



**5** Plastic bag-free Kuwait: A noble environmental cause



**11** US slaps \$5bn fine, curbs on Facebook in privacy probe



**20** Murals commemorate Sudan protest 'martyrs'



**26** Hungarian teen Milak smashes Phelps record, Peaty does double



# Kuwait using all resources to locate POWs, missing persons

## Foreign ministry says DNA tests on human remains showed a match

### Boris becomes British premier with Brexit vow

LONDON: Boris Johnson took over as Britain's new prime minister yesterday, vowing to prove the "gloomsters" wrong and get a new deal to leave the European Union on Oct 31 - or exit without one. The 55-year-old former London mayor is a divisive figure, loved by many for his wit and optimism but criticized for populist rhetoric and exaggerated claims during the 2016 Brexit referendum vote. In a speech in Downing Street, he repeated that he would prepare to leave the bloc without an agreement with Brussels but suggested this was a "remote possibility".

But ending Britain's 46-year membership of the bloc will prove a huge challenge for Johnson, who has a wafer-thin working majority in parliament and faces significant opposition among his own Conservative party. The EU has repeatedly said it will not renegotiate the divorce deal it struck with his predecessor Theresa May, which has been rejected by MPs three times.



LONDON: Britain's new Prime Minister Boris Johnson gestures after giving a speech outside 10 Downing Street yesterday. — AFP

In typically upbeat fashion, Johnson insisted he could find a way through and unite the country. "We are going to fulfill the repeated promises of parliament to the people and come out of the EU on October 31, no ifs or buts," he declared.

Continued on Page 24

KUWAIT: Kuwait will continue efforts to locate its prisoners of war (POWs) and missing individuals in Iraq and will use all of its resources to achieve this goal, said a source at the foreign ministry yesterday. In a press release commenting on the findings of the technical committee of the International Committee of the Red Cross' (ICRC) tripartite commission, Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organization Nasser Al-Hain said Kuwait presented data to the commission and the Iraqi team involved in the search for the remains of Kuwaitis in Iraq.

The step led to the approval of DNA testing on human remains found in Iraq recently, said Hain. He added that initial results had shown a match in the DNA samples of some of the remains, which promoted Kuwait to request that all discovered bodies be sent back to its soil for further analysis. The tests will continue in Kuwait and the identities of



the bodies will be revealed as soon as results are announced, indicated the official, adding that the families of the victims will be informed as the process goes on.

Hain commended the tripartite commission and subcommittees for their efforts to uncover the fates of Kuwaiti POWs and missing persons and thanked Iraqi authorities for efforts to facilitate procedures in finding the remains. He hoped that the long-awaited case of the fate of

Kuwaitis and individuals from other nationalities will be closed, to conclude this humanitarian tragedy.

On June 20, the ICRC-affiliated tripartite commission announced the discovery of human remains in southern Iraq with initial expectations pointing to the discovery of bodies of Kuwaiti citizens and other nationals. The discovery gave hope to the families of the missing individuals who were taken away over 28 years ago. The commission gathers officials from Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, the US, the UK, France, and Iraq.

In 2005, the remains of a number of Kuwaiti citizens were discovered in Iraq, while in 2011, the body remnants of Iraqi individuals were uncovered. The tripartite commission continues efforts to uncover the remains of people missing or killed in the 1990-1991 war to liberate Kuwait. A total of 605 persons were taken as prisoners or went missing during the war, according to official Kuwaiti figures. — KUNA

### News in brief

#### Health insurance online only

KUWAIT: The health ministry said payment for expat health assurance will exclusively be online, adding that the paper-based collection system will stop on July 28, 2019. Meanwhile, sources said insurance centers operated by the party that is implementing the health insurance scheme will return to the health ministry on July 28. — A Saleh

#### Israel foils Iran spy ring attempt

JERUSALEM: Israel's domestic intelligence service said yesterday that the country's security forces had uncovered Iranian intelligence efforts to recruit Israeli Arabs and Palestinians. A statement from the Shin Bet said that the alleged Iranian-run operation was discovered "in recent months". "The network was based in Syria under Iranian guidance and was led by a Syrian operative nicknamed 'Abu Jihad'," it said. "It attempted to recruit people via preliminary contacts based on fictitious Facebook profiles and later - messaging apps." It said that those contacted were asked to gather data on sites such as military bases and police stations with a view to providing Iran with potential Israeli targets. — AFP

#### Rumors spark B'desh lynchings

DHAKA: Eight people have been killed in vigilante lynchings in Bangladesh sparked by rumors on social media of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for the construction of a mega-bridge, police said yesterday. The victims - which include two women - were targeted by angry mobs over the rumors, spread mostly on Facebook, that said human heads were required for the massive \$3 billion project, police chief Javed Patwary said. "We have analyzed every single case of these eight killings. Those who were killed by lynching mobs - no one was a child kidnapper," Patwary told reporters in Dhaka. Police are so concerned about the deadly fallout in rural towns that officers are trying to counter the web rumor using loudspeakers. — AFP

#### Nike sneakers sell for \$437,500

NEW YORK: A new world record for a pair of sneakers was set at auction on Tuesday when an avid collector splashed out \$437,500 on Nike's 1972 "Moon Shoe". Sotheby's said. The sale smashed the previous record of \$190,373 spent in 2017 on a pair of signed Converse worn by Michael Jordan in the 1984 Olympic basketball final, the New York-headquartered auction house said in a statement. Canadian collector Miles Nadal was the successful bidder in the online action, adding to the 99 pairs of other hard-to-find shoes that he bought in a private sale last week. Nike cofounder Bill Bowerman designed the flat racing 'Moon Shoe' which was made for runners at the 1972 Olympic trials. — AFP

### Mueller insists Trump was not exonerated

WASHINGTON: Robert Mueller denied yesterday that Donald Trump had been exonerated of obstructing his two-year investigation into Russian election meddling but - in his first testimony before Congress on the probe - he again declined to accuse the US president of a crime. In high-stakes testimony, a shaky-voiced Mueller appeared uncertain as Democrats and Republicans peppered him with questions about the investigation, repeatedly asking lawmakers to repeat themselves or restate their query.

The 74-year-old former FBI chief and veteran prosecutor also repeatedly

referred lawmakers to the report, and said he would not go beyond its text in his hotly anticipated appearances before two Democrat-led House committees. But his answers made clear he took issue with Trump's claim that the April report had exonerated him from charges of obstruction of justice. "The finding indicates that the president was not exculpated from the acts that he allegedly committed," Mueller told the House Judiciary Committee.

The former special counsel emphasized that Russia did interfere with the 2016 election and did so to bolster Trump's campaign against his rival, Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton - contrary to Trump's repeated denials. But he also said that neither the president nor others of his campaign were charged over cooperation with Russians because the investigation lacked sufficient support for conspiracy charges. — AFP (See Page 6)

### Spotlight on suicide pushes taboos in Iraq

BAGHDAD: Nada never spoke about her suicide attempts and Ahmad hesitated before sharing his story, but as cases rise in Iraq the taboo issue is being pushed out of the shadows. Kept from school and sexually abused by her brothers, 24-year-old Nada, who first tried to take her own life at the age of 12, only agreed to

referred lawmakers to the report, and said he would not go beyond its text in his hotly anticipated appearances before two Democrat-led House committees. But his answers made clear he took issue with Trump's claim that the April report had exonerated him from charges of obstruction of justice. "The finding indicates that the president was not exculpated from the acts that he allegedly committed," Mueller told the House Judiciary Committee.

Almost 200 people took their own lives in Iraq in the first four months of 2019, according to the government's Human Rights Commission. This follows a rise in suicides from 383 in 2016 to 519

Continued on Page 24

### Jordan opens underwater military museum

AQABA, Jordan: Sunken tanks, a troop carrier and a submerged helicopter: Jordan yesterday opened its first underwater military museum off its Red Sea coast. The kingdom is hoping the 19 decommissioned pieces of military hardware, submerged at depths up to 28 m, will attract tourists to the already popular diving resort of Aqaba. The Underwater Military Museum Dive Site includes several tanks, an ambulance, a military crane, a troop carrier, an anti-aircraft battery, guns and a combat helicopter, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) said.

The sunken items have been "stationed along the coral reefs imitating a battle tactical formation", ASEZA said in a statement. The museum aims to offer a "new type" of museum experience combining "sports, environment and exhibits" for divers, snorkelers and visitors on glass-bottomed boats, it said. The launch was marked by a ceremony with music from the Jordanian Armed Forces band and a local folk group, AFP photographers there said. — AFP (See Page 21)



WASHINGTON: A quote from the Mueller report appears on a screen as former Special Counsel Robert Mueller testifies before the House Judiciary Committee in the Rayburn House Office yesterday. — AFP



BAGHDAD: An Iraqi policeman pilots a speedboat while on patrol to prevent people attempting suicide from jumping in the Tigris River on May 10, 2019. — AFP



AQABA, Jordan This combination of pictures shows military hardware submerged to be part of a new underwater military museum. — AFP

# Amir, Crown Prince receive state officials at Bayan Palace

## Sheikh Sabah meets visiting Saudi Minister for Energy



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem and His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. — Amiri Diwan and KUNA photos



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



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Saudi Minister for Energy Affairs Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud.



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



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



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



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

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received yesterday at Bayan Palace His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness the Amir also received Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness

the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and President of the Supreme Judicial Council and the Constitutional Court and President of the Cassation Court, Justice Yousef Jassim Al-Mutawaa.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received the

visiting Saudi Minister for Energy Affairs Abdulaziz bin Salman Al Saud and his official delegation. Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, acting Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah Mubarak Al-Sabah and Minister of

Electricity and Water Dr Khalid Ali Al-Fadel attended the meeting. In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince received Ghanem. His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, and Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Interior Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah. —KUNA

### News in brief

#### Commercial Bank launches 'E-GOV' card

KUWAIT: The Commercial Bank of Kuwait announced launching the 'E-GOV' card that was designed to meet the needs of its clients, and present innovative services to them. General Manager of the Personal Banking Services Hameed Salman said the E-GOV card is distinguished by being an ATM card with recharging ability, and comes with other unique features that allow control of payment and uses.



Hameed Salman

#### Deputy FM heads to Switzerland

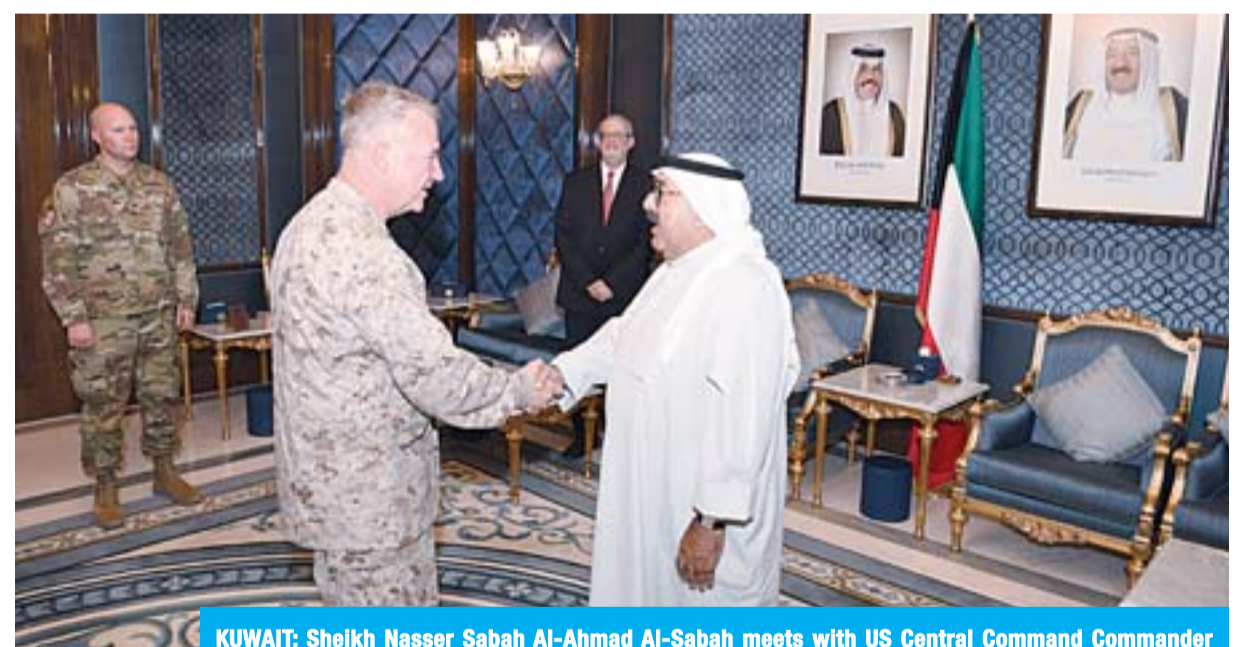
KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah headed yesterday to Switzerland to lead Kuwait's delegation in the fifth round of political consultations between Kuwait and the Swiss confederation. Political consultations between both sides were established under a signed agreement as a mechanism for coordination and consultation where Jarallah heads the Kuwaiti side. The Swiss team is led by the Minister of State for Foreign Affairs. Through the last four sessions, held alternately between both countries, they were able to launch relations to new and multiple horizons. —KUNA

#### Pan-Arab economic merger

CAIRO: Director General of Kuwait General Administration of Customs (KGAC) Jamal Al-Jalawi yesterday underscored necessity of achieving pan-Arab economic integration to pave way for setting up the aspired joint Arab custom union. Custom managers play a role in facilitating cross-border commerce and unifying tariffs, said Jalawi, addressing the 29th meeting of Arab custom general directors, held at the Arab League headquarters. Acknowledging that some Arab states have 'reservations' regarding the planned common Arab custom law, Jalawi hoped the delegations' views would be harmonized on controversial matters. —KUNA

## Kuwaiti Defense Minister, US General discuss cooperation

KUWAIT: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah on Tuesday discussed mutual cooperation with visiting US Central Command (CENTCOM) Commander General Kenneth McKenzie. The meeting also featured cordial talks about matters and topics on the visit's agenda, the Ministry of Defense said in a statement. Sheikh Nasser Al-Sabah lauded the depth of relations between the two friendly countries as well as the mutual cooperation on different levels, mainly the military affairs, according to the statement. This reflects mutual keenness on developing and promoting all aspects of bilateral cooperation, it noted. —KUNA



KUWAIT: Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah meets with US Central Command Commander General Kenneth McKenzie. —KUNA

## Audit organizations sign agreement to exchange expertise

KUWAIT: The Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) and the Asian Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ASOSAI) signed yesterday a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to exchange expertise and bolster cooperation. Chairman of the Executive Council of the Arab Organization of Supreme Audit Institutions (ARABOSAI) Iraq's Saleh Khalaf said that the MoU focuses on boosting cooperation in the application side of things, adding that joint work between ASOSAI and ARABOSAI will result in strategies bettering society and improving governments programs to fight poverty and unemployment. The ASOSAI has recently concluded its 54th meeting in Kuwait, a gathering that saw the participation of 11 audit bureaus from Asia. —KUNA



KUWAIT: ARABOSAI and ASOSAI chiefs sign the memorandum of understanding. —KUNA

Local

# Lack of accountability to blame for Israel's illegal practices, Kuwait tells UN

## Kuwait condemns Israel for demolishing Palestinian homes

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait slammed the lack of accountability after Israeli soldiers demolished dozens of apartments in occupied East Jerusalem, leaving Palestinian residents there homeless. The remarks were made by Kuwait's permanent United Nations representative, Mansour Al-Otaibi, after a UN statement underlined the seriousness of the ongoing actions, which were described as being contrary to international law and humanitarian law. The absence of accountability has contributed to Israel's expansion of settlements, its forcible land seizures, and the confiscation of homes and forced displacement of Palestinians, said the Kuwaiti envoy.



### Int'l law breaches affect peace process

#### Occupying force

Describing Israel as "the occupying force," Kuwait said this has also led to increased violence, putting civilian lives at risk, as unlawful raids, arrests, and arbitrary and indefinite detention continue without a trial. Israel continues to implement its illegal practices in the occupied city of Jerusalem, aiming to erase the holy city's historical and religious identity and to eliminate the Palestinian presence there, Otaibi went to say. Israeli authorities, whose unjust blockade on Gaza has entered its 13th year, should instead be looking out for

the best interests of the people under occupation in accordance with international humanitarian law and the Fourth Geneva Convention, he argued.

The ambassador also lamented the lack of funds being provided to the UN Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA), calling on the international community to continue backing the urgent needs of these refugees. Kuwait will continue being one of the UNRWA's biggest contributors, he said, including a total of \$113 million over the past four years, he added. Otaibi went on to reiterate Kuwait's support of the international, Islamic and Arab position on the matter, based on comprehensive peace and the two-state solution.

#### Peace process

Meanwhile, an official source at the Kuwaiti Foreign Ministry yesterday said that Kuwait strongly condemns Israel's demolition of Palestinian homes in Sur Baher area, east of Jerusalem. The ministry official, in a statement, explained that Israel breaches international law and immensely affects the peace process, while it continues its illegal settlement activities in full violation of its obligations under Security Council resolutions and international conventions and treaties. Kuwait is in coordination with



**NEW YORK:** Kuwait's permanent UN representative Mansour Al-Otaibi addresses a UN Security Council session held to discuss the Israeli attacks. — KUNA

South Africa and Indonesia, as well as in liaison with the Palestinian delegation, succeeded in holding a meeting of the Security Council to discuss the Israeli attacks, the official source added. In addition, the meeting discussed the Israeli activities against the Palestinian homes and called on the council to carry out its duties to maintain international peace and security, plus to issue a statement in which Israel holds responsibility for such actions. — KUNA

## Kuwait to hire 200 doctors, 300 nurses from Palestine

By A Saleh

**KUWAIT:** Official sources said the health ministry prepares to hold intensive meetings with officials from the Palestinian National Authority in order to recruit doctors, nurses and medical technicians from Palestine, as part of a mechanism of giving facilities to the private sector to bring in Palestinian doctors and nurses. The sources said meetings will start in September and will include visits by Palestinian officials to Kuwait and Kuwaiti officials to the Palestinian Authority to sign contracts with Palestinian doctors in Gaza and the West Bank, just like what the education ministry did with teachers.

The sources said professional tests will be conducted in the Palestinian territories and they will be contracted in their countries, adding that the interior ministry has received clear instructions to issue visas to Palestinians who have licenses to work in Kuwait. Sources said the health ministry is about to open several hospitals and health centers, which calls for signing contracts with expat doctors and nurses, and that it is neces-

sary to sign contracts with Palestinians who proved excellent before the Iraqi Invasion of Kuwait, and were highly productive as well. The ministry is expected to sign contracts with 200 Palestinian doctors and 300 nurses before the end of the year.

In other news, the Ministry of Higher Education and a specialized government team began preparing the implementation rules of the government universities law, and it is expected to be ready in January, as the government is now committed to implementing the law. The sources said the team includes specialists from the Fatwa and Legislation Department, higher education ministry, Kuwait University and Public Authority for Applied Education and Training, in addition to independent specialists. Sources said the government is preparing to establish a new government university a year from now, including a decision to form an academic academy to prepare a plan for establishing the new university, adding that the government may revive the Jaber University law that was issued by the National Assembly in 2012.

## Two injuries reported in road accidents



**KUWAIT:** A vehicle pictured after an accident reported on Ghazali Road yesterday.



Two vehicles heavily damaged after a head-to-head collision reported in Taima.

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

**KUWAIT:** A man was injured when his vehicle hit a light post on Ghazali Road yesterday. Farwaniya firemen dealt with the accident and freed the motorist from his vehicle before hand-

ing him over to paramedics. Meanwhile, a passenger was injured when two vehicles collided head-to-head at a street in Taima. Jahra firemen responded to the scene and handed the injured man to paramedics after moving him out of the vehicle.

### News in brief

## No complaint against Kuwait from Congress

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah said the ministry did not receive any complaint against the government of Kuwait or any of its citizens from the US Congress. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said in an answer to a parliamentary question from MP Abdullah Al-Kandari that the ministry follows and protects Kuwait's and its citizens' interests abroad, adding it did not receive anything in this regard. Kandari had asked the minister about recent reports alleging that a person submitted a complaint against Kuwait at the US Congress demanding the application of the Magnitsky Act in case Kuwait refuses to release a suspect wanted in a major embezzlement case. Kandari condemned the foreign ministry's silence towards Neil Bush's statements in the Washington Times threatening to apply the said act if Russian businesswoman Marsha Lazareva was not released. Lazareva, who was sentenced by a Kuwaiti court to jail over embezzlement charges, has since been released on bail. — Al-Jarida

#### Philippine domestic helpers

The Philippine Embassy's charge d'affaires Mohammad Nour Al-Deen said the embassy is planning to coordinate with the Kuwaiti side to set a date before the end of July for a delegation from the Philippine labor ministry to discuss the final unified contract items with regards to bringing Philippine domestic helper. Nour Al-Deen said all items of the agreement were agreed upon during the meetings of joint technical committees. He said discussions will include Philippines' proposal to call the contract a "harmonized labor contract", adding domestic helpers are currently working with two contracts - the Philippine one and that of Kuwait. This calls for the necessity to have a unified form of the contract for the benefit of the two sides, in addition to some other technical matters, he said, expressing optimism towards positive results in the coming meetings. — Al-Rai

#### Court rules on students' cheating

The administrative court upheld the decision to fail a university student and decided to cancel her entire school year, adding that if a student cheats in one subject, they should be banned from all tests and considered failed. A Kuwaiti student contested Kuwait University's decision to ban her from all tests after finding she had cheated, but the court upheld the university's ruling and considered cheating as morally bad and deviation from honesty and credibility, which compromises the principle of equal opportunity between students. — Al-Qabas

Ready for the Beach ??

