codes that enable users to unlock the scooters, and immobilized others with strips of tape reading "attack vehicle neutralized". Still, the scooter companies see Latin America as a natural place to expand. The region is home to three of the five most gridlocked cities in the world, according to consulting firm Inrix - Bogota, Mexico City and Sao Paulo - and the resulting air pollution is an increasingly urgent concern.

Meanwhile, an enlarged middle class has growing access to cell phones and debit cards. San Francisco-based startup Lime is set to launch service in Sao Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires and Lima this month. Mexico City-based Grin is currently hiring nearly 70 people around the region, and has just teamed up with Brazilian company Yellow to expand their footprint. The companies tend to respond with a common strategy when they face accusations of exacerbating traffic chaos: Blame the cars. —AFP

environmental footprint of the scooters. "We are capable of repairing an E-scooter in 25-30 minutes and we are going to throw almost nothing away," say Jacquier. The Quartz website carried out an enquiry last year into the use of scooters in Louisville, Kentucky, which showed that they last - on average - 28.8 days.

Bird, whose scooters are used there, contests the figures. So far, the only clear winner from the explosion of scooter use looks to be Chinese manufacturer Ninebot, which notably is the main supplier in US rental markets. According to Bloomberg, Ninebot estimated late last year that four of every five scooters in circulation globally came from its factories.

Consolidation ahead

The spectacular growth in E-scooter use is down to a swift evolution in modes of transport. "There has been a real move towards the electrical and towards urban mobility which is having overtaking leisure mobility," Jean Ambert, director general of Smart Mobility Lab, told AFP recently. Yet uncertainty persists over the market's long-term prospects. "How many problems are remaining, especially with regulators? Where do we park? How do we protect customers?" asks Barrack, as city and state authorities roll out legislation to cover existing legal loopholes surrounding use of such machines.

There is also the issue of how many E-scooter startups will manage to survive cut-throat competition which is a hallmark of the market. "Consolidation is inevitable," says Barrack. Even so, Patrick Studener, Bird vice-president observes: "We've seen many companies pivoting to get into the E-scooter business. It proves the market's right." Bird recently bought out rival and compatriot Scoot for, the Wall Street Journal reported citing people familiar with the matter, \$25 million. There has furthermore been media speculation of a Lime buyout by Uber, which has already invested in the firm to add E-scooters to its car app. —AFP

Business

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ALLAHABAD: An Indian shopkeeper selling grains and legums waits for customers at a market in Allahabad on Friday. India's newly re-elected government promised an easing of foreign investment rules and more infrastructure spending in an effort to boost flagging growth rates. — AFP

India raises import tariffs, taxes on superrich

Fiscal deficit target for 2019/20 trimmed to 3.3% of GDP in budget

NEW DELHI: India raised import tariffs on nearly 75 items including gold and automobile parts in its budget on Friday and increased taxes on the rich to help pay for recapitalizing banks and supporting small business in a bid to revive sagging growth. Aiming to restart investment that's at its weakest level in years, the Prime Minister Narendra Modi's government also proposed giving foreign investors a bigger role in India's giant insurance and aviation sectors, which have been tightly controlled for decades.

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman unveiled the proposals while presenting to parliament the budget for the fiscal year ending March 31, 2020, the first since the Hindu nationalist-led government was re-elected in a vote spanning April and May. Modi, boosted by his election victory, has set a target of growing India into a \$5 trillion economy by 2024/2025 from \$2.7 trillion. A government report on Thursday said this will be done on the back of higher investment, savings and exports in the way China's growth was propelled.

"This budget is setting out a vision, a target, for every sector of our society," Sitharaman said to the thumping of desks in parliament. GDP growth slumped to 5.8 percent in January-March, the lowest in 20 quarters. Growth for the last fiscal year, at 6.8 percent, was also a five-year low. All important indicators of economic activity, like the dipping index of industrial production and plummeting automobile sales, confirmed the slowdown.

But the government did not announce a big jump in public spending, contrary to expectations. Sitharaman said the fiscal deficit for this financial year would be trimmed to 3.3 percent of GDP - which analysts said was likely based on ambitious expectations of higher tax collections.

"Commitment to restrict fiscal deficit at 3.30 percent compared to 3.40 percent is a good intent, but we need to look at the revenue assumptions more closely to draw more comfort," said Joseph Thomas, head of research, Embay Wealth Management in Mumbai. Capital Economics is skeptical about the deficit target. "The fiscal maths don't add up," it said.

Taxes on super-rich

Sitharaman raised import duties on gold and other precious metals to 12.5 percent from 10 percent, and levied an import tax of one rupee per ton on crude oil to boost federal revenue just as global oil prices have softened from their highs. The government also increased local levies on a liter of petrol and diesel by two rupees each, stoking fears of inflation.

The finance minister said the government would provide state-owned banks 700 billion Indian rupees (\$10.23 billion) of additional capital that are laden with bad debt which has affected their ability to lend and also spur economic growth. Indian banks and financial institutions, in all, hold bad debt of over 10 trillion rupees.

The government raised income tax surcharge on people with an annual income of more than 20 million rupees who make up the top end of Indian society.

Currently, India imposes a 10 percent surcharge where total income is between 5 million rupees and 10 million, and 15 percent on income above 10 million rupees. The new rate will include 25 percent surcharge on income between 20 million and 50 million rupees, and 37 percent on income exceeding 50 million rupees a year.

"This budget is a mixed bag with a significant increase in taxation for the wealthy. Also, the increase in excise duty for petrol and diesel will stoke inflation," said Abhimanyu Sofa, head of research at IIFL Securities Ltd. Sitharaman cut corporate tax rates to 25 percent from 30 percent for companies with an annual turnover of up to 4 billion rupees, from current ceiling of 2.5 billion rupees.

But there was no move forward on the government's long-time goal of across-the-board cutting of corporate taxes - now about 35 percent - to make India more competitive with other countries. In 2018, average corporate tax was 25 percent in China and Indonesia, 24 percent in Malaysia and 20 percent in Thailand, according to KPMG.

Foreign role in insurance, retail

The government said 100 percent foreign ownership will be permitted for insurance intermediaries and local sourcing norms will be eased for FDI in retailers selling a single brand. India currently allows foreign direct investment in single-brand retail but mandates investors to source locally 30 percent of the value of good purchased. At present, India allows 49 percent foreign ownership through the automatic route in the insurance sector, which is worth billions of dollars and has been tightly controlled for decades for fear of a backlash from the unions.

"It is high time India gets fully integrated into the global value chain of production of goods and services but also becomes part of the global financial system to mobilize global savings mostly institutional in insurance, pension, and sovereign wealth funds," Sitharaman said.

But economists say scaling up Asia's third largest economy in rapid fashion will need bold reforms including freeing up land and labor markets, which Modi shied away from in his first term for fear of political backlash. Capital Economics said in a note that reaching that target "is dependent in large part on achieving real GDP growth of 8 percent a year, which we think is unlikely."

Land and labor reforms are difficult in a democracy like India and it seems unlikely Modi will risk drawing the ire of his Bharatiya Janata Party voters that gave him a huge re-election mandate. Sitharaman set an ambitious target of sale of stakes in state-run companies to 1.05 trillion rupees (\$15.33 billion) from 850 billion rupees

raised in the previous fiscal year.

A plan to sell the national carrier Air India has failed for lack of buyers and in the last couple of years the government has reached its target by selling its shares in one state-run firm to another in a sleight of hand. Indian shares fell on Friday as Sitharaman proposed

increasing the minimum public shareholding in listed companies to 35 percent from 25 percent, threatening a wave of new issuance.

But bonds and the rupee firmed after the government trimmed this year's fiscal deficit target and said some of its borrowing would be made offshore. — Reuters

Erdogan sacks Turkey central bank governor amid rate tensions

ANKARA: President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has sacked the governor of Turkey's central bank and replaced him with his deputy, a presidential decree said yesterday, after months of tension with the government over high interest rates. Murat Cetinkaya, who was appointed to the role in April 2016, has been replaced by Murat Uysal, according to the decree published in the official gazette, which gave no official reason for the change.

There had been recent speculation that Cetinkaya could be replaced amid disagreements with the government on cutting interest rates. Erdogan has repeatedly railed against high interest rates and called for them to be lowered to stimulate growth.

He once called high rates the "mother and father of all evil". Turkey's main interest rate is 24 percent after the bank under Cetinkaya made an aggressive rate hike of 625 basis points last September following a currency crisis in August. Last month, Erdogan said the current rate was "unacceptable", promising to find a solution as soon as possible.

"I agree on the independence of the central bank but let me put it very clearly that I am against interest (rate) policies and above all, high interest rates," he said.

'Adventurist path'

Erdogan's ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) has built its success on Turkey's strong growth, with supporters boasting of progress in living standards during the Turkish leader's 16 years in office - first as prime minister and then president. But the weakening economy contributed to the AKP losing Ankara and Istanbul in recent local elections, in what was a stinging rebuke to the ruling party in power since 2002.

Economic columnist Ugur Gurses said that the central bank chief was sacked with the goal of lowering rates. "As I predicted, Ankara is swiftly taking an adven-

turist path after losing the election," he wrote on Twitter.

"The goal of removing the central bank governor is clear: print money and lower the interest (rate) but the governor cannot be sacked except for the reasons specified in its law. A presidential decree is not above law." The central bank's next policy meeting is scheduled to be held on July 25.

The new governor Uysal said he would continue to use monetary policy tools "independently" while remaining focused on ensuring price stability as his "main aim", according to a central bank statement.

Uysal, who had served as deputy governor since June 2016, will hold a press conference in the coming days, the bank said. The change of central bank chief came after markets closed on Friday.

Disputes with US

Turkish inflation fell to 15.72 percent in June—the lowest rate in nearly a year—from 18.71 percent in May, official statistics showed on Wednesday. The opposition Republican People's Party (CHP) spoke out against the removal of Cetinkaya, with spokesman Faik Oztrak accusing the president of interfering in the independence of the central bank. "Those who do this have lost the right to say 'trust in our economy'. The Turkish central bank is a hostage in the hands of the Palace. Full stop," he wrote on Twitter.—AFP



ANKARA: In this file photo, Turkey Central Bank Governor Murat Cetinkaya looks on during a hand over ceremony. — AFP

Business

NBK announces winner of KD 250,000 in Al-Jawhara's quarterly draw

Peshimam: I have held an Al-Jawhara account for almost 12 years

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait revealed the winner in its Al-Jawhara account's quarterly draw. Musaddik Shafee Peshimam received the KD 250,000 prize in the draw held live on FM 88.8 Kuwait Pulse on Tuesday (25 June 2019) in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry as well as representatives from NBK. Al-Jawhara's monthly and quarterly draws are supervised and audited by Deloitte.

Speaking to NBK, Peshimam expressed his happiness on winning the grand prize and said: "I have held an Al-Jawhara Account for almost 12 years. My wife and two children each have their own account. I received the news of my win from a friend who told me to check the Instagram account where my name was announced."

Peshimam added: "I would like to open a rehabilitation center in Kuwait and India that focuses on the self-development of people who have suffered from difficult experiences in life. I would like to thank NBK for this opportunity. The bank is a source of credibility and I wish them continued success."

Customers of Al-Jawhara Account enter automatically in the weekly, monthly and quarterly draws, giving them the chance to win KD 5,000 weekly, KD 125,000

monthly and the grand prize of KD 250,000 quarterly for every KD 50 deposited in their Al-Jawhara Account. Customers' chances of entering the draws double for every KD 50 if no withdrawal or transfers occur on the account during the required period. To open an Al-Jawhara Account, the minimum opening amount is KD 400 while the maximum amount that can be held is KD 500,000.

NBK also recently announced the winners in Al-Jawhara's weekly draw of KD 5,000 for the month of June: Khaleel Ibrahim Khaleel Gharbeyah, Saleh Yousef Saleh AlOthman and Abdullahaziz Yaqoub Hasan Abdullah.

Customers can open an Al-Jawhara Account by simply visiting their nearest branch or through the NBK Mobile Banking and NBK Online Banking. NBK has rewarded customers with total prizes of KD 2,200,000 annually since 2012 through its weekly, monthly and quarterly draws.

The Bank is also committed to offering customers discounts, offers and prizes all year long as part of its focus to cater to the needs of customers, which also ensures customers receive the best banking experience, the safest and most advanced.



Ethiopia to sell minority stake in telecom, issue licenses

ADDIS ABABA: Ethiopia said Friday it would grant two telecom licenses to private firms and sell a minority stake in Ethio Telecom, the sole operator, as the government opens sectors long closed to outsiders. Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed announced last year plans to privatize a swathe of industries and allow foreign and private investors into key state-owned companies in an effort to attract new players to the economy. State Minister of Finance Eyob Tekalign Tolina unveiled plans "to sell up to 49 percent stake in Ethio-Telecom to private firms and give telecom licenses to two private telecom operators".

"Ethiopia plans to make Ethio-Telecom a first-class service provider," he told reporters in Addis Ababa. "The government plans to open the sector to competition in addition to partial privatisation, to improve Ethiopia's digital footprint".

It is estimated Ethio Telecom, the country's only mobile and internet provider, has north of 40 million customers. Eyob declined to detail which firms had expressed interest in the telecom offer, but stiff competition is expected from foreign multinationals keen on entry into one of Africa's largest markets.

Ethiopia is Africa's fastest-growing economy but faces soaring debt, poor-performing industries and a foreign exchange shortage. The government owns most of Ethiopia's major industries, and foreign businesses are kept out of banking, retail and other key sectors, unlike other rapid-growing African economies. In another reversal of long-standing policy, Ethiopia will also open parts of its agricultural sector to outsiders.

Eyob said several state-owned sugar projects would be sold, with foreign firms given the option of direct sale or entering joint ventures of public-private partnerships.

"Ethiopia has sought investment from foreign buyers located in Europe, Asian and even African countries. The Ethiopia Ministry of Finance and Economic Cooperation expects the privatization of at least five to six sugar factories within six to twelve months" he said. Ethiopia has in recent years invested billions in the sugar sector to meet fast-rising local demand and to bolster export revenue.

But the sector has been dogged by allegations of mismanagement and corruption and many state-run mills have suffered major losses. —AFP

African free trade zone expected to begin in 2020

NIANEY, Niger: A landmark African free trade zone due to be ceremonially launched at a summit in Niger this weekend is expected to take effect from July 2020, the African Union (AU) trade commissioner said Friday. "We have recommended to the summit that the actual date of trading should be the 1st of July 2020," Albert Muchanga, in charge of trade and industry at the 55-nation bloc, told AFP. "It is not yet definitive, the summit has to consider that recommendation," he said.

However, "the ministers of trade have accepted, so naturally you would expect that the head of states will." "I am very optimistic, the passion is spreading and everyone is ready to work hard for the better," he added. The launch of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), 17 years in the making, will be the major focus at the AU summit.

Nigeria, Africa's most populous nation and the most notable absentee to the deal alongside Benin and Eritrea, announced earlier this week that it would sign up to the AfCFTA in Niamey.

'Removing fragmentation'

Muchanga said the accord, which will progressively phase out duties on 97 percent of goods traded between African countries, would be a spur for growth. "The biggest benefit is you are removing the fragmentation of Africa," Muchanga said, predicting an influx of foreign capital that would create jobs and prosperity.

According to the AU, the zone, bringing together Africa's 1.2 billion people into the world's largest trade bloc, could increase intra-African trade by 60



NIAMEY: The launch of an African Continental Free Trade Area will be the focus of the two-day summit of the Executive Committee of the Meeting of the African Union at the Palais des Congres in Niamey, Friday, July 5, 2019.

percent by 2022. Some however have feared that cheaper imports will hit small manufacturers and farming families. Some countries would face a short-term hit to revenues but competition would drive innovation, Muchanga said. A billion US dollars (890 million euros) in credit has been earmarked by the African Import and Export Bank for countries requiring support, he announced.

Devil in details

"Countries which will have adjustment costs then can have recourse to that facility which will assist them," he said.

The pact notionally came into being in late May after crossing the threshold of ratification by at least 22 countries. AU members, after formally launching it in Niamey, will then have to hammer out key details to make it operational. Some of these are notorious pitfalls in trade liberalization talks, say analysts. They include a timetable for lowering customs duties, rules for certifying "Made in Africa" products and arbitration mechanisms to settle disputes.

Observers also caution that import duties are not the only obstacles to freer business—corruption, decrepit infrastructure and lengthy waiting times at borders are also major deterrents to trade. —Reuters

US-China trade officials aim to talk next week: Officials

WASHINGTON: US and Chinese officials are working to schedule a top-level trade talks by telephone next week but a face-to-face encounter has not been scheduled yet, US officials said Friday.

Efforts to pencil in a new round of negotiations come a week after President Donald Trump and Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping met in Japan

and agreed to restart their stalled negotiations.

But Beijing this week showed no sign of softening its position, with the Commerce Ministry announcing Thursday that any resolution would require Washington to lift the steep tariffs it imposed on Chinese imports last year. "I know they're working on coming up with a date for so-called face-to-face meetings. That will happen," top White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow told Fox Business Network on Friday.

"I don't know if that's this coming week. I think the phone calls are this week. The face-to-face may not be for another week, but I don't want to get ahead of that curve," he said.

An official with the US Trade

Representative's office confirmed to AFP that efforts are underway to schedule a call between top negotiators for next week.

Meanwhile, The South China Morning Post also reported Friday that talks were due to resume in Beijing next week. US stocks appeared to react positively to word talks will resume, erasing some of the losses from earlier in the day when a strong jobs report called into doubt a hoped-for cut in interest rates by the Federal Reserve.

Trade talks with Beijing have been stalled since May, when Trump accused Chinese negotiators of renegeing on core commitments made over prior months of negotiating.

But at their meeting last week on the sidelines of the Group of 20 summit in

Japan, Trump agreed to soften the hard-line stance on Chinese telecommunications giant Huawei, a company US officials claim poses a national security threat. The decision triggered a backlash among lawmakers on Capitol Hill but White House officials said the changes should not create any additional risk to US national security.

The White House also said this week it had no intention of easing a ban on Huawei's participation in the development of 5G wireless networks in the United States.