**Kuwait Times**

Subscribe or renew your subscription  
& get K.D 50

**1 Coupon FREE**

P.O. Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait | Tel: 24833199 - 24833358 - 24835616/7  
Fax: 24835620 - 24835621 | E: info@kuwaittimes.net

## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: The Central Bank of Kuwait's building decorated with colorful lights forming Kuwait's flag. — Photo by Fahad Al-Otaibi (KUNA)

# Spread of social media poses challenges to caricaturists

Art form that delivers a bold and purposeful social, political and economic message

CAIRO: In light of the technological development and the spread of social media, the caricature industry is facing modern challenges shown in popular censorship and audience reactions to published work. However, media decreased its attention to this journalistic art, which sarcastically simplifies stances and views to audience. Caricature is a rendered image, which shows the features of its subject in a simplified or exaggerated way through varied artistic drawings. This art delivers a bold and purposeful social, political and economic message to correct mistakes in the society and shed light on key issues to address them. Before the spread of social media, the art of cartoon was managed by editors-in-chief of newspapers, and they were the only people who decide which caricature is published. However, any cartoonist can nowadays post his works on his official account on social media, and these works are widely attracted by a large number of social media users.

Some Kuwaiti artists took part in the sixth edition of the International Forum of Caricature which took place in Cairo recently in an attempt to maintain cartoon's features in light of difficulties facing this art, amid the reluctance of audience to print newspapers. On the sidelines of the forum, head of Kuwait Cartoon Society Mohammad Thalab said that caricature is not only related to politics, but also to many issues in society. Cartoonists offer a better content in print newspapers due to the official censorship, unlike social media, he noted.

Meanwhile, deputy head of the society Sarah Al-Noumas, said one of the difficulties facing caricature is the



Mohammad Thalab



Sarah Al-Noumas

low turnout of audience to cartoon exhibitions and activities, in addition to the little attention to this art. "Cartoonists are bold and do not complement. This makes some believe that the artists use their brushes as a weapon of direct attack on people," Noumas said. She added that the artist highlights local issues through images, provided that the red lines are not crossed. — KUNA



CAIRO: Some artworks displayed at the sixth edition of the International Forum of Caricature which took place in Cairo recently. — KUNA

## Burgan Bank set to sponsor 'D Partners Program' 2019

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, one of the leading contributors to the welfare of the community, announces it will sponsor the 'D Partners Training Program' for the first time. Organized by the Training Gate International, the training program includes a series of workshops designed to enable and integrate a generation of young people with disabilities into society and to serve as advocates for their cause.

It is targeted at empowering both the disabled and non-disabled nationals with a collective conscience of the community's needs while inspiring more to fulfill their role as responsible members in the society. The innovative platform reinforces the global pledge to accommodate the persons with disability' youth with the necessary skills, professional competency, quality education, real-life career experiences, better healthcare and environmental services, overall accessibility and mobility to support themselves.

In line with the new Kuwait 2035 Vision, 'D Partners' is one of the most important civil society development programs that contribute to improving the lives of persons with disabilities and equip them with the keys to success to practice in both their social as well as professional lives. In addition, to increase a national sense of duty and level of awareness through the aid of the media to better under-

stand their circumstances, enable effective communication and constructive dialogue among members.

Hessa Al-Najadah, External Affairs Manager at Burgan Bank said: "We are proud to partner with Training Gate International as the 'D Partners' objectives are in line with Burgan Bank's Corporate Social Responsibility mission to serve the community. Since the bank's inception, it has been keen on promoting equal rights and social inclusion of individuals with disabilities and continues to partner with entities that develop their skills and help them serve as equal contributors to society. The bank seeks to establish a conscious and educated society that will build the foundation for a better future for the Persons with Disability segment."

Kifayah Al-Alban, Founder and Director General of the Training Gate International said: "We are delighted to partner with Burgan Bank and commend them for their role in driving many initiatives that address the needs of people with disabilities. Through our training methods, our goal is to develop their lives with the help of proper educational, vocational and practical training to actively join their peers and raise opportunities for success in both their personal and professional lives."

The bank's support of this initiative falls under its dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change. This program sheds light on important aspects affecting every segment of the society by promoting social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives. Burgan Bank's approach to 'ENGAGE' begins with a vital principle that as a leading Kuwaiti financial institution, its conduct and policies should be aligned with the needs and interests of the community.



Local

# KIPIC to expand Al-Zour refinery with Honeywell technology

## Complex to increase plant's output capacity of fuels, petrochemicals

**KUWAIT:** Honeywell announced yesterday that Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) has awarded reconfiguration of the refining and petrochemical sections of its Al-Zour refinery to Honeywell UOP. The newly designed complex will increase the plant's output capacity of fuels and petrochemicals. Honeywell UOP, a leading licensor of refining and petrochemical process technology, will revise the configuration and capacity of the refinery's gasoline production facilities. The company will also supply technology licenses, design services, key equipment, and state-of-the-art catalysts and adsorbents to produce clean-burning fuels, paraxylene, propylene and other petrochemicals.



Rachad Abdallah



**Kuwait's largest refinery, petrochem plant**

"Honeywell is committed to supporting Kuwait's long-term growth and development in the energy sector, leveraging innovative technologies and advanced training programs to help achieve key objectives under New Kuwait Vision 2035 and KPC Vision 2040," said Rachad Abdallah, president for Honeywell in Kuwait, in a press release. "Our technologies are helping transform Kuwait into a world-leading manufacturer in the downstream oil and gas industry. In addition to aromatics and propylene, the Euro-V fuels will be produced at Al-Zour plant which is the cornerstone of Kuwait's clean fuels initiative."

When completed, this will be the largest integrated refinery and petrochemical plant ever constructed in Kuwait. The refinery's gasoline section will include a world-scale 98,000 barrels per day (bpd) RFCC complex for production of propylene, gasoline, and a UOP Selectfining unit to produce low-sulfur gasoline blending components. Two UOP Merox units will be used to treat mix C3's for

propylene production, and mixed C4's to make clean-fuels blending components, including MTBE from a UOP Ethermax unit. Also included 193 KMTA Butamer unit to convert normal butane to isobutane. The petrochemicals section includes an aromatics complex that will produce 1.4 million metric tons per year of paraxylene. It will use the latest generation LD Parex aromatics technology, including the Sulfolane, Isomar and Tatoray processes. The CCR Platforming unit and naphtha hydrotreater have been expanded to meet the needs of the larger gasoline and aromatics complexes. For over 50 years, Honeywell has a long history of supporting



**KUWAIT:** Expansion works at Al-Zour refinery. — KUNA



Kuwait's energy industries through leading-edge technologies, efficient business solutions, local training, research and development initiatives. Honeywell is the first company to build 'Made in Kuwait' solutions to power digital transformation across the country's growing oil, gas and petrochemical sectors. The company also operates the Honeywell Automation College in Mina Abdullah, which delivers global training capabilities locally through more than 300 courses specifically designed to address the requirements of

Kuwait's power and water, oil and gas, and automation industries. KIPIC is a new subsidiary of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC) set up by State of Kuwait to manage refinery, petrochemicals and LNG import operations in the Al-Zour complex, located south of Kuwait City.

Honeywell UOP is a leading international supplier and licensor of process technology, catalysts, adsorbents, equipment, and consulting services to the petroleum refining, petrochemical, and gas processing industries.

Honeywell UOP is part of Honeywell's Performance Materials and Technologies strategic business group, which also includes Honeywell Process Solutions, a pioneer in automation control, instrumentation and services for the oil and gas, refining, petrochemical, chemical and other industries. Honeywell is a Fortune 100 technology company that delivers industry specific solutions that include aerospace products and services; control technologies for buildings and industry; and performance materials globally. — KUNA

## Plastic bags-free Kuwait, a noble cause

**KUWAIT:** It is no secret that plastic bags are hazardous to the environment, a fact heavily documented by scientists and environmentalists alike. Joining the global rally to rid the world from the dangerous material, a number of Kuwaiti officials expressed strong desire to create a plastic bags-free country via various steps and noble causes.



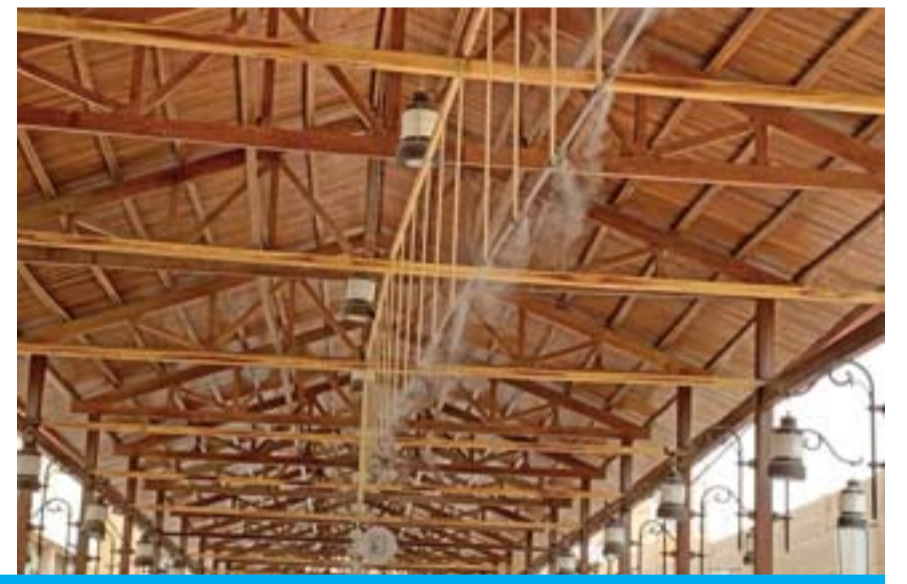
Speaking on this matter, Director General and chairman of the board of the Environment Public Authority (EPA) Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said that the authority was in support of decreasing dependency on plastic bags through the use of environment-friendly alternatives. The material which plastic bags are made from is hazardous for the ecosystem and also human beings, causing various negative effects, stated Sheikh Abdullah Al-Ahmad, who called on officials running cooperative societies and markets to seek substitutes for plastic bags. He affirmed that the EPA would continue to spread awareness on the subject on a multitude of platforms, saying that it was an obligation upon Kuwaitis to fight back against materials harmful to the environment.

In similar fashion, head of the Union of Consumer Cooperative Societies (UCCS) Mishaal Al-Sayer revealed that since 2011, a number of cooperative societies implemented measures to reduce usage of plastic bags, adding that 70 percent of such markets complied. A meeting for the federation was held to look into more venues to encourage the usage of environment-friendly bags. Sayer revealed, indicating that new measures will be enforced to rid Kuwait from plastic bags once and for all.

The EPA and several other entities are working to end the use of plastic bags by 2020. While it is a great step to protect the environment from the ill effects of plastic bags, the problem remains in the presence of a huge number of such material, making it quite a challenge especially with the known fact that the substance is very hard to decompose. It would be a long and hard fight to protect the environment from plastic bags and other hazardous materials, but it would be worthwhile knowing that future generations would be thankful for a clean and health planet. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Water sprinklers in Al-Mubarakiya Market. — KUNA photos



## Sprinklers battle Kuwait's heat

**KUWAIT:** Water sprinklers can be noticed scattered around various outdoor locations in Kuwait as a measure to fend off the scorching summer heat. Whether at Kuwait International Airport, Al-Mubarakiya Market or elsewhere, the sprinklers are a welcome sight for those stuck outside or who try to enjoy the outdoors during extreme temperatures. — KUNA



**Water sprinklers outside Kuwait International Airport.**



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Times continued its tours to check compliance with the ban on outdoor work between 11:00 am and 4:00 pm during the summer. Several violations were detected during tours yesterday in Shuwalkh between 11:00 am and 12:00 pm. The ban started on June 1st and ends on August 31st. — Photos by Ben Garcia

## Patients' Fund celebrates 40 years of helping the poor

**KUWAIT:** Out of sheer empathy towards poor patients' financial and social ailments, alongside the physical pain, a group of Kuwaiti doctors had made it their mission to put a smile on the faces of those bed-ridden through the establishment of the Patients Helping Fund Society in 1979. "The Fund is a bright page in the books of Kuwait's charitable history: helping pauper and poor patients for the last 40 years: tens of thousands of them," said Dr Mohammad Al-Sharhan, the Fund's Board Chairman, in an interview on the occasion of the Fund's 40th inception anniversary. "More than 100,000 patients benefited from the Fund; which so far handed aid worth KD 90 million (\$297 million)," Dr Sharhan noted, pointing out that the Fund was the first of its kind in the Gulf region in providing quite expensive medication, especially for cancer, hepatitis and MS patients.

The Fund does not limit itself to helping Kuwaitis only, as there is a specialized sub-committee tasked with reviewing cases and medical files of residents with adequate paperwork, and determining whether they meet the Fund's help-providing criteria, he said. As for activities outside Kuwait, Dr Sharhan said the Fund's 'Foreign Committee' plays a pivotal role in showcasing Kuwait's humane and civilized facade through providing humani-



tarian/medical aid and urgent emergency assistance to the most vulnerable in the world. "Thus far, more than 35,000 cancer, heart and hepatitis patients were reached out for in many countries," he noted.

Through the 'eye camps' project, the Fund managed to treat; and even help, some 10,000 people regain partial or full vision, especially in the Basin of Africa's Niger, Chad, Djibouti, Sudan and Egypt, in addition to the dialysis project in Bangladesh, elaborated Dr Sharhan. Other medical-related projects and activities were also supported in Yemen, Somalia, Albania and Bosnia and Herzegovina. Lauding the Fund's Women's Committee, Dr Sharhan owed the establishment of such division to the great and vital value woman has within society. Established in 1984, the all-female staff headed by Khadija Abdulsamad, now supervises 17 children's clubs to aid poor patients and lend a helping hand to them regardless of nationality or belief. — KUNA



US finally gets a new Pentagon chief Esper

Boys can wear skirts under Taiwan school's gender-neutral uniform plan

Page 9

Page 8



WASHINGTON: Former Special Prosecutor Robert Mueller (lower left) testifies before Congress yesterday in Washington, DC. —AFP

# 'No,' Trump was not exonerated: Mueller

## NO COLLUSION, NO OBSTRUCTION! Trump tweets again

WASHINGTON: Robert Mueller said yesterday he did not exonerate Donald Trump in his two-year Russian meddling investigation but also told lawmakers he will not say if the president committed a crime, as he launched into a marathon day of congressional testimony. Three months after releasing the final report on his probe into the 2016 election, much of the American public remains unclear about the former special counsel's findings on whether Trump criminally obstructed justice and whether his campaign colluded with Russians.

With Trump declaring he was "exonerated" in the probe and Democrats saying the report supplied ample evidence for impeachment, the notoriously taciturn Mueller answered questions for the first time in front of two separate, Democrat-run committees in the House of Representatives. Mueller—who made a few public remarks at a press conference on May but did not take questions and has resisted testifying—reiterated that he would "stay within the text" of his report, and was visibly uncomfortable once the question period began. "Based on Justice Department policy and principles of fairness, we decided we would not make a determination as to whether the president committed a crime. That was our decision then and it remains our decision today," Mueller said in his opening remarks. But when asked at the start of the hearing before the House Judiciary Committee if his report completely cleared the president of wrongdoing, Mueller said "no."

"The president was not exculpated for the acts he allegedly committed," Mueller said, adding that it was "true" that Trump could be prosecuted for obstruction of justice after he leaves office. As the questioning

volleyed back and forth from Democratic to Republican committee members, the tension mounted and ebbed. Mueller offered many one-word answers and repeatedly referred lawmakers back to the report.

Trump insisted this week he would not watch the nationally-televised testimony but half an hour before it was to start, he let loose with an angry Twitter tirade, complaining among other things about the fact Mueller specifically NOT agreed to, and I would NEVER have agreed to it. The Greatest Witch Hunt in US history, by far!" Trump wrote in one of a half dozen tweets.

The cryptic legalese used in Mueller's report allowed the president and his allies to claim the investigation was a politically charged witch hunt that found nothing of substance. "NO COLLUSION, NO OBSTRUCTION!" Trump tweeted again on Tuesday. Democrats nevertheless hoped Mueller would make clear to the public why he did not bring charges despite damning evidence outlined in the 448-page report—and potentially offer explanations of Trump's conduct that would damage him in the run-up to the 2020 election. "Every American deserves to know the crimes and corruption exposed in the Mueller Report," said Democratic Representative Ted Lieu.

### Collusion, obstruction alleged

Mueller's report documents extensive contacts between the Trump campaign and Russians, including attempts to cooperate or collude, neither of which is a specific crime. Mueller ruled in the end that there was not enough evidence to recommend charges of criminal conspiracy, the main legal charge he could make use of. The veteran prosecutor and former FBI director also laid out in detail 10 instances when Trump allegedly tried to obstruct the investigation.

But he said he was prevented from recommending charges against Trump because Justice Department rules prohibited him from lodging criminal charges against a sitting president. He reiterated that position in yesterday's testimony. That left it to Congress to determine whether Trump committed a crime, and a minority of Democrats are pressing for the House to impeach the president.

### Justice Department rules

Mueller, veteran of some 88 trips to Capitol Hill over a long career in government, is notorious for saying as little as possible. But he also made clear he thinks the American public does not fully understand the extent and consequences of Russia's campaign to meddle in



The Greatest Witch Hunt in US history



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump addresses the Turning Point USA's Teen Student Action Summit 2019 in Washington, DC, on July 23, 2019. —AFP

the election, which the president has repeatedly refused to acknowledge.

Trump's Justice Department meanwhile weighed in late Monday with a statement demanding that Mueller stick only to what he wrote in his report, in hopes of containing any fallout from his testimony. "It's incredibly arrogant of the department to try to instruct him on what to say," Jerry Nadler, the chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, said on CNN Tuesday. "It's part of the ongoing coverup by the administration to keep information away from the American people." —AFP

## Google goes Nigerian with 'informal' transit routes and local accent

LAGOS: Commuters making their way through Nigeria can now hear travel advice in a local voice on Google Maps under new features aimed at attracting more users in Africa that were unveiled by the company yesterday. The local accents feature, unveiled at an event in the commercial capital Lagos and also available on Google Assistant, is the first move by the US technology giant to offer such a service in Africa.

Rapidly expanding populations, increased mobile phone penetration and crowded cities that are often poorly signposted have led technology firms to identify African countries as potential growth areas. They are now offering transport features from detailed maps to motorcycle ride-hailing services. Google's motorcycle directions will also be available in Benin Republic, Ghana, Rwanda, Togo and Uganda from yesterday, the company said. The technology behemoth owned by Alphabet Inc said it is aiming to capture new users and expand its appeal beyond just drivers.

"There are 10 million (motorcycles) in Nigeria, it's hugely

popular," said Ramesh Nagarajan, Google's director of product management. "We're going market by market based on popularity." In the coming months, the maps feature will also allow users in Lagos to seek directions on what it calls "informal transit" — such as yellow danfo minibuses that ply virtually every road in Lagos, but about which it is difficult for outsiders or even Lagosians travelling to a new neighborhood to find information.

Google partnered with local startup Road Preppers Technologies Ltd to gather data on the different routes available, and aims to tell users the best options available based on traffic, weather and road conditions. "What we're really hoping is for people who might be making a trip to an unfamiliar town, maybe a journey they don't usually take, to be able to discover the info they need to make that journey," said Jeff Albertson, a Google senior product manager who worked on the development.

The map will include information on the expected fare, travel time and even photos of the bus stops to help guide commuters. Outside Lagos, Google is expanding street view imagery to Abuja, Benin City, Enugu and Ibadan. Google has worked hard to expand in West Africa, especially Nigeria, the continent's most populous country with an estimated 190 million citizens. Last year it unveiled WiFi hotspots across Lagos, and in 2017 it launched a program to train millions of Africans in tech skills to make them more employable. Google declined to say what sort of investment it was putting into the new developments. —Reuters

## A priest, car crash, bags full of stolen parish money

LOS ANGELES: Emergency workers responding to a car crash in a California town last month found a priest with a fractured hip and, much to their surprise, bags of cash he allegedly stole from the local parish. The Diocese of Santa Rosa, north of San Francisco, said in a statement on Monday that \$18,000 in church collections were found in Father Oscar Diaz's car at the time of the accident on June 17.

It added that further investigation revealed "a prolonged history of theft," with more than \$95,000 stolen from parishes where the 56-year-old Diaz had served over the past 15 years. "I am deeply grieved that this has happened and am deeply saddened that the parishes he was sent to serve have been harmed." Bishop Robert

Vasa said in a statement.

"The full extent of the theft is not known and may never be fully known but the Diocese is committed to determining as fully as possible the extent of the theft from each of these parishes," Vasa said that Diaz, who has been a priest for 25 years, told the emergency responders at the time of the crash that the bags of cash were his salary. But a hospital employee uncomfortable with the amount of money Diaz brought into the emergency room contacted police, who alerted the diocese.

Vasa said a search of Diaz's office and the rectory where he lived uncovered a large number of collection bags containing cash. A further probe revealed that Diaz had also deposited a number of checks made out to parishes into his personal bank account. Vasa said Diaz had admitted to stealing church collection bags for some time. "Father Oscar is presently suspended from priestly ministry," he said. "There are no plans at this time for ministry in the Church and his future is uncertain." He said the diocese was not planning to pursue criminal prosecution at this time, in part because of the cost involved. —AFP

## International

# The struggle to regulate tech giants like Facebook, Google and Amazon

## Facebook to fix kids app flaw allowing chats with strangers

**SAN FRANCISCO:** Internet giants like Facebook, Google and Amazon have disrupted markets and culture in a lucrative rise to power that have regulators launching probes, imposing fines and even threatening to break the companies up. Government regulators are scrambling to collar the online giants, often having to update rules designed for an analog world as the digital behemoths grow in size and influence.

The European Union kicked off the regulatory assault, with the United States following by launching a sweeping probe into the practices of leading online platforms, social networks, search engines and e-commerce services. While the US Department of Justice did not specify targets, it appeared certain that it would be investigating Amazon, Facebook and Google.

### Facebook

Facebook boasts more than 2.7 billion users monthly at its family of apps that include Messenger, Instagram, WhatsApp and the eponymous social network. The Silicon Valley-based company uses what it learns about users to target ads, raking in money from businesses with the promise of delivering ads that resonate with consumers. Critics say Facebook puts profit over privacy.

The social media giant remains under intense scrutiny following revelations that personal data on tens of millions of users was hijacked by political consultancy Cambridge Analytica, which was working on the Donald Trump campaign in 2016. Lambasting by politicians and dents to its reputation seem to have failed to hurt its business. Fear of a multi-billion dollar fine however did drag down earnings in a recent quarter. Facebook estimated that it will face a US Federal Trade Commission fine of \$3 billion to \$5 billion for "user data practices."

Analyst firm eMarketer expects Facebook this year to claim more than 20 percent of a \$333.25 billion global digital ad market. The social network continues to innovate, betting on virtual reality with Oculus gear. Facebook also has a version tailored for businesses, and is backing a project to launch a digital currency called the Libra. The company's efforts to better compete with Chinese virtual coin rivals could however be undermined by government regulators.

### Alphabet/Google

Search engine Google remains the money-making engine for parent company Alphabet, routinely crushing any competition. Most of its revenue comes from digital ads, which accounted for \$116 billion of the \$136 billion the Silicon Valley-based company took in last year. Google dominates digital advertising, with 31 percent of the global total expected to go into its coffers this year, according to eMarketer. Google comes under fire for the way it protects — or fails to protect — user data, from online browsing histories to locations captured by software on smartphones.

In January, France's CNIL data watchdog slapped Google with a record 50-million-euro fine for failing to meet the EU's tough General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force early last year. Google is appealing the fine. US regulators who say Google failed to protect children from harmful content and data collection on its YouTube platform could also fine the company. Europe has imposed fines on Google tallying billions of dollars for anti-competitive activity.

Alphabet continues to invest in advertising products as well as areas that include artificial intelligence, cloud computing, internet-linked household devices, and even a streaming video game service called Stadia. Google makes its Android mobile operating system available free to device makers, looking to make money from ads or offerings that users tap into. Alphabet's subsidiary Waymo, which specializes in autonomous cars, is considered one of the most advanced companies in the field.

### Amazon

Amazon is an online commerce powerhouse that is also considered a leader in computing, content and online services hosted at its internet cloud data centers. Brussels has launched an investigation into whether Amazon has violated EU competition rules by taking advantage of data from independent retailers that use its online storefront. Cloud unit Amazon Web Services (AWS) continues to grow at a rate of 40 percent annually, said analyst Patrick Moorhead of Moor Insights & Strategy.

Amazon recorded historic sales this month for its "Prime Day" event. But eMarketer recently downgraded its assessment of Amazon's share of the US e-commerce market to 37 percent



**NANTES:** Photo shows the logo of the US online social media and social networking service, Facebook. —AFP

from 50 percent. "The story of Amazon's past few quarters has been continued supercharged growth in its more profitable business lines like cloud and advertising," said eMarketer principal analyst Andrew Lipsman. Amazon has also been investing big in original content for streaming television offered as a perk for people who subscribe to its Prime service.

### Facebook to fix kids app

Meanwhile, Facebook acknowledged yesterday that a flaw in its Messenger Kids service allowed children get into group chats with people who were not approved by their parents. The leading social network said it has been shutting down the group chats involved and notifying thousands of parents that their children may have unintentionally connected with strangers.

"We recently notified some parents of Messenger Kids account users about a technical error that we detected affecting

a small number of group chats," Facebook said in response to an AFP inquiry. "We turned off the affected chats and provided parents with additional resources on Messenger Kids and online safety." Technology news website The Verge first reported on the development, publishing a copy of an alert informing parents that the flaw allowed a child's friend to create a group chat involving people who were not on their child's list of approved connections.

Group chat involvement was still limited by restrictions set by the parents of whoever got it going. Facebook in December 2017 introduced a version of its Messenger application designed to let children between six and 12 years old connect with others under parental supervision. No in-app purchases are allowed. The social media giant said at the time that it created the app as a safe environment because many children had been going online without safeguards. —Agencies

## Turks welcome 'Ottoman grandson' Boris Johnson

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey celebrated incoming British prime minister Boris Johnson's Turkish heritage yesterday, with politicians and media proclaiming that the "Ottoman grandson" could strengthen ties between two countries on Europe's fringes. The former London mayor is the great-grandson of the Ottoman Empire's last interior minister, Ali Kemal, and his ancestry has been a source of pride for many Turks.

Despite his sometimes disparaging remarks about Turkey, including a crude limerick about President Tayyip Erdogan and demands in 2016 that Britain veto Turkey's accession to the European Union, Johnson is affectionately referred to as "Boris the Turk" by some Turkish media. "Ottoman grandson becomes prime minister," read a front-page headline of the opposition newspaper Sozcu. "For England, a prime minister with roots in Cankiri," it said, referring to Kemal's home province in central Turkey.

Like Johnson, his great-grandfather was a journalist who went into govern-

ment, a move that proved ill-fated. In the final days of the Ottoman Empire, Kemal was captured and lynched by nationalists fighting to establish the Turkish state. Erdogan congratulated Johnson on Twitter, adding that ties between Turkey and the United Kingdom were set to improve. Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu also congratulated him, sharing a video of Turkish reporters asking Johnson about his roots in Cankiri during a 2016 visit to Ankara.

Demiroren News Agency quoted a resident of Cankiri's Kalfat village as saying it was an honor that someone from their village had become prime minister, adding that Johnson owed his distinctive mop of blond hair to his Turkish forefathers. "They call his ancestors from this house 'Blond Boys'. Boris Johnson's blondness comes from this lineage," Mustafa Bal said.

### Lucky charm

Johnson's own relations with Turkey have sometimes been rocky. Three years ago he won first prize in a British magazine competition which asked readers to compose limericks about Erdogan "as filthy and insulting as possible." He later said the Turkish leader had not brought up the verse when they met. Johnson, a leading campaigner for Brexit in Britain's 2016 EU referendum, wrote to then-Prime Minister David Cameron before the vote calling for the government to veto Turkish EU accession and



**LONDON:** Britain's new Prime Minister Boris Johnson (center) is clapped into 10 Downing Street by staff in central London yesterday, on the day he was formally appointed British prime minister. —AFP

stop a planned extension of visa-free travel to Turkey. Turkey's EU accession talks are now stalled, while Johnson has barely three months to meet an Oct. 31 deadline to negotiate Britain's exit from the bloc. Pro-government newspaper Aksam said Johnson, who succeeds Theresa May as prime minister after winning the leadership of the ruling Conservative Party, may have been helped by a bit of Turkish folklore. Receiving a Turkish award in 2012

for his work as London mayor, Johnson was told of a belief in the Black Sea province of Rize, where then-premier Erdogan's family hail from, that no one could become prime minister unless they could play the kemençe, a traditional stringed instrument. Johnson had a go, video footage shows, and despite his limited skills the instrument appears to have worked its charm. "The kemençe brought good luck," Aksam newspaper said. —Reuters

## Soaring prices and rising anger in Pakistan

**KARACHI:** Nearly one year after the election that brought Imran Khan to power in Pakistan, the cricket-hero-turned-prime-minister faces growing anger as he chases an elusive target: how to right the South Asian nation's teetering economy. Pakistan has been staring down the barrel of a balance of payments crisis since before last year's July 25 vote, and analysts have long warned that the new government must act quickly.

In one of his earliest speeches, Khan — who led the cricket-mad country to World Cup victory in 1992, and campaigned on vows to build an Islamic welfare state — tried to reassure voters, telling them repeatedly: "Do not panic." But since then the rupee has lost nearly 30 percent of its value and inflation is running at nearly nine percent, and likely to continue rising. "The price of tomatoes is touching the skies," 30-year-old Shama Parveen, who walked several kilometers through Karachi's sweltering heat to find cheaper produce said. "Life has become hard."

"I need to earn at least 1,000 rupees (\$6.30) daily to meet my expenses," said 60-year-old Mohammad Ashraf, who sells henna dye. "Nowadays I can hardly save 500 or 600 rupees... I sometimes think if I fall ill, how could I afford the medicines and treatment? I would die, I think." Analysts warn that with Pakistan's galloping population increase far outstripping growth — set to slow to 2.4 per-

cent this year — the country will find no short-term relief, even after the International Monetary Fund approved its latest \$6 billion loan.

Pakistan has a rocky relationship with the IMF, which has bailed it out many times before, and Khan secured billions in loans and investment from "friendly countries" including China and Saudi Arabia before going to the Fund. But it was not enough. Pakistanis are facing the grimmest part of a seemingly endless economic cycle: austerity imposed on millions of poor people, and futile demands for deep-rooted structural reform.

Traders held a one-day strike earlier this month, and on Friday about 8,000 people marched through the city of Rawalpindi to protest against rising prices. "This government has completely failed... they are making the country poorer with each passing day," Ayaz Ahmed, a 32-year-old university graduate, told AFP at the protest. Mass demonstrations organized by opposition parties are planned for Thursday to mark Khan's one-year anniversary in office.

### Worse than nuclear sanctions?

But while discontent is rising on social media, where viral TikTok videos mock Khan's promises, street protests remain a luxury for many. "I cannot afford to lose even one day of earnings," said Karachi spice vendor Naseem Akhtar. Asghar Ali, an associate economics professor at the University of Karachi, estimates that up to eight million people could slip beneath the poverty line in the coming days.

He singled out Khan's anti-corruption drive — which has seen opposition leaders jailed and businesses "harassed" — as



**KARACHI:** People eat charity food by a roadside in Karachi. Nearly one year after the election which brought Imran Khan to power in Pakistan, the cricket-hero-turned-prime-minister faces growing anger as he chases an elusive target: how to right the South Asian nation's teetering economy. —AFP

causing "havoc". For Shahid Hasan Siddiqui, chairman of the Research Institute of Islamic Banking, the situation is "worse than 1998, when the country survived international sanctions after nuclear tests".

Taxes are the issue, he argued. Just one percent of Pakistan's adult population is estimated to pay taxes. Khan's government is pushing hard to broaden the tax base but it remains to be seen whether the latest schemes rolled out by officials will make a difference. But a tax amnesty by Khan "allows the rich to get their black money whitened by paying a mere 1.5 percent tax," Siddiqui said. "On the contrary, every poor man who buys

essentials pay 17 percent in (sales) tax." Rarely do the poor "get to see the inside of a hospital or the schools built with those taxes", agreed Pakistani author Mohammed Hanif in a scathing New York Times opinion piece excoriating Khan's Pakistan recently. Umer Farooq, an investment analyst at AKD Securities, said the policies are "largely fair", however. "The real challenge for the government is how they will implement them," he said. In the meantime, despair is growing. Mohammad Imran, a 35-year-old vegetable seller in Karachi, said he can no longer pay his debts. "What should I do? I would commit suicide someday." —AFP

## Crackdown and separatist uprising inflame Cameroon prisons

**LIBREVILLE:** Crushed inside disease-ridden cells, with no beds, little food and even less hope, inmates in Cameroon's prisons were already tense before an influx of political detainees and Anglophone separatists stirred up an explosive mix. At an overcrowded central prison in the capital Yaounde this week, hundreds of prisoners revolted against their poor conditions in an upsurge of violence broadcast on Facebook. On Monday, videos spread across social media of prisoners ransacking and burning the Kondengui jail library and a sewing workshop before security forces crushed the munity. Filming on their phones, inmates posted parts of their protest, chanting: "We want more to eat than porridge," and "We want to go to trial." A day later, security services had reestablished control.

But the riot highlighted the crisis in the central African nation's prisons, exacerbated by a crackdown on opposition parties, Boko Haram militants, and a separatist uprising that has rocked English-speaking regions since 2016. "Prison overcrowding is exacerbated by the socio-political crisis that began in 2016 in the Anglophone areas and the post-election crisis," said Maximilienne Ngo Mbe, director of the local REDHAC rights group. "The situation in Cameroonian prisons has become catastrophic... How is it that people languish in prison for two or three years without being tried?"

The Cameroon prison population has increased steadily from 23,500 in 2013 to almost 31,000 in December 2017, according to the last report published in 2018 by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms of Cameroon. Kondengui prison, the scene of the riot, was built to accommodate 1,500 inmates but is estimated to house more than double. Some prison occupancy rates are three times over normal capacity, according to official data. Rights groups say prisons also suffer from a prevalence of tuberculosis, HIV, AIDS, cholera and scabies.

### Growing numbers

Since 2017, fighting between government troops and English-speaking separatists demanding independence in two western regions has killed hundreds and forced nearly 500,000 people from their homes. The government has rejected the demands for autonomy and cracked down on English-speaking communities which chafe at what they see as discrimination from the French-speaking majority. Some prisons have been filled with English-speaking activists accused of militancy by the authorities, but who are yet to face trial.

In Buea, the capital of an English-speaking region, tensions erupted at a prison on Tuesday housing many separatist inmates a day after the revolt in Yaounde. Gunshots were heard around the prison and flame and smoke were seen rising from its roof, witnesses said. Prisons have increasingly become political incubators, according to analysts, also because the opposition MRC party has faced a crackdown. Party chief Maurice Kamto has been held in jail in Yaounde since January after claiming the 2018 presidential election results were rigged. —AFP

## International

# Eyeing power, Merkel protegee starts high-stakes defense job

## Kramp-Karrenbauer sworn in as German defense minister

**BERLIN:** Chancellor Angela Merkel's protegee, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, pledged yesterday to push for increased military spending "in our own interests" as Germany's new defense minister - a role likely to make or break her chances of succeeding her mentor. Kramp-Karrenbauer, who lacks high-echelon government experience, grabbed the defense role to build her credentials for the chancellor - a high-stakes move that will demand she build up a military many Germans remain uneasy about deploying.

Merkel, who turned 65 a week ago, is aiming to stage-manage her gradual exit from politics and hand over power to Kramp-Karrenbauer, who replaced her as chair of their Christian Democrats (CDU) in December. At a swearing-in ceremony yesterday, Kramp-Karrenbauer - known as AKK after her initials - began the tricky task of promising to seek spending hikes that the CDU's Social Democrat coalition partners want to limit.

At the same time, she stressed that shaping up the Bundeswehr (armed forces) was in Germany's own interests - presenting thinly veiled resistance to US President Donald Trump's demands that Berlin boost its military budget. "To speak

quite plainly, this is not about wishes from abroad, this is not about an arms build-up, it is about equipment and personnel - it is about our Bundeswehr," she told lawmakers to loud applause.

"It is about a Bundeswehr that can fulfill the tasks we give it - it is about our own interests. If the Bundeswehr is to demonstrate the capabilities (that) we demand and expect of it, then the defense budget must rise." The defense job, vacated last week when Ursula von der Leyen quit to become president of the European Commission, will raise Kramp-Karrenbauer's profile and give her a chance to reverse her declining popularity with a view to succeeding Merkel by 2021.

But her move into a role dubbed "the ejector seat" - such is the career damage to recent incumbents - risks backfiring as she inherits the task of reviving a demoralized and under-equipped Bundeswehr dogged by scandals and right-wing extremism. With the defense job, she also ties herself to the binds of cabinet loyalty - while as CDU chair she must still mastermind the party's strategy for three autumn regional elections in Germany's east, in which success is crucial to her prospects.

### Floundering popularity

She immediately ran into trouble last week after giving a lacklustre television interview and saw her public support - already floundering - take a further dip. Kramp-Karrenbauer brings no defence experience, but comes with a track record - albeit brief - of pushing the military's case. In March, she said Germany's credibility with its NATO partners was at stake unless it raised defence spending.

She underlined Germany's NATO commitment to boost military spending towards a target of 2% of economic output, adding: "We are a reliable ally, bearing a fair share of the joint duties." Aiming to make a better fist than von der Leyen of cleaning up the armed forces and boosting morale and military readiness, she paid tribute to the service of Germany's armed forces: "This service needs respect, this service needs support," she said.

In 2017, von der Leyen criticized "weak leadership" in the armed forces, provoking dismay among soldiers' representatives, after an officer was arrested on suspicion of planning a racist attack to frame refugees. Adding to the challenges Kramp-Karrenbauer faces, the Social Democrats are wary of committing to Britain's plan for



**BERLIN:** Germany's new Defense Minister Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer talks to German Chancellor Angela Merkel (left) after taking her oath during her swearing in ceremony at the main hall of the Paul-Löbe-Haus parliamentary annex yesterday. — AFP

a European-led naval mission to ensure safe shipping through the Strait of Hormuz. "We must always examine scrupulously requests

for support from our partners - we mustn't affirm hastily, nor issue knee-jerk rejections," she said. — Reuters

## Scans on diplomats show 'something' happened to the brains

**WASHINGTON:** Brain scans of about 40 US diplomats injured in mysterious circumstances in Cuba reveal visible differences compared to those in a control group, researchers who analyzed them said Tuesday. The study, published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* and led by professors at the University of Pennsylvania, does not draw any conclusions about the cause of the symptoms suffered by the diplomats from late 2016 into May 2018.

But the MRIs of the patients confirm that "something happened to the brains of these people," Ragini Verma, a professor of radiology at UPenn and co-author of the study said. "It's not imagined," she said. "All I can say is that there is a truth to be found." Verma added: "Whatever happened was not due to a pre-existing condition, because we test for that."



Dr Mitchell Valdes-Sosa

From late 2016, diplomats posted in Havana and some of their family members suffered unexplained symptoms ranging from poor balance and vertigo to lack of coordination, unusual eye movements, anxiety and what victims called a "cognitive fog." The United States recalled most of its diplomatic personnel from the Cuban capital in September 2017. Some of them have recovered and returned to work, but others are still undergoing rehab, according to Verma.

The US government never publicly explained the cause of the mysterious illnesses. It neither confirmed nor denied the possibility of attacks using some sort of acoustic weapon, as some US media reported, without offering proof. Cuba has denied all responsibility for the incidents, which also affected at least 14 Canadian citizens. Ottawa also ended up recalling most of its diplomats from Havana in January. At the request of the State Department, 44 diplomats and family members were sent from mid-2017 to UPenn's brain trauma center to undergo MRI (magnetic resonance imaging) exams.

Researchers compared those results with scans from 48 comparable subjects in two control groups. The differences are statistically significant and relate to the brain's white matter as well as the cerebellum, the part of the brain that controls movement. A State Department spokesman welcomed "the medical community's discussion on this incredibly complex issue. The Department's top priority remains the safety, security, and well-being of its staff." Verma said it was vital to follow the diplomats and their families over time "to see whether these changes evolve or change."

### Cuba rejects the study

Responding to the report, Havana again denied all responsibility in the affair. The study by the UPenn professors "does not allow clear and final scientific conclusions to be reached," said Mitchell Valdes-Sosa, head of the Neuroscience Center of Cuba. Valdes-Sosa told reporters that the study "does not show, contrary to what has been speculated... that the group of diplomats suffered brain damage during their stay in Cuba." A senior foreign ministry official in charge of US affairs, Johana Tablada, said that as of now "no evidence exists of any type of attack" against the US diplomats, and called on Washington to stop using that term in such an "irresponsible" way. Tablada urged the White House to stop using the issue "as a pretext to impose increasingly aggressive new sanctions" against the Cuban people. — AFP

## US finally gets a new Pentagon chief Esper

**WASHINGTON:** Former soldier Mark Esper was sworn in as US secretary of defense Tuesday after earning Senate confirmation, filling America's longest-ever Pentagon leadership vacuum as Washington faces mounting tensions with Iran and struggles to end the long-running Afghanistan war. President Donald Trump's second Defense Department chief takes over nearly seven months after the shock departure of Jim Mattis, the deeply respected career US Marine who broke with Trump over policy on the Middle East and Afghanistan.

Two others were made acting defense secretary this year to fill the void-including Patrick Shanahan, who served a six-month temporary stint but resigned for family reasons in June and withdrew from consideration for the full-time top post. Esper sailed through the confirmation process at lightning speed. He earned broad bipartisan support and was confirmed by a vote of 90 to 8.

Later Tuesday, he was sworn in at an Oval Office ceremony attended by several Senate Republicans and Trump, who called it "a very important day" for the nation. "There is no one more qualified to lead the Department of Defense," the president said. Esper's confirmation brings ballast to a Pentagon destabilized by the leadership revolving door since late December, and comes as the world's primary military power is engaged in conflicts in countries including Afghanistan and is being tested by Tehran.

Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell, the top Republican in Congress, hailed Esper, who served a two-year stint as secretary of the US Army beginning in 2017, as "a thoroughly well prepared nominee" who has the respect of the national security community and can hit the ground running. "The world is full of serious threats to America, to our allies and to our interests, not least among them obviously is Iran's insistence on continuing to ratchet up tensions in the Middle East," McConnell said in a Senate floor speech Monday. "Having a Senate-confirmed secretary of defense, especially one of this quality, could not come a moment too soon."

## Hunger looms for Venezuela migrants as aid falls short

**RIOHACHA:** It is mid-morning and the Rancheria community kitchen in northern Columbia is already full of families queuing for a free meal of pasta with chicken, bread and guava juice. Hundreds of Venezuelan migrants rely on the community kitchen for survival, among them Marbellis Atencia, 39, who comes here every day with her three children. But a funding shortfall threatens its future - even as Venezuelans' desperate exodus over the border continues.