Beijing and Washington have hit each other with tariffs on \$360 billion in two-way trade since last year, rattling markets and weighing on the manufacturing sector while fueling concerns about a weakening global economy. —AFP

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	304.250
Euro	345.320
Sterling Pound	384.570
Canadian dollar	234.490
Turkish lira	55.830
Swiss Franc	310.140
US Dollar Buying	296.900

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2.805
Indian Rupees	4.445
Pakistani Rupees	1.965
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.723
Nepali Rupees	2.766
Singapore Dollar	225.540
Hongkong Dollar	39.079
Bangladesh Taka	3.587
Philippine Peso	5.953
Thai Baht	9.970
Malaysian ringgit	77.813

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81.187
Qatari Riyal	83.620
Omani Riyal	790.773
Bahraini Dinar	808.420
UAE Dirham	82.891

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.289

Yemen Rival/for 1000	1.222
Tunisian Dinar	109.050
Jordanian Dinar	429.880
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.367

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.640
Canadian Dollar	231.025
Sterling Pound	386.455
Euro	346.375
Swiss Frank	298.070
Bahrain Dinar	807.490
UAE Dirhams	83.070
Qatari Riyals	84.310
Saudi Riyals	81.865
Jordanian Dinar	429.550
Egyptian Pound	18.210
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.719
Indian Rupees	4.379
Pakistani Rupees	1.933
Bangladesh Taka	3.596
Philippines Peso	5.904
Cyprus pound	18.065
Japanese Yen	3.825
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.739
Malaysian Ringgit	74.225
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.515
Thai Bhat	10.825

Turkish Lira	52.785
Singapore dollars	222.971

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.375492	0.389392
Czech Korune	0.005473	0.014773
Danish Krone	0.041932	0.046932
Euro	0.335456	0.349158
Georgian Lari	0.132022	0.132022
Hungarian O.001147	0.001337	
Norwegian Krone	0.031619	0.036819
Romanian Leu	0.065218	0.082068
Russian ruble	0.004801	0.004801
Slovakia	0.009097	0.019097
Swedish Krona	0.028600	0.033600
Swiss Franc	0.301183	0.312183
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.204859	0.216859
New Zealand Dollar	0.196231	0.205731
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.227771	0.236771
US Dollars	0.300250	0.305550
US Dollars Mint	0.300750	0.305550
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003007	0.003808
Chinese Yuan	0.042764	0.046264

Hong Kong Dollar	0.037030	0.039780
Indian Rupee	0.003856	0.004628
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002738	0.002918
Korean Won	0.000250	0.000265
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070151	0.076151
Nepalese Rupee	0.002677	0.003017
Pakistan Rupee	0.001370	0.002140
Philippine Peso	0.005865	0.006165
Singapore Dollar	0.219112	0.229112
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001352	0.001932
Taiwan	0.009921	0.010101
Thai Baht	0.009575	0.010125
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.801147	0.809197
Egyptian Pound	0.018633	0.021993
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.424361	0.433361
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021368	0.045366
Omani Riyal	0.785392	0.793283
Qatar Riyal	0.082941	0.083775
Saudi Riyal	0.080073	0.081373
Syrian Pound	0.001290	0.001510
Tunisian Dinar	0.102108	0.110108
Turkish Lira	0.047810	0.057655
UAE Dirhams	0.082230	0.083056
Yemeni Riyal	0.000989	0.001069

Business



The Arab British Economic Summit, London

FIs need to embrace FinTech as an exciting opportunity: Al-Bahar

Shaikha Al-Bahar's speech at Arab British Economic Summit, London

KUWAIT: Shaikha Al-Bahar, Deputy Group Chief Executive Officer, National Bank of Kuwait said that financial technology is now a cornerstone of modern banking infrastructure and vital in remaining competitive and customer centric, ensuring retention and engagement in the current disruptive environment.

In her speech delivered at the Arab-British Economic Summit held recently in London, attended by governmental, business and economic figures as well as Arab and British business leaders, Al-Bahar emphasized the importance of adopting to a rapidly changing world, and to embrace FinTech as an opportunity to thrive, rather than tools to compete and survive.

Al-Bahar added that the future success of banking lies in the hands of technology. Banks must commit significant investment into building state of the art infrastructure if they wish to keep pace with the sector's accelerating trajectory, highlighting that some analysts go as far to predict that IT investments should be as much as 10% of annual revenues as is the case of some leading global institutions.

Exciting opportunities to build and thrive

"For a while there has been a growing consensus, especially in MENA, that banks must adapt, or else they will not survive. Our philosophy is the opposite. We do not view technology as a threat to traditional banking services, but as a fluid enabler of solutions to better service our customers," Al-Bahar said.

She added that FinTech and Blockchain comes with the exciting opportunity to build and thrive. We must remain vigilant and proactive as we enter uncharted technological territory, rather than defending outdated mechanisms.

Acknowledging the importance of partnerships with non-bank FinTech players, Al-Bahar described it as an emerging trend that strengthen banking architecture while true internal integration can occur, confirming that this takes many forms, such as core IT upgrades to improve bandwidth and ranges to cyber-security resilience to combat rising online threats.

Competition drives innovation

Al-Bahar said that competition brings with it the need for innovation, therefore our aim at NBK is for our new initiatives to give us an edge against our peers. "We have invested in our consumer platforms to provide better service experiences for customers, with new options such as selfie pay, biometric cards and smart phone fingerprint identification," Al-Bahar said.

She added that NBK has recently implemented a new mobile banking platform for Egypt, Iraq, Bahrain, Jordan and the UAE, which ensures seamless banking transactions. On top of this, our joining of swift GPI and Ripple networks to ensure real-time international remittances across geographies, bolstering our global transaction offering, also demonstrates how lever-

aging new technologies can create a remarkable customer experience built on reliability and convenience.

Adapting to the impact of Fintech is a process

Al-Bahar explained that making a bank competitive in the current environment requires informed decision-making on technology and a deep understanding of the forces at work.

She further detailed NBK's strategy that identified three main areas of focus: 1) the threat and disruption of technological innovation, 2) the faster pace of change in product and services enabled through FinTech, and 3) facilitating customer engagement through digital banking services.

Al-Bahar also emphasized the importance of demographic considerations as a vital element in providing relevant technologies and solutions in the GCC region. In Kuwait for instance, 63% of the population is under the age of 30. This population also enjoys one of the highest internet and mobile penetration rates in the world. In such economies, advanced online and mobile banking is not a luxury, it is an integral part of the online financial ecosystem.

Creating an infrastructure for enabling Fintech

Al-Bahar indicated that while re-investing revenue, regional markets are also

building a sandbox regulatory environment for new concepts and ideas to be tested. Banks should participate in this process to incubate and nurture programs, including the likes of Fintech Hive in Dubai, FinTech Saudi in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and FinTech Bay in Bahrain. Similarly in Kuwait, the central bank has recently issued a regulatory sandbox framework for FinTechs. We have no doubt that the appetite for partnerships among the larger banks will propel operations and service offerings into the digital age.

She pointed out that regulatory infrastructure must welcome both home-grown and overseas FinTech players to stimulate growth drivers across markets. Innovation is a key growth driver catering to a young and tech-savvy population. Younger customers will become early adopters of nascent technologies, such as AI and robotics, and will be adequately rewarded for doing so. It is in banks best interests to foster such relationships with key stakeholders.

Wealth of opportunities

Al-Bahar confirmed that there exists a wealth of opportunity for investment in the Arab FinTech industry. It is remarkable to witness the progress that has been made and its implications for the industry. Powerful and relevant players are emerging, especially when it comes to payments and transactions. The recent London IPOs of Network International and Finabl, both



Shaikha Al-Bahar speaks at the Arab British Economic Summit, London

of which are UAE-based businesses, are testament to that fact.

And similarly, NBK also had its own experience, investing in Smart Wealth, through our investment banking arm, NBK Capital. Smart Wealth is a digital end-to-end financial services advisor platform that we expect will be the future of investing.

"That is not to say that large banks should be competing in an arms race for FinTech partners. Investment in third-party ventures must remain measured and strategically sound. NBK's adoption of RippleNet supports our e-remittance business, which holds great revenue potential and will undoubtedly improve service to customers", Al-Bahar noted.

Moreover, she stressed on the fact that banks need to demonstrate serious commitment to customers, shareholders, regulators and partners by investing in FinTech. NBK itself has received few accolades for excellence in banking innovation and payment services which is a testament to our own commitment. Our investment efforts do not end there - they are extensive and diverse in scope.

Al-Bahar concluded her speech at the Arab British Economic Summit by saying that: "Shifting customer needs and demographic changes remind us that we must continue to do the best we can, finding new ways to deepen our business landscape and grow the sector together as partners, not adversaries."

NBK sponsors the Arab British Economic Summit

National Bank of Kuwait sponsored the Arab British Economic Summit 2019 organized by the Union of Arab Chambers, Arab British Chamber of Commerce and the League of Arab States and with the participation of British and Arab business leaders, corporate affairs and public policy professionals.

The summit highlighted the subjects most relevant to UK and Arab business, showcasing the broad range of projects emerging and under development within the Arab world with the purpose of promoting and strengthening cooperation among its members. It also offered invaluable opportunities for investors, exporters, experts, consultants and providers of services to engage in dialogue with project leaders and decision makers.

The summit included valuable discussions about a number of key topics including: Challenges facing investment in the renewable energy sector, job creation, business climate, difficulties facing the investments in the infrastructure sector, as well as ways to attract inward investment in this sector by discussing the vital role played by infrastructure in promoting sustainable economic development in the Arab world.

Another topic of discussion was focused on the MENA region as an important strategic hub for facilitating trade between the UK, Europe and the new global markets such as Asia, in addition to the factors that make it most attractive to investors. Existing investment opportunities were pinpointed as the region expands as a hub for inter-regional trade.

Participants also discussed the challenges facing the agriculture sector and water security in light of the high population growth, considering to what extent the Arab world relies on imports to meet local demand for food produce and highlighted the investment and partnership opportunities as the region acts to develop sustainable agriculture.

The Arab British Economic Summit is an exceptional opportunity to network with key players from all sectors and expand trade exchange between Britain and the Arab world throughout all major economic sectors.

- Competition creates innovation and our strategy is built on delivering initiatives that emphasize our leadership
- FinTech is an opportunity to thrive, rather than tools to compete and survive.
- The future success of banking lies in the hands of technology & banks must commit significant investment into digital solutions.
- There exists a wealth of opportunity for investment in the Arab FinTech industry
- NBK recently launched "Smart Wealth" digital platform to be the future of investing
- Receiving accolades for excellence in banking innovation is a testament to our own commitment
- Kuwait enjoys one of the highest internet and mobile penetration rates in the world, and mobile banking is an integral part of the online financial ecosystem, hence the necessity to provide innovative online services
- Banks commitment to customers and shareholders drive the need to invest in FinTech and digital innovations

Business

NBK Capital acts as Joint Lead Manager for Burgan Bank's \$500 million issuance

Perpetual Tier Capital Securities callable in July 2024

KUWAIT: Watani Investment Co. K.S.C.C. ("NBK Capital") acted as Joint Lead Manager for the issuance of Burgan Bank K.P.S.C.'s ("Burgan" or the "Bank") \$500 million Regulation S Perpetual Tier 1 Capital Securities (the "Capital Securities"). The Capital Securities will offer semi-annual coupon payments set at 5.75 percent per annum and have a first call date set for 9 July, 2024.

The issuance constitutes direct, unconditional, unsecured and subordinated obligations by Burgan, the second largest conventional bank in Kuwait, with credit ratings of A3/Stable from Moody's, BBB+/Stable from S&P and A+/Stable from Fitch.

HSBC Bank plc and J.P. Morgan Securities plc acted as Global Coordinators, while NBK Capital, Bank ABC, Citigroup Global Markets Limited, Emirates NBD Capital Limited, First Abu Dhabi Bank P.J.S.C., HSBC Bank plc, J.P. Morgan Securities

plc and Standard Chartered Bank acted as Joint Lead Managers.

The issuance was well received by both regional and international investors, with the global order book peaking at \$2.2 billion. The global order book closed at \$1.8 billion after price revisions translating to an oversubscription of around 4.4x. MENA-based investors dominated the deal with a 51 percent share of the issuance, followed by Asian investors at 22 percent, European investors at 14 percent and investors from the United Kingdom at 12 percent.

The issuance was undertaken to manage the Bank's capital and long-term liquidity in accordance with Basel III and the Central Bank of Kuwait regulatory requirements. Faisal Al-Hamad, NBK Capital's Chief Executive Officer stated: "We are incredibly honored to have advised Burgan Bank on this international issuance. The significant demand from local

NBK CAPITAL

as well as global investors is a reflection of Burgan's solid track record in the international debt capital markets and the consistent global demand for Kuwaiti paper.

Rani Selwanes, NBK Capital's Managing Director and Head of Investment Banking added: "The overwhelming demand from Kuwaiti investors reflects on

the importance of the Kuwaiti market in supporting both regional and global issuances and reflects on NBK Capital's ability to execute global transactions at the highest quality." The Capital Securities were priced at par (100.00 percent) with a competitive reoffer yield of 5.75 percent representing a spread of 400.7 bps over the 5-year US Treasury. This came after a 50 basis point tightening from the initial price thoughts at the opening of the transaction.



Faisal Al-Hamad

URC signs pact with IKARUS

KUWAIT: United Real Estate Company K.S.C.P (URC), one of the leading real estate developers in the MENA region, announced signing an agreement with IKARUS United Marine Services K.S.C., one of KIPCO's Group of Companies. IKARUS will cover a 2-year contract period effective from July 1st



Ahmad H Kasem

2019 to include management and operation of the Marina Berth and Yacht Club. Situated along Kuwait's coastline, Marina Yacht Club is an exclusive service harbor with space for 144 berths at the Marina World located on the Arabian Gulf in Salmiya.

Ahmad Kasem, Acting Chief Executive Officer, commented, "This management and operation agreement is part of the Company's strategy to optimize its operational activities and business growth for Marina Yacht Club, in line with latest industry standards by sourcing it to one of the leading marine service providers in order to deliver a world-class quality service to our valued clientele of yacht owners."

URC's operations extend to construction and contracting, facility management, and project management through its several subsidiaries. The company's portfolio of assets and businesses are geographically spread across a number of countries through several assets such as Marina World, Marina Hotel, and KIPCO Tower in Kuwait, Salalah Gardens Mall & Residences in Oman, Abdali Mall in Jordan, Raoche View 1090 in Lebanon, Hilton Cairo Heliopolis & Waldorf Astoria Hotels in Egypt, Aswar Residences in Egypt, and Assoufid in Morocco.

Import duty on gold could hurt Indian jewelry business: MGD official



KUWAIT: Commenting on the Union Budget 2019-2020, the Managing Director of International Operations at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Shamlal Ahamed, said that while the budget was pro-poor and would definitely help in the progress of the rural India, it will hurt the domestic gold and jewelry market.

He pointed out that the additional import duty for gold will hurt India's gold and jewelry businesses and promote illegal gold smuggling, which is detrimental to the economy. On the other hand, the increased tariff in India will lead to a significant price advantage in neighboring markets such as the GCC, Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka. The price advantage of 10-12.5 percent along with VAT refunds for tourists will definitely lead to GCC, Singapore, Malaysia and Sri Lanka benefiting from jewelry tourism, he said.



Shamlal Ahamed

Gulf Bank's sixth monthly salary draw to be held tomorrow

KUWAIT: Tomorrow, Gulf Bank will be holding its sixth monthly Salary Account draw at its Shaab Branch. The draw will be approved by, and held in the presence of, a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. The 2019 Kuwaiti Salary Offer automatically enrolls both existing and new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank in the monthly and annual draws. The monthly draws allow customers the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary, while the yearly draw gives them the opportunity to win Kuwait's largest salary prize of up to 100

times their salary.

Commenting on the draw, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank said: "This is one of the most exciting days of the month at Gulf Bank. Every month, our Salary Account offers all account holders multiple benefits and gives one lucky winner a chance to claim a cash prize of up to 12 times their salary. Salary Account holders are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, so all those enrolled can have a chance to win. We can't wait to announce who is going to be our sixth winner of the year!"

The Salary Account also gives new customers the



Ahmad Al-Amir



opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and will be eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

Customers can also enjoy additional benefits like a Visa or MasterCard credit card free of charge for a year, as well as a chance to apply for a loan of up to KD 70,000 or a consumer loan of up to KD 25,000.

HSBC survey

People to match technology as top business investments

KUWAIT: About a third of businesses expect to change radically in the next two years, from what they sell to where they work, as they seek growth opportunities in a fast-changing world. But while technologies like robotics top their spending plans, firms are now prioritizing investment in the well-being and future skills of their people, according to a new HSBC survey.

'Navigator: Made for the Future', a survey of over 2,500 companies in 14 countries and territories, shows that 34 percent of decision-makers think their technological focus will 'totally' change over the coming 24 months, with a further 45 percent expecting 'slight' change. As they seek to become more customer-centric and to boost productivity, over half (55 percent) plan to invest more in research and development.

Nearly as many though (52 percent) will boost spending on skills training and 43 percent on employee well-being; ahead of logistics (42 percent), plants or equipment (34 percent), and 'bricks and mortar' premises (29 percent).

Roger Winfield, Chief Executive Officer of HSBC Kuwait, said: "There can be few more important priorities for any business or country than preparing for the future. This research is, essential-

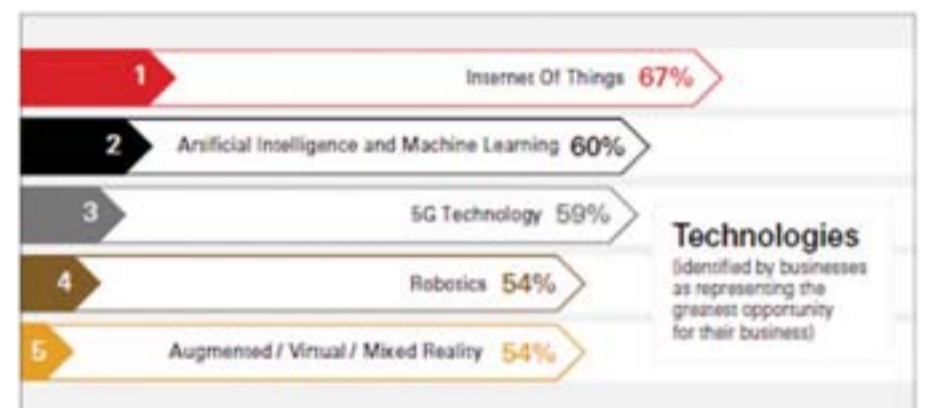


Roger Winfield

ly, thousands of business leaders around the world shining a bright light on the importance of investing in technology and people in the face of significant change to come. In Kuwait, many of these priorities are aligned with the ambitions set out in the 2035 vision."

By upskilling employees and adopting innovative technologies, the end goal for businesses is to become more efficient, more customer-centric and greener. Over half the companies surveyed plan to increase their investment in customer experience (52 percent) and 45 percent will raise spending to become more environmentally sustainable over the next two years. Almost a quarter (24 percent) want to become greener to attract and retain talented staff, and 30 percent are feeling pressure from customers to improve in this area.

A number of new technologies have already been embraced by businesses and include A.I. (41 percent), the



Internet of Things (40 percent), wearables (37 percent) and facial/image recognition (38 percent). The biggest benefits of employing these four technologies are improvements in productivity, customer experience and product or service quality.

While 76 percent of companies think technologies will make their staff more productive and 72 percent think they will enhance well-being, 59 percent also said they think they'll need fewer workers in

the future. Three in five (60 percent) intend to introduce or increase flexible working practices to enhance well-being and adapt to a rebalancing between human and automated output.

Interviews for the 'Navigator: Made for the Future' survey were conducted in Australia, Canada, mainland China, France, Germany, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Mexico, Singapore, the UAE, the UK and the USA in May 2019.

Jaguar Land Rover set to build electric cars in UK

LONDON: Car manufacturer Jaguar Land Rover has decided to produce a range of electric vehicles at its central England factory, it announced Friday, securing thousands of jobs in a major boost to post-Brexit Britain. "Jaguar Land Rover today revealed plans to manufacture a range of new electrified vehicles at its manufacturing plant in Castle Bromwich, UK," the Indian-owned group said in a statement.

The first car to roll off the production line at Castle Bromwich, which currently employs 2,500 workers, will be the next-generation all-electric Jaguar XJ luxury saloon model. "It's a huge step for (the) very prestigious, special premium-luxury XJ production in Castle Bromwich," JLR Chief Executive Ralf Speth told AFP in an interview.

The facility in Birmingham, Britain's second biggest city, will produce the electric vehicles as part of a "huge" electrification investment that was "in the billions", Speth said.

The news is a welcome fillip for the nation's largely foreign-owned car sector, which has long warned over the impact of Britain's looming departure from the European Union at the end of October.

'Future is electric'

Batteries will be made in neighboring Hams Hall, Warwickshire, while electric motors will be manufactured at JLR's engine plant close to the nearby city of Wolverhampton. "Today's announcement, which safeguards several thousand jobs in the UK, is the next stage in execution of Jaguar Land Rover's electrification strategy," JLR added.

The group aims to offer electrified options for all new Jaguar and Land Rover models by 2020.

"The future of mobility is electric and as a visionary British company, we are committed to making our next generation of zero-emission vehicles in

the UK," added Speth. The investment, praised as "trailblazing" by Britain's biggest trade union Unite, follows an agreement for employees to work a four-day week as part of restructuring plans.

"This is a proud day for our members and Jaguar Land Rover," said Steve Turner, Unite assistant general secretary for manufacturing. Cardiff University professor Peter Wells cautioned that Brexit was probably not a major factor in JLR's decision, given its existing UK manufacturing operations and declining consumer demand for high-polluting diesel cars.

'Not really Brexit related'

"The company is constrained by what they've got... it's not really a Brexit-related decision," Wells told AFP. "It's more an issue that has been forced upon the company, perhaps faster than they had wanted."

"The market is changing across the world quicker than many car companies have anticipated, so in that respect the company was essentially forced to invest in the UK—even though it's not perhaps

ideal in terms of reaching those key European markets."

Britain's auto sector warned last week that a no-deal Brexit could cost UK-based carmakers up to £70 million (\$89 million, 78 million euros) daily through delays to production. JLR, which launched its first electric vehicle I-PACE last year, is meanwhile late to develop its strategy for the segment.

"It is not alone in being late ... but certainly, given that the Nissan Leaf has been out for many years now, and Tesla has been making waves for some time in the kind of segments that Jaguar and Land Rover operate in, then clearly there is concern," Wells said.

"It's not so easy to ramp up the production of electric vehicles at this point because of concerns over supply—the battery technology and the materials needed. "They have an electric model but I don't see that they will be able to produce a high proportion of electric vehicles across the range for quite some time," added Wells, noting particularly strong competition from German carmakers like Audi, BMW, Mercedes, Porsche and Volkswagen.—AFP

What's On

ACK awards Junior Engineers Camp participants

The Center of Continuous Education (CCE) at the Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) held a ceremony to honor the students who participated in the first ever Junior Engineers Camp. The Junior Engineers Camp was organized by the CCE in collaboration with the School of Engineering as a part of its efforts to help the youth of Kuwait to reach their full potentials. The camp gave high school students, aged 14 and up, an opportunity to learn more about engineering at ACK in the period of ten days.

At the camp, students were taught how to conduct experiments and were also taught about important safety aspects of lab work. The focus of the experiments was on the four engineering majors offered by ACK: Electrical, Mechanical, Civil, and Petroleum. The students who took part in the camp described the experience as valuable, fun, and a great way to learn during summer break.

"The camp was very beneficial, it gave us an excellent opportunity to learn more things and to explore our options," said Noor Basel Al Obaid, one of the students at the camp. "You can rarely find something academic for teens in Kuwait, and I think it was a great initiative from ACK to provide us with this opportunity. I appreciate that they recognize the youth and their needs."

The students worked well with the instructors which ensured the success of the camp. Dr Michel Nahas, Assistant Professor of Electrical Engineering at ACK commented: "I personally enjoyed teaching them.



They were very enthusiastic and attentive to our instructions. The students worked well together as they explored the four engineering majors." ACK Junior Engineers who challenged themselves in this camp and proved their abilities.

UPAC organizes blood donation drive



For the fifth consecutive year, and in continuation of the "Donate Blood to Save Lives" campaign, United Projects for Aviation Services Company (UPAC), a leading commercial real estate and facilities management company, organized blood donation drives in partnership with Kuwait Central Blood Bank. The two blood donation drives were held between July 1 - 2, 2019, at Discovery Mall and at UPAC's head office respectively. 48 UPAC employees as well as various walk in visitors at Discovery Mall donated blood in support of Kuwait Central Blood Bank's campaign.

A total of 24 liters of blood were donated which will be utilized to supplement emergency blood requirements at various government hospitals in Kuwait. Donating blood contributes to helping those in need of immediate transfusions following an accident, as well as in restoring the health of patients recovering from illnesses. UPAC's blood donation drive showcases the company's commitment towards the local community and to helping those in need. Discovery Mall is one of UPAC's managed properties that offer a host of educational, cultural, and entertainment activities that are geared towards children and the youth segment in Kuwait.

Burgan Bank customers enjoy discounts at Salmiya Clinic

Presenting its clients with unique benefits and privileges, Burgan Bank customers can now enjoy valuable deals at one of the growing health centers in Kuwait, Salmiya Clinic. Ensuring its customers with the highest quality of medical services, all Burgan Bank cardholders can avail of the discounts that come under different specialties and sub specialties. Keeping in line with the latest demands and expectations of the community, Burgan Bank customers can receive a 20 percent discount at the medical laboratory, 15 percent for diagnostics radiology and sonar, and 10 percent at the endocrinology clinic, nutrition clinic, and for laser and dental and oral facilities.



Double Tomato Pesto Spaghetti with Zucchini Noodles

This fresh summer recipe features burst cherry tomatoes, cherry tomato and sun-dried tomato pesto, zucchini noodles and spaghetti! It's light and delicious.

INGREDIENTS

Pasta and zucchini noodles:
8 ounces whole grain spaghetti
1 large zucchini

Pesto:

1 cup walnuts
2 pints (4 cups) cherry or grape tomatoes
2 tablespoons olive oil, plus more for drizzling
1/4 cup oil-packed sun-dried tomatoes, rinsed and drained
2 garlic cloves, roughly chopped
1/2 teaspoon finely grated lemon zest
1 to 2 tablespoons lemon juice
1/4 teaspoon red pepper flakes
1/4 teaspoon salt, to taste
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

Garnishes:

1/2 cup lightly packed basil leaves, larger leaves torn into small pieces
Freshly grated Parmesan cheese
Olive oil, for drizzling

INSTRUCTIONS

Bring a large pot of salted water to boil for the spaghetti. Cook the pasta until al dente, according to package directions. Drain and transfer to a large serving bowl. Spiralize the zucchini with a spiralizer (here's how), or turn the zucchini into noodles with a julienne peeler, or grate the zucchini the long way on a large box grater. Toast the walnuts: In a medium skillet over medium heat,



cook the walnuts, stirring occasionally, until they smell nice and fragrant, about 7 minutes. Set aside to cool.

Cook the cherry tomatoes: In a large saucepan over medium-high heat, combine the cherry tomatoes, olive oil and a pinch of salt. Cover the pot and cook, stirring occasionally, until the tomatoes have burst open and they are cooking in their own juices, about 7 to 8 minutes. Set aside.

In a food processor, combine the walnuts, half of the cooked tomatoes, sun-dried tomatoes, garlic, lemon zest, 1 tablespoon lemon juice, red pepper flakes, 1/4 teaspoon salt and several twists of freshly ground black pepper. Blend until the mixture is pretty smooth, then season to taste with additional lemon juice, salt and/or pepper until the flavors really sing (if that doesn't do the trick, add some more sun-dried tomatoes). Blend again.

Pour the pesto over the spaghetti and toss to combine. If you'll be consuming this dish in one sitting, go ahead and toss in all of the zucchini noodles now, too. (If you plan on having leftovers, store the zucchini noodles separately from the rest, as they leach water when they're exposed to salt-I just pile the noodles on top of my individual bowls and wait to stir them in when I'm ready to eat. Hope that makes sense.)

Pour the rest of the cherry tomatoes on top of the dish, and sprinkle the basil over them. Toss gently, and divide the mixture into bowls. Top individual bowls with Parmesan or nutritional yeast, if you'd like, and a light drizzle of olive oil. Serve immediately.

Arugula & Watermelon Salad

Delicious watermelon salad recipe with fresh arugula, feta, olives and sherry vinaigrette. This surprising, sweet and savory salad is perfect for summer!

INGREDIENTS

Salad:
5 ounces arugula (about 5 cups, packed)
2 cups cubed pieces of seedless watermelon
1 cup crumbled feta cheese
1 cup halved and pitted Kalamata olives

Vinaigrette:

1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil
1 small shallot, chopped (about 2 tablespoons)
2 tablespoons sherry vinegar or red wine vinegar
Hefty pinch of salt
Freshly ground black pepper, to taste

INSTRUCTIONS

To assemble the salad: In a medium serving bowl, combine the arugula, cubed watermelon, feta and olives.

To prepare the vinaigrette: In a small liquid measuring cup or bowl, combine all of the vinaigrette ingredients and whisk until blended. Taste, and add more salt and pepper if necessary, keeping in mind that the salad contains some salty ingredients.

Wait until you're ready to serve to dress the salad, since the arugula will start wilting once it comes into contact with the vinaigrette. Whisk the vinaigrette one more time, then drizzle about half of the vinaigrette over the salad. Gently toss to combine. Add more vinaigrette if necessary to lightly coat the arugula (I only needed about half of mine and saved the rest for a future salad). Serve immediately.



Sheep shearers flock to world championship in France

BORDEAUX: Sheep shearing experts flocked to a small town in the French countryside on Thursday for the opening of the annual world championship, a four-day event held for the first time on French soil. More than 320 competitors from 34 countries as far apart as Norway, Japan and the Cook Islands, are battling it out to win titles in woolhandling, machine shearing and "blade" shearing, a traditional method using scissors.

And the 5,000 sheep on site will no doubt appreciate a haircut, with temperatures expected to peak at 34 degrees Celsius over the coming days in Le Dorat, a town in central France. It is the first time the international competition sets foot-and hoof-on French soil, although the town, which is home to 1,800 people, has previously hosted the French sheep shearing championships in 2013 as well as the Six Nations tournament the same year. Last year, it also welcomed a 24-hour sheep shearing marathon, with six shearers clipping around 2,500 sheep, producing six tonnes of fleece.

"The world championship, it's so fantastic, so spectacular, we want to share it with the French people," said Christophe Riffaud, president of the Association for the World Sheep Shearing Championship (AMTM) who has competed in Northern Ireland and the Netherlands. "I like the physical aspect of the job," said Canadian Pauline Bolay, one of only two women among the 323 participants.

Endurance, speed, flexibility

Sheep are typically shorn at least once a year to avoid sickness caused by ticks, flies and other insects in their wool. Endurance, speed and flexibility—particularly in the back—are considered key skills for this iconic rural activity, with professional shearers typically paid per animal. Competitors in Sunday's machine-shearing final will be tasked with shaving 20 lambs in under 16 minutes.

Quality is the most important aspect, making up around 60 percent of the final grade. Judges "check for marks, uncut fleece and uneven levels of shearing," the AMTM said on its website. New Zealand is the favorite to win the world title, after celebrating home-turf victories in the machine shearing and woolhandling categories in 2017. South Africa picked up first prize for blade shearing. Apart from cherrypicking the best of the best, the event aims to educate the public about how wool goes from sheep to jumper.

"Ninety percent of French wool gets sent to China to be washed and processed," Riffaud said. "There's not much demand for French wool because of its structure, but we want to promote it as a quality natural product". The seven-hectare site is also displaying around 100 exhibits made from wool, including a wedding dress and jeans, in a bid to promote the fruits of the French countryside. —AFP



LE DORAT: New Zealand's Cam Ferguson takes part in the machine shearing event at the 18th edition of the World Sheep Shearing and Wool handling championships in Le Dorat, central-western France. — AFP

CLINIC

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Kuwait Times
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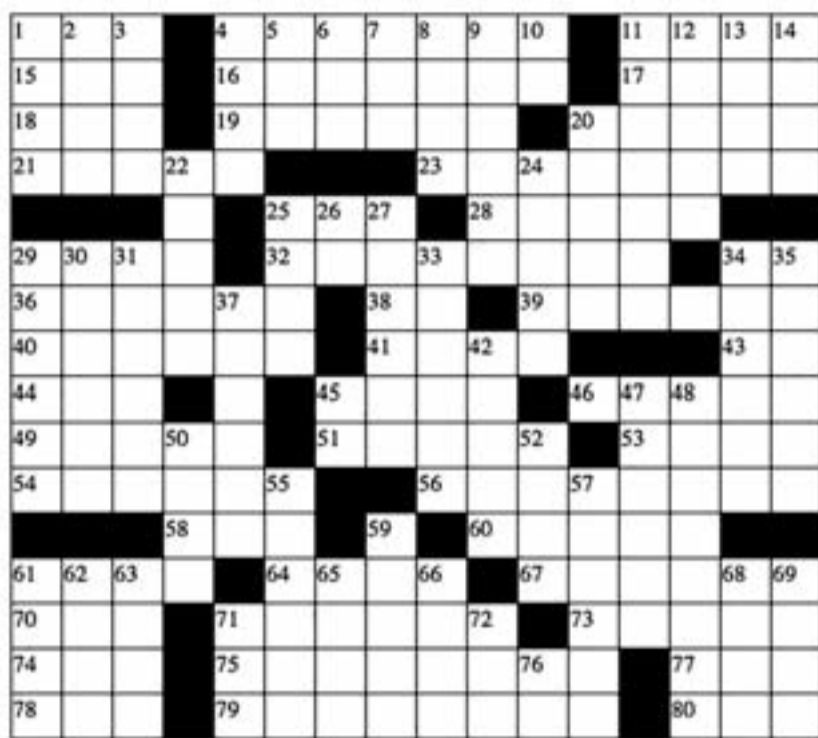
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2250



ACROSS

1. Annual grass of Europe and North Africa.
4. A Dravidian language spoken in southern India.
11. (old-fashioned) At or from or to a great distance.
15. 100 pyas equal 1 kyat.
16. Of or relating to or suggestive of dreams.
17. (Irish) Mother of the Tuatha De Danann.
18. The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
19. A supporter of feminism.
21. Largest crested screamer.
23. A historian who writes annals.
28. Relatively nontoxic South African herb smoked like tobacco.
29. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
32. Sedative-hypnotic drug (trade name Quaalude) that is a drug of abuse.
36. Soviet physicist who worked on low temperature physics (1908-1968).
38. A metallic element having four allotropic forms.
39. Any of various trees or shrubs of the genus Cassia having pinnately compound leaves and usually yellow flowers followed by long seedpods.
40. Remote city of Kazakhstan that (ostensibly for security reasons) was made the capital in 1998.
41. Distinctive and stylish elegance.
43. (astronomy) A measure of time defined by Earth's orbital motion.
44. The syllable naming the sixth (submedian) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
46. A long backless sofa (usually with pillows against a wall).
49. Excessively fat.
51. Short and fat.
53. (Babylonian) A goddess of the watery deep and daughter of Ea.
54. Any warm-blooded vertebrate having the skin more or less covered with hair.
56. Tropical American tree bearing sweet pulpy fruit with thick scaly rind and shiny black seeds.
58. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
60. Affected with or marked by frenzy or mania uncontrolled by reason.
61. (informal) Exceptionally good.
64. South African term for 'boss'.
67. Having a woven pattern.
70. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
73. An indehiscent fruit derived from a single ovary having one or many seeds within a fleshy wall or pericarp.
74. A benevolent aspect of Devi.
75. (anatomy) Of or relating to or associated with the parietal bones in the cranium.
77. Thigh of a hog (usually smoked).
78. A light touch or stroke.
79. A mining town in southern Wales.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
2. An Indian nursemaid who looks after children.
3. A village in eastern Ireland (northwest of Dublin).
4. Tree bearing large brown nuts containing e.g. caffeine.
5. Black tropical American cuckoo.
6. A long projecting or anterior elongation of an animal's head.
7. Horny projecting mouth of a bird.
8. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
9. A full skirt with a gathered waistband.
10. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
11. Type genus of the Adelgidae.
12. A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
13. Type genus of the Anatidae.
14. A flat float (usually made of logs or planks) that can be used for transport or as a platform for swimmers.
20. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
22. Port city in western Saudi Arabia on the Red Sea.
24. An intricate traditional dance in India performed by professional dancing girls.
25. A shade of blue tinged with green.
26. A dialect of Chinese spoken in the Yangtze delta.
27. A computerized data system to provide brokers with price quotations for securities traded over the counter.
30. Melon having yellowish rind and whitish flesh.
31. A song of praise (to God or to a saint or to a nation).
33. A tablet placed horizontally on top of the capital of a column as an aid in supporting the architrave.
34. A Spanish male Gypsy.
35. A short sleep (usually not in bed).
37. Anneal or toughen by a process of gradually heating and cooling.
42. A medieval oboe.
45. A bachelor's degree in science.
47. The innermost membrane of an organ (especially the inner lining of an artery or vein or lymphatic vessel).
48. Gregarious burrowing rodent larger than the chinchillas.
50. Air pollution by a mixture of smoke and fog.
52. A small ball with a hole through the middle.
55. 1 species.
57. Render capable or able for some task.
59. Large inoffensive chiefly nocturnal ungulate of tropical America and southeast Asia having a heavy body and fleshy snout.
62. Avatar of Vishnu.
63. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
65. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
66. (biology) Shed at an early stage of development.
68. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
69. God of love and erotic desire.
71. A federal agency established to coordinate programs aimed at reducing pollution and protecting the environment.
72. The 7th letter of the Greek alphabet.
76. A colorless and odorless inert gas.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You seem to work best today when exchanging ideas with others. You may find yourself in a group who is able to throw ideas back and forth until problems are conquered and much progress is made. This is an ideal situation for you today. You may find this to be an extremely productive day in the workplace. Later this even you may find you have a deep desire to connect with friends, neighbors, and love ones. Great connections can be made, and fences can be mended with little effort. You exude a sincerity to those you love and are met with open arms. Aries. This is a time of grace and happiness in your world.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may feel as if someone is cutting you off today. They may be making it difficult for you to express yourself. This may put you in a mood to shut down and keep to yourself. Know any obstacle you face today will be short-lived and temporary. Frustration may come over you. Time will eliminate these obstacles. You will be back to your old self shortly. Keep a positive attitude today.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Just because it is easy doesn't make it right. You may be very tempted today to take a shortcut. If you can not tell yourself this is the right thing to do, you should steer clear of making the wrong decision. Doing the right thing never goes unnoticed. In the long run, you will be rewarded for going the extra mile and doing the right thing. You may find this gives you a grasp for all that is spiritual. Your ideas are more of a spiritual sense and you will be able to really get your point across when you share your ideas and life lessons with others today.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have an appreciation for your responsibilities. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. This is a motto for you. This way of thinking has brought you a long way on your path towards success. You are focused and driven and most of all, honest. By not cutting corners not taking the easy way out, you have developed a good reputation for having an excellent work ethic. You have a lot to proud of and you may find many opportunities beginning to come your way.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Make time for your loved ones. Don't wait for a holiday or special event. What is a little thing to you can make a big difference in the life of someone you care about. You are creative enough to turn a small act into a big memory. Take the time. Make the effort. You will find it rewarding.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You have the ability to find beauty in everything and everyone surrounding you. In a way you may find this as a weakness because this can cause you to over indulge. This may include material things or involve your investing too much of yourself into others. Resist that urge at this time. You may find a child or someone younger who is close to you as a disappointment and find yourself at odds with them. This is temporary, and you should resist the urge to make permanent decisions that affect your living situation or theirs at this time. You may feel as if your level of authority is being challenged today and find it difficult to react. Virgo, see this as a positive and know that now is just not the time.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You may have never put much thought into how you love. It has always just been an emotion or feeling that came natural to you. You may have an experience that leads you to see things in a different light. You may experience a sense of awakening that opens your eyes not only to the way you express love but to the way others close to you need to be loved. This may develop stronger bonds and relationships in your life and bring much harmony and passion into your world. To love and to be loved has always been a strong desire for you and you are entering a time and learning a lesson that will bring you to new levels in your close relationships. Libra, enjoy the peace and harmony this brings into your world.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Make sure to spend some time outdoors today. This is a day the beauty of creation will be filled with special meaning for you. It seems everything may take on a more special meaning in your life now. A positive attitude and an open mind seem to take you far in this world. You have both. When you choose to be happy, you will be happy. You have an attitude that no one nor anything can steal your joy. This is the answer. This is the way to face your day and conquer the world.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may feel as if you are on the outside looking in today. Difficulty getting your point across to others could find you frustrated. Group situations may be the thing to avoid for you today. This day would be best spent taking some time to yourself. Step outside and take a breath of fresh air. Find a way to have a little escape and clear your mind. You will be back to your old self in no time.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You may feel torn between two worlds. You may find conflict when delegating your time between family life and home. You will have to get your priorities straight and try to find a balance between the two. You may find that you feel led to pass up a career opportunity because of the effect it will have on your personal life. Remember, family is forever. The tie that binds. Not everything in life revolves around money. This is a time you may come to realize, money can not buy happiness.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You can really get your thoughts and ideas across. Your communication skills are on point today. You may find yourself being especially kind to a friend and feeling a desire to share the love in your heart with all who surround you. You may find others admire the kindness you show to others and are drawn to you. You could enjoy being the recipient of many compliments today. Others seem to notice your belongings, your good taste, and the way you treat those around you. Your goodness and emotions seem to be accented today and you should expect much support from your friends and family.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are hungry for knowledge. Eager to see what all this world has to offer you. You are at your best when visiting with siblings or neighbors today. A great time to sit and express your views and feelings about some situations that have bothered you. Getting things off of your chest will help you regain focus. You are getting back on track.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Classic Toys

Find and circle all of the toys that are hidden in the grid. The remaining letters spell a quote by G. K. Chesterton.