"There was no food in Venezuela," said Atencia, who has been searching for a job since her family arrived in Colombia nearly a year ago. "When I try to find a job, I'm asked if I'm from Venezuela. And if I answer yes, they say, 'No then, you come here to steal our jobs'," the former housekeeper told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Services like these are desperately needed - the 18 community kitchens the United Nations' World Food Program (WFP) operates in the desert-like La Guajira region bordering Venezuela fed nearly 100,000 migrants in June.

The agency has calculated it needs \$76 million in 2019 to respond to the Venezuelan migration crisis in Colombia alone, but it is facing a \$35 million funding gap. Country director Carlo Scaramella told the Thomson Reuters Foundation that as demands on its services grew, WFP could be forced to reduce rations, help fewer people - or both. "Donor support will continue to be critical to ensure that

WFP can continue to provide assistance at scale to vulnerable migrants and local communities during the second part of the year and well into 2020," he said.

### 'Protracted emergency'

Venezuela's economic collapse has unleashed the biggest migratory crisis in recent South American history, with 4 million people leaving. Funding shortfalls are also hitting other countries across Latin America hosting Venezuelan migrants and refugees. In December 2018, a UN-led appeal by nearly 100 aid agencies requested \$738 million to help the fleeing Venezuelans, but less than a quarter has been funded.

But Colombia has taken the highest share, with 1.3 million migrants settling there, according to government data. "Colombia has been extremely generous... But the situation can become more complex and stressed if resources are not available," WFP's Scaramella said, calling the situation "the beginning of a protracted emergency". Across Colombia, Venezuelan migrants can be seen on street corners and at traffic lights, appealing for work or spare change. Many said they had fled economic and political crisis at home only to find themselves relying on handouts.

Aid workers pointed out that the crisis came at a difficult time for Colombia, which signed a peace agreement with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) rebels in 2016 after half a century of fighting. Alan Bojanic, representative in Colombia for the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), said the country needed substantial funding. "For a country that is still trying to solve problems of the war, like the 7.8 million people who were displaced within Colombia because of the violence, to have this on top... it's a complicated scenario," he said.

Colombian Foreign Minister Carlos



**WASHINGTON:** Mark Esper (left) is sworn-in as Defense Secretary by Associate Justice Samuel Alito (right) before his wife Leah Esper in the Oval Office at the White House on July 23, 2019. — AFP

### Combat experience

Esper has significant Middle East experience. He fought in Iraq during the Gulf War in 1991, and was part of the US Army's famed 101st Airborne Division known as the "Screaming Eagles." He is also close to Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, with whom he studied at the prestigious West Point Military Academy. Both men graduated in 1986.

On the political front, he served as an advisor to several lawmakers on Capitol Hill, including Republican senator Chuck Hagel, who later became secretary of defense under Democratic president Barack Obama. But his links with the defense industry drew criticism during his confirmation process. Democratic Senator Elizabeth Warren was among five 2020 presidential candidates who voted against Esper. Warren highlighted his potential conflicts of interest due to his affiliation with defense contractor Raytheon, for whom he was a lobbyist when Trump tapped him for the army secretary post.

"At the age of 18, I went to West Point, and I swore an oath to defend this Constitution, and I embraced a motto called duty and honor and country," he told Warren during his confirmation hearing. "And I've lived my life in accordance with those values ever since then," he said, adding: "I went to war for this country." Number two Senate Democrat Dick Durbin suggested he voted for Esper as a way to help keep an impulsive president in check.

Esper "has a special responsibility to advise a President who has no experience in national security," Durbin tweeted. "I believe that Dr. Esper is up to the task." Trump raised eyebrows recently with a series of imprudent comments. Afghanistan's leaders sought clarification from the White House after Trump said Monday could easily and swiftly win a war in which "Afghanistan would be wiped off the face of the Earth." He also told reporters he was feeling less inclined to deal with Iran because "they behave very badly," and that Washington was "ready for the absolute worst" with the Islamic republic. — AFP



**MARACAIBO:** A boy drinks water as another fills jerry cans from a makeshift intake set on a sidewalk for people to collect water in Maracaibo, Zulia State, Venezuela. — AFP

Holmes Trujillo has promised his country will not close its doors, but has asked for international help as its health and education systems come under strain. The community kitchen already provides sanitation, health and nutrition advice and help for pregnant and nursing mothers as well as meals. WFP field monitor Irma Diaz, who works there, spoke of the "desperation" of the pregnant women she meets.

"They do not know where to go... So we accompany them to the doctors and re-direct them to the health system," she said, recalling a woman who gave birth a week after arriving. Atencia said she still wanted to go back to Venezuela if she could - though that is unlikely to happen soon. Her mother, who had just arrived from their home town of Maracaibo, told her there was no electricity or public services there. Phil Gunson, senior analyst

for the Andes region with the International Crisis Group, said Colombia had been "as accommodating as it can be" of the migrants.

But he said the country did not have the resources to deal with an influx on such a scale, warning it risked creating a backlash. "That will lead to political consequences that may be beyond the control of the current administration, and it is a matter of great urgency that the resources be found to assist Colombia with a problem not of its own making," he said. Meanwhile staff at the Rancheria community kitchen say they are still seeing about 400 new arrivals every week. "We have funding until the end of the year... but I don't think this situation is going to slow down or end by then," said WFP field monitor Diaz. "The numbers are stable and the needs will not decrease." — Reuters



## International

# Human sacrifice bridge rumors spark lynchings in Bangladesh

## 8 killed over rumors of kids being kidnapped and sacrificed

**DHAKA:** Eight people have been killed in vigilante lynchings in Bangladesh sparked by rumors on social media of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for the construction of a mega-bridge, police said yesterday. The victims - which include two women - were targeted by angry mobs over the rumors, spread mostly on Facebook, that said human heads were required for the massive \$3 billion project, police chief Javed Patwary said. "We have analyzed every single case of these eight killings. Those who were killed by lynching mobs - no one was a child kidnapper," Patwary told reporters in Dhaka. More than 30 other people have been attacked in connection with the rumors.

Patwary said police stations across the country had been ordered to crack down on rumors, and at least 25 YouTube channels, 60 Facebook pages and 10 websites have been shut down. AFP has identified several posts still on Facebook that share the rumor, however. Mob lynchings are common in Bangladesh, but the latest incidents are particularly brutal. Local media said they started after reports circulated of a young man allegedly found carrying the severed head of a child in the northern district of Netrokona.

Among the latest victims was a single mother-of-two, Taslima Begum, who was beaten to death in front of a Dhaka school on Saturday by a mob which suspected her of being a child kidnapper, a police official said. A deaf man was also beaten to death outside the capital that day

while trying to visit his daughter. Police said eight people have been arrested over Begum's murder, and at least five others detained for their role in spreading the rumor on social media.

### Loudspeaker pleas

Police are so concerned about the deadly fallout in rural towns that officers are trying to counter the web rumor using loudspeakers. "We are building awareness about the rumor and ask people not to get panicked," a police chief in northwestern Chapainawabganj district said. Some 6.1 million Ansar paramilitary security forces and village guards have also been asked to warn villagers, according to media reports quoting Ansar major general Kazi Sharif Kaikobad. Meanwhile beggars fearful of being lynched were wearing their identity cards to prove they were not strangers to a particular area, local media reported.

The lynchings could be "a sign of people's distrust in the existing law and order system", Dhaka University sociology professor Monirul Islam told AFP. But he did not rule out the possibility that some people were deliberately trying to trigger panic or unrest in the community. The bridge - which is set to be Bangladesh's biggest - is being built on the Padma, a major tributary of the Ganges. Rumors of human sacrifices being required for a bridge in Bangladesh have surfaced before, with several people attacked in 2010 over another structure, according to local media. — AFP



**DHAKA:** National police chief Javed Patwary speaks to the media over the recent lynching incidents triggered by rumors in social media of children being kidnapped and sacrificed as offerings for construction of a mega-bridge, in Dhaka. — AFP

## Boys can wear skirts under Taiwan school gender-neutral plan

**KUALA LUMPUR:** Both male and female students will be allowed to wear skirts at a school in Taiwan after it announced plans to drop gender-specific uniforms yesterday, a move LGBT+ campaigners said was a boost for gender equality. The change, a rare move in Asia where traditional values often prevail, came after male students and teachers at Banqiao Senior High School near Taipei donned skirts in May during a week-long campaign seeking to break down gender stereotypes. The school's decision is seen as reinforcing the self-ruled island's reputation as a beacon of liberalism in Asia, which became the first place in the region to legalise same-sex marriage in May.

Under the current guidelines, male students are required to wear trousers and skirts for female students, but the new dress code - to take effect in the new academic year from August 30 - will remove any mention of specific gender. "It is to boost the students' autonomy in choosing their uniforms while respecting their rights," the Banqiao Senior High School said in a statement to the Thomson Reuters Foundation. The school, which is located in New Taipei City, just outside the capital, has over 2,000 students aged between 16 and 18.

Taiwanese education ministry officials were quoted in local media as welcoming the school's decision. "This is a progressive step that embraces diversity," said Du Sih-cheng, the policy advocacy director at the Taiwan Tongzhi Hotline Association, a non-profit that campaigns for LGBT+ rights. "It will especially gives transgender teenagers the freedom to choose what they want to wear in schools," he said by phone from Taipei, urging more



**NEW TAIPEI CITY:** Two men pass fishing boats tied up at the harbor as a precaution in New Taipei City. — AFP

schools to follow suit. A global campaign to push for gender-neutral school uniforms has gained traction in recent months.

Mexico City's mayor last month announced that students can decide whether to wear skirts or trousers to

school, stirring a controversy in the socially conservative predominantly Catholic country. In Wales, the government said this month that it would no longer have separate uniform codes for boys and girls under a new policy due to come into force from September 1. — Reuters

## Car boom brings gridlock misery to 'green and happy' Bhutan

**THIMPHU:** Famed for valuing Gross National Happiness over economic growth, Bhutan is a poster child for sustainable development. But booming car sales may impact efforts to preserve its rare status as a carbon negative country - and an increase in traffic is testing the good humor of its citizens. Bhutan has seen a more than five-fold increase in cars, buses and trucks on its roads in the past two decades, according to transport authority director general Pemba Wangchuk with capital Thimphu hardest hit by the influx of vehicles.

Phuntsho Wangdi, a media consultant, says the congestion and lack of parking now makes driving stressful in the tiny Himalayan kingdom where there are no traffic lights. "I wish there were fewer cars. It wasn't like this before," he adds of life in Thimphu, which is home to half the cars in the country. The nation's economy has grown 7.5 percent each year in the past decade, according to the World Bank. Officials estimate there is now one car for every seven people in Bhutan, which has a total population of 750,000. But the nation's narrow country lanes and outdated city roads can barely cope. A lack of infrastructure, along with poor driving etiquette - some simply leave their cars parked in the middle of the road - compounds the problem. "Every year the number of cars and the number of people are increasing, and the roads have remained the same, and it's a problem for us," Lhendup, a taxi driver, tells AFP.

### Gridlock misery

Morning rush hour journeys that once took five minutes now take more than half an hour. This may seem a small figure compared to the hours of gridlock faced by commuters in Manila, Jakarta, and Bangkok, but it is a step-change for the Bhutanese who say the situation has rapidly deteriorated in the past year.

"It's chaotic. I eat my breakfast in the car now to save time," says Kuenzang Choden, who drops her four-year-old daughter at school every day before heading to work. The traffic jams are a sign of the wider economic changes the nation is facing. Bhutan is renowned for prioritizing Gross National Happiness over GDP, and has captured tourists' imagination as a tranquil, idyllic land, but there are signs of discontent.

According to the World Bank's 2018 report, the youth unemployment rate is high, as is rural to urban migration, which puts a strain on the resources of towns and cities.



**THIMPHU:** Photo shows traffic backed up on a road in Bhutan's capital Thimphu. Famed for valuing Gross National Happiness over economic growth, Bhutan was a poster child for sustainable development, but a boom in car sales may jeopardize its rare status as a carbon negative country. — AFP

And despite its reputation as a place where well-being is prioritized - it ranked 95th out of 156 countries in the 2019 UN World Happiness Report. The proliferation of the internet and smartphones are fuelling modern desires, while dealers are filling their showrooms with new brands and models from Japan and South Korea to lure buyers. And while taxes have increased and restrictions put on vehicle loans, car buyers are not discouraged.

Local financial institutions gave 3.2 billion ngultrum (\$46 million) in car loans in 2015, but by last year the amount had reached 6.7 billion ngultrum (\$96 million). The figures please local businessmen but worry environmentalists keen to ensure Bhutan remains one of the world's greenest countries. Environmental activist Yeshey Dorji explains: "As a nation that prides itself on being a carbon-negative country, the increase in the number of fossil fuel vehicles speaks poorly of our leadership position in environmental conservation."

### Radical measures

Bhutan and Suriname, both with lush forests, are the only two countries to claim they are carbon negative, absorbing more carbon pollution than they give off. Methane from cows, the burning of crops and other farm

activities used to be Bhutan's main source of greenhouse gases. But that has changed in recent years to industry and cars. Bhutan's constitution dictates that at least 60 percent of the country must be forest and the figure is currently above 70 percent.

But Bhutan is now importing more in fossil fuels than it exports in hydropower to India - the country's biggest revenue earner. Public transport is poor, particularly in Thimphu, which is home to 100,000 people but barely 40 buses. The capital's mayor Kinlay Dorji plans to introduce bus-only lanes on city roads and wants to buy more buses. "It's time for radical measures," he says. "We have to make public transport more attractive and discourage owning cars," he adds, warning that unless action was taken Thimphu risked grinding to a standstill.

To ease congestion, the city is also constructing its first two multi-storey car parks that will each take about 600 cars. The National Environment Commission insists Bhutan is still carbon negative despite the traffic jams and vehicle boom, but wants to stop things worsening. Commission secretary Dasho Sonam P Wangdi explains: "We cannot stop people from buying cars, but we can introduce alternative, less polluting cars such as the hybrid and electric ones to reduce carbon footprint." — AFP

## Sri Lanka orders return of smuggled British garbage

**COLOMBO:** Sri Lanka customs Tuesday ordered the return of container loads of hazardous mortuary and clinical waste illegally imported into the island from Britain under the cover of metal recycling. Customs officials said the racket dating back to 2017 was uncovered after the Colombo port complained last week that an importer had abandoned 111 containers which were emanating a huge stink.

A total of 241 containers had been imported since 2017 and 130 of them had been taken to a free-trade zone ostensibly for recycling and re-export, customs spokesman Sunil Jayaratne told AFP. "We are taking immediate action to order the re-export of the 111 containers abandoned at the port," Jayaratne said.

"The other 130 which had already been cleared from the port will be dealt under environmental and other laws." He said the 130 containers were stuffed with used mattresses and plastic and clinical waste imported in violation of international laws governing the shipping of hazardous material. A Sri Lankan businessman who imported the containers would be liable for criminal prosecution if he failed to re-export them to Britain, from where they originated, Jayaratne said.

An official at the finance ministry, which is responsible for the customs department, said it would take up the issue with British authorities for exporting hazardous cargo without first checking if Sri Lanka was willing to accept it. — AFP

## Opposition outrage as India terror bill passes first hurdle

**NEW DELHI:** A controversial bill giving India's government sweeping powers to designate individuals as terrorists passed a major hurdle in parliament yesterday, as opponents warned the legislation was too broad and open to abuse. It comes in the wake of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's resounding victory in general elections in May, and amid accusations that his ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is trying to stifle dissent in the world's largest democracy.

The main opposition Congress party - which led a parliamentary walkout as the bill was debated - warned the proposed law was "draconian" and could turn India into a "police state". The bill has to be passed by the upper house before it becomes law, with the government needing to court votes from smaller parties and independents for it to pass. Home Minister Amit Shah defended the bill in the lower house yesterday, saying it was necessary to keep law enforcement agencies one step ahead of those deemed to be terrorists.

"The only purpose of this law is to root out terrorism. We will ensure that this law will not be misused," he said, before the bill was passed by acclaim. Opposition lawmakers remained unconvinced, however. "Is this government assuring us that the law will not be misused in future?" asked Congress member Karti Chidambaram. "Are you putting processes in place under which misuse will not happen?" Under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Amendment Bill, a person can be designated as a terrorist on broad grounds. — AFP



**NEW DELHI:** India Prime Minister Narendra Modi (center) reads a document during a Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) Parliamentary Committee meeting at the Parliament house in New Delhi. — AFP

## Analysis

**Kuwait Times**  
Established 1961  
The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

THE LEADING INDEPENDENT  
DAILY IN THE ARABIAN GULF  
ESTABLISHED 1961

Founder and Publisher  
YOUSUF S. AL-ALYAN

Editor-in-Chief  
ABD AL-RAHMAN AL-ALYAN

EDITORIAL : 24833199-24833358-24833432  
ADVERTISING : 24835616/7  
FAX : 24835620/1  
CIRCULATION : 24833199 Extn. 163  
ACCOUNTS : 24833199 Extn. 125  
COMMERCIAL : 24835618

P.O.Box 1301 Safat, 13014 Kuwait.

Email: info@kuwaittimes.com  
Website: www.kuwaittimes.net

## SA committed to injecting African concerns onto agenda of UNSC

SA's term on the UN Security Council is guided by our national experience of peacefully dismantling apartheid and achieving a negotiated settlement. On Sept 24, 2018, the UN General Assembly, in its peace summit commemorating the centenary of the birth of Nelson Mandela, adopted a declaration dedicating member states to the pursuit of global peace, security and development. In keeping with this vision, we have chosen for our term on the Security Council the theme "Continuing the legacy: working for a just and peaceful world" for our tenure.

SA has been using its time on the council over the last five and a half months to promote a more effective multilateral approach to addressing issues related to international peace and security. We are emphasising the role of women in the resolution of conflict. SA is promoting the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all Security Council resolutions in line with Security Council resolution 1325 (2000) on women, peace and security. The 20th anniversary of this landmark resolution, initiated by our neighbour

Namibia during its time on the council will also be commemorated during our term in 2020. We will also hold an open debate on resolution 1325 during our presidency of the council in October this year. The African Union (AU) committed to ending conflicts and silencing the guns on the continent by the year 2020. Serving on the council will also afford SA an opportunity to meaningfully contribute towards this goal.

The charter of the UN gives the Security Council primary responsibility for the maintenance of international peace and security. Chapter VIII of the charter also recognises the complementarity between the roles of the UN and regional organisations in that respect. In this regard, SA is continuing to work towards strengthening co-operation between the Security Council and regional organisations.

SA pioneered the adoption of resolution 1809 in 2008 and resolution 2033 in January 2012 to further strengthen that relationship, particularly between the Peace and Security Council of the AU and the UN Security Council. Through these resolutions we demonstrated as a country, and as the AU, our collective political will to strengthen co-ordination and co-operation between the UN and regional organisations.

Among the challenges we are addressing are those brought about by the funding gap for UN peacekeeping missions. Recent cuts to the UN budget have a detrimental effect on peace and security, particularly on the African continent. It is vital that there be predictable funding for UN-mandated AU peacekeeping operations in Africa. During our term on the Security Council we are working towards strengthening co-ordination between the 10 elected members of the council (the E10). We believe only through improved co-ordination and co-operation can the E10 compensate for the inherent imbalances between elected and non-elected council members.

We recognise that elected members of the council face a distinct disadvantage. This is because we join an organ of the UN which comprises five permanent members that have been on the council for over 70 years and who have the right to a veto. Consequently, in November 2018, SA and Sweden hosted an unprecedented meeting of elected members of the council in Pretoria to discuss mutual cooperation and better co-ordination. This meeting recognised that in the face of growing divisions among the five permanent members, elected members have a crucial role to play to ensure that the council is able to fulfil its mandate.

We unfortunately note a rise in populism and nationalism globally. There are increased geopolitical divisions and the pursuit of narrow interests by some. This has made it more difficult to respond to transnational challenges. We must recognise that states are interdependent and even the most powerful countries cannot achieve security, nor maintain prosperity and ensure sustainable development for their people by acting unilaterally or in isolation. These challenges are clearly evident in the Security Council, especially among the permanent members. As a result, the council has not been able to act in cases where it should, such as on Palestine or in Syria.

From our perspective, collective action through multilateral engagement is all the more necessary if we are committed to address our common problems. Thus we need a multilateral system based on international law that fosters greater interdependence and mutual co-operation. Countries like SA, which have gone through turbulent histories, and which recognise the importance of multilateral action, must work together to reinforce the notion of collective action through the UN. Our time on the Security Council allows us an opportunity to do this.

NOTE: This opinion piece by Deputy Director General for Public Diplomacy Clayson Monyela was published in the Sunday Times on July 21, 2019

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



Guatemalan migrants use a makeshift raft to illegally cross the Suchiate River from Tecun Uman in Guatemala to Ciudad Hidalgo in Chiapas State, Mexico on July 22, 2019. — AFP

## 'American Dream' of migrants becoming Mexican one

Honduran Rolando Rodrigo arrived last week in the Mexican city of Tapachula with his family, just one stop on the long route to the United States and the dream of a new life free from the poverty and gang violence that wracks their homeland. But faced with increased controls by Mexican authorities, at the behest of Washington, to stem the flow of migrants heading north from Central America, they're considering postponing their "American dream" for the time being.

Just hours after US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard exchanged congratulations on "significant progress" in a deal to slow down the wave of undocumented migrants heading for US soil, Rodrigo wandered about Tapachula's central square with his three-year-old son Gadiel asking for money to feed his family.

The 29-year-old arrived in Mexico on Friday with his wife Miriam, Gadiel and a young daughter. They've taken a modest hotel room in this south Mexican town, but only have enough money for a few nights' stay. They crossed the border into Mexico over rugged, hilly terrain near Tacana, a 4,000-meter high volcano near the border where they saw no sign of Mexico's National Guard.