PEL POE PEL T T I L W S I Z Z L E R S
 P Y Y O H A T O N K A T R U C K T W A R R S
 Q T W E T O C N B G D S R P O O Z A K A A E
 G T R B K S F H A E K W A E R U L L A D C B
 U T K U G O I B A I A D I E Z R O E U I X E
 N P C C U M P P P T D C T F A Z T G H O O E
 E Y I A M O R P R L T S H E F C Z O H F B B
 T L T M B I I P E E A Y B B R L T I S L H S
 C L S O Y N K B O M T Y C U A W E R W Y C I
 H I O S G E A H W T D A B A H L E B K E T R
 A S G R N L L E P D A I W E T I L L A R A F
 K P P O D V I T B S R L O L O A Y A E T L S
 E Y E K N O M K C O S G O H L Y S B I I T H
 T C A P G U N U M A M S O L E K O R D N H W
 C E I B R A B T A E N Y O R C A S E O K O E
 H B I J O E N Y T I C O A A I L D P S E O E
 N E R F B A L L T H N C J L I P I U C R Y B
 E A S Y B A K E O V E N A N P N S O T A L
 G L L O D Y S T A L F I K N N I T W P O L E
 A G Y R O S C O P E S Y A W O O N D E Y P S
 E T I R B E T I L E F S Y I N G E R P A I N T R

BALLOON HOT WHEELS PLAY-DOH SPIROGRAPH
 BARBIE JACKS PLAYMOBIL SUPER BALL
 BEACH BALL KALEIDOSCOPE POGO STICK TEDDY BEAR
 BOF BAG KAZOO POKEY TINKERTORY
 CAP GUN KEN POP GUN TIN SOLDIERS
 CHATTY CATHY LEGO RADIO FLYER TONKA TRUCK
 EASY BAKE OVEN LITE BRITE RUBIK'S CUBE VIEWMASTER
 ETCH A SKETCH LITTLE PEOPLE SILLY PUTTY WATER PISTOL
 FINGER PAINT MATCHBOX CAR MECCANO WHEELS
 FLATSY DOLL MR POTATO HEAD SKIPPING ROPE WIFFLE BALL
 FRISBEE G.I. JOE SLINKY SOCK MONKEY WIZZER
 GUMBY NERF BALL SOMA CUBE YO-YO
 GYROSCOPE PADDLE BALL

Fishing

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 IELONEILUHFATLHESMLTAE
 TLKFRYRHLASALBES
 LYEIELELHESMLTAE
 WNRBSIILITLHESMLTAE
 LLDONHUMITLHESMLTAE
 LNPOWIAITLHESMLTAE
 BILHATRAITLHESMLTAE
 BDTANKLITLHESMLTAE
 INDISGLINFLOUNDER
 NHOOSTINCASREELTICP
 KLAFITHELWAKCSHTT
 HEYSSTREAMARESAFTA
 URECIJUNGNERHROUC

ANGLER FLIES LAKE SINKER
 ANGLING FLIPPING LANDING NET SPINCAST REEL
 AUGER FLAT LEADER SPINNER
 BAIT FLOUNDER LINE SPOOL
 BASS FLY CASTING LURE SPOON
 BLUEFISH FLY FISHING NIBBLE STILL FISHING
 BOAT FLY REEL PANFISH STREAM
 BOBBER FLY ROD POLE FISHING STRIKE
 CATCH AND RELEASE GEAR POND TACKLE BOX
 CATFISH HOOK REDFISH TRAILER
 CRAPPIE JIGGING RIVER TROLLING
 CRAWLER JOGS ROD AND REEL TROUT
 DAILY LIMIT KEEPER SALMON

The hidden sentence is: MANY MEN GO FISHING ALL OF THEIR LIVES WITHOUT KNOWING THAT IT IS NOT FISH THEY ARE AFTER.

Daily Sudoku

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

Friday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JULY 7, 2019



Fireworks explode over the Lincoln Memorial during the Fourth of July celebrations in Washington, DC. — AFP

US accuser drops civil suit against Kevin Spacey

A young man who accused Kevin Spacey of a sexual assault in a Massachusetts bar has dropped his lawsuit against the award-winning actor. A motion for “voluntary dismissal” of the civil complaint against the former “House of Cards” star was filed in Superior Court in Nantucket, Massachusetts, with no reason



In this file photo US actor Kevin Spacey arrives at a fashion show in Milan, Italy. — AFP

given. Possible motives for the dismissal this week include a private settlement or the accuser's desire not to risk damaging his odds in a separate criminal case with the civil suit, which was filed just six days ago.

William Little's lawyer, Mitchell Garabedian, who made a name for himself defending victims of sexual abuse by Catholic priests, gave no comment. A hearing on the criminal charges against Spacey is set for Monday in the District Court in

Nantucket, the posh island community where the alleged aggression took place in July 2016. Little has said he took a smartphone video of the incident, which he says took place when he was an 18-year-old busboy in a Nantucket bar/restaurant.

The smartphone images, which Little has said he shared with a then-girlfriend, allegedly show Spacey shoving his hand into the teen's pants and fondling him. But the plaintiff's lawyers say they have been unable to find the smartphone, which Spacey's defense team has demanded to see. Little has said he has not seen the phone since handing it over to police investigators in December 2017. Police say they turned it over to the young man's father, but he says he has “no memory” of it.

If the phone is not located by Monday, the District Court judge has said he will call on Little to testify about it. Spacey, who is 59, was charged in January with indecent assault and battery. The actor has insisted on his innocence. The charges carry a penalty of up to five years in prison. The allegation of sexual misconduct against the two-time Oscar winner was one of more than a dozen to emerge since 2017 — in both the United States and Britain—with devastating effect on his acting career.

He was dropped from the cast of the popular “House of Cards” series and from a leading role in director Ridley Scott's “All the Money in the World”; Christopher Plummer was brought in as a last-second replacement.—AFP

Statue on Slovenia's Melania tourist trail divides opinion

After Melania cake, Melania honey, and even Melania slippers, the Slovenian hometown of the US first lady will now boast a statue of its most famous daughter—albeit one that has faced decidedly mixed reviews. The life-size statue on the outskirts of Sevnica was inaugurated on Friday and is the brainchild of 39-year-old American conceptual artist Brad Downey, who says it's the first monument anywhere dedicated to the wife of US President Donald Trump.

The sculpture was carved into a tree using a chainsaw and depicts Melania in a blue dress raising her left hand in a waving gesture, emulating a pose she struck at her husband's 2017 inauguration. Its somewhat naive style has led some critics on social media to brand it a “scarecrow”. “I can understand why people might think that this falls short as a description of her physical appearance,” Downey told AFP, but insisted that he found the end result “absolutely beautiful”.

Since Donald Trump took office in 2017, sleepy Sevnica has become a magnet for tourists and journalists searching for insights into the American first lady's past. Entrepreneurial locals have been cashing in on the influx, offering a bewildering array of Melania-branded food and merchandise as well as a tour of the area taking in the key sites of her early years. Downey came up with the statue as part of a project aimed at exploring the first lady's Slovenian roots and commissioned local artisan Ales Zupevc—also known as “Maxi”—to actually carve the sculpture.

Downey told AFP he was struck by the fact that Maxi was born in the same year and in the same hospital as Melania herself. He said conversations with Maxi had enabled him to see



A picture shows what conceptual artist Ales 'Maxi' Zupevc claims is the first ever monument of Melania Trump, set in the fields near town of Sevnica, US First Lady's hometown. — AFP

Melania's ancestral region through local eyes. “You see this river that she would have seen as a child, you see the mountains,” he said. However, not everyone has been moved to wax lyrical about the artwork.

Nika, a local 24-year-old architecture student, told AFP: “If the monument was meant to be a parody, then the artist has been successful. “We in Sevnica can only laugh and, at the same time, hold our heads in our hands over

their (the Trumps') catastrophic reputation,” she added. Katarina, a 66-year-old resident of nearby Rozno, said that she thought the monument was a “good idea”. “Melania is a Slovenian hero, she made it to the top in the US,” she said.—AFP

KAREN MOK HOPES TO BRING BROADWAY TO CHINA

Karen Mok may be currently performing on what she says will be her final concert tour but the Hong Kong-born actress and singer has no plans to retire just yet, setting her sights on bringing Broadway-style musicals to China. The 49-year-old has released 20 solo albums and starred in more than 40 films during her 25-year career including Keanu Reeves' “Man of Tai Chi” and Wong Kar Wai's “Fallen Angels”. She also worked alongside fellow Hong Kong star Jackie Chan in “Around the World in 80 Days”.

“It doesn't mean that I'm retiring or anything...I could never quit the stage but I just feel that it's a good time to call it a day where pop concerts are concerned,” Mok told Reuters in London while on a visit to promote her tour. “Going forward I want to go into doing musicals and musical theatre because that's my one true love in performing.”

Mok, who in 2005 and 2006 starred in the hit Broadway musical “Rent” on its 10th anniversary tour, said she wants China to have its own version of the

New York theatre district or London's West End. “There's a lot of theatre going on in China but like the West End as an industry (it's) not really there yet but at some point it will happen so I feel that I should contribute towards that,” she said.

“My next big mission in my career is to create, from scratch, a musical for the Chinese audience...I really love musicals because they allow you to simultaneously act, dance, sing and play music and getting to do it live every evening is just amazing...We should

have our own original musicals.” The singer's “Ultimate Karen Mok Show” kicked off in Shanghai in June 2018 and has included shows in Singapore, Taipei and Beijing. In Europe, she will play the Folies Bergere in Paris on Sept. 12 and the London Palladium on Sept 15 - a show Mok, who studied at the University of London, described as “a little bit of a homecoming”.—Reuters



Gulf Air flies travel agents from Kuwait to Salalah

Gulf Air, the national carrier of the Kingdom of Bahrain, recently arranged a familiarization trip for Kuwaiti travel agents to Salalah, Sultanate of Oman. Taking place from June 15 to 18, 2019, and in partnership with NTT Tours in Salalah, the trip coincided with Gulf Air's inaugural flight to the new summer destination. Guests had the opportunity to experience the comfort of flying Gulf Air and using the airline's Falcon Gold lounge in Bahrain International Airport during transit.

At the destination, the guests participated in a celebratory event at Salalah International Airport welcoming the first Gulf Air flight which included airport airline and airport officials. Participants also visited most notable touristic sights and landmarks and enjoyed staying in Salalah Rotana Resort, a key five star resort in the Omani city. National Travel and Tourism (NTT), a leading Destination Management Company in the Sultanate of Oman having over 3 decades of experience in the tourism industry. NTT has a qualified team of professionals with rich experience in tourism business and is known for its aggressive customer orientation and top caliber customer service levels.

NTT Tours has an extensive experience of innovative product development, separate divisions handling Leisure, Adventure and Special Interest Tours, MICE and Cruise segments. NTT are one of the top producers for most of the leading hotels in Oman, owning the largest fleet of vehicles in Oman under the Hertz franchisee, and have branches in Muscat and Salalah. The team comprises of well qualified and experienced tour consultants handling various markets and a very strong operational team well supported by logistic teammates and linguistic guides.

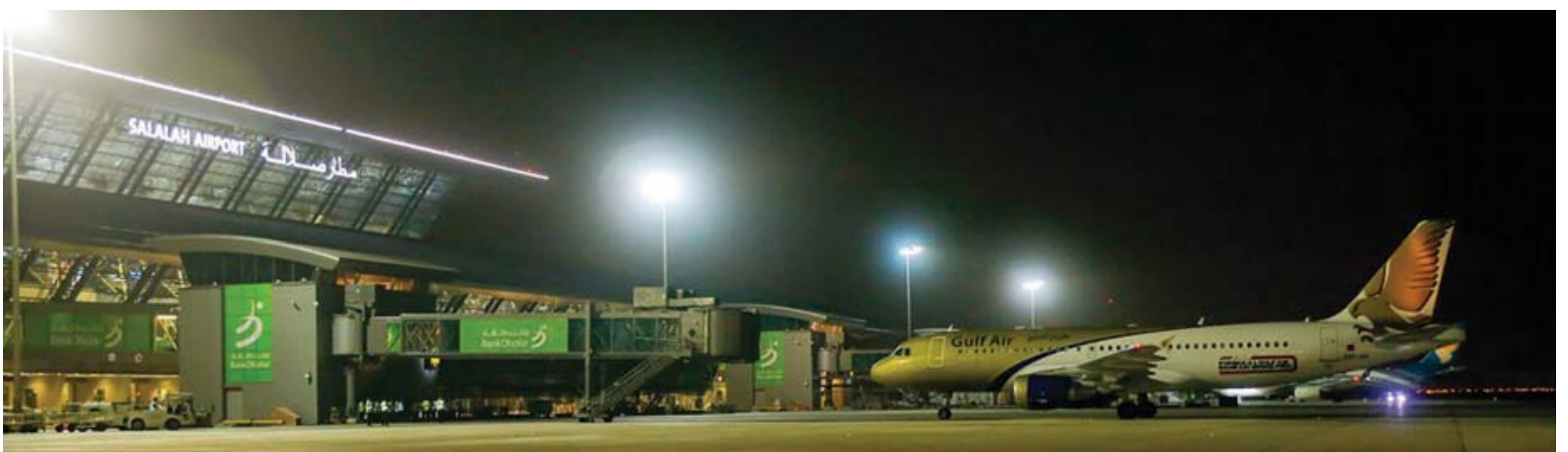
Below are some of the main services NTT offers as a DMC:

- Tourist/Business Visa Services
- Personal Meet & Greet Services at Muscat International Airport



- Airport transfers at Muscat, Salalah and Khasab
- Hotel Reservations
- Tailor-made Itineraries (Guided and Self-Driven)
- Individual & Group Tours
- Trekking & Adventure Tours
- Desert Safaris
- Turtle Watching Tours
- Sea Tours
- Cruise Ship Shore excursions
- Meetings & Events
- Incentives Groups
- Conferences

Effie De Souza, Area Director of Sales-Global Sales Office Kuwait and Qatar Rotana hotel, poses with Sandra Smith, Gulf air Sales Manager for a picture.





FENDI CELEBRATES LAGERFELD AT ROME'S TEMPLE OF VENUS



Italian label Fendi on Thursday paid tribute to its late designer Karl Lagerfeld, who died in February after a half-century helping the company, with a haute couture show at the ruins of the ancient Temple of Venus and Roma. The "Dawn of Romanity" collection showcased 54 outfits, one for each year of Lagerfeld's work with the Fendi label.

"The heart beats hard because the emotion is great to be here today without him (Lagerfeld)" Fendi president Serge Brunswick told the 600 guests invited to the special show in the hills of the Italian capital, with the famous Colosseum as the backdrop. German designer Lagerfeld launched Fendi's ready-to-wear line in 1977 and remained its artistic director until his death at the age of 85.

French luxury powerhouse LVMH, Fendi's parent company, has pledged 2.5 million euros to clean and restore the remains of the temple, which was built by the Emperor Hadrian in the second century BC and is thought to have been the largest in the Roman Empire. The events allowed Fendi to look back at its origins while opening the way for its post-Karl life.

The collection, featuring lightly patterned silk trousers, geometric interlacing of furs, a coat with marble-like details and lace skirts on models sporting pageboy cuts, was created by Silvia Venturini Fendi, one of the inheritors of the furrier and leather goods company founded by her grandparents Edoardo and Adele in 1925.—AFP



Italian fashion designer Silvia Venturini Fendi acknowledges applause following the presentation of Italian fashion house Fendi's Couture Fall/Winter 2019-2020 show.



Guests attend the outdoors presentation of Italian fashion house Fendi's Couture Fall/Winter 2019-2020 show.



Members of the public look at completed sections of a tapestry.

Thrilling yarn: Tapestry depicts 'Game of Thrones' saga



In a Belfast museum, seamstresses are at work depicting gory battles and warring kings in shimmering threads of red and gold—an epic homage to the TV phenomenon “Game of Thrones”. The team of volunteers at the Ulster Museum are putting the final touches to a 90-metre tapestry depicting all eight seasons of the fantasy saga, which reached its dramatic conclusion in May. “Game of Thrones”, which first hit screens in 2011, was produced and chiefly filmed in studios in Belfast and in the Northern Irish countryside.

The Northern Irish public have taken the series to their hearts. “A tapestry is, more than anything else, a great storytelling device,” explained Valerie Wilson, costume and textiles curator at National Museums Northern Ireland. “The length of the tapestry allows the story to unfold, so in many ways it’s the perfect medium for telling the story of the ‘Game of Thrones’ project.”

Styled in the manner of the treasured Bayeux Tapestry—which depicts the 11th-century Norman conquest of England—the completed piece will be transported to France to hang near its predecessor in September. “This tapestry references the Bayeux Tapestry in that it has a series of repeated icons through it,” explained Wilson. The panels of the piece are woven by machine before the finishing touches are put on by hand.