In June, Mexico deployed thousands of soldiers and

police officers, both near its southern border with Guatemala and its northern border with the United States to slow the migrant flow, which has come principally from impoverished and crime-ridden Central American countries. Rodrigo's family carefully avoided the heavily guarded Suchiate river that forms part of the Mexico-Guatemala border. "When you know the route well, you know how to go about" crossing the border, said Rodrigo.

### Unprecedented numbers

The nine points along the river most often used by migrants crossing into Mexico are now permanently guarded by security forces. Given the difficulties in getting to the United States "with my wife, we think we'd like to stay here for a couple of years," said Rodrigo, who used to repair computers for a living. Honduran, Guatemalan and El Salvadoran migrants have been reaching southern Mexico in unprecedented numbers since October.

In late May US President Donald Trump threatened to hammer Mexico with new trade tariffs unless it acted decisively to stem the migrant wave. Ebrard said on Monday that the migrant flow had been reduced by "around 36.2 percent," and that he would meet Pompeo again in 45 days to discuss progress.

### Death threats

While Rodrigo mingled amongst other migrants in Tapachula - including Cubans, Haitians, Indians and Bangladeshis - another Honduran, Jose Jimenez, was trying to relax with his wife Iris and daughter Aline. Threatened with death by drug traffickers from his neighborhood, Jimenez opted to quit a stable job and leave for somewhere safer. They crossed the Suchiate just over a month ago, crucially before the Mexican authorities stationed thousands of security forces along the river.

The family has requested asylum in Mexico, as well as a humanitarian visa that would allow them to travel to the US border. But not everyone agrees over where they should ultimately settle. "Where will I work?" Jimenez asked his six-year-old daughter. "Monterrey," she replied, referring to the prosperous northeast Mexican industrial city, where her father spent two months working in 2007. His wife, though, still has her eyes on the United States. "If it's not possible to get into the US, (Monterrey) is the other option," said the welder, who now survives by unloading trucks in the Tapachula market for up to 16 hours a day. The three family members sleep together on a couch in a room they rent on the outskirts of Tapachula. Little by little, they're adapting to the idea that their American dream might just turn out to be Mexican. — AFP

## Donovan, the US special agent who pursued 'Chapo'

Seven years ago, US special agent Ray Donovan began an in-depth study of the Joaquin "El Chapo" Guzman saga - and it quickly became an obsession. Now, the tall, 48-year-old New Yorker displays behind glass in his office the beige T-shirt that prisoner 3912 - Guzman, the former head of the Sinaloa cartel - wore when he was extradited from Mexico to the United States on January 19, 2017.

Guzman - considered the most powerful drug lord on the planet after Colombian Pablo Escobar was killed in a police shoot-out in 1993 - has been sentenced to life behind bars, nearly two decades after he first escaped from a Mexican jail in a cart of dirty laundry. It took a massive team and years of work that saw Donovan manage to identify Guzman's suppliers and partners, along with hitmen, lawyers and lovers - intel that led to captures in 2014 and 2016.

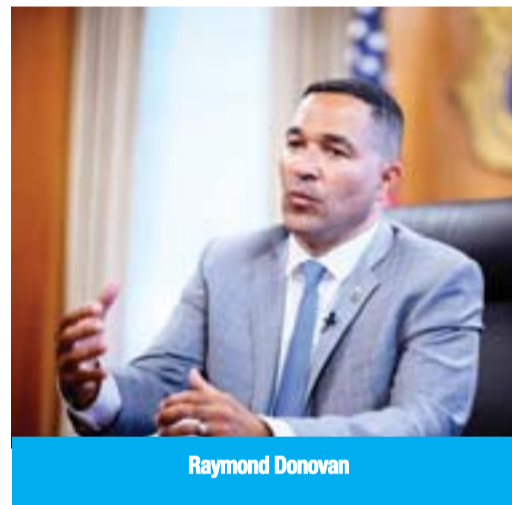
According to Donovan, the New York chief for the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), he now even knows how the kingpin thinks. "To go after the highest level drug trafficker in the world is always a dream of every agent," he told AFP from his office in the Chelsea neighborhood.

### 'Full circle'

Guzman's confinement in a maximum-security prison located in Colorado's mountain desert brings things "full circle" for Donovan. "I don't think many people thought that we would capture him," Donovan said. "There is this myth that he was almost untouchable." But "there was a team of people that absolutely believed that if we put everything together and we pursued him relentlessly, we would capture him."

In Feb 2014 as head of the DEA special operations division in Virginia, Donovan oversaw the operation that led to Guzman's arrest in the Pacific beach resort Mazatlan, in the crime boss' home region of Sinaloa. But "El Chapo" escaped yet again that July - this time through a 1.5 km tunnel. "We felt very defeated, because we had put such a tremendous amount of effort in pursuing him," Donovan said. But Mexican marines recaptured Guzman in Jan 2016. "They're the crown jewels," he said of that force. "They are Mexican national heroes." "If it wasn't for them, and their partnership, their willingness to collaborate with us - there's no way El Chapo would be in Colorado today."

It took coordinated effort between 22 different US government agencies and Mexico, hundreds of people who Donovan said "put their egos aside" in pursuit of a common goal: arrest the drug lord accused of trafficking or attempting to move more than 1,250 tons of drugs state-side over a quarter-century. The special agent



Raymond Donovan

said that "El Chapo" was also "very influential in exposing the United States to fentanyl," lacing heroin with the potent and often fatal drug and helping to foster the current opioid crisis.

### New enemy 'number one'

Donovan's next target is "RCQ" - Rafael Caro Quintero, the co-founder of the now-disbanded Guadalajara Cartel - who in 1985 ordered the murder of DEA agent Enrique "Kiki" Camarena in Mexico after performing blood-curdling torture on him. There is a \$20 million reward for information leading to Caro Quintero's capture. "Until he's apprehended, DEA will not stop. He's number one. He is our priority," Donovan said. "It's personal." He said that after Guzman - who "had a lot more resources at his disposal than RCQ" - he is confident the agency will get their hands on Caro Quintero. Donovan would not say if Caro Quintero continues to traffic drugs, but believes the wanted boss is hidden in Mexico.

### Model of pursuit

Donovan said evidence of Guzman's guilt is so overwhelming that if the government presented all of it during court proceedings it would have taken eight months, versus three. Though the Sinaloa cartel is still active and controls drug distribution into the US, Donovan said Guzman's capture provides a blueprint going forward. "From that we also developed a relationship, a model to pursue every other drug trafficker, not only in Mexico but worldwide," he said.

Donovan said extraditing criminals, which the US has done for years from Colombia, is the way to go in Mexico and elsewhere: "The one thing that these drug traffickers fear more than anything else is the American judicial system." Caro Quintero, for example, was arrested in 1985, tried in Mexico and sentenced to 40 years in prison. But in 2013, a judge released him on a legal technicality, and by the time he was ordered recaptured, the drug baron had disappeared. Guzman's imprisonment is less about the so-called US "war on drugs" and more about serving justice, Donovan said. "In the DEA we don't see a war on drugs, we see federal crimes," he said. "It's satisfying to know that justice has been served." — AFP

## Hair apparent: Boris locks key to political brand

At different times described as a "straw-colored mop", "eccentrically windblown" and resembling a "mediaeval Amok", Boris Johnson's talismanic haircut has helped define a political career that has now led to Downing Street. The messy mass of platinum blond locks has become an unmistakable brand in an era where celebrity and politics have combined, symbolizing the chaotic and gaffe-prone style that charms his supporters and appalls his critics.

To his backers, the haircut mirrors his unconventional thinking and personality, which they see as an antidote to a monolithic political order that they blame for economic catastrophe and an erosion of national sovereignty. To his opponents, it demonstrates a buffoonish temperament that is unsuited to public office, and which makes Britain a laughing stock on the international stage.

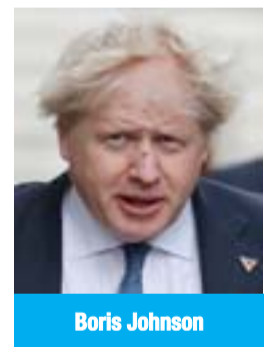
Obvious comparisons have been drawn between Johnson and US President Donald Trump, whose eccentric haircut also became intertwined with his political image. Johnson and Trump have both ridden the populist wave to power, with the British politician integral in the country's 2016 vote to leave the European Union. Pictures of Johnson as a child reveal the platinum blond that was a feature from a young age.

During his university years in the 1980s, Johnson favored a less raggedy side parting, largely blending in with the hirsute trends of the time. But as his political career took off, the style became ever more distinctive, long on top - swept to one side - and short at the back in what magazine Marie Claire called the "mediaeval monk" cut. US chatshow host David Letterman famously asked the then mayor how long he had been cutting his own hair.

### 'Weaponized hair'

Throughout his tenure as London mayor, the hay bale style became increasingly unkempt and recognizable. Historian Greg Jenner wrote on Twitter that by this time, Johnson had "weaponized his hair as iconic branding". "I've seen him deliberately mess it up before giving a speech," he wrote. Johnson famously missed out on becoming prime minister in 2016, but a neat trim in January was taken as the first sign he was girding up for another run at the top office as Theresa May's government wobbled.

Stylist Nick Mazer, who was responsible for the cut, said the result was an accident, telling The Sun that Johnson had said to him "Don't change me". "I was a little nervous and cut it shorter than I should. He's kept that shorter style ever since and it suits him far better than his usual wild mane of hair," he said. Others were less impressed, with Twitter users pointing out that his hair was thinning and any Samson-like powers on the wane. "Johnson's hair feels somehow talismanic of his ego, so I can see why people want to jeer," wrote Jenner. Johnson has also fended off suggestions he dyes his hair, claiming he was joking during a 2016 interview in which he said he did. Asked at a recent hustings if he dyed his hair, Johnson said it was an "outrageous suggestion". — AFP



Boris Johnson

# Business

THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2019

**12** KIPCO completes its rights issue, raises KD 95.08 million in equity

**13** Burgan Bank announces solid H1 2019 results; net income of KD 44.8 million

**14** KFH key component of Kuwait 2035 vision, says Al-Nahedh



## Ooredoo Kuwait reports revenue of KD 310 million for first half of 2019

### Net profit up by 42% to KD 17.3 million in H1 2019

**KUWAIT:** National Mobile Telecommunications Company K.S.C.P "Ooredoo Kuwait" announced yesterday its financial results for the half year period ended 30 June 2019:

**Financial highlights:**

- Consolidated customer base increased by 2 percent to 26.7 million in H1 2019, compared to 26.1 million in H1 2018.

- In local currency terms Kuwait, Tunisia and Maldives recorded good growth in revenue. However, revenues in KD were impacted by a 21 percent depreciation of the Tunisian dinar and the decrease in Algeria revenue mainly due to the weak economic environment, currency devaluation and price competition. Consequently, consolidated revenue decreased by 9 percent to KD 310.4 million for H1 2019, compared to KD 341.4 million for the same period in 2018.

- EBITDA increased by 8 percent for H1 2019 to KD 115.9 million, compared to KD 107.6 million for the same period in 2018, supported by the implementation of IFRS 16, a new accounting standard and operational efficiencies.

- Net profit attributable to NMTC was KD 17.3 million for H1 2019, representing a strong growth of 42 percent compared with KD 12.2 million for the same period in 2018. Net Profit growth was supported by good performances by Ooredoo Kuwait and Ooredoo Tunisia.

- The consolidated earnings per share was 35 fils for H1 2019, compared to 24 fils per share earned for the same period last year.

**Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani, Chairman of the Board of Directors commented:**

"Ooredoo Kuwait (NMTC) continues on the path of digital transformation as we work towards our vision to enrich the digital lives of our customers. We are constantly adapting and refining our service offering to meet the evolving needs of our cus-



tomers. I am pleased to report a 42 percent increase in our Net Profit for the first half of 2019 and an increase of our customer base by 2 percent to 26.7 million in H1 2019 year on year. Overall, we reported a sound set of results with all of our operations, excluding Algeria, reporting an increase in EBITDA. Algeria was affected by economic instability, currency devaluation and intense price competition putting pressure on EBITDA during the period. Group EBITDA increased 8 percent during the first half of 2019, positively supported by the implementation of IFRS 16, which came into effect on January 2019.

Impacted by geopolitical and macroeconomic factors, as well as the currency depreciation in Algeria and Tunisia, our top line remains under pressure. During the first half of 2019 revenues declined by 9 percent due to the broader industry wide shift towards data from traditional voice and SMS services.

In Kuwait, EBITDA increased 48 percent during the first half of the year, driven by the realization of savings from our cost optimization program as well as the positive impact from the implementation of IFRS 16.

In Tunisia, we increased our subscriber base by 5 percent and grew EBITDA to KD 26.8 million in the first half of 2019, despite the 21 percent year on year depreciation of the Tunisian dinar.

In Algeria we made good progress in preparing for a data centric future, by increasing the coverage of our 4G network to 58 percent of the population. In Palestine we performed exceptionally well, with our customer base up 5 percent and EBITDA increasing 23 percent due to various cost optimization initiatives.

Maldives continued to perform well, with a 4 percent increase in customer numbers, 2 percent increase in revenue and a 10 percent increase in EBITDA."



Sheikh Saud Bin Nasser Al-Thani

**Review of operations**

The Group's operational performance can be summarized as follows:

**Ooredoo - Kuwait**

Ooredoo's customer base in Kuwait increased to 2.5 million in H1 2019, up 6 percent compared to H1 2018. Revenues for H1 2019 were KD 114.1 million, compared to KD 127.6 million in H1 2018. EBITDA was strong, increasing to KD 36.0 million for H1 2019, compared to KD 24.3 million for H1 2018. The increase of 48 percent reflected good operational efficiencies across the business as well as a positive impact of the new IFRS 16 accounting standard.

**Ooredoo - Tunisia**

Ooredoo's customer base in Tunisia increased 5 percent to reach 8.8 million customers in H1 2019, compared to the same period in 2018. The Tunisian dinar depreciated by 20.8 percent year on year, leading to a decrease in revenues from KD 63.7 million in H1 2018 to KD 57.5 million in H1 2019. In local currency terms, revenues were up by 9 percent. EBITDA was KD 26.8 million in H1 2019 compared to KD 24.2 million in H1 2018.

**Ooredoo - Algeria**

Customer base in Algeria stood at 13.6



**Financial Highlights:**

	Quarterly Analysis			Half Year Analysis		
	Q2 2019	Q2 2018	% change	1H 2019	1H 2018	% change
Consolidated Revenue (KWD m)	156.1	166.8	-6%	310.4	341.4	-9%
EBITDA (KWD m)	57.3	52.3	10%	115.9	107.6	8%
EBITDA margin (%)	37%	31%	-	37%	32%	-
Net Profit attributable to NMTC (KWD m)	8.5	3.1	178%	17.3	12.2	42%
Consolidated Customers (m)	26.7	26.1	2%	26.7	26.1	2%

million in H1 2019. Business in Algeria was negatively impacted by the devaluation of the Algerian Dinar, weak economic environment and price competition. Revenues also decreased to KD 104.9 million in H1 2019, compared to KD 115.7 million in H1 2018. EBITDA was KD 38.3 million in H1 2019, down from KD 46.0 million in H1 2018. Algerian dinar depreciated by 2.6 percent year on year.

**Ooredoo - Palestine**

Customer base in Palestine increased by 5 percent to reach 1.3 million customers in H1 2019. Revenue decreased to KD 14.2 million in H1 2019, compared to KD 15.0

million in H1 2018. EBITDA was strong, increasing to KD 4.1 million in H1 2019 compared to KD 3.3 million in H1 2018, up by 23 percent compared to the same period in 2018.

**Ooredoo - Maldives**

Ooredoo Maldives reported a 2 percent increase in revenues to KD 19.7 million in H1 2019, compared to KD 19.2 million in H1 2018. EBITDA for H1 2019 was KD 10.9 million, an increase of 10 percent compared to KD 9.9 million for the same period in 2018. Ooredoo Maldives now serves a total of 447k customers, an increase of 4 percent compared to H1 2018.

## US slaps record \$5bn fine on Facebook

**WASHINGTON:** Facebook Inc will pay a record-breaking \$5 billion fine to resolve a government probe into its privacy practices and the social media giant will restructure its approach to privacy, the US Federal Trade Commission said yesterday.

The FTC voted 3-2 along party lines to adopt the settlement, which requires court approval. Democrats opposed it, saying it did not go far enough or require a large enough fine.

"Despite repeated promises to its billions of users worldwide that they could control how personal information is shared Facebook undermined consumers' choices," FTC Chairman Joe Simons, a Republican, said in a statement. Democratic FTC Commissioner Rohit Chopra said the penalty provided "blanket immunity" for Facebook executives "and no real restraints on Facebook's business model" and does "not fix the core problems that led to these violations."

Facebook agreed to pay an additional \$100 million to settle allegations that it misled investors about the seriousness of the misuse of users' data, the Securities and Exchange Commission said yesterday. The FTC said that

Facebook's data policy was deceptive to "tens of millions" of people who used its facial recognition tool and also violated its rules against deceptive practices when it did not disclose phone numbers collected for a security feature would also be used for advertising. Under the settlement, Facebook's board will create an independent privacy committee that removes "unfettered control by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg over decisions affecting user privacy."

Facebook also agreed to exercise greater oversight over third-party apps. Chopra and Democratic FTC Commissioner Rebecca Slaughter said the \$5 billion penalty may be less than Facebook's gains from violating users' privacy. "Until we address Facebook's core financial incentives for risking our personal privacy and national security, we will not be able to prevent these problems from happening again," Chopra said.

The FTC Republican majority argued the settlement "significantly diminishes Mr Zuckerberg's power-something no government agency, anywhere in the world, has thus far accomplished." The Republican commissioners led by Simons said if the FTC had gone to court "it is highly unlikely that any judge would have imposed a civil penalty even remotely close to this one."

They called the settlement-in light of what the FTC might have been able to win in a court fight-"a complete home run." The Republicans noted that Zuckerberg and other Facebook executives must sign quarterly certifications attesting to the company's privacy



SAN JOSE: In this file photo, Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg speaks during the annual F8 summit at the San Jose McEnery Convention Center in San Jose, California. — AFP

practices. The FTC said Zuckerberg or others filing a false certification could face civil and criminal penalties.

Facebook also is barred from asking for email passwords to other services when consumers sign up. It is barred from using telephone numbers obtained in a security feature, like two-factor authentication, for advertising and must get user consent to use data from facial recognition technology.

Facebook said the deal worked out with the FTC would give the company "a comprehensive new framework for protecting people's privacy," and that it expected to find additional problems as it initiates a review of its systems.

"Going forward, our approach to

privacy controls will parallel our approach to financial controls, with a rigorous design process and individual certifications intended to ensure that our controls are working - and that we find and fix them when they are not," Facebook General Counsel Colin Stretch said in a statement. Senator Richard Blumenthal, a Democrat from Connecticut, called the settlement "a fig leaf" that offers "no accountability for top executives."

"By relying on a monetary fine to deter Facebook, the FTC has failed to heed history's lessons. Facebook has already written this penalty down as a one-time-cost in return for the extraordinary profits reaped from a decade of data misuse," said Blumenthal. — Reuters

## Boeing reports \$2.9bn loss in Q2, biggest quarterly loss ever

**NEW YORK:** Boeing reported a second-quarter loss of \$2.9 billion yesterday as the grounding of 737 MAX following two deadly crashes continues to weigh on the company. The loss, the biggest ever in a single quarter for the aerospace giant, follows last week's announcement that Boeing would set aside \$4.9 billion after taxes to compensate airlines for canceled flights and the delay in plane deliveries.

Revenues tumbled 35.1 percent to \$15.8 billion, reflecting the hit from a halt to deliveries of the 737 MAX, a top-selling plane. "This is a defining moment for Boeing and we remain focused on our enduring values of safety, quality, and integrity in all that we do as we work to safely return the 737 MAX to service," said chief executive Dennis Muilenburg.

The 737 MAX has been grounded since mid-March following the March 10 Ethiopian Airlines crash, the second of two crashes that together claimed 346 lives. Boeing is developing a software fix to address a problem with a flight handling system that was linked to both crashes.

Airlines have repeatedly pushed back their target dates for returning the jets to service as the regulatory timeframe has dragged on, most recently when the Federal Aviation Administration in June identified problems with microprocessor during simulator testing. "Disciplined development and testing is underway and we will submit the final software package to the FAA once we have satisfied all of their certification requirements," Boeing said. — AFP

Business

# KIPCO completes its rights issue, raises KD 95.08 million in equity

## Oversubscription reflects our shareholder's confidence in KIPCO: Al-Ayyar

KUWAIT: KIPCO - the Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) - announced the successful completion of the company's share capital increase and the allocation of the shares to the subscribed shareholders. The Board of Directors had approved the capital increase in January, with the aim of supporting the positive growth of KIPCO's businesses through continuing to invest in its core portfolio companies.

The rights issue saw a 17 percent oversubscription in the 452,748,662 new ordinary shares that were on offer, raising around KD 95.08 million in equity and representing an

approximate 29.3 percent raise on KIPCO's former issued share capital. KIPCO's issued share capital now stands at KD 200 million.

The rights issue saw the participation of a wide range of KIPCO's shareholders, including corporates, funds, portfolios and individuals. The offer price was set at 210 fils per issue share. The offering period closed on July 17.

KAMCO Investment Company acted as the issuance advisor and subscription agent. KIPCO's last capital increase was in 1996, and over the last 22 years the company's businesses have been growing strongly. To support this growth, KIPCO has been investing capital

in its core portfolio companies. The exercise is timely given the company's forward-looking approach to managing its capital structure, and the cash will be used to continue to selectively invest in KIPCO's businesses, while increasing the company's overall financial flexibility.

Faisal Al-Ayyar, KIPCO's Vice Chairman (Executive), said: "The oversubscription in the rights issue reflects the confidence that our shareholders have in KIPCO's performance and its long-term business strategy, and we are grateful for this trust. We would like to thank the Central Markets Authority and the

regulatory agencies for facilitating this exercise, and we also appreciate greatly the value of the efforts of the agencies that have been rating KIPCO over the last decade."

He added: "Over the last two decades, we supported the growth of businesses through investing capital in our core portfolio companies, while maintaining a prudent capital structure. The cash raised through this rights issue will allow us to continue to invest in our banking, media, insurance and industrial businesses. It will also provide us with the financial flexibility to invest in emerging sectors like education in a thoughtful and disciplined way."



Faisal Al-Ayyar

## 007 carmaker sees shares crash on profit warning

LONDON: James Bond's favorite carmaker Aston Martin sent its share price crashing by a fifth on Tuesday after issuing a profit warning on the back of weak global demand and Brexit. The company - whose cars play a starring role in the fictional British spy's blockbuster films - warned in a statement that it faced a "worsening" economic environment, particularly in Britain and Europe, and cut its 2019 earnings and sales guidance.

As a result, the car giant slashed its 2019 wholesale target to between 6,300-6,500 vehicles. That was sharply down from prior guidance of 7,100-7,300. And the group also lowered its 2019 adjusted operating earnings margin to eight percent, down from 13 percent.

Aston Martin, which floated on the London Stock Exchange in October, saw its stock slump 22.18 percent to 805.40 pence in morning deals yesterday. "Our wholesale performance is adversely impacted by macro-economic uncertainty and enduring weakness in UK and European markets," said Chief Executive Andy Palmer in the gloomy trading update.

"We are disappointed that short-term wholesales have fallen short of our original expectations, but we are committed to maintaining quality of sales and protecting our brand position first and foremost," he added. "We remain focused ... on delivering sustainable long-term growth."

The company is nevertheless counting the cost of weak economic growth in Europe and home market Britain - which will leave the European Union at the end of October. In February, Aston Martin set aside £30 million in contingency funds to help it weather any potential disruption arising from Brexit. —AFP

## Nissan confirms profit plunge as job cuts reported

TOKYO: Japanese car giant Nissan confirmed yesterday it will report a plunge in first quarter operating profit as media reported the struggling automaker plans to cut more than 10,000 jobs worldwide.

The firm is working to turn around its fortunes after being plunged into crisis by the arrest of its former chief Carlos Ghosn, and is fighting falling sales in the United States and Europe. Yesterday, a day before it announces first-quarter results, Nissan confirmed that it would report a plunge in operating profit, but declined comment on news it plans to cut thousands of jobs. The Nikkei business daily said earlier yesterday that Nissan would announce a 90 percent drop in operating profit for the first quarter because of declining US sales, with the cost of developing electric vehicles and autonomous driving technologies weighing on profits.

"While the financial results are still being reviewed, the operating profit reported in the Nikkei Shimbun article was broadly accurate," Nissan said in a press release, declining to offer details before the official earnings announcement. Motoo Nagai, a member of the board and chair of the firm's audit committee, said the company would address the job cut reports today.

"It's not a simple restructuring. It's about revitalization to make Nissan grow again," he said at an informal briefing. Nissan had already said it planned to trim 4,800 posts from its global workforce of around 139,000, but the further cuts reflect the firm's ongoing struggles.

In May, it reported net profit fell to a near-decade low and warned of "a difficult business environment" for the next 12 months. The job cuts are likely to hit some factories in South America and other regions where Nissan has low profitability. Kyodo news agency reported.

### Governance overhaul

The company has seen weak sales in the US and Europe, and has also faced tensions with its French partner Renault, which owns 43 percent of the



FRANKFURT MAIN: In this file photo, a Nissan Leaf car has its sheet metal half cut to show its engine at a press day of the 66th IAA auto show in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany. —AFP

Japanese manufacturer. Nissan is currently undergoing an overhaul intended to strengthen governance after the Ghosn scandal. In May, it reported net profits for the fiscal year to March of 319 billion yen (\$2.9 billion) — the lowest amount since 2009/10 when the company was struggling in the wake of the global financial crisis.

It was a decline of 57 percent from the previous fiscal year and the profit outlook for the current fiscal year was forecast to be even worse, at 170 billion yen. Ghosn, who has been sacked from auto industry leadership roles, is awaiting trial in Japan on charges of under-reporting millions of dollars in salary and of using company funds for personal expenses.

Last month, Nissan shareholders voted in favor of a series of reforms, including the establishment of

three new oversight committees responsible for the appointment of senior officials, pay issues and auditing. They also approved the election of 11 directors as the firm restructures, among them two Renault executives as well as current Nissan CEO Hiroto Saikawa.

The reforms are designed to put Nissan on a more stable footing after the shock caused by the arrest of Ghosn, considered one of the auto industry's most powerful executives. Ghosn forged a three-way alliance between Nissan, Renault and Japan's Mitsubishi Motors that is the world's biggest-selling auto group.

But relations in the alliance have been seriously strained by Ghosn's arrest, which has exacerbated long-standing tensions over how closely the automakers should be integrated. —AFP

## Daimler books first quarterly loss in 10 years in Q2

FRANKFURT: Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler yesterday reported its first quarterly loss in almost 10 years, saying cash it had to set aside over emissions cheating and vehicle recalls drove it into the red.

The Stuttgart-based car maker said in a statement it lost 1.2 billion euros (\$1.3 billion) in April-June due to one-off effects totalling 4.2 billion euros. The last time Daimler reported a quarterly loss was in the fourth quarter of 2009. "Our second-quarter results were mainly impacted by exceptional items," newly-installed chief executive Ola Kallenius told reporters.

By contrast, revenues rose by five percent to a higher-than-expected 42.7 billion euros, despite a one percent fall in unit sales. Daimler also tumbled into the red on the operating level, losing 1.5 billion euros - compared with underlying profit of 2.6 billion euros a year ago.

### 'Anything but satisfactory'

The figures are "anything but satisfactory", admitted Kallenius, a Swede who has been at the helm since May when predecessor Dieter Zetsche stepped down. "Expect a noticeable improvement in the second half of the year based on our strong product portfolio."

In response to the poor figures, Kallenius promised to "intensify" savings measures launched by Zetsche and "focus in the second half of the year on improving our operating performance and cash-flow generation." The operational loss is a "remarkably bad" result and shows there is a "lot of work for Mr.

Kallenius" to do, said analyst Jurgen Pieper at Metzler Bank. "I think Daimler hasn't been managed so well in the last two years," added Pieper in a dig at Zetsche.

After cutting its annual outlook twice in recent months, Daimler left the forecast unchanged this time around, predicting operating profit "significantly below" the 11.1 billion euros booked in 2018.

The auto giant pointed to weaker-than-expected growth on global car markets, fallout from the diesel emissions cheating scandal and a mass recall over faulty Takata airbags. The defect, discovered in 2014 by the authorities in America and affecting around 100 million vehicles worldwide across a variety of manufacturers, has resulted in around 20 deaths. German transport authority KBA also ordered the recall of 60,000 Mercedes-Benz vehicles in June on suspicion they were fitted with software to cheat emissions tests - allegations Daimler contests. —AFP



BERLIN: This file photo shows then outgoing Daimler CEO Dieter Zetsche (left) and his Swedish successor Ola Kallenius before the start of the German carmaker's annual general meeting in Berlin. —AFP

## EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.		Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd		BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL	
<b>EUROPEAN &amp; AMERICAN COUNTRIES</b>		<b>Rate for Transfer</b>	<b>Selling Rate</b>	<b>CURRENCY</b>	<b>BUY SELL</b>
US Dollar Transfer	304.750	US Dollar	304.240	British Pound	0.371465 0.385365
Euro	341.780	US Dollar	304.240	Czech Korune	0.005281 0.014581
Sterling Pound	381.090	Canadian Dollar	232.290	Danish Krone	0.041433 0.048433
Canadian dollar	233.260	Sterling Pound	380.530	Euro	0.331894 0.345594
Turkish lira	54.180	Euro	342.105	Georgian Lari	0.132195 0.132196
Swiss Franc	310.970	Swiss Frank	301.030	Hungarian 0.001149	0.001339
US Dollar Buying	297.400	Bahrain Dinar	809.085	Norwegian Krone	0.031062 0.036262
<b>ASIAN COUNTRIES</b>		UAE Dirhams	83.235	Romanian Leu	0.065328 0.082176
Japanese Yen	2.818	Qatari Riyals	84.475	Russian ruble	0.004838 0.004838
Indian Rupees	4.420	Saudi Riyals	82.025	Slovakia	0.009116 0.019116
Pakistani Rupees	1.931	Jordanian Dinar	430.395	Swedish Krona	0.033145 0.033145
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.729	Egyptian Pound	18.335	Swiss Franc	0.302117 0.313117
Nepali Rupees	2.757	Sri Lankan Rupees	1.728	<b>Australasia</b>	
Singapore Dollar	224.250	Indian Rupees	4.412	Australian Dollar	0.204288 0.216288
Hongkong Dollar	39.008	Pakistani Rupees	1.894	New Zealand Dollar	0.197683 0.207183
Bangladesh Taka	3.592	Bangladesh Taka	3.603	America	
Philippine Peso	5.951	Philippines Peso	5.948	Canadian Dollar	0.226516 0.235516
Thai Baht	9.906	Cyprus pound	18.100	US Dollars	0.300650 0.305950
Malaysian ringgit	77.941	Japanese Yen	3.810	US Dollars Mint	0.301150
<b>GCC COUNTRIES</b>		Nepalese Rupees	2.763	<b>Asia</b>	
Saudi Riyal	81.321	Malaysian Ringgit	74.750	Bangladesh Taka	0.003004 0.003805
Qatari Riyal	83.757	Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.665	Chinese Yuan	0.042758 0.046258
Omani Riyal	792.073	Thai Bhat	10.825	<b>Arab</b>	
Bahraini Dinar	809.750			Bahraini Dinar	0.802205 0.810263
UAE Dirham	83.027			Egyptian Pound	0.018659 0.022019
<b>ARAB COUNTRIES</b>				Iranian Riyal	0.000084 0.000086
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.650			Iraqi Dinar	0.000210 0.000270
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.364			Jordanian Dinar	0.424927 0.433927
				Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000 1.000000
				Lebanese Pound	0.000157 0.000257
				Moroccan Dirhams	0.021412 0.045412
				Omani Riyal	0.786428 0.794327
				Qatar Riyal	0.083051 0.083885
				Saudi Riyal	0.080150 0.081480
				Syrian Pound	0.001292 0.001512
				Tunisian Dinar	0.102066 0.110060
				Turkish Lira	0.046156 0.056001
				UAE Dirhams	0.082339 0.083166
				Yemeni Riyal	0.000991 0.001071

Business

# Burgan Bank announces solid H1 2019 results; net income of KD 44.8 million

## Bank delivers return on equity of 10.7%

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank Group (Burgan) announced yesterday its H1'19 results, reflecting the Bank's solid operating performance and its continued prudent growth approach.

Strong revenue levels were delivered due to stable Net Interest Margin of 2.8 percent. Burgan continues to focus on operating efficiency, thereby maintaining its Cost-to-Income Ratio at 42.1 percent. Burgan's Asset Quality continues to be healthy as a result of its prudent risk culture and practice across the Group. The Group achieved low Cost of Credit of 0.8 percent, stable NPL Ratio of 2.7 percent and improved NPL Coverage of 174.9 percent.

Burgan's Regulatory Capital levels continue to be optimal with CET1 Capital Ratio of 11.6 percent, Tier 1 Capital Ratio of 14.1 percent and Capital Adequacy Ratio of 17.0 percent.

The underlying business trend continues to be similar to last year. Beginning this year, the Bank has revised its financial statements' closing process by changing the reporting date of its subsidiaries to one month earlier than the Group's reporting date. Accordingly, the reported financial results of the first half of 2019 include only five months (i.e. January to May) performance of the subsidiaries instead of six months as included in the prior periods.

Majed Essa Al-Ajeel, Chairman of Burgan Bank Group said: "We are very pleased with the overall performance of Burgan Bank Group. Our strategy continues to deliver, our business model is solid, and we are well positioned to capture potential opportunities. The bank has also invested in further strengthening its risk management capabilities and is driving forward the sustainable development of its human capital."

Furthermore, Masaud M J Hayat, Group CEO of Burgan Bank Group commented, "Burgan continues to deliver solid and consistent returns to its shareholders, as demonstrated by the double-digit Return on Equity for the period."



Majed Essa Al-Ajeel



Masaud M J Hayat



Raed Al-Haqhaq

Raed Al-Haqhaq, CEO-Kuwait of Burgan Bank Group added, "Burgan's Kuwait business continues to perform well with stable loan book, improved asset quality, strong operating efficiency and low credit costs." The consolidated financials encompass the results of the Group's operations in Kuwait, and its share from its regional subsidiaries, namely Burgan Bank - Turkey, Gulf Bank Algeria, Bank of Baghdad, Tunis International Bank. Burgan Bank Group has one of the largest regional branch networks with 164 branches across Kuwait, Turkey, Algeria, Iraq, Tunisia, Lebanon and representative office in Dubai-United Arab Emirates.

Established in 1977, Burgan Bank is the youngest commercial Bank and second largest by assets in Kuwait, with a significant focus on the corporate and financial institutions sectors, as well as having a growing retail, and private bank customer base. Burgan Bank has majority owned subsidiaries in the MENAT region supported by one of the largest regional branch networks which include Gulf Bank Algeria - AGB (Algeria), Bank of Baghdad - BOB (Iraq & Lebanon), Tunis International Bank - TIB (Tunisia), and fully owned Burgan Bank - Turkey, (collectively known as the "Burgan Bank Group"). Furthermore, Burgan Bank has a presence in the UAE through its corporate office ("Burgan Financial Services Limited") which had helped the bank to participate in multiple financing opportunities in the UAE.

The Bank has continuously improved its performance over the years through an expanded revenue structure, diversified funding sources, and a strong capital base. The adoption of state-of-the-art services and technology has positioned it as a trendsetter in the domestic market and within the MENA region. Burgan Bank's brand has been created on a foundation of real values - of trust, commitment, excellence, and progression, to remind us of the high standards to which we aspire. 'People come first' is the foundation on which its products and services are developed.

**Key highlights of H1'19 results are as follows:**

- Revenue of KD 116.3mn
- Operating Profit of KD 67.3mn
- Net Income of KD 44.8mn
- Return on Equity of 10.7%

## Strong Returns Driven by Stable Operating Performance

**Net Income**  
KD 44.8 million

**Return on Equity**  
10.7 %

**Revenue**  
116.3  
KD million

**Operating Profit**  
67.3  
KD million

**NPL Ratio**  
2.7  
%

**Capital Adequacy Ratio**  
17.0  
%

For Financial Results of First Half 2019.

H1 2019 financial results include only 5 months of subsidiaries' performance.

**Burgan Bank Group:**  
Kuwait - Turkey - Algeria - Iraq - Tunisia - UAE - Lebanon





What's On

# China celebrates 92nd anniversary of the founding of Chinese People's Liberation Army



The Ambassador of People's Republic of China Li Minggang and Defence Attache Snr Col Zhang Ge hosted a reception on the occasion of the 92nd anniversary of the founding of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) at Crowne Plaza Hotel. Higher officials, diplomats, Defence Attache and cross section of Chinese community attended the event. — Photos by Yasser Al Zayyat

The Ambassador of People's Republic of China Li Minggang and Defence Attache Snr Col Zhang Ge hosted a reception on the occasion of the 92nd anniversary of the founding of Chinese People's Liberation Army (PLA) at Crowne Plaza Hotel. Higher officials, diplomats, Defence Attache and cross section of Chinese community attended the event. The following speech was delivered by Chinese Defense Attache Snr Col Zhang Ge:

Your Excellency Brigadier General Mohamed, your excellencies ambassadors, distinguished guests, dear friends & colleagues, ladies & gentlemen:

Asalamalicom!

This evening we are gathering here to celebrate the 92nd year's anniversary of the founding of the Chinese People's Liberation Army, PLA. First of all, as the Defence Attaché of the Chinese Embassy in Kuwait, I'd

like to extend our warmest welcome to all of you, and wish you a very happy evening.

The Chinese People's Liberation Army was created in August 01, 1927, initially called the Chinese Red Army. Since its establishment, the PLA has made remarkable contributions to the founding of the People's Republic of China and has written glorious chapters in modern Chinese history. Over the past 92 years developing process, the PLA has grown from its original single service into strong and modernized armed forces composed of army, navy, air force, rocket force and strategic support force, and is now in the transition from mechanization toward informationized armed forces.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world today is undergoing complex and profound changes and China is entering a new era of building socialism with Chinese characteristics. China's

destiny has never been so interrelated with that of the world as a whole. A prosperous and stable world would provide China with opportunities, while China's peaceful development would also offer an opportunity for the whole world. As is known to many, there's no development without peace and there's no sustainable peace without development. The Chinese armed forces will continue to strengthen its exchanges and cooperation with international partners to jointly deal with the challenges confronting world peace and stability.

Kuwait is the first Gulf Arabic country establishing diplomatic relations with China. In this month last year, His Highness the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah paid a state visit to China. During the visit, Chinese President Xi held talks with His Highness the Amir and the two leaders agreed to establish strategic partnership between the two countries. In December last year, First Deputy Prime

Minister and Defence Minister of Kuwait Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah visited China. (According to statistics, bilateral trade between China and Kuwait totaled 18.7 billion dollars last year. China remains Kuwait's largest source of imports, and second largest export destination and Kuwait's largest trading partner in non-oil fields. Kuwait is China's ninth largest oil exporter, with the volume reaching 23.21 million tons of crude oil to China last year.) Military-to-military relationship is an important part of the bilateral ties between China and Kuwait. As the Chinese Defense Attaché to Kuwait, I'm quite confident that our two sides will have a lot more to do in the near future.

Finally, I wish the tree of friendship between China and Kuwait and between the two militaries evergreen. Thank you!



# Insects replace pesticides in Spain's 'Sea of Plastic'

## Farmers adopt new methods as crops become resistant to chemicals

**DALIAS, Spain:** "They work for me night and day," smiles Antonio Zamora, standing in his greenhouse. His minuscule employees are bugs that feed on the parasites threatening his peppers. Zamora, like most of his colleagues, no longer sprays his crops with pesticides, instead hanging small bags of mites on the plants, leaving them to attack parasites while sparing his produce. He owns two hectares in the so-called "Sea of Plastic", some 30,000 hectares of greenhouses in southeastern Spain's Almeria province, where much of Europe's fruits and vegetables are grown.

The sparkling mosaic of white plastic bordering the Mediterranean—which is visible from space—produces tomatoes, cucumbers, courgettes, peppers and aubergines all year round to supply Europe's supermarkets. Last year 2.5 million tons of produce was exported from Almeria, half of Spain's total vegetable exports. Like Zamora, virtually all pepper growers in Almeria have replaced insecticides with so-called "biological control" using insects.

About 60 percent of tomato growers have done the same, along with a quarter of courgette producers, according to the producers' association Coexphal. Consumption of insecticides in Almeria—where agriculture employs some 120,000 people and accounts for 20

percent of economic output—has dropped by 40 percent since 2007, according to local authorities.

### A trillion insects

The use of insecticides surged in the 1960s, but farmers have adopted new methods under pressure from consumer groups as well as the fact that their crops have become increasingly resistant to the chemicals. "We have had to change course. The use of pesticides became excessive," said Jan van der Blom, an expert in biocontrol at Coexphal. Encarnacion Samblas of environmental group Ecologists in Action described the change as a "very positive step".

"In many cases the reduction in the use of chemical products has been drastic, and the substances that are still in use are softer," she said. French agricultural cooperative InVivo, which has yearly sales of 5.5 billion euros, recently opened a "biofactory", Bioline Iberia, in the heart of the Sea of Plastic. Inside hermetically closed rooms with tightly controlled temperature and humidity levels, employees raise four species of mites to be sold in the region as well as in Portugal and Morocco.

The company projects production of a trillion insects this year. Several other factories of

the same type have sprung up in recent years around the Sea of Plastic, and roughly 30 firms sell insects, at steadily decreasing prices. "Spain can be considered the largest area in Europe and perhaps the world in terms of the use of biological control," said Bioline Iberia director Federico Garcia.

### Chemicals still prevalent

But the road to truly green farming remains long, said Samblas of Ecologists in Action, noting that many farmers still use fungicides and various other substances to disinfect soils. "Farmers continue to use chemicals in a not very rational way, because they are recommended, they are sold to them. Often they use them as a routine, without really knowing why," she said. Even "organic" greenhouses—with 2,000 hectares certified as such or seeking the label—often pay little heed to biodiversity or fail to take proper care of the soil, the ecologist said.

She noted that European regulations on these issues are lacking. An increase in the amount of land used for farming has put pressure on water resources in an arid region, Samblas added. Agronomist Jose Manuel Torres warned that year-round farming methods favor the growth of parasites, arguing that



**DALIAS, Spain:** Spanish farmer Antonio Zamora works at his pepper plant's greenhouse in Dalias, near El Ejido. — AFP

the region should halt production during the summer. Samblas noted another problem: old greenhouse plastics often find their way into the Mediterranean.—AFP



**TASMANIA:** This undated handout picture shows a healthy wombat looking for food at Narawntapu National Park near Bakers Beach in Tasmania. — AFP

## Aussie drug offers hope for stamping out wombat-killing disease

**SYDNEY:** A disease that has ravaged wombats in southern Australia could be brought under control using a treatment commonly applied by pet owners on cats and dogs, researchers said yesterday. Mange—which causes wombats to lose some or all of their fur and starve to death within months—has wiped out more than 90 percent of bare-nosed wombats in a single national park on the island state of Tasmania.