Emerald green wildfire

For two years, a team of 30 has been at work on and off stitching embellishments on the icons—“blood red weddings”, “emerald green wildfire” and “cold-blue White Walkers” which prove pivotal in the blood-and-guts HBO drama. Such is the graphic nature of their handiwork, the museum display comes with a warning: “Due to the depiction of graphic scenes, viewing of the tapestry is not suitable for anyone under the age of 18.” The team has been



working on stitching depicting the eighth and final series.

Participants-like actors in the show—were also sworn to silence, forced to sign non-disclosure agreements to maintain the shroud of secrecy. “It was very crucial when the project launched that it had that new, fresh, almost surprise element,” Wilson told AFP. After the embellishments are put on, the final panels are being added to the snaking display of series one to seven already on show to museum visitors.

“I think it’s really beautiful,” said Abbie Merrick—a diehard fan of “Game of Thrones”, who spent a morning walking her mother through the plot woven across the fabric. “I think tapestry’s a really beautiful art form and a really nice way of storytelling.” —AFP

Embroiderers work on the final section of a tapestry depicting the hit television series Game of Thrones at the Ulster Museum in Belfast. — AFP photos



Embroidered scenes on the tapestry depicting the hit television series Game of Thrones are on show at the Ulster Museum in Belfast.

GAY ASIAN MILLENNIAL PROTESTS HIS WAY UP SPAIN'S MUSIC SCENE

Meet Chenta Tsai Tseng, better known in Spain by his stage name “putochinomaricon.” In English, that translates as “f*****g Chinese fag.”

The 28-year-old gay, Asian-Spanish singer, DJ and writer is making a name for himself in Spain for his acerbic criticism of issues like racism in the LGBTQ community and beyond, the selfie generation and pride festivals like the

festivals like Sonar and Primavera Sound. Slight and softly-spoken, Chenta weighs up every word he says, inclusive language peppering his interview, in sharp contrast with his eccentric performances and irreverent electropop songs.

“That you went to Majorca and stayed in the Ritz, that you feel alpha male and show off in the gym, that your father bought you a Ferrari so you can brag... We don’t really care about your f*****g life,” he sings in one song.

‘You have yellow skin’

Born in Taiwan in December 1990, Chenta emigrated to Spain with his parents when he was just 11 months old. He says his first experience of not feeling quite like others happened when he was around four or five, playing with a friend. “He gave me the yellow power ranger, and obviously I wanted the pink power ranger,” he remembers, laughing. “I didn’t understand why he associated me with the colour yellow... and he told me, you have yellow skin, you’re different.”

And so it has continued, including in the dating scene. “Either they reject you simply for seeing your photo and seeing you’re Asian, or they fetishise you and want to go out with you just because you’re Asian,” he says.

All very food-oriented, Chenta notes, which inspired the title of his first album—“Steamed Pork Heart with Ginseng.” Chenta denounces discrimination generally within the LGBTQ community, which he says often favors white, muscular men who are often effeminate. As for pride celebrations, he feels there is too little focus on “women, trans women, the disabled” or those from different ethnic groups. But he’s starting to come around.

This year, Madrid Pride has chosen to focus

on the 50-year fight for rights since the historic Stonewall riots in New York. It will be the first such festival since local elections in May saw Madrid’s city hall swing to the right with the support of emerging far-right party Vox, which is strongly critical of the LGBTQ collective. “I feel that in the current political environment, we have to group together rather than segregate,” Chenta says.

Aqua, Wieniawski

For Joan Luna, news editor at Spain’s Mondo Sonoro music magazine, the attraction of “putochinomaricon”—aside from his quirky performances and “very effective electropop”—is his discourse. “The lyrics connect with people,” he says. And then there is the novel fact he is an Asian electropop artist in Spain. “As Asians, we’re seen as being good at jobs that aren’t tied to entertainment, like mathematics and science,” says Chenta. The stereotypes are so ingrained his father believed them too.

“My father always had this absurd notion that if you were an Asian (migrant), you could only do three things, open a restaurant, open a pound shop or play a classical music instrument,” he says. At the time, Chinese-US cellist Yo-Yo Ma was a reference. So it was that Chenta ended up graduating as a violinist from Madrid’s Royal Conservatory of Music. The only problem? He hates violin. For a key exam he chose to sing a piece by the Danish-Norwegian pop band Aqua, but also played Polish violinist Henryk Wieniawski’s signature piece “Legende”. “I passed with top marks.” —AFP

Kimonos and colossal bows fill Valentino's colorful catwalk

Italian designer Pierpaolo Piccioli went for an explosion of bold colors at Valentino’s Haute Couture collection, switching from mustard yellow to fuchsia to azure with supermodel Gigi Hadid walking in purple. Clashing textures with silks, woolen fringes and pom poms also gave the outfits a subtle complexity. Some models wore ornate beaded hats in the style of traditional tribal headpieces.

American actress Gwyneth Paltrow and models Heidi Klum and Naomi Campbell figured among the stars on the front row at the Paris runway show late on Wednesday. Hadid sported a kimono-inspired lilac gown, complete with gemstone-encrusted white, jade and orange embroidery and a colossal bow resting askew on her shoulders. Piccioli has been Valentino’s sole creative director since 2016 but has been with the label since 1999. His bouffant dresses and vibrant use of color have garnered the brand fresh acclaim after founder Valentino Garavani retired in 2007.

One surprise on the runway came in a green dress and glittering trench coat, as 75-year-old model Lauren Hutton wowed the crowd in four-inch mustard heels and sparkling fuchsia gloves. The fashion house said in a note that the collection aimed to celebrate individuality, diversity and inclusivity. After the finale, Piccioli walked the runway hand-in-hand with the team of women and seamstresses who crafted the intricate pieces.

The label’s Qatari owners, investment vehicle Mayhoola, had examined plans to list Valentino on Milan’s stock market, sources told Reuters in late 2017, although the company has been evasive about such plans since. The show wrapped up this season’s Couture Fashion Week, where an elite club of top-end designers show off elaborate, hand-made creations. The event ends on Thursday as with jewelry brands presenting their high-end collections. — Reuters



Asian-Spanish singer, DJ and writer Chenta Tsai Tseng, better known in Spain by his stage name ‘putochinomaricon’ performs in Madrid. — AFP

one taking place in Madrid. A qualified violinist and architect, Chenta created “putochinomaricon” two years ago in an angry nod to the insults he received in the street.

“I said, ‘that’s it’, I’m going to start accepting my body, accepting my identity,” Chenta tells AFP before a DJ set in Madrid. He composed a short song and posted it on Instagram. Two years later, he has two albums and an autobiography out and has performed in major

Classifieds

Sunday, July 7, 2019

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DAY: Saturday 06/07/2019 Valid From 7 AM To 7 PM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 25 - 55 km/h causing rising dust.

BY NIGHT: Hot to relatively hot with moderate to fresh north westerly wind, with speed of 20 - 45 km/h.

WEATHER WATCH			Fresh wind		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 06/07/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	34 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	48 °C	28 °C			
ABDALY	47 °C	30 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	48 °C	31 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	44 °C	30 °C			
SALMIYAH	43 °C	34 °C			
AHMADI	46 °C	34 °C			
NUWASIB	42 °C	28 °C			
WAFRA	47 °C	28 °C			
SALMY	46 °C	28 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	07/07	Very hot with a chance for rising dust	49 °C	32 °C	NW	25 - 45 km/h
Monday	07/08	Very hot	50 °C	34 °C	NW	20 - 42 km/h
Tuesday	07/09	Very hot	49 °C	33 °C	NW	15 - 42 km/h
Wednesday	07/10	Very hot with a chance for rising dust over open areas	47 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 45 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:19
Sunrise	04:54
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:27
Sunset	18:51
Isha	20:22

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	47 °C
MIN. Temp.	33 °C
MAX. RH	20 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 64 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UP:0 2019/07/06 02:27 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.م.ع.ع/ع-1

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

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Sakina Habib Jigar holder of Indian Passport No. J3507105, issued in Kuwait, I need to change my name on my passport as Sakina Zakir Husain Rantawala. (C 5656) 5-7-2019

Nova Palmar, Cortalim, Cortalim Mormugao, South Goa, Goa 403710. (C 5655) 4-7-2019

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

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22456700
Air India EXPRESS	22438185/4
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

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

Arrival Flights on Sunday 7/7/2019					Departure Flights on Sunday 7/7/2019				
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time		Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	UAE 871	Dubai	12:45	JZR	221	Riyadh
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSR 610	Cairo	12:45	GFA	214	Bahrain
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:10	KAC 742	Dammam	12:55	MEA	405	Beirut
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	AXB 393	Kozhikode	13:10	JZR	213	Jeddah
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	KAC 774	Riyadh	13:35	QTR	1075	Doha
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	JZR 212	Jeddah	13:45	JZR	123	Dubai
KAC	102	London	00:50	FDB 8191	Dubai	13:50	JZR	115	Doha
AHY	119	Baku	00:55	UAE 877	Dubai	14:00	KAC	541	Cairo
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC 672	Dubai	14:00	SAW	702	Damascus
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	GFA 221	Bahrain	14:15	ETH	3621	Addis Ababa
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	FDB 059	Dubai	14:20	MSR	611	Cairo
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	QTR 1078	Doha	14:25	KAC	515	Tehran
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC 792	Madinah	14:40	THY	767	Istanbul
PGT	840	Istanbul	01:50	KAC 562	Amman	14:40	AXB	394	Kozhikode
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	JZR 222	Mumbai	14:45	UAE	872	Dubai
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	KAC 304	Riyadh	14:45	FDB	8192	Dubai
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	JZR 222	Jeddah	14:45	KAC	673	Dubai
JZR	262	Beirut	02:05	SVA 500	Doha	14:50	KAC	673	Dubai
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC 618	Jeddah	14:50	GFA	222	Bahrain
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	KAC 788	Jeddah	14:55	FDB	060	Dubai
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	JZR 602	Baku	15:00	JZR	103	Bahrain
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	KAC 118	New York	15:00	QTR	1079	Doha
THY	768	Istanbul	02:55	KAC 692	Muscat	15:00	UAE	878	Dubai
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC 529	Jeddah	15:05	SVA	501	Jeddah
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KNE 529	Abu Dhabi	15:15	KNE	530	Jeddah
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	ETD 303	Muscat	15:20	KAC	563	Amman
PGT	856	Istanbul	03:10	OMA 645	Sharjah	15:35	JZR	405	Kochi
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ABY 127	Dubai	15:45	KAC	615	Bahrain
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	UAE 857	Cairo	15:50	KAC	615	Bahrain
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KAC 546	Sohag	16:00	ABY	128	Sharjah
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	FEF 341	Cairo	16:10	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	JZR 732	Dubai	16:10	OMA	646	Muscat
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	FDB 051	Dubai	16:10	KAC	785	Jeddah
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	QTR 1072	Doha	16:15	KAC	619	Doha
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC 502	Beirut	16:15	FEG	442	Asyut
JZR	1738	Cairo	04:45	FEF 241	Alexandria	16:45	KAC	675	Dubai
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	SAW 705	Damascus	17:00	FDB	052	Dubai
THY	1414	Trabzon	05:05	JZR 116	Doha	17:05	QTR	1073	Doha
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	SVA 510	Riyadh	17:10	UAE	858	Dubai
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	KAC 215	Bahrain	17:30	KAC	503	Beirut
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	JZR 214	Jeddah	17:35	KAC	283	Dhaka
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	IRA 665	Shiraz	17:35	FEG	242	Alexandria
UAE	873	Dubai	05:40	JZR 124	Dubai	17:40	KAC	343	Chennai
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	QTR 1080	Bahrain	17:40	KAC	621	Doha
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR 104	Doha	18:00	KAC	381	Delhi
QTR	8511	Doha	06:05	QTR 1080	Doha	18:10	SAW	706	Damascus
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC 516	Tehran	18:20	SVA	511	Riyadh
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	KAC 302	Istanbul	18:20	JZR	721	Alexandria
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	KAC 620	Cairo	18:30	JZR	721	Alexandria
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	MSR 620	Dubai	19:05	GFA	216	Bahrain
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	FDB 063	Dubai	19:05	JZR	127	Doha
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	GFA 217	Bahrain	19:05	JZR	403	Hyderabad
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	RJA 640	Amman	19:05	IRA	664	Shiraz
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	UAE 875	Dubai	19:05	JZR	501	Lahore
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	ABY 123	Sharjah	19:20	JZR	733	Cairo
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	KAC 156	Istanbul	19:25	JZR	253	Amman
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC 616	Bahrain	19:40	JZR	261	Beirut
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	RBG 555	Alexandria	19:40	QTR	1081	Doha
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	KAC 674	Dubai	19:45	KAC	345	Ahmedabad
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	KAC 178	Vienna	19:50	MSR	621	Cairo
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	FDB 057	Dubai	19:50	FDB	064	Dubai
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	KAC 158	Istanbul	19:55	GFA	218	Bahrain
JZR	706	Asyut	08:25	KNE 381	Taif	20:00	ABY	124	Sharjah
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC 166	Rome	20:00	RJA	641	Amman
IRC	528	Ahwaz	09:00	KAC 104	London	20:00	RBG	556	Alexandria
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	OMA 647	Muscat	20:05	FDB	058	Dubai
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	DLH 624	Frankfurt	20:10	JZR	401	Mumbai
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	MEA 402	Beirut	20:15	UAE	876	Dubai
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	KAC 542	Cairo	20:15	KAC	351	Kochi
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC 620	Doha	20:30	KNE	232	Riyadh
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	QTR 1088	Doha	20:40	DLH	624	Dammam
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	KAC 445	Amsterdam	21:00	OMA	648	Muscat
SAW	703	Damascus	10:00	KAC 172	Frankfurt	21:00	KAC	353	Trivandrum
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	KAC 445	Amsterdam	21:00	MEA	403	Beirut
OMS	223	Muscat	10:35	UAE 859	Abu Dhabi	21:10	KAC	301	Mumbai
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	ALK 229	Colombo	21:15	QTR	1089	Doha
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	THY 764	Istanbul	21:30	DHX	171	Bahrain
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC 676	Dubai	21:45	KAC	203	

News

UK ship 'safe and well'...

Continued from Page 1

US President Donald Trump and British Prime Minister Theresa May discussed ways to maintain pressure on Iran during a phone call on Friday, the White House said in a statement yesterday. The statement, which did not mention the tanker incident, said: "They discussed cooperation ... to advance shared national security interests, including efforts to enforce sanctions on Syria, to ensure that Iran does not obtain a nuclear weapon, and to achieve the final, fully verified denuclearization of North Korea."

Authorities in Gibraltar, a British overseas territory on Spain's southern tip at the western entrance to the Mediterranean, said they suspected the tanker was carrying crude to Syria in violation of EU sanctions. The detention of the 330-m Grace 1 comes at a sensitive time in Iran-EU ties as the bloc mulls how to respond to Tehran announcing it is poised to breach the uranium enrichment limit it agreed to in a troubled 2015 nuclear deal.

The Grace 1 was halted in the early hours of Thursday by police and customs agencies in Gibraltar, aided by a detachment of British Royal Marines. Gibraltar's Supreme Court ruled Friday that the vessel can be held for 14 more days, the territory's attorney general said. The ship was detained four kilometres south of Gibraltar in what it considers British waters, although Spain, which lays claim to the territory, says they are Spanish.

Iran insists the vessel was intercepted in international waters and the foreign ministry official accused Britain's Royal Navy of taking action "tantamount to maritime banditry". A senior foreign ministry official "described the UK move as unacceptable" in a meeting with British ambassador Rob Macaire, who had been summoned to hear a formal protest, the ministry said in a statement. He "called for the immediate release of the oil tanker, given that it has been seized at the request of the US, based on the information currently available", the statement added.

The secretary of Iran's Expediency Council, a key advisory and arbitration body, warned that if Britain failed to release the tanker Iran would be forced to take tit-for-tat action against a British vessel. "If Britain does not release the Iranian oil tanker, the relevant authorities will be duty-bound to take reciprocal action and seize a British oil tanker," said council secretary Mohsen Rezai.

The Gibraltar authorities say the tanker was boarded when it slowed down in a designated area used by shipping agencies to ferry goods to vessels. "We have rea-

son to believe that the Grace 1 was carrying its shipment of crude oil to the Banyas refinery in Syria," Gibraltar's Chief Minister Fabian Picardo said. In a statement, Britain's Foreign Office said it welcomed Gibraltarian authorities "acting to enforce the EU Syria sanctions regime". Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Borrell told reporters the vessel was detained at the request of the United States.

But Gibraltar insisted it acted of its own accord. "There has been no political request at any time from any government," Gibraltar's government said in a statement. "The decisions of Her Majesty's Government of Gibraltar were taken totally independently, based on breaches of existing law and not at all based on extraneous political considerations."

European Union sanctions against war-torn Syria have been in force since late 2011. The 28-member bloc has imposed sanctions on Syrian officials including government ministers over their role in the "violent repression" of civilians. Russia said the tanker's detention was a "targeted action aimed at further complicating the situation around Iran and Syria". The "enthusiastic remarks" by British and American officials following the seizure "show that this action was planned for a long time", the foreign ministry said in a statement.

The move by Gibraltarian authorities comes just days after Iran announced it would exceed the uranium enrichment limit set under the 2015 nuclear deal. Tehran took the action in response to Washington abandoning the deal last year and hitting Iran's crucial oil exports and financial transactions with biting sanctions. The International Atomic Energy Agency, the UN's nuclear watchdog, said Friday it would hold a July 10 emergency meeting on Iran.

The announcement followed a request by the US, which under Trump has forged ahead with a policy of "maximum pressure" against Iran in coordination with its allies Israel and Saudi Arabia. White House National Security Advisor John Bolton, a champion of the hawkish policy towards Tehran, tweeted the interception of the supertanker was "excellent news". According to specialized shipping trade publication Lloyd's List, which analyses vessel-tracking data, the 1997-built ship is laden with Iranian oil. It reported that the ship loaded oil off Iran in April and sailed around the Cape of Good Hope in South Africa. Tensions are high in the Gulf following last month's attacks on vessels near the Strait of Hormuz, a vital oil shipping route, and Iran's downing of a US drone. Washington and Saudi Arabia have directly blamed Iran for the attacks on tankers, something Tehran denies. The attacks have raised fears of a broader confrontation in the region where the United States has boosted its military presence over perceived Iranian threats. — Agencies

Sudanese who fled abroad will return to the country. And this country will then be a beautiful country," the 19-year-old said. The deal was hailed by the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia, which have been sympathetic to the ruling generals. "We hope that the next phase will be the establishment of a strong constitutional system that strengthens the role of institutions," UAE minister of state for foreign affairs Anwar Gargash wrote on Twitter. The Saudi foreign ministry called the agreement an "important step" which could pave the way for "a new phase of security and stability" for Sudan.

Rights group Amnesty International said it hoped the deal ends the "horrific crimes" committed against Sudanese people for decades. "This agreement must be judged by how those in power now live up to their responsibilities to respect people's fundamental rights," Amnesty's Kumi Naidoo said in a statement. Lebutt said the two sides had postponed the establishment of a transitional parliament.

Before talks collapsed in May, the generals and protest leaders had agreed on a 300-member legislature, with two-thirds of lawmakers hailing from the protest movement. Lebutt said the two sides have also agreed to "a detailed, transparent, national, independent investigation into all the regrettable violent incidents that the country faced in recent weeks", including the June 3 raid.