Squat and furry, wombats are small burrow-dwelling marsupials that are largely nocturnal and

walk on all fours. They are not a threatened species. But University of Tasmania scientist Scott Carver said the disease, which was introduced to Australia by European settlers in the 1800s, caused "the worst animal suffering" he had ever seen. Mange affects wombats across much of southeastern Australia and tends to cause only scattered deaths—until an outbreak strikes an entire population.

"You get sporadic outbreaks in different locations," Carver told AFP. "When you get these outbreaks, lots of individuals die." It is estimated there are now as few as three bare-nosed wombats left in Tasmania's Narawntapu National Park, where hundreds of the marsupials once roamed. A paper published today in the Journal of Applied Ecology details how past attempts to control the disease in the park failed, but Carver said scientists were now "confident" a different drug—used to treat mange in domestic cats and dogs—could prove effective in wombats. Scientists installed small doors over wom-

bats' burrows to brush on a course of mange-fighting treatment over several months in 2015, a program that initially seemed to eliminate mange but was deemed unsuccessful a year later once it became clear the effects were temporary. Carver said the study had prompted researchers to turn to an alternative medication, Bravecto, that could last for up to three months after a single application, as opposed to just one week.

"It's really just a slight improvement in the duration and the delivery—if you can couple those things together it will have a great effect in controlling the disease in wombat populations," he said. Trials of the drug on captive wombats are expected to last for the next six to 12 months, followed by at least two years of trials on wild animals. But Carver said he was hopeful Australian regulators would approve use of Bravecto on wombats within the next 18 months, allowing wildlife carers to administer the drug.—AFP

CLINIC

PAGE

248 33 199

**Optthalmology Services**

Dr. Ahmed Hosni Abd Elhamid  
Consultant

Dr. Rany Essam Mitwally  
Senior Registrar

Dr. Abeer Khattab  
Specialist

**Follow Us On Social Media**

Tel: 1828282  
WhatsApp Us: +965-0000 2194

## Dr Sahar Ghannam

**Dermatology consultant, skin treatment and laser**

**Timing: Saturdays and Wednesdays from 10 am to 5 pm**  
Sunday, Monday and Tuesday from 9:30 am to 5 pm  
Thursday from 9:30 am until 1 pm

**Friday is a holiday.**

**Address: Fourth Ring Road - Abdallah Fadalh Street, Meidan Hawally, opposite fire station - block 35, building 31.**

Clinic Phones: 25610407/ 409/ 314 Fax: 25610465  
Mobaile: 90974754/ 99166746

[saharpolyclinic](#) [Dr.saharghannamclinic](#) Email: drsgderma@gmail.com

**To advertise on this Page**

**Call: 24833199 ext:101,102 or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617**

**or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com**

**WELCOME**

**Dr Tammam Abou Ali**  
Consultant ENT, Head & Neck, Facial Plastic Surgeon.

Followship of the royal college of surgeons in UK and Ireland.  
10 years work experience in UAE Hospital WOH Kuwait.

Ex Head of ENT department in Karamia Hospital WOH Kuwait  
10 years work experience in UK and Ireland.

- Endoscopic Sinus Surgery
- Septoplasty and turbinate reduction surgery by laser or RF
- Snoring and OSAP Surgery
- Rhinoplasty with open and closed techniques
- Microscopic Middle Ear Surgery and Tympanoplasty
- Salivary gland and parotid surgery
- Thyroid and parathyroid surgery
- Micro laryngeal surgery

1 888 883

www.qmc-kuwait.com

[qmckuwait](#)

**Our Doctors Provide care For the entire Family**

*Book your appointments today!*

**Dr. Kiran Turaka**  
Ophthalmologist

**Dr. Zareena Zahir**  
Ophthalmologist

**Dr. Naman Khan**  
Senior Cardiologist

**Dr. P. Sesheendra Nath**  
Orthopedic Consultant (AUSTRALIA)  
Specialized in Neck, Shoulder Hip and Knee

**EXIR**  
اكسير

**EXIR MEDICAL SUBSPECIALITIES CENTER**

Block No.4 Jahra - Kuwait

WE ACCEPT ALL MAJOR INSURANCES

Tel: 24568857 / 24568859 info@exircenterkw.com www.exircenterkw.com



# CLINIC PAGE



**Kuwait Times**  
248 33 199

**DR. MOHAMMAD AL HAJRY**  
Canadian Board of Otolaryngology  
Head & Neck Surgery and Facial Plastics.  
Fellow of Royal College of Surgeons-Canada  
A rare Subspecialty in Microscopic Ear Surgery, Cochlear implant & Ear diseases

- Diagnosis/ Treatment of General Ear, Nose, and Throat conditions in adults & pediatrics
- Minimally Invasive Endoscopic sinus surgery including Balloon sinuplasty
- Minimally Invasive Microscopic Endoscopic Ear surgery
- Diagnosis & treatment of Otolaryngology and Audiology (Hearing loss, Tinnitus & balance disorders)
- Facial Plastic and reconstructive surgeries (Rhinoplasty, Otoplasty, Fillers & Botox injections)
- Diagnosis & treatment of snoring & obstructive sleep apnea in clinic without surgery
- Diagnosis & Treatment of voice and swallowing disorders.
- Diagnosis & Treatment of Head and Neck benign & malignant tumors.

**Salmiya, Belajat Street, Tel: 1881122**

**DR. FAHAD S BUHAIMED**  
Consultant Cosmetic Dermatologist & Hair Transplant, NY

**ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:**

- Dermatology board certified.
- Fellowship training program in cosmetic dermatology and hair transplant, New York, USA.
- Member of American cosmetic dermatology society.
- Referee reviewer of International Journal of Dermatology.

**SPECIALIZED IN:**

- Dermatology & Cosmetic Treatments.
- Laser Treatments.
- Hair Transplant & Restoration.
- Body & Face Contouring.
- Injectable Fillers & Botox.

**SHARQ, Ahmad Alieher st., Building 68, Floor 13.**  
Tel: (+965) 22060777  
@DrFahadmed, @FahadSabb, @FahadSabb  
Email: drfahadmed@beautybeyond.com.kw

**To advertise on this Page**

**Call: 24833199 ext:101,102**  
**or Direct line: 24835616 / 24835617**  
**or email: ads@kuwaittimes.com**

**Dr. Ahmad Alaeddine**  
Head of Cardiology departmenta at Dar Al Shifa hospital

- Consultant Interventional and conventional cardiologist.
- Specialised in the Diagnosis and treatment of all adult cardiac diseases, including those cases that need urgent intervention in Cath lab (primary angioplasty).

**مسشفى دار الشفاء**  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

**DR KHALED ALMERRI**  
Consultant interventional Cardiology  
Department: Heart & Vascular Center

**Specialized in:**

- 1-Diagnostic and therapeutic cardiac catheterization (Angiography and Angioplasty). Aortic valve implantation.
- 2- Diagnosis and treatment of coronary artery diseases
- 3- Diagnosis and treatment of heart failure, cardiomyopathies and valvular diseases.
- 4-Diagnosis and treatment of high blood pressure and high cholesterol.
- 5- Diagnosis and treatment of syncope, palpitations and cardiac arrhythmias.
- 6- Non-invasive diagnostic procedures echocardiography, exercise stress test, and 24 hour blood pressure and Holter monitoring

**Know your Doctor**  
Otorhinolaryngology (E.N.T)  
**Dr Hamoud Abdullah Alarouj**  
ENT Specialist

- Laryngology Fellowship - Canada
- Fellow of the European Board Otolaryngology - Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the American Academy of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the British Laryngological Association
- Member of the Canadian Society of Otolaryngology Head & Neck Surgery
- Member of the European Laryngological Society

**Specialized in:**

- Management of benign and malignant vocal cord lesions.
- Vocal cord augmentation.
- Treatment of spasmodic dysphonia.
- Adenotonsillectomy using latest techniques.
- Thyroid surgery.
- Surgery for the deviated nasal septum.
- Endoscopic sinus surgery.
- Treatment of allergic rhinitis.
- Treatment of snoring.
- Treatment of vertigo.

**IC INTERNATIONAL CLINIC**  
American Board Certified in General Surgery  
Member of the Society of American Gastrointestinal & Endoscopic Surgeons (SAGES)  
Higher specialization in Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary surgery & Organ Transplantation  
Member of many prestigious surgical societies.

- Day case surgeries
- Minor surgeries (lipoma, sebaceous cyst, ingrowing nail)
- Diagnosis, treatment and follow up of all surgical emergencies
- Hemorrhoids, fistula & anal fissure surgeries
- Surgery for morbid obesity (sleeve, gastric bypass)
- Breast surgeries
- Hernia repair
- Thyroid & adrenal surgeries
- Surgery for reflux disease
- Cholecystectomy & laparoscopic appendectomy
- Liver, pancreas & bile ducts surgeries

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

**Scope of Clinical Practice:**

- General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- Single Port Surgery
- Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, including Colorectal Cancer
- Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abdomen
- Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- WART Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistaloscope)
- Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve-Gastroctomy
- Gallstones & Abdominal Hernia Surgery

**Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:**

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

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

**مسشفى دار الشفاء**  
Dar Al Shifa Hospital  
Tele:1802 555

**DR. FAHAD AL-MUKHAIZEEM**  
Consultant Pediatrician

Consultant Pediatrician-Canadian & American Board in Pediatrics-Canadian Board in Pediatric Emergency

**Tel.: 22269369 - Fax: 22269368**  
Al-Jabriya - Block 1A - St.1 - Mazaya Building - 15th Floor - Clinic B

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

**Academic Certificates - Training**

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

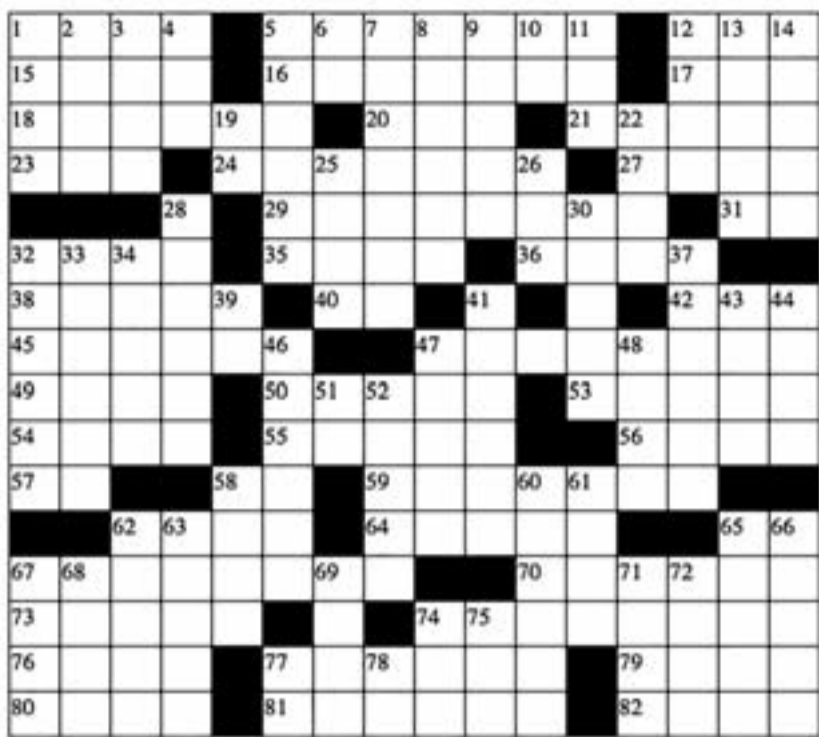
**Scope of clinical Practice.**

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2266



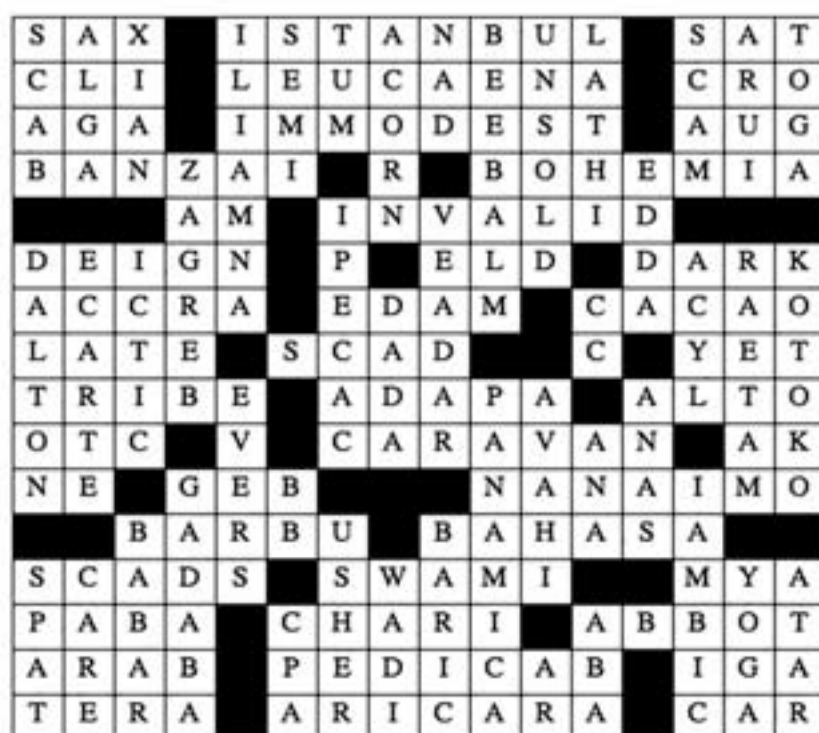
ACROSS

- Showing or causing joy and pleasure.
- Sharing equally with another or others.
- Not reflecting light.
- Goddess of the dead and queen of the underworld.
- A republic in southeastern Europe on the Adriatic coast of the Balkan Peninsula.
- American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
- (Old Testament) The second wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin.
- Rate of revolution of a motor.
- A British doctorate.
- A federal agency established to regulate the release of new foods and health-related products.
- Straggling shrub with narrow leaves and conspicuous red flowers in dense globular racemes.
- The (prehensile) extremity of the superior limb.
- A great rani.
- The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.
- A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
- (Islam) The man who leads prayers in a mosque.
- Empty rhetoric or insincere or exaggerated talk.
- Being of use or service.
- Before noon.
- The sense organ for hearing and equilibrium.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- The chief solid component of mammalian urine.
- A blind god.
- The 18th letter of the Hebrew alphabet.
- A lawman concerned with narcotics violations.
- (botany) Relating to a plant of the family Araceae.
- An official language of the Republic of South Africa.
- An edge tool with a heavy bladed head mounted across a handle.
- A serviceman who is drafted.
- An ancient Hebrew unit of dry measure equal to about a bushel.
- A river in northeastern Brazil that flows generally northward to the Atlantic Ocean.
- Bundle of rods containing an axe with the blade protruding.
- Appeal or request earnestly.
- A girl or young woman who is unmarried.
- Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
- A law passed by US Congress to prevent employees from being injured or contracting diseases in the course of their employment.
- Included seven times in every 19 years.
- A small cake leavened with yeast.

DOWN

- A releasing factor that accelerates the secretion of growth hormone by the anterior pituitary body.
- A soft heavy toxic malleable metallic element.
- Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
- The longer of the two telegraphic signals used in Morse code.
- Highly seasoned fatty sausage of pork and beef usually dried.
- A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 100 liters.
- The first of the Old Testament patriarchs and the father of Isaac.
- Desert shrub of Syria and Arabia having small white flowers.
- (trademark) An alloy of iron and nickel having a low coefficient of thermal expansion.
- A hard malleable ductile silvery metallic element that is resistant to corrosion.
- An anxiety disorder characterized by chronic free-floating anxiety and such symptoms as tension or sweating or trembling of light-headedness or irritability etc that has lasted for more than six months.
- A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
- Place in a line or arrange so as to be parallel.
- A diacritical mark (-) placed over the letter n in Spanish to indicate a palatal nasal sound or over a vowel in Portuguese to indicate nasalization.
- Military action involving the use of electromagnetic energy to determine or exploit or reduce or prevent hostile use of the electromagnetic spectrum.
- English illustrator of several of Dickens' novels (1815-1882).
- Avatar of Vishnu.
- A pilgrimage to Mecca.
- A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
- Verbal abuse.
- A drug (trade names Atarax and Vistaril) used as a tranquilizer to treat anxiety and motion sickness.
- A party who files a notice with a law court.
- A family of fish in the order Zeomorphi.
- (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
- A state of social isolation.
- A Loloish language.
- A roll of photographic film holding a series of frames to be projected by a movie projector.
- Malevolent aspect of Devi.
- A sharp sound made by small birds or insects v l.
- Being or occurring at an advanced period of time or after a usual or expected time.
- A state in northwestern United States on the Pacific.
- A genus of delicate ferns belonging to the family Osmundaceae.
- Bony flesh of herring-like fish usually caught during their migration to fresh water for spawning.
- (Norse mythology) The Norse dragon that guarded a treasure and was slain by Sigurd.
- Of or relating to or characteristic of Thailand of its people.
- Not stale or old.
- Squash bugs.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Port city on southern Honshu on Osaka Bay.
- By bad luck.
- (Scottish) Bluish-black or gray-blue.
- A thrusting blow with a knife.
- (Greek mythology) Daughter of Zeus and Demeter.
- Relating to a recently developed fashion or style.
- A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- A college or university team that competes at a level below the varsity team.
- A white metallic element that burns with a brilliant light.

Yesterday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find during this time in your life that romance and social interaction become a major focus. You yearn for close and meaningful relationships with others. You feel as though you wish everything in your life to exude a type of elegance and refinement. You want to have the relationship everyone sees as ideal. You experience a level of excitement at the mere thought of having others look at you in envy of your life. You desire not only the perfect relationship, but also the want others to admire you for your high standards of truth and beauty. Being the center of attention excites you.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You always tend to place great importance on the needs of those close to you. You are entering a cycle where relationships seem to mean even more to you than usual. Your focus is not only on your family but also on your social relationships. Friendships become priority now. You seem to be taking a more open-minded approach to life. Focusing on seeing situations and solving problems from the perspective of others will help you grow as a person. You may find yourself focusing on listening to understand rather than listening to respond. This is a very healthy change you are making in your life. Relationships on all levels will strengthen as you become more open-minded.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You are optimistic and faith that all things good will come your way. The sky is the limit as far as you are concerned today. You may feel as if there is nothing you can not accomplish. Bring it on! In your personal life you may be ready to take a huge risk. Today may find you down on one knee, considering a move, or opening up and expressing your deepest feelings to someone. You are in a sort of daredevil mode and high on life. Your confidence level is at an all-time high and you are just the person who can make your desires become reality. Today there is just no stopping you!



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Your friendships take on great meaning for you at this time. The love and support you can feel from a close friendship is truly a gift. You may feel led to nurture these relationships and bond on a deeper level with someone close to you. Today is a great day for new projects or tasks that require great focus. You are feeling both focused and determined and this should make for a very productive day in the work place for you. You may also find pleasure working on group projects of some sort, whether in the office or perhaps a puzzle with friends. You will find great satisfaction in being able to work with others to accomplish a common goal. Cancer. You may find that being a little less independent can be rewarding today.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Listen to your hunches. Now is a great time to go with the flow. You may find your creative juices flowing and those around you seem very impressed with your talents. You are very intuitive when it comes to the feelings of others. You read people well. This is a talent that is admired by your peers and people are drawn to you. You are starting to appreciate yourself as a person and work hard to be good to others. This is a great time for facing your problems head on. Solutions could come easy and you will find great peace after any issues are worked through. Leo, this is a great time in your life. Enjoy!



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You are full of wit. A very eccentric side of you shines through. You may have insights and breakthroughs. This is a very enlightening time in your life. New beginnings are on the horizon. You may experience a breakthrough concerning your living situation. This is a great time to follow your gut feeling and take action. Your independence and unique qualities seem to draw others in. You may find yourself surrounded by those who admire you today.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today finds you in a very positive mood. You have learned to value adversity, as your positive approach keeps you focused on learning from your mistakes and experiences. This quality makes you very appealing to others. You may find others tend to seek and value your opinions and advice. You almost have a mystical quality about yourself today. You place great value on love and forgiveness of those closest to you. Libra, you may find much peace surrounding you today. Enjoy and relax!



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

A need for power and control is a driving force in your life now. You long to be in control of everyone and every aspect of your world. You may find that others see you as being more assertive than usual and are caught off guard by the change in you. You find you are curious and seeking answers to subjects and mysteries you find intriguing. Today could find you doing a bit of soul-searching trying to find answers to all that fascinate you about who you are, who you have become, and where life finds you today. This is a day solutions to old problems seem to fall into your lap. You may find much support from someone close to you that truly admires your more eccentric qualities.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

You may find yourself tense and anxious about a situation you have found yourself in. You may feel under pressure and feel somewhat anxious. This may lead to you mentally checking out. You may use this as a coping mechanism for the stress you are under. An out of body feeling in a dreamy state may be the way your mind chooses to handle this conflict. Others may not be fond of this side of you and this could result in conflict with someone close to you. You will find your way and through your ability to get to the root of your problems, this too will be solved. Sagittarius. You may find a negative result from the escape you take from reality as it may cause an opportunity you have been hoping for to pass you by.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

You've made a breakthrough in a relationship. Your patience has paid off. Don't take anything for granted though. This one will require continuing cultivation. A small conflict could undo all of your work. You can be assertive without being aggressive. You can make suggestions and not demands. The reward is worth the effort.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You are a practical person with an abundance of common sense. You are able to use both of these qualities as assets to make your way to the top in the career world. You may be feeling a need to change your focus and tighten your circle a bit. You feel as if you need to spend more of your time and attention on you and yours. At this point you may have accomplished your goal in the workplace but feel you need to continue to work on your goal at home. This will be a balancing act to continue to make sure you thrive in every area of your life. Your communication skills are at all time high and you are able to relate and interact with ease to all who surround you.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You may find yourself wanting to broaden your horizons. You know this is a big world and your life is contained in a tiny square of it. It may be time to take a step out of that box and find what the world has to offer you. You could find it difficult to communicate with others today because you find your mind is a million miles away. Curiosity has taken a hold on you and you can't seem to stay focused on the here and now. You may find this evening that a good book may be just what you need to find this escape you have been searching for. A good time for rest and relaxation is in order for you.