At least 136 people have been killed nationwide since June 3, including more than 100 on the day of the raid, according to doctors close to the protesters. The health ministry says 78 people have been killed nationwide over the same period. The military council insists it did not order the violent dispersal of the sit-in, although witnesses have said the raid was carried out by men in military fatigues. — AFP

hanging gardens, the Tower of Babel, and the Ishtar Gate. Excavation began there in the early 1800s and artefacts were sent abroad, including parts of the Ishtar Gate which remain in museums across Europe. The site was substantially impacted by new structures built under dictator Saddam Hussein and further damaged by soldiers during the US-led invasion that toppled him in 2003.

UNESCO on Friday said the site's "extremely vulnerable condition" sparked "serious concerns, with many structures in urgent need of conservation and several on the verge of collapse". But it opted not to designate Babylon as a World Heritage Site in Danger after objections from Iraq, and instead said it would work with local authorities to set a plan of action for conservation. "Babylon is the largest populated city in ancient history," said Qahtan Al-Abeed, who heads the Basra Antiquities Department and led efforts to get the site listed. "The Babylonians were the civilization of writing, administration and science," he told AFP. The UNESCO designation "will encourage research and development of the site," and would "be free publicity for tourists," he added excitedly.

Babylon is one of 7,000 archeological sites across Iraq, many of which were destroyed by the Islamic State group or ravaged by lucrative artefact smuggling. Five have been listed by UNESCO, including the Arbil citadel in northern Iraq and the southern Mesopotamian marshes. The three others are also on the agency's "World Heritage in Danger" list and include Hatra, an ancient city in northern Nineweh province damaged by IS in 2014. Samarra, along the Tigris River, was added in 2007 and Ashur, the capital of the Assyrian empire, in 2003. Iraq has another 11 "tentative" sites hoping to be listed by UNESCO.

After decades of back-to-back conflict, the country declared victory against IS in 2017 and is now basking in a period of relative calm. It has sought to attract both international investors and tourists, and hopes its prominence on UNESCO's lists can do both. — Agencies



The 'Pamplonesa' municipal music band performs during the 'Chupinazo' (start rocket) to mark the kickoff at noon sharp of the San Fermin Festival in front of the Town Hall of Pamplona in northern Spain on Friday. — AFP

India hikes duty on gold...

Continued from Page 1

We were expecting reduction in the custom duty," Anantha Padmanabhan, chairman of All India Gem and Jewellery Domestic Council (GJC) told Reuters, adding the hike has effectively raised smugglers' margins.

Gold smuggling surged in India after the government raised the import duty to 10 percent in Aug 2013. Grey market operators - businesses that smuggle gold from overseas and sell it in cash to avoid the duties - got a further boost in 2017 when India imposed a 3 percent sales tax on bullion. The south Asian country also raised import duty on gold dore or non-refined mined gold, to 11.85 percent from 9.35 percent and to 11 percent from 8.5 percent on silver dore, Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said in her first federal budget speech on Friday.

Kuwait cleared to compete in...

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Minister of Information and Minister of State for Youth Affairs Mohammad Al-Jabri said the move to lift the ban came after years during which "damage was inflicted in all factors of Kuwaiti sports". Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem tweeted: "Congratulations to every Kuwaiti, and to the athletes in particular... and a thousand thanks to all those who worked to achieve this goal."

Last August, the IOC acknowledged the progress made and provisionally lifted the suspension, a decision which enabled athletes to compete in the Asian Games and the Youth Olympics. Football's world governing body FIFA suspended the Kuwait Football Association for the same reason in October 2015, lifting the ban in Dec 2017.

KOC President Sheikh Fahd called on Kuwait's sportspeople to work hard and sincerely to put Kuwaiti sport on the world map. In a press statement on Friday, Sheikh Fahd congratulated HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah and the

India has been trying to bring transparency in bullion trading by curbing cash transactions but the hike "will dilute efforts to reduce cash transactions", said Somasundaram PR, the managing director of the World Gold Council's Indian operations. Gold futures jumped over 2 percent after the announcement to a record high of 35,100 rupees (\$512.82) per 10 gm. The high local prices may also further weaken demand, said Snehal Choksey, director at Shobha Shringar Jewellers.

Shares of jewelry makers such as Titan, P C Jeweller, Tribhovandas Bhimji Zaveri Ltd and Thanga Mayil Jewellery Ltd fell as much as 7.8 percent. Up to 95 tons of gold was smuggled into India in 2018, according to the WGC. "Legal imports would fall and smuggling could rise above 200 tons this year," said a Mumbai-based dealer with a gold importing private bank.

Industry officials fear the higher duties could prompt customers to buy jewelry from some informal jewelers who use smuggled gold to make ornaments. "The increase in custom duty makes gold sold by organized retailers more expensive and encourages customers to buy from unorganized jewelers," said Vaibhav Saraf director of Aishshpra Gems & Jewels. — Reuters

Sudan protesters hail landmark...

Continued from Page 1

but prominent protest leader Ahmed Al-Rabie told AFP it would comprise six civilians, five of them protest movement nominees, and five military representatives. The SPA said the transition would last three years and three months, with the first 21 months presided over by a military nominee, and the last 18 months by a civilian.

UN chief Antonio Guterres called on "all stakeholders to ensure the timely, inclusive, and transparent implementation of the agreement and resolve any outstanding issues through dialogue", his spokesman said. Leaders from the umbrella protest movement, the Alliance for Freedom and Change, said later on Friday that the final agreement could be signed next week in the presence of regional heads of states. They said the alliance would also be ready to name its candidates for the sovereign council and the prime minister by next week.

People celebrated on the streets of Khartoum well into Friday, chanting "the martyrs' blood has not been shed in vain" and "civilian rule, civilian rule". In Khartoum's eastern district of Burri, a hotbed of demonstrations, 51-year-old Hannan said the residents had faced "difficult hardships" since the protest movement began. "A lot of our young people were chased and beaten by the security forces," he said, alongside family and neighbours at a gathering celebrating the agreement.

Mohamed, with the Sudanese flag painted on his cheeks, was hopeful about the future. "One day, all the

UNESCO adds Bahrain burial mounds...

Continued from Page 1

enabled the inhabitants to develop an elaborate burial tradition applicable to the entire population".

They are the third site in Bahrain to be designated as a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. Head of the Bahrain Authority for Culture and Antiquities, Shaikha Mai bint Mohammed Al-Khalifa, said the tombs were "living proof of Bahrain's distinguished cultural heritage", according to the kingdom's official BNA news agency. Bahrain's other two UNESCO sites are the Bahrain Citadel, listed in 2005, and a major pearling site in the city of Muharraq included in 2012.

On Friday, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee voted to list the sprawling Mesopotamian metropolis of Babylon as a World Heritage Site after three decades of lobbying efforts by Iraq. Iraq had been trying since 1983 to have the site - a massive 10-sq-km complex of which just 18 percent has been excavated thus far - recognized by UNESCO. Straddling Iraq's Euphrates River about 100 km south of Baghdad, the city was the center of the ancient Babylonian empire more than 4,000 years ago.

"What is the world heritage list without Babylon? How to tell the history of humanity without the earliest of old chapters, Babylon?" said Iraq's representative to UNESCO's World Heritage Committee ahead of the vote. "It fills a gap that was evident on the list and indeed, this is a type of site that we can say this convention was actually designed to protect," said Tunisia's delegate. After the successful vote, Iraq's delegation clasped hands and invited all delegates "to visit Babylon, the cradle of civilization".

Babylon developed as a walled city of mudbrick temples and towers, known internationally for its

Crews assessing damage as...

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pointed to huge piles of smashed wine bottles and other merchandise thrown to the floor by the quake as he walked through his store. "We've never seen anything like this, this is the biggest and most impactful quake that I've ever experienced," he told AFP.

Two news presenters on local TV station KCBS looked distraught as the quake hit while they were on the air, gazing up repeatedly to see if anything was falling. "We are experiencing very strong shaking. I think we need to get under the desk," one presenter said, then did just that as the station cut to a commercial. Around 3,000 people in Ridgecrest and the surrounding area are without power, the local utility company said. In the town of Trona some buildings collapsed, gas pipelines ruptured and power was knocked out. Officials would know more as the day progresses, said Mark Ghilarducci, director of the California governor's Office of Emergency Services. There were "significant reports" of fires caused by gas leaks, as well as breaks to power, water and communications lines in the region, he told a press conference. The latest quake was 11 times stronger than the 6.4-magnitude quake "foreshock" the previous day, according to the United States Geological Survey.

The two major quakes, along with multiple aftershocks, have revived fears of the "Big One" - a powerful tremor along the San Andreas Fault that could devastate major cities in Southern California. "This is an earthquake sequence. These earthquakes are related," said Caltech seismologist Lucy Jones. There was a 10 percent chance of Friday's quake being followed by another magnitude 7.0 or higher quake in the next

week, she added. Abdullatif, the shop owner, said he is holding off on cleaning up from the quake because of the warnings there could be yet more seismic activity. "The anxiety is definitely very high," he said. "It's definitely a scary time."

Terri Brantley, who lives in a mobile home in Ridgecrest, said the quake's fury was stunning. He and his wife were in bed when it hit but they managed to get out. "It literally picked up the house in the air, and threw it to the west about three feet," he told AFP. "I've experienced other quakes before, many times, but nothing like this. This was absolutely terrifying," Brantley said.

Numerous gas leaks were reported near the epicenter, including in the towns of Trona and Argus. "Firefighters have secured leaks where possible and evacuated residents from homes with leaks that cannot be secured," the San Bernardino fire department tweeted. In Los Angeles, the fire department deployed vehicles and helicopters, and reported fallen power lines and localized electricity outages.

But Mayor Eric Garcetti said there were no reports of serious damage in the city. Numerous visitors to Disneyland in Anaheim reported on Twitter that rides were shut for safety inspections after the quake. Patrons at movie theaters in the Los Angeles area evacuated due to the quake. "Everyone remained calm as the theater began to shake and then the shaking got stronger. We all headed to exits and down the stairs. No panic but one woman sobbing. This one was scary," wrote NBC journalist Lester Holt on Twitter. No damage was reported at Los Angeles International Airport following inspections.

In Las Vegas, 150 miles east of the quake, an NBA summer league game was postponed when the tremor hit, causing the scoreboard and several overhead speakers to sway. The earthquake was the largest in Southern California since 1999, when a 7.1-magnitude quake struck the Twentynine Palms Marine Corps base, according to The Los Angeles Times. — AFP

Sports

Padres top Dodgers as quake rattles stadium; Cardinals overpower Giants

Red Sox pull away to defeat Tigers

LOS ANGELES: Hunter Renfroe hit a go-ahead home run in the eighth inning and Eric Lauer pitched six strong innings as the visiting San Diego Padres ended their five-game losing streak with a 3-2 victory over the Los Angeles Dodgers in a game that was played through a strong earthquake. With the Dodgers' Enrique Hernandez at the plate in the fourth inning, an earthquake centered just over 100 miles northeast of Los Angeles began shaking Dodger Stadium. Hernandez's at-bat continued uninterrupted, although both foul poles swayed and the live broadcast shook through the center field camera shot. Lauer gave up two runs (one earned) on four hits with one walk and six strikeouts, and continues to have success against the Dodgers. He not only took a no-hitter into the fifth inning when he faced Los Angeles on May 3, he is now 4-0 with a 1.47 ERA against the Dodgers in five career starts. Dodgers starter Clayton Kershaw gave up two runs (one earned) on five hits over seven innings with one walk and nine strikeouts as the Dodgers saw their nine-game home winning streak come to an end. Kershaw ended up with a no-decision, but it was the first time the Dodgers lost a home game started by Kershaw since August 13 of last season—ending a streak of 11 straight starts.

Twins 15, Rangers 6

Luis Arraez, Jorge Polanco, Jonathan Schoop and Mitch Garver each homered as Minnesota broke the major league record for most long balls before the All-

the ninth inning to jumpstart a five-run rally that lifted Philadelphia over New York in the opener of a three-game series. Bruce got the go-ahead hit off Edwin Diaz a little more than seven months after he was dealt to the Seattle Mariners in a blockbuster trade that brought Diaz and Robinson Cano to the Mets. Bruce was traded by the Mariners to the Phillies on June 2. The Phillies are just 9-14 since June 10, but they've won all five of their meetings against the Mets in that span. The Mets are a National League-worst 7-16 since June 10.

Yankees 8, Rays 4 (11 innings)

Aaron Judge hit his second homer of the game leading off the 11th inning, and Brett Gardner hit a three-run homer as New York beat Tampa Bay in St Petersburg, Fla. Aaron Hicks tied the game at 4-4 two pitches into the eighth when he connected off Emilio Pagan. Judge gave the Yankees the lead again when he drove a first-pitch fastball from Ryne Stanek (0-2) over the center field fence. Five batters later, Gardner added a three-run homer over the center field fence, helping New York beat Tampa Bay for the sixth straight time.

Brewers 7, Pirates 6 (10 innings)

After blowing a five-run lead in the ninth inning, visiting Milwaukee got an RBI single from Lorenzo Cain in the 10th to beat Pittsburgh. Against Pirates closer Felipe Vazquez (2-1), Milwaukee's Orlando Arcia, Manny Pina and Cain singled in succession to produce the winning run. Jesus Aguilar and Pina each hit a two-



LOS ANGELES: Francisco Mejia #27 of the San Diego Padres looks back for the ball as Alex Verdugo #27 of the Los Angeles Dodgers slides past to score, to tie the game 2-2, during the sixth inning at Dodger Stadium on July 05, 2019. — AFP

(3-12) allowed two runs, three hits and four walks while striking out five in five innings. He has not won since April 27, a span of 13 starts.

Angels 5, Astros 4

Shohei Ohtani celebrated his 25th birthday with a home run, one of four clubbed by Los Angeles in a victory at Houston. Ohtani blasted a 423-foot solo shot to straightaway center field in the Angels' three-run third inning. It was his 13th home run of the season, and it came two plate appearances after Kole Calhoun hit a two-run dinger. Mike Trout homered for the fourth time in the Angels' past three games, and he matched the club record for home runs prior to the break. Garret Anderson set the mark in 2000, and Trout and Albert Pujols both matched it in 2015.

Royals 7, Nationals 4 (11 innings)

Adalberto Mondesi's RBI single broke an 11th-inning tie, and two more runs scored on a throwing error by Nationals first baseman Ryan Zimmerman as Kansas City won at Washington. The Royals loaded the bases against lefty Jonny Venters (0-1) in the 11th, and Mondesi, who had three hits and scored twice, came through with the tiebreaking hit with one out. Alex Gordon then hit a hard grounder to Zimmerman, whose throw home got past the catcher. The Nationals, who had won four straight and eight of nine, stranded 19 runners and could not take advantage of 11 walks. Zimmerman (three doubles) and Brian Dozier had RBI hits in the bottom of the ninth as Washington tied the game at 4-4 against Royals closer Ian Kennedy.

Diamondbacks 8, Rockies 0

Christian Walker slugged two home runs, Zack Greinke pitched seven scoreless innings, and Arizona snapped an eight-game losing streak to Colorado with a victory in Phoenix. Walker gave Arizona a 2-0 lead in the fourth inning on a two-run, opposite-field shot to right. He smacked a three-run homer in a six-run fifth inning for an 8-0 lead. That was Walker's 17th home run of the season and marked his first career game with multiple home runs. Greinke (10-3) gave up four hits, struck out nine and walked none, relying more than usual on his slow curveball, often inducing swings-and-misses by locating the pitch off the plate at speeds below 70 mph. He heads into his sixth All-Star Game having thrown 14 consecutive scoreless innings to lower his ERA to 2.73.

Red Sox 9, Tigers 6

Xander Bogaerts hit a three-run homer and drove in

four runs, and visiting Boston topped Detroit. The game was delayed 2 hours, 4 minutes by rain prior to the sixth inning. Mookie Betts supplied three hits, scored three runs and knocked in another for the Red Sox. Rafael Devers hit a two-run homer and reached base three times. Boston's Eduardo Rodriguez (9-4) allowed one run on four hits in five innings to collect the victory. Jeimer Candelario had two hits and drove in two runs for Detroit, while Brandon Dixon contributed two hits and scored twice. John Hicks also knocked in two runs, including hitting a solo homer in the ninth.

A's 5, Mariners 2

Brett Anderson (9-5) pitched 6 1/3 strong innings as Oakland won at Seattle. The left-hander allowed two runs on five hits with no walks and four strikeouts as the A's won for the eighth time in their past 10 games. Liam Hendriks, announced earlier in the day as a substitute for the All-Star Game, pitched the ninth for his fourth save. Anderson outdueled Mariners rookie left-hander Yusei Kikuchi (4-6), who allowed three runs (two earned) on four hits in seven innings. He walked one and struck out five. Seattle lost for the seventh time in eight games.

Braves 1, Marlins 0

Brian McCann lined a bases-loaded single into left field to drive in Freddie Freeman with the winning run in the ninth inning, giving host Atlanta the win over Miami. Freeman led off the ninth with a double off the wall against Jose Quijada (0-3), and Josh Donaldson was intentionally walked. The runners advanced to second and third on a Nick Markakis infield grounder, and the Marlins intentionally walked Austin Riley to load the bases. McCann then hit Quijada's first-pitch fastball for the game-winner as Atlanta improved to 9-1 against the Marlins this year. The Braves have won the teams' past eight meetings.

Cardinals 9, Giants 4

Jose Martinez hit the sixth pitch of the game an estimated 433 feet for a home run, and Paul Goldschmidt went ever farther with a Drew Pomeranz offering five pitches later for a two-run shot, sending St. Louis to a win at San Francisco. Dexter Fowler added a single, a triple and a home run for the Cardinals, who have won three in a row after opening a nine-game Western swing with three losses in four games. Dakota Hudson (7-4) pitched five innings of three-run ball for the win. The loss ended San Francisco's bid for its first five-game winning streak since May 30-June 4, 2018.—Reuters



SAN FRANCISCO: Buster Posey #28 of the San Francisco Giants hits a single in the first inning at Oracle Park in San Francisco. — AFP

Star break while cruising past Texas in Minneapolis. The four home runs give Minnesota a total of 165 with two games remaining before the break, shattering the record of 161 set by the New York Yankees in 2018. Schoop, who also had two doubles, went 3-for-5 with four RBIs, and Marwin Gonzalez finished 3-for-4 with two RBIs and two runs for the Twins, who finished with 20 hits—a team-record-tying 13 for extra bases. Byron Buxton had a pair of doubles while Polanco, Max Kepler, Garver, C.J. Cron and Arraez each finished with two hits.

Phillies 7, Mets 2

Jay Bruce exacted some revenge on his former team Friday night, when he laced a tiebreaking RBI single in

run homer in the eighth, Aguilar added an RBI single and Arcia hit a solo homer for Milwaukee, which broke a three-game losing streak. Pittsburgh scored five runs in the ninth for a 6-6 tie, on Starling Marte's sacrifice fly, Josh Bell's three-run homer and Jung Ho Kang's solo shot, his ninth of the season.

Orioles 4, Blue Jays 1

Chris Davis homered and drove in three runs, Dylan Bundy struck out six in 6 2/3 innings, and Baltimore won at Toronto. Bundy (4-10) allowed one run, three hits and two walks to end a personal four-game losing streak. Left-hander Paul Fry pitched a perfect ninth inning to earn his second save. Brandon Drury homered for the Blue Jays. Toronto right-hander Aaron Sanchez



Kuwait participate in karate championship

KUALA LUMPUR: The Kuwaiti Kyokushin Karate team is participating in the fourth edition of Malaysia championship that kicked off yesterday with participation of teams from 10 countries. The head of the Kuwaiti expedition, Hassan Al-Kanderi, said in a statement to KUNA that the national team has been fully prepared to participate in the competitions. The Kuwaiti champions, Dhari Al-Enezi (under 85

kg), Abdullah Al-Abdullah (under 75 kg) and Salem Al-Harbi (under 65 kg) will compete in the scheduled encounters, he said. This tournament is preparatory for the world championship due in Uzbekistan in November. Other competing teams represent the host country Malaysia, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, New Zealand, India, Pakistan and Nepal.—KUNA

World No 1 Park surges into lead at Thornberry Classic

LOS ANGELES: Park Sung-hyun stormed through her second round at the Thornberry Creek Classic on Friday, with a sizzling 62 for a one-shot lead over tour rookie Yealimi Noh. The world number one Park, who moved into the coveted top LPGA Tour ranking spot on Monday, rolled in four straight birdies beginning at the par-four sixth and then repeated the feat on the other side with four straight, beginning at the par-five 13th.

She shot a bogey free round to reach a 17-under 127 total at the halfway stage of the LPGA Tour event in Oneida, Wisconsin. "I made four birdies in a row twice today. I honestly didn't know," Park said. "When I was eight under today, I thought I was seven under." Park, 25, is fresh off a win at the NW Arkansas Championship that vaulted her back into the top spot. It was her second win of the season. Noh, who is making her pro debut at this tournament, capped her second round on Friday with a six-foot birdie on the par-five ninth.

Noh shot a 63 in her opening round on Thursday. She turned down a scholarship offer from a US college and instead turned pro. This is her third LPGA event after competing in the other two as an amateur. Noh played in the last group Friday with 20-year-old amateur Presley Cornelius, who stumbled to a 31-over-par 103 in the second round and



WISCONSIN: Sung Hyun Park of the Republic of Korea hits her tee shot on the second hole during the second round of the Thornberry Creek LPGA Classic on July 05, 2019. — AFP

missed the cut by 60 shots. Cornelius, who got in on a sponsor's exemption, shot a 96 on Thursday and finished at 55-over par, a whopping 72 strokes back of leader Park, who will be Noh's playing partner on Saturday.

Thailand's Ariya Jutanugarn had a 64 and was two shots behind Park. Jutanugarn said she expects to see a lot of birdies on the

weekend. "Actually, I feel like it's really tough for me because I felt like every hole, everybody have the chance to make birdie," she said. American's Mina Harigae and Tiffany Joh are tied for fourth at 14 under after shooting 63 and 66 respectively. First round leader Liu Yu (69) and her Chinese compatriot Feng Shanshan (67) are one stroke back in a tie for sixth at 13 under.—AFP

Sports

Crusaders thrash Jaguares for 10th Super Rugby title

Jaguares left in tears in Christchurch

CHRISTCHURCH: Richie Mo'unga kicked the Canterbury Crusaders to a record 10th Super Rugby title, and their third in a row, with a 19-3 victory that left the Jaguares in tears in Christchurch yesterday. In a match complicated by a slippery ball, the Crusaders scored the only try through Codie Taylor and Mo'unga landed four penalties for the defending champions as they beat the Argentines. To chants of "three-peat" from the capacity home crowd of 18,000, they extended their run to three back-to-back titles, remain unbeaten in their last 31 games on home soil and have won all 24 of their home play-off games since the competition's inception in 1996.

"Thank god for that," coach Scott Robertson said after the final whistle. "It was a massive relief, and it was a party tonight even though the rugby was pretty uneventful in a rugby sense in terms of points, on defence it was tough, it was a grind but everyone climbed into it and knew that a bit of history was going to be made." In a clash of Test-match proportions, with most of the players either All Blacks or Pumas, the Jaguares put up a gallant showing but could not break the Crusaders' defence and their forwards melted as the game wore on.

But their stubborn early resistance and the playing conditions, meant the Crusaders could not make any headway until they abandoned their free-flowing game plan. "It was actually quite slippery out there so we actually found we were better without the ball than with it," captain Sam Whitelock said. "So we kicked those contestable kicks a bit more and tried to put their skills under pressure and at times it worked for us."

It was a tactic that also made Crusaders flanker Matt Todd and the Jaguares' Pablo Matera the two central figures in the game as they fought for possession. The Jaguares have been the surprise of the season, winning their last seven games to make the grand final in only their fourth year in the competition. They believed they could go all the way, and were unhappy even though they lost to the most successful side in the history of the competition. "No one likes losing so of course there's a bit of frustration," coach Gonzalo Quesada said.

'In tears'

"Everyone must imagine that the guys should be proud and just happy to be here but the dressing room is very sad and terrible. They guys are in tears." The Jaguares produced a rock-solid defensive effort to withstand a powerful opening attack by the Crusaders over the first 10 minutes.

A subtle break by Matais Moroni then put the Jaguares on attack where Joaquin Diaz Bonilla opened the scoring with a 40-metre penalty. With the game marred by multiple handling errors — the result of a ball made slippery from the combined effects of heavy rain during the day and dew in the evening — the only try came in the 25th minutes when Todd stole the ball and lock Whitelock stormed 20 metres before passing inside for Taylor to score. Mo'unga landed the conversion and a penalty on half-time for the defending champions to turn around with a seven point advantage. Moroni, the standout right wing for the Jaguares, was denied a try at the start of the sec-



CHRISTCHURCH: Crusaders players and team members celebrate their win in the Super Rugby final match between New Zealand's Crusaders and Argentina's Jaguares in Christchurch yesterday. — AFP

ond half from a kick-and-chase effort that was shut down by Jack Goodhue on the line. From there the Crusaders went up several gears and while they could not score

another try Mo'unga landed three more penalties, two of them from the destructive efforts of the Crusaders pack at scrum time. — AFP

Kawhi joins Clippers, as George follows in the NBA blockbuster

LOS ANGELES: Kawhi Leonard, who led the Toronto Raptors to last month's NBA title, agreed to a four-year deal worth \$142 million with the Los Angeles Clippers, who also landed playmaker Paul George, according to multiple reports. The blockbuster deal announced by ESPN, USA Today and several other media outlets is part of a reshaping of the NBA that leaves next season wide open without a heavy favorite from either the Eastern or Western Conference.

The Clippers' moves added superstar skills to an already solid team that went 48-34 last season, losing to Golden State in the first round of the NBA playoffs. The club, founded in 1970, has never reached a conference final. Leonard was named NBA Finals Most Valuable Player in leading the Raptors to the crown. Toronto and the LeBron James-led Los Angeles Lakers tried in vain to sign him for next season. It was the second NBA Finals MVP award for Leonard, the 28-year-old forward who also won the honor with San Antonio in 2014.

Leonard, who returns to his hometown, averaged a career-best 26.6 points this past season along with 7.3 rebounds and 3.3 assists a game. In the playoffs, Leonard lifted his averages to 30.5 points and 9.1 rebounds a con-

test. New NBA free agent contracts cannot be signed until later Saturday, when teams will begin confirming deals as they are completed. In all, there have been more than 80 major free agency deals worth more than \$3 billion.

"This has been the craziest NBA summer ever!!!" tweeted free agent swingman Jamal Crawford. With Leonard and George and guard Patrick Beverley, all among the top defensive players in the NBA as well as formidable point producers, the Clippers should instantly become title contenders in the Western Conference.

George comes to from Oklahoma City in a trade deal. The Clippers sent Italian Danilo Gallinari, 20-year-old Canadian guard Shai Gilgeous-Alexander and several draft picks sent to the Thunder. George, 29 and also from the Los Angeles area, averaged 28.0 points, 8.2 rebounds, 4.1 assists and an NBA-best 2.2 steals a game. The departure of George also puts Oklahoma City in a rebuilding position that might push them to trade superstar Russell Westbrook.

Lakers scramble quickly

Former Lakers legend Jerry West, now an executive with the Clippers, has frustrated his former club. Foiled in their bid to have Leonard join James and Antonio Davis in a 'Big Three', the Lakers instead switched to spending their remaining salary cap funds to surrounding James and Davis with enough supporting talent to make them a solid contender in a wild western conference.

They signed Danny Green, an ex-Clipper who played for Toronto last season, to a two-year deal worth \$30 million, and Kentavious Caldwell-Pope on a two-year deal worth \$16 million. JaVale McGee also agreed to a two-



Kawhi Leonard

year deal worth \$8.2 million deal to remain the Lakers' center. "That LAL vs. LAC rivalry is going to be (fire emoji)," tweeted Kevin Love, a former Cleveland Cavaliers teammate of James. The Clippers and Lakers will be trying to overtake Golden State, who have lost injured Kevin Durant to Brooklyn.

Add to that a revamped Utah team powered by French big man Rudy Gobert and a Houston squad featuring scoring champion James Harden and star guard Chris Paul and the Western Conference looks up for grabs. In the Eastern Conference, the Raptors will be weakened by the loss of Leonard and Green. The Milwaukee Bucks, who won an NBA-best 60 games last season, and the Philadelphia 76ers, who revamped the lineup around Joel Embiid and Ben Simmons, look the top contenders. — AFP



LAUSANNE: Noah Lyles of the US poses next to a screen reading his time for the Men's 200m as he celebrates after breaking the meeting record in the discipline and winning the race during the IAAF Diamond League competition in Lausanne. — AFP

Lyles becomes the fourth-fastest 200m runner of all-time

LAUSANNE: American Noah Lyles became the fourth-fastest man in history over 200 metres with a stunning Diamond League victory in 19.50 seconds at Lausanne on Friday. The 21-year-old was expected to face a close challenge from Andre De Grasse, but the Canadian was left trailing in third as Lyles laid down a serious marker ahead of September's World Championships in Doha.

"Oh my God, would it be crazy if I said yes?," said Lyles when asked if he expected to run so fast. "The worlds-I've been waiting for this since 2017, for so long, but I have no pressure as I have never participated in a big championship." Only world-record holder Usain Bolt (19.19sec), his fellow Jamaican Yohan Blake (19.26sec) and four-time Olympic gold-medal winner Michael Johnson (19.32sec) have run quicker.

Lyles will now have the US Track and Field Championships, which run from July 25-28 in Iowa, in his sights. "I was even disappointed that the trials are postponed until July (from June)," he added. "It makes me wait even more, and I want to show that I'm the best." Running in lane 7, Lyles seized a clear lead coming out of the bend and was never going to be caught in the final 100m. Ecuador's Alex Quinonez snatched a

surprise second place from lane 8, ahead of De Grasse (19.92sec), running 19.87sec.

Wins for Fraser-Pryce, Gatlin

Two-time Olympic champion Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce powered to a dominant victory in the 100 metres to confirm her return to the upper echelons of sprinting, while reigning world champion Justin Gatlin won the men's race. The 32-year-old Jamaican, on the comeback trail after taking time away from the sport to give birth to her son Zion, clocked 10.74 seconds to beat European champion Dina Asher-Smith into second. Fraser-Pryce had already impressed when finishing second at the Jamaican trials last month, managing the same time (10.73sec) as winner Elaine Thompson.

She won the 100m gold medals at both the 2008 and 2012 Olympics, before having to settle for bronze behind compatriot Thompson in Rio de Janeiro three years ago. Fraser-Pryce will be a contender for a medal at the worlds if she can maintain this kind of form. Her time was only 0.02secs slower than Marion Jones' 21-year-old meeting record. Britain's Asher-Smith, 23, ran a season's best time of 10.91sec to beat world silver medallist Marie-Josée Ta Lou (10.93sec) into third.

American veteran Gatlin proved his is still capable of defending his world 100m title later this year with a second consecutive Diamond League win. The controversial 37-year-old, who has twice served doping bans in his career, claimed victory in 9.92sec, having run 9.87sec to triumph in Stanford last weekend. The 2004 Olympic champion beat fellow countryman Michael Rodgers (10.01sec) and Canada's Michael Rodgers (10.07sec). "I feel good, I feel strong," said Gatlin. — AFP

Teunissen 'dream' winner of dramatic Tour opening stage

BRUSSELS: Dutch rider Mike Teunissen won a chaotic opening stage of the Tour de France yesterday after a collision in the final kilometre blew the bunch sprint wide open in Brussels. The 26-year-old Jumbo-Visma rider becomes the first yellow-jersey holder on the 2019 Tour and the first Dutchman to lead the race since Erik Breukink 30 years ago. Teunissen edged Peter Sagan in a photo finish at the winning line, with the Slovak taking the green sprint points jersey after he won the early intermediate sprint.

"I never thought I could beat the sprinters, but in the end I got it," said Teunissen. "I started cycling with these kind of dreams. It's a dream come true. I'll remember this day for a long, long time." Australian rookie Caleb Ewan took the young rider's white jersey after staying clear of the crash. The race was marked by two falls as young Dutch sprinter Dylan Groenewegen, who many tipped for the stage win, caused a mass fall as the tension mounted a kilometre from home.

One of the Tour de France overall favourites, Denmark's Jakob Fuglsang also crashed 18km from the finish but struggled back to the peloton looking shocked and bleeding from the head. Greg Van Avermaet claimed the first King of the Mountains polka dot jersey after winning an intense struggle on the 7.8 percent gradient Mur de Grammont climb at 45km, which often features in the Flanders one-day classics.

The 34-year-old Van Avermaet, on his golden Olympic champion bike, was in yesterday's early breakaway, from which he also came second on the day's other, lesser, Bosberg climb securing the polka dot jersey after just 50km. Half a million fans and well-wishers turned out as the race embarked in balmy sunshine from Brussels city centre, passing the Grand Place, the Royal Palace and the European Commission building before a 194.5km loop through the lush Belgian plains. — AFP



BRUSSELS: Dutch rider Mike Teunissen celebrates his best sprinter's green jersey on the podium of the first stage of the 106th edition of the Tour de France cycling race between Brussels and Brussels yesterday. — AFP

NHL notebook: Sullivan gets a 4-year extension

NEW YORK: Pittsburgh Penguins coach Mike Sullivan agreed to a contract extension through the 2023-24 season on Friday. Sullivan's extension will begin after the 2019-20 campaign. He has won two Stanley Cup titles since becoming Penguins coach in December 2015. "Mike has done a great job delivering four 100-plus-point seasons with our team," Pittsburgh general manager Jim Rutherford said in a statement. "To win back-to-back Cups in this era speaks volumes of him as a coach."

His instincts in managing the inter-workings of our team both on and off the ice has been impressive." The 51-year-old Sullivan is 174-92-34 as coach of the Penguins with the club reaching the playoffs in all four seasons. Pittsburgh won the Stanley Cup in 2016 and 2017, making Sullivan the first American-born coach to win multiple Stanley Cups.

Scott Harrington

Defenseman Scott Harrington has re-signed with the Columbus Blue Jackets on a three-year deal that runs through the 2021-22 season. Harrington, who was a restricted free agent, played in 73 games with the Blue Jackets last season and had two goals and a career-best 15 assists. "Scott Harrington is a very smart, reliable defenseman who made great strides to become a regular contributor on our blue line last season," said Jarmo Kekalainen, the team's general manager. "He works very hard and has continued to improve steadily over the past three seasons. Scott has shown himself to be an excellent leader who has earned the respect of his coaches and teammates and we look forward to his continued contributions to our club."

Arizona Coyotes

The Arizona Coyotes signed forwards Michael Bunting and Hudson Fasching to two-year, two-way contracts, the team announced. Terms of the deals were not announced. Bunting, a fourth-round draft pick by the Coyotes in 2014, made his NHL debut with the Coyotes last season, scoring one goal in five games. He also played 52 games with the Tucson Roadrunners of the AHL, tallying 19 goals and 22 assists. Fasching, taken in the fourth round by the Los Angeles Kings in 2013, appeared in 22 games over three seasons with the Sabres, notching a goal and two assists. He finished with 16 goals and 17 assists in 64 games with the Roadrunners last season.

Cedric Paquette

The Tampa Bay Lightning re-signed forward Cedric Paquette to a two-year, \$3.3 million contract. Paquette scored a career-high 13 goals while posting 17 points last season. The 25-year-old has 67 points (40 goals, 27 assists) in 316 games with the Lightning over the past five-plus seasons. Tampa Bay also re-signed forward Carter Verhaeghe to a one-year, two-way contract. The 23-year-old had 82 points (34 goals, 48 assists) in 76 games for Syracuse of the American Hockey League last season.

Philip Broberg

The Edmonton Oilers signed their top 2019 draft pick-defenseman Philip Broberg-to a three-year, entry-level deal on Thursday. Financial terms were not announced. Broberg, 18, was the No. 8 overall pick in the draft and the third defenseman taken. With AIK of the Swedish Allsvenskan League, Broberg had two goals and seven assists in 41 games during the 2018-19 season. He added eight points (two goals, six assists) for AIK J-20 in the Swedish SuperElit League. — Reuters

Sports

Morocco crash out to Benin on penalties in Nations Cup last 16

Mane scores and misses penalty as Senegal end Uganda's run

CAIRO: Hakim Ziyech's missed stoppage-time spot-kick proved extremely costly as 10-man Benin stunned Africa Cup of Nations title contenders Morocco in a penalty shootout Friday to reach the quarter-finals after a 1-1 draw in Cairo. Moise Adilehou forced home at a corner early in the second half to put Benin on course for a shock win but Youssef En-Nesyri equalised for Morocco before Ajax star Ziyech blew the chance to snatch victory by striking the post from the spot in the 96th minute.

Benin were forced to play most of extra time a man down after Khaled Adenon received a second yellow card for dissent, but they prevailed 4-1 in the shootout following misses by Sofiane Boufal and En-Nesyri to set up a clash with Senegal on July 10 for a spot in the semi-finals. "It's not the right time to talk about anything," said Morocco boss Herve Renard, after possibly his final game in charge. "The only thing I would like to say is thank you very much to all the fans who came to Egypt to support us."

"I'm a bit ashamed in front of them, and especially about all the people who were supporting us since more than three years. "You know in life of course, some people are against you, but this is life. You just have to look forward and only remember the positive things." Morocco suffered a troubled build-up to the tie at Al Salam Stadium with captain and key defender Medhi Benatia lost to injury while Benin were without forward Steve Mounie due to suspension.

The Atlas Lions had been clinical, determined and efficient so far in Egypt, mirroring the beliefs of Renard, the only coach to win the Cup of Nations with two countries. Benin, winless in 12 previous matches in the competition, only scraped through to the knockout rounds on the back of three draws after holding both Ghana and reigning champions Cameroon. En-Nesyri and Ziyech both produced saves in a dreary first half from Saturnin Allagbe,

who kept his place in the Benin goal after replacing Fabien Farnolle for the final group game.

Adilehou strikes first

Youssef En-Nesyri equalised for Morocco shortly after the restart but it was Benin who grabbed a surprise lead when Adilehou broke clear of his marker to turn in a corner on 54 minutes, the Squirrels' first goal since their opening game in Egypt. Substitute Boufal nearly levelled with his first touch after coming off the bench on the hour, meeting Nordin Amrabat's cross with a downward header that skipped off the grass and flashed just over the top. A mistake from Jordan Adeoti presented Morocco with the equaliser on 75 minutes, as he was caught in possession on the edge of his area by Mbark Boussoufa who squared for En-Nesyri to stroke beyond Allagbe.

Ziyech stung the palms of Allagbe with a free-kick while Boussoufa, who scored a last-gasp winner in the 1-0 victory over South Africa, also saw his set-piece superbly clawed away by the Benin keeper. After a quiet start to the tournament Ziyech looked destined to finally deliver when Benin captain Stephane Sessegnon upended Achraf Hakimi deep into stoppage time, but the winger smacked his spot-kick against the base of the post.

Adenon's bizarre dismissal, ostensibly for brushing the referee away as he attempted to tend to a cramping teammate, gave Morocco the numerical advantage but Ziyech again squandered an opportunity to send his side through as he blazed over a cutback from Boussoufa. Morocco were left to count the cost of those misses as Boufal blazed over Morocco's second attempt in the shootout before Allagbe tipped En-Nesyri's effort onto the bar, leaving Mama Seibou to fire Benin into the last eight.

Senegal end Uganda's run

Meanwhile, Senegal forward Sadio Mane continued his



CAIRO: Morocco's forward Youssef En-Nesyri misses a penalty during the penalty shoot-out of the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Round of 16 football match between Morocco and Benin at the Al-Salam Stadium on July 5, 2019. — AFP

hit-and-miss tournament when he scored his third goal of the Africa Cup of Nations but also missed a penalty for the second game running as his side beat Uganda 1-0 to reach the quarter-finals on Friday. Mane broke the deadlock in the 15th minute of a physical game after Senegal pounced on a mistake by Uganda, who were in the knockout stages for the first time in 41 years.

However, he squandered the chance to give Senegal some breathing space when his spot kick was saved by goalkeeper Denis Onyango in the 61st minute of a game which featured 45 fouls. Outsiders Uganda, whose players were involved in a pay dispute with their federation in the run-up to the game, gave Senegal a stern test at a near-deserted Cairo International stadium. —Agencies

Infantino eyes further WCup expansion after 'best ever' tournament

LYON: FIFA president Gianni Infantino said on Friday he is determined to push ahead with plans to expand the women's World Cup to 32 teams in time for the next tournament after hailing France 2019 as "the best ever". Speaking at a press conference in Lyon, where the World Cup concludes today as holders the United States and the Netherlands contest the final, Infantino claimed the tournament had been "phenomenal" as he promised huge increases in investment in the women's game and to the prize fund for future competitions.

"There was a before and there will be an after the World Cup but it is up to us to seize the opportunity and do something about it," added Infantino, who last month was re-elected for a second four-year term in charge of world football's governing body. Rolling out a series of proposals for the development of the women's game, Infantino said he would try to expand the competition from 24 teams to 32 in time for the next tournament in four years.

"I think we should increase the number of participants," said Infantino, who has succeeded in expanding the men's tournament from 32 teams to 48 in time for the 2026 finals. "The tricky thing is that we have a World Cup coming in 2023 for which we started just a couple of months ago a bidding process based on 24 teams, so there we will need to act more quickly if we want to have more teams already in 2023."

This is only the second women's World Cup since it was expanded from 16 teams to 24 in Canada four years ago. The competition started out with 12 teams in 1991. Infantino suggested FIFA may need to "reopen the bidding



ZURICH: Argentinian President Mauricio Macri (center), FIFA President Gianni Infantino (right) and the president of the South American football's governing body Conmebol, Paraguayan Alejandro Dominguez pose with a ball in Zurich. — AFP

process and allow everyone to have a chance to organise or maybe co-host" but claimed that "nothing is impossible". A decision on who hosts the 2023 finals will be made next year, with Australia, Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Japan, South Africa, and New Zealand among the contenders, while the possibility of South Korea co-hosting with North Korea has also been raised.

Earlier in the tournament, USA star Alex Morgan stated her wish to see the competition expanded to give developing countries more reason to invest in the women's game. "It's great to see quality games and quality teams, and my hope is eventually we cap it at 32 teams moving forward,"

she said after her team's 13-0 demolition of Thailand. Infantino also promised to double the prize fund for the next tournament having initially raised overall contributions from \$15 million to \$50 million in time for this year's competition.

When that increase was announced by FIFA late last year, it was criticised by players union FIFPro, who said it actually marked a "regressive trend" compared to the men's tournament. The prize money for the 2018 men's World Cup in Russia was \$400 million, a \$48 million increase from 2014. "I am very confident we can achieve the necessary figures," Infantino said on Friday. — AFP

'The star is the team': Madagascar punching above weight at AFCON

ALEXANDRIA: There is a squad comprised largely of players from the lower tiers of French football, but Madagascar have emerged as the surprise team at this year's Africa Cup of Nations in Egypt. Ranked as lowly as 190th little over five years ago, the arrival of French coach Nicolas Dupuis has transformed the perennial also-rans into a cohesive unit that is making waves in a first appearance at the continental showpiece.

The Indian Ocean islanders held Guinea to a 2-2 draw in their debut match and have gone from strength to strength in Mediterranean city Alexandria, with a 1-0 victory over Burundi followed by "the most beautiful win in Madagascar's history", a famous 2-0 defeat of three-time African champions Nigeria. Their reward for finishing top of the group is a last-16 encounter today with the Democratic Republic of Congo, a team that thrashed Madagascar 6-1 when the sides last met in 2016.

"All teams are better on paper than us," Dupuis told AFP, pointing out that none of the players involved that day are part of the current squad. "Everything has changed, the team is no longer the same. The players have changed and the set-up has changed. It's much more professional, the staff as well, with proper physical trainers, physiotherapists and doctors. Everything is done better and in a professional manner. It's normal that we've had a few more results."

While Dupuis, who juggles the job with his role at a French fourth-division club, has scoured the lower reaches of the game in his homeland for prospective players, Madagascar remain decidedly short on star power. "We don't have any stars in our team. The star is the team. We have a real team of friends but also with talented players, who are very good but perhaps not stars. Players who put with one another, if we start playing well and with tactical discipline, can make a very good team."

Charles Andriamahitsinoro was the standout performer in the group phase with two goals and an assist, but the



ALEXANDRIA: Madagascar's midfielder Lalaina Nomenjanahary celebrates after scoring a goal during the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations (CAN) Group B football match between Madagascar and Nigeria. — AFP

Saudi-based attacker was quick to deflect praise back towards the group. "We did what we needed, and at a point a player stands out individually when the team needs him. That's our strength," he said.

However, the longer-term concern for Dupuis and football in Madagascar is the lack of succession planning for a team heavily reliant on aging players, such as 35-year-old captain Faneva Andriatsima and Lalaina Nomenjanahary, 33. "I've sounded the alarm in Madagascar. There is nothing being done from a technical standpoint at the national level, there's no work in terms of youth and it's serious," said Dupuis.

"I'm raising the alarm because the national team is the tree that hides the forest. "If we don't question everything, if we don't get back to work, in two years there will be no more team and in four even less so. It would be a shame because there's a real breeding ground and it's quite an old team. My role is to sound the alarm and tell officials there are lots of things in need of change in Madagascar."

For Dupuis and his players the significance of their success in Egypt has yet to properly sink in, but they will get a taste of the fervour back home with President Andry Rajoelina chartering a 480-seater plane to take fans to today's match. "We're not too aware of what we're doing, except when we get sent photos from Madagascar where it's madness right now," says Dupuis. — AFP

Staying on feet pays off for persistent Gabriel Jesus

TERESOPOLIS: At just 22 years of age, a back-to-back Premier League title winner with Manchester City and having scored 17 goals in 34 matches for five-time world champions Brazil, it might seem absurd to say it, but Gabriel Jesus was under pressure coming into the Copa America. The former Palmeiras forward - who won the Brazilian title there too before moving to City - seems to have the world at his feet and enviable statistics for a player of his age.

Yet when he arrived at the Copa America on home soil, Jesus was the subject of severe criticism. The reason being: his lack of goals for Brazil. That's a strange accusation to put at a guy scoring an average of one in every two matches and who, with six international goals in 2019, is having his most prolific calendar year in the Selecao's yellow shirt. But the problem was that until he netted in the 2-0 Copa semi-final victory over arch rivals Argentina, Jesus's last nine goals had come in friendlies. Crucially, he didn't score at the World Cup last year and also missed an injury-time penalty in the 5-0 win over Peru earlier in the Copa. Scoring against Argentina lifted a huge weight off his shoulders.

"I'm delighted about the goal because it's something I'd been searching for since the first match at the Copa," said Jesus. "In life, sometimes things don't go as you'd like. You have to be persistent, things aren't easy." His last goal in a competitive match dated back to October 2017 and a World Cup qualifier against Chile.

Not only did he take his chance against Argentina, popping up in the right place at the right time to tap home a cross from Roberto Firmino after great work from captain Dani Alves, but he also laid the second on a plate for his strike partner. Jesus won a 50-50 challenge with Argentina midfielder German Pezzella, shrugged off a full-blooded attempted foul from his City team-mate Nicolas Otamendi as he entered the area, cut inside a sliding Juan Foyth and slipped the ball to Firmino to score. — AFP

Atletico accuses Barcelona, Griezmann of 'disrespect'

BARCELONA: Atletico Madrid have accused Barcelona and Antoine Griezmann of a "lack of respect" after the Catalan giants' president Josep Maria Bartomeu revealed on Friday that the two clubs had held talks about the signing of the France international. In a statement, the La Liga club confirmed Bartomeu's earlier announcement that there had been a meeting, at Barca's behest, on Thursday to discuss a deal to sign World Cup winner Griezmann, who has a release clause of 120 million euros (\$134.6 million) in his contract. Atletico also said they refused a proposal from Barca that they sign the 28-year-old but delay the payment of the buy-out clause.

"Obviously our response was negative, understanding that both Barcelona and the player have disrespected Atletico Madrid and all its fans," the club said. The statement also claims that Griezmann had told the club that he had struck a deal with Barcelona in March, just days before the second leg of their Champions League last-16 tie with Juventus, which saw them dumped out by a Cristiano Ronaldo hat-trick after winning the first leg 2-0 in Madrid.

It added: "Atletico Madrid wants to express its strongest condemnation of the behaviour of both parties, in particular Barcelona, for having induced the player to break his contractual relationship with us during the moment in which the club was not only playing the Champions League tie with Juventus, but also challenging Barcelona for the La Liga title." Griezmann - who announced in May that he would be leaving Atletico but could not reveal his destination until his release clause dropped from 200 million euros on July 1 - signed for the capital club from Real Sociedad in 2014 and has since scored 133 goals in 257 appearances for Diego Simeone's men.

He has also netted 29 times in 70 international games for France, winning the 2018 World Cup and claiming the Golden Boot at Euro 2016 as Les Bleus lost in the final on home soil to Portugal. Barcelona won their second straight La Liga title last season but are looking to reinforce their squad after failing again in their bid for a first Champions League triumph since 2015 - suffering a humiliating loss to Liverpool in the semi-finals having won the first leg 3-0.

'Neymar wants to leave PSG'

Barca have also been linked with a possible move to bring Neymar back to the Camp Nou. But Bartomeu admitted there was little prospect of the Brazilian rejoining the club he left in a world-record 222-million-euro transfer to Paris Saint-Germain in 2017. "We know that Neymar wants to leave PSG, we know it, but we also know that PSG don't want Neymar to leave," he added. "There is no 'Neymar' file." Griezmann would not be guaranteed to walk into Barca's starting line-up, though, with Lionel Messi, Luis Suarez and either Philippe Coutinho or Ousmane Dembele usually making up their front three last term.

If Barca can get the Griezmann deal over the line despite the friction it has caused with Atletico, it could also put the futures of former Liverpool forward Coutinho and teenager Dembele in doubt. Griezmann scored 21 goals in all competitions as Atletico finished second behind Barcelona in La Liga last term, while Dembele and Coutinho managed 11 and 14 respectively. Bartomeu was speaking ahead of the presentation of rising Dutch star Frenkie de Jong, who has joined the club from Ajax for 75 million euros. — AFP

25 Padres top Dodgers as quake rattles stadium



26 Crusaders thrash Jaguares, grab 10th Super Rugby title



27 Infantino eyes further World Cup expansion



LEEDS: India's Rohit Sharma plays a shot during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between Sri Lanka and India at Headingley in Leeds, northern England yesterday. — AFP

Sharma shines as India humble Sri Lanka

Plane flies over Headingley with 'Justice for Kashmir' banner

LEEDS: Rohit Sharma became the first player to hit five centuries in a single World Cup as India cantered to a comfortable seven-wicket win in their final World Cup group match against Sri Lanka yesterday. Sharma smashed 103 off 94 deliveries as semi-finalists India chased down their target of 265 in 43.3 overs to end the league stage with seven wins, one defeat and one washout.

Sharma's opening partner KL Rahul top-scored with 111 as the pair put on 189 runs for the first wicket to put India well on top. Sharma reached his milestone with a boundary off Kasun Rajitha to pass the mark set by Sri Lanka's Kumar Sangakkara, who scored four hundreds at the 2015 tournament.

He reached his century off 92 balls with 14 fours and two sixes but was dismissed shortly afterwards, caught by Angelo Mathews off the bowling of Rajitha. Sharma, known as the "hitman", now leads the tournament's run-scoring charts with 647 runs in eight matches after hitting his third successive century. He is only the fourth batsman after Sachin Tendulkar, Matthew Hayden and Shakib Al Hasan to score more than 600 runs at a single World Cup.

Skipper Virat Kohli remained unbeaten on 34 and Hardik Pandya hit the winning runs to give India a chance of finishing above group leaders Australia, playing South Africa in the later match at Old Trafford. Rahul registered his first century of the tournament but was caught behind shortly before the end of the game off veteran paceman Lasith Malinga—playing his final World Cup match—after hitting 11 fours and one six in his 118-ball knock.

Earlier, Mathews hit his third one-day international century and put on 124 runs for the fifth wicket with Lahiru Thirimanne (53) to give Sri Lanka a respectable total after they were reeling at 55-4. Jasprit Bumrah returned impressive figures of 3-37 in his 10 overs as India, who had already qualified for the semi-finals, restricted Sri Lanka with some quality bowling. The 1996 champions finished their World Cup campaign with three wins, four defeats and two games ending in no result.

'Justice for Kashmir'

Meanwhile, banners reading "#Justice for Kashmir" and

"India stop genocide & free Kashmir" were flown over Headingley during India's World Cup clash with Sri Lanka yesterday. It followed last week's incident when a banner was flown over the same ground in Leeds during the match between Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Kashmir has been divided between India and Pakistan since they gained independence from British colonial rule in 1947 but both claim the Himalayan territory in full. An insurgency on the Indian side over the past three decades has left more than 70,000 dead, mainly civilians. "We are incredibly disappointed this has happened again," the International Cricket Council said in a statement. "We do not condone any sort of political messages at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup."

"Throughout the tournament we have worked with local police forces around the country to prevent this type of protest occurring. After the previous incident we were assured by West Yorkshire Police there would not be a repeat of this issue, so we are very dissatisfied it has happened again." The ICC said it had been assured by police that there would not be a repeat of the incidents

during the semi-finals in Manchester and Birmingham. Last week's group game between Pakistan and Afghanistan was marred by clashes between fans, prompting a police probe.

The ugly scenes were sparked by the flying of a banner over the ground reading: "Justice for Balochistan." Balochistan, Pakistan's largest and poorest province, which borders Afghanistan and Iran, is rife with Islamist, separatist and sectarian insurgencies. The Pakistani military has been waging war on militants there since 2004, and security forces are frequently targeted. Later yesterday, another banner was flown over the stadium reading "Help end mob lynching in India"

Dozens of people have been killed by Hindu groups over the past five years over allegations that they had slaughtered cows or eaten beef. Critics have accused the government of right-wing Hindu Prime Minister Narendra Modi of turning a blind eye to vigilante attacks on minority Muslims in the name of cow protection. Modi has called the deaths "unacceptable" and called the mobs "anti-social" in his rare comments on the cases. — Agencies

Nadal, Barty and Serena cruise into Wimbledon last 16

LONDON: Two-time Wimbledon champion Rafael Nadal had a much more enjoyable experience yesterday than his previous match as he eased into the last 16 with a 6-2, 6-3, 6-2 romp over French veteran Jo-Wilfried Tsonga. The ease with which Nadal made the fourth round for the ninth time was replicated on the women's side by Ashleigh Barty—who will be breaking new ground in appearing in the last 16 for the first time—and Serena Williams.

Nadal, who embraced Tsonga fondly at the end in stark contrast to the chilly handshake he had with fiery Australian Nick Kyrgios in the previous round, said he was delighted with the manner of his victory describing every match as a battle. "I was very happy," said Nadal. "I played a great match from the beginning to the end. "Jo is one of those players you don't want to face early but today was my day."

His great rival eight-time champion Roger Federer followed him onto Centre Court to play another Frenchman, Australian Open semi-finalist Lucas Pouille. Federer and

Nadal's one-time fellow member of the big four Andy Murray's hopes of men's doubles glory ended early as he and French partner Pierre-Hugues Herbert went out in the second round.

On the women's side Barty and Williams could meet in a blockbuster quarter-final if they win their last 16 matches on 'Manic Monday'. Two of the top 10 seeds did bow out, Dutch fourth seed Kiki Bertens and American ninth seed Sloane Stephens losing to Czech Republic's Barbora Strycova and Britain's French Open semi-finalist Johanna Konta respectively. While Barty will be in new territory playing singles at Wimbledon in the second week for the first time, for Williams it is the 16th time.

'Such a buzz going around'

Barty overwhelmed British wild card Harriet Dart 6-1, 6-1 while 37-year-old, seven-time champion Williams produced her most convincing display in dispensing with German Julia Goerges 6-3, 6-4. Barty, bidding to become the first Australian Wimbledon women's champion since Evonne Goolagong Cawley won her second title in 1980, will play unseeded American Alison Riske for a place in the last eight. She is also the first Australian woman to make the second week since 2010. "That was really good," said Barty. "I served really well and getting out of the love 40 game was massive. "Incredible it is a first for me (to be in the last 16), new territory for me."

Williams goes on to face Spain's Carla Suarez Navarro



LONDON: US player Serena Williams returns against Germany's Julia Goerges during their women's singles third round match on the sixth day of the 2019 Wimbledon Championships. — AFP



LONDON: Spain's Rafael Nadal serves against France's Jo-Wilfried Tsonga during their men's singles third round match on the sixth day of the 2019 Wimbledon Championships. — AFP

for a place in the quarter-finals. Eleventh seed Williams, who defeated Goerges in last year's semi-finals, is bidding to equal Margaret Court's all-time record of 24 Grand Slam titles. "It's been an arduous year for me, so every match I'm hoping to improve tons," said Williams, who had a knee problem which affected her season. "Every time I get out there, I try. I'm getting a really late start but all that matters is that I'm still here."

Mixed doubles rarely gets centre stage but British fans will wait till the bitter end as former world number one Murray will partner Williams against Andreas Mies of Germany and Chile's Alexa Guarachi. "I wanted to play mixed because I've only played just about 15 matches so far this year," said Serena. "It's such a buzz going around about me and Andy now, that I've got nervous. "I'm ready and excited but I'm definitely nervous." — AFP