Wordsearch Puzzle

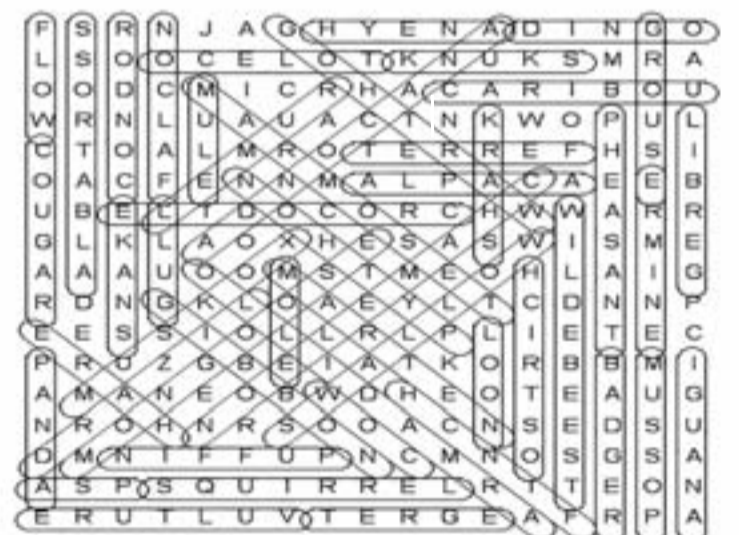
Astronomy

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



- |                  |            |                  |               |
|------------------|------------|------------------|---------------|
| ANDROMEDA GALAXY | DEEP SPACE | MOON             | SOLAR SYSTEM  |
| APOGEE           | ECLIPSE    | NEBULA           | SOLAR WIND    |
| ASTEROID         | EQUINOX    | ORBIT            | SPACE SHUTTLE |
| ASTRONOMER       | GALAXIES   | PARSEC           | SPACECRAFT    |
| ATMOSPHERE       | GALLILEO   | PERIGEE          | STARS         |
| AURORA           | GRAVITY    | POLARES          | SUN           |
| BINARY STAR      | HUBBLE     | PROXIMA CENTAURI | SUPERNOVA     |
| BLACK HOLE       | KEPLER     | PULSARS          | TELESCOPE     |
| CONSTELLATION    | LIGHT YEAR | QUASARS          | TIDES         |
| CORONA           | METEOR     | RED GIANT        | UNIVERSE      |
| CRATER           | MILKY WAY  | SATELLITE        | WHITE DWARF   |

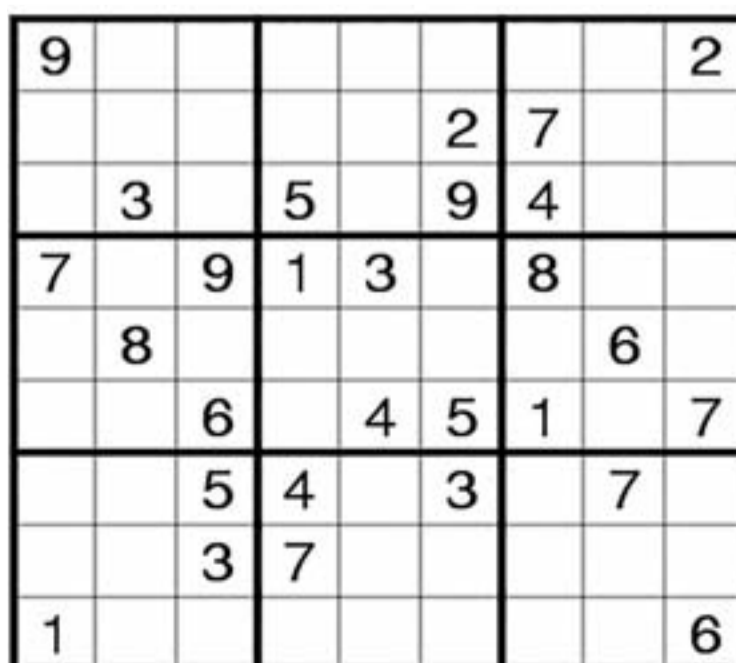
Animals 3



- |           |        |           |           |
|-----------|--------|-----------|-----------|
| ALBATROSS | EGRET  | LIZARD    | PUFFIN    |
| ALPACA    | ERMINE | LOON      | PYTHON    |
| ANACONDA  | FALCON | MARMOSSET | SHARK     |
| ARMADILLO | FERRET | MARTEN    | SKUNK     |
| ASP       | FINCH  | MOLE      | SNAKE     |
| BADGER    | GERBIL | MONGOOSE  | SQUIRREL  |
| CARIBOU   | GIBBON | MULE      | SWALLOW   |
| CHAMELEON | GROUSE | MUSKOX    | VULTURE   |
| CONDOR    | GULL   | OCELOT    | WARTHOG   |
| COUGAR    | HARE   | OSTRICH   | WILDBEEST |
| COW       | HYENA  | PANDA     | WOLF      |
| CROCODILE | IGUANA | PHEASANT  |           |
| DINGO     | LEMUR  | POSSUM    |           |

The hidden animal is: JAMAICAN WOODPECKER

Daily Sudoku



Yesterday's Solution



# Lifestyle

THURSDAY, JULY 25, 2019



People interact with one of the pieces on display at an exhibition by Argentina artist Leandro Erlich entitled "The Confines of the Great Void" at the CAFA Art Museum in Beijing. — AFP

## FLYING FRENCHMAN TO FULFILL CHANNEL CROSSING 'DREAM'



**A** daredevil French inventor said yesterday he was ready to realize his dream of flying between France and Britain across the Channel on a jet-powered "flyboard" after finally overcoming bureaucratic obstacles. Franky Zapata, a former jet skiing champion, aims to soar above the Channel "like a bird" on Thursday morning in a scene likely to resemble a science fiction film. In a tribute to past aviation heroes, the 40-year-old has picked the day that marks 110 years since pioneer Louis Bleriot made the first airplane flight across the Channel on July 25, 1909.

Zapata plans to take off from Sangatte on the northern French coast just outside Calais, make the 35 kilometer (22 mile) crossing in 20 minutes, and land in Britain around Dover in a location that has yet to be disclosed. His plan hit choppy waters initially as the French maritime authorities refused to give the project their benediction-while stopping short of an outright ban-due to busy shipping traffic in the Channel. But the maritime authorities said they lifted their "unfavorable opinion" after receiving guarantees from Zapata about his refueling plans and safety.

### 'New way of flying'

"I feel good. The hardest thing for me was the authorizations," Zapata said yesterday at a news conference in Saint-Inglevvert outside Calais. "It was a lot of stress" The flamboyant native of Marseille, southern France, said "the wind could cause issues" but added that he could refuel twice if conditions were really poor. Without disclosing precise timings, he said he planned on leaving Sangatte between 6:00-8:00 am (4:00-6:00 am GMT) to have the "best chances of success". "We created a new way of flying. We don't use wings. You are like a bird, it is your body that is flying. It is a boyhood dream."

"This simple dream has become true and we will fly from one country to another," he vowed. Zapata sprung to national prominence at the July 14 Bastille Day military parade when he soared above the Place de la Concorde in Paris in front of world leaders including President Emmanuel Macron.

He carried a rifle during that demonstration and the French defense ministry said it was studying how the flyboard could be used by its troops. Zapata has said he is ready to work with the armed forces, but insists the main point of the device is to revolutionize travel for civilians. He also has plans to develop a flying car.

### Kerosene-filled rucksack

Zapata's flyboard, which is about the size of a skateboard, is powered by five small jet engines that allow the rider to fly at speeds of 190 kilometers an hour (118 mph). It is fueled by kerosene stored in the rider's backpack and Zapata will carry 47 kilos (104 pounds) of it today. He aims to maintain an



These photos show Zapata CEO Franky Zapata flies over fields on his jet-powered hoverboard or "Flyboard" during a test flight in Saint-Inglevvert, northern France. — AFP photos

average speed of 140 kilometers an hour (87 mph) for the crossing and expects to be around 15-20 meters (50-65 feet) above the water.

If all goes to plan, he will make one refueling stop on a boat in mid-channel to pick up a second pack of kerosene. The device is controlled by a handheld throttle, which Zapata activates to take off after strapping himself into a pair of boots attached to the board. Features include "auto-hover mode" and "quick release boots" in case of an emergency landing on water, according to Zapata's website. The English Channel has often attracted daredevils. One of the latest was Austrian skydiver Felix Baumgartner, who went on to jump from the edge of space in 2012. He glided from England to France in 2003 wearing an aerodynamic suit fitted with a six-foot carbon-fibre wing. — AFP



Zapata CEO Franky Zapata (left) poses for a picture with his wife Chrysten (right) and their son prior to a test flight on his jet-powered hoverboard or "Flyboard".





A man walks past the mural painting of Babikir Anwar on the wall of the family home in the neighborhood of Shambat, in the Sudanese capital Khartoum. — AFP photos



Maiyssa Omar (right), the mother of Walid Abdelrahim sits in front of the mural painting of her son, ornating the family home in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.



Pupils gesture in front of a mural painting of a protester killed during anti-government protests in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

# Sudan murals commemorate protest 'martyrs'

Sudanese protester Walid Abdelrahim was shot dead last month in Khartoum but for his mother he is still alive—thanks to a colorful mural of his smiling face on a wall of their home. “The painting keeps him alive,” said Maiyssa Omar, her voice choking as she talked of her son, who was killed during a three-day nationwide civil disobedience campaign in June. The campaign had been launched in response to a brutal raid on a weeks-long sit-in in the capital on June 3 that left dozens of demonstrators dead and hundreds wounded. “When I see his painting ... it gives me strength. I feel proud to be a mother of a martyr,” Omar told AFP as she looked at her son’s face painted on the wall of their one-storey house in Bahri, a northern district in Khartoum.

The portrait is part of a campaign launched by Sudanese artist Assil Diab to draw murals and graffiti to commemorate demonstrators killed in the months-old protest movement that has rocked the northeast African country. Doctors close to the protest movement say 246 people have been killed across Sudan since demonstrations erupted in December. Officials have given a lower death toll. The protests initially broke out against the regime of veteran leader Omar al-Bashir. Following his ouster by the army on April 11, protesters continue to agitate against the ruling generals who seized power. These murals are specifically drawn on the walls of protesters’ own homes or in their neighborhoods.

### ‘Immortalize their legacy’

Diab, a former employee of Doha-based Al-Jazeera television network, and her team got their motivation from a protest catchcry: “Our martyrs didn’t die, they are alive among the revolutionaries!” “The idea is to immortalize their legacy in their own homes and to make the people of their neighborhoods proud of a martyr who sacrificed his life for Sudan,” Diab, 29, told AFP by telephone from Doha. “Graffiti makes martyrs come alive and reminds people of them even if the people themselves did or did not support the revolution.”

Diab, who lives in the Qatari capital with her family but



Sudanese artist Asil Diab (left), walks in front of a mural painting of Mohamed Mattar, on the wall of a youth club in Bahri in the capital Khartoum's northern district.



Adawiya Mohamed, the mother of Babikir Anwar is pictured in front of her son's mural painting on the wall of the family home in the neighborhood of Shambat, in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.

often returns to her homeland, said painting each mural costs her about \$635 given the high prices of colors and tools she uses. “But martyrs took to the streets and died for us. This is the least we can do for them,” said Diab, who has drawn about 30 portraits of protesters killed in Khartoum. For years such artwork remained underground amid censorship imposed by heavy-handed security agents of Bashir’s regime, who considered it anti-establishment or pure vandalism.

But artists say everything changed since the protests erupted, with dozens of murals flourishing across Khartoum’s walls since the initial weeks of the uprising. The capital’s neighborhoods like Bahri, a regular site of protests, became a canvas for artists like Diab. One such painting on a blue coloured wall of a youth club in Bahri is of protester Mohamed Mattar, who was one of dozens killed in the June 3 raid on the protest camp. “This painting

inspires me to participate in the protests to achieve the demand of those who died for us,” said Bahri resident Mujahid Sadeq. “I didn’t know Mattar before, but now we all know him.”

### ‘Dangerous experience’

A student in Britain, Mattar was back to visit family and had just celebrated his 26th birthday when he decided to spend a night with the demonstrators at the sit-in. His death in the raid had evoked a campaign of solidarity on social media under the hashtag #blueformattar. “We decided to draw his face here because this is a big area where the maximum number of people can see it,” said Eythar Gubara, a member of Diab’s team. Some of the paintings Diab has drawn are also of protesters killed in a September 2013 crackdown on anti-austerity rallies.

They include Babikir Anwar whose face Diab has

drawn on a wall of his family’s home in the neighborhood of Shambat. “We will not forget you Bakur,” is written below the painting, referring to his nickname. “It makes me feel that he is with me, as if he is sitting in front of me,” said Anwar’s mother Adawiya Mohamed, dressed in a black traditional robe. “I’m happy that Sudan still remembers his legacy.”

Diab said drawing the graffiti had not been easy. Often her team faced resistance from the feared paramilitary group the Rapid Support Forces, who are accused by rights group of carrying out the June 3 raid. “It was a dangerous experience, but worth taking the risks,” Diab said. “I was interested in immortalizing the legacy of these martyrs in the best way that I knew ... through graffiti.” — AFP



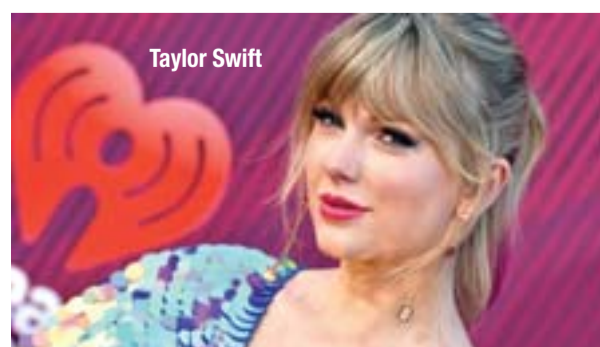
Pupils gesture in front of a mural painting of a protester killed during anti-government protests in the Sudanese capital Khartoum.



A mural painting of a Sudanese protester killed during anti-government protests ornates the wall of a building.

## Man with burglary tools arrested outside Swift home

An Iowa man who traveled to small-town Rhode Island planning to “visit” pop superstar Taylor Swift has been arrested and charged with possession of burglary tools, police said Tuesday. David Page Liddle, 32, was arrested and charged with possession over the week-



end after police discovered him in the beachfront town of Westerly with items including more than 30 lock picks, a window-entry rake and an aluminum baseball bat. According to the local newspaper, which first reported the story, Liddle was coming “to catch up with Taylor Swift” and insisted he knew her personally.

Police chief Shawn Lacey confirmed those details to AFP Tuesday. The Westerly Sun indicated that Liddle had been on a watch list and quoted Lacey as saying he “may have visited other properties belonging to Taylor Swift in the past.” The suspect was taken into custody without incident and issued a no-contact order prohibiting him from coming near or attempting to reach any of Swift’s properties. He will also undergo a mental health evaluation. It is not the first time Swift—who was not in Rhode Island over the weekend—has faced unwanted visitors: in March an alleged stalker was arrested for the second time in less than a year for breaking into her Manhattan home.

Roger Alvarado, who had already been restricted from coming near Swift’s apartment in the Tribeca neighborhood, broke a window and entered the loft in the middle of the night when the singer was away. In April 2018 he had used a ladder to climb through a window into her apartment, also when she wasn’t home. Swift, who has cited violence as one of her “greatest fears,” reportedly has deployed facial recognition technology at some concerts in a bid to identify potential stalkers in the crowd. — AFP

## Country folk icon John Prine postpones tour for stent surgery

Grammy-winning American singer John Prine will reschedule upcoming tour dates after doctors advised him he faced a stroke risk and needed surgery, his family said Tuesday. “In consultation with his doctors, John has been advised that he has an elevated risk for a stroke. He will have surgery this week to insert a stent which will remedy the issue,” read a statement on his Instagram signed by the 72-year-old performer’s family and record label. “He looks forward to a full and speedy recovery.”

A prolific songwriter and often whimsical performer, Prine last month was inducted into the Songwriters Hall of Fame. He has had past surgeries for cancer in his neck and lung. The statement said Prine’s eight-date summer concert schedule would be shifted back, with the next date, a July 28 show at Colorado’s Red Rocks venue, moved to September 18. “All original tickets will remain valid” and refunds are available at the point of purchase the statement said. “Thank you for your support and understanding.”

The news comes months after Rolling Stones frontman Mick Jagger, 75, also underwent a heart procedure, caus-

ing a rash of fan fear as the British rockers postponed a string of tour dates. The ever-energetic Jagger returned to the stage last month and the Stones are currently playing the rescheduled dates. — AFP



In this file photo US singer-songwriter John Prine performs onstage during the 2019 Songwriters Hall Of Fame Gala at The New York Marriott Marquis in New York City. — AFP



This picture shows a decommissioned Jordanian Armed Forces' AH-1 Cobra helicopter being submerged into the waters of the Red Sea off the coast of the southern Jordanian port city of Aqaba, as part of preparations for a new underwater military museum. — AFP photos



A handout picture shows a sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' Khalid battle tank on the seabed of the Red Sea off the coast of the southern port city of Aqaba.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' armored vehicle on the seabed of the Red Sea.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' AH-1 Cobra helicopter being lowered to the seabed of the Red Sea.

# Fish tanks: Jordan sinks military hardware for underwater museum

**S**unken tanks, a troop carrier and a submerged helicopter: Jordan yesterday opened its first underwater military museum off its Red Sea coast. The kingdom is hoping the 19 decommissioned pieces of military hardware, submerged at depths up to 28 meters (92 feet), will attract tourists to the already popular diving resort of Aqaba. The Underwater Military Museum Dive Site includes several tanks, an ambulance, a military crane, a troop carrier, an anti-aircraft battery, guns and a combat helicopter, the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority (ASEZA) said.

The sunken items have been "stationed along the coral reefs imitating a battle tactical formation", ASEZA said in a statement. The museum aims to offer a "new type" of museum experience combining "sports, environment and

exhibits" for divers, snorkelers and visitors on glass-bottomed boats, it said. The launch was marked by a ceremony with music from the Jordanian Armed Forces band and a local folk group, AFP photographers there said. The northern Red Sea is popular with divers attracted by its coral reefs, which are in relatively good health despite global reef depletion due to global warming.

ASEZA said it had removed "hazardous materials" from the hardware to protect the marine ecosystem. It said the museum would allow the creation of artificial reefs and promote the recovery of the area's natural reefs by "drawing visitors away to an alternative site." — AFP



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' tracked medical vehicle on the seabed of the Red Sea.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' armored vehicle on the seabed of the Red Sea.



A sunken Jordanian Armed Forces' battle tank on the seabed of the Red Sea.



## Hermes defies trade tensions as China leads growth

**G**lobal trade tensions may have sapped growth for many firms, but luxury handbag maker Hermes said Tuesday it posted a double-digit rise in second quarter sales thanks in part to China. For the months of April through June the firm recorded a 14.7 percent increase in sales to 1.67 billion euros (\$1.87 billion), beating the consensus of analyst forecasts compiled by both Factset and Bloomberg. Over the first half of the year sales rose by 15.1 percent to 3.28 billion euros. "Hermes sales were very dynamic in the first half of 2019, in all regions and in all business lines," said chief executive Axel Dumas. Asia excluding Japan led the growth among regions, where sales jumped by 18.6 percent in the second quarter when exchange rates changes are excluded, "with positive

momentum in continental China and double-digit growth in all other countries in the area," Hermes said in a statement. Financial Director Eric du Halgouet acknowledged that sales in Hong Kong were impacted by the pro-democracy demonstrations in June, with two of its six shops there having to make brief closures. However he noted that sales growth there was still in the double digits for the half year.

Sales rose by nearly 10 percent in Japan and the Americas as well. Jewelry and home products enjoyed the best second quarter growth of nearly 21 percent, although it makes up less than 8 percent of total sales. The main business line that includes handbags rose by 12.2 percent, while the ready-to-wear and fashion acces-

sories unit rose by 16.9 percent. "In the medium term, despite growing economic, geopolitical and monetary uncertainties around the world, the Group confirms an ambitious goal for revenue growth at constant exchange rates," said Hermes. It has previously indicated that its operating margin will likely come in at slightly less than the record 34.5 percent it recorded in the first half of 2018 when it publishes half year results in September. Hermes shares slid 0.4 percent in Paris where the CAC 40 index was up 0.4 percent. — AFP



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto shows her skateboarding skills during a training in the city of Ama, Aichi prefecture.



Reigning Asian Games champion Kensuke Sasaoka shows his skateboarding skills during a training in the city of Ama, Aichi prefecture.



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto poses with her skateboard in the city of Ama, Aichi prefecture. — AFP photos

## X factor: Japan's teen skateboard queen wary of Olympic jinx

Whisper it, but tiny Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto looks to have become the host country's best hope to win skateboarding gold at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics. A year from the start of the Games, the bashful 13-year-old screws her nose up at talk of making history when the hipster sport makes its Olympic debut—for fear of jinxing a sizzling run of form. “If I listen to all that, I worry it will go to my head,” Okamoto told AFP after practicing. “I don't want to get carried away—that's happened to me before and I'm scared it could happen again so I just try to block it out.”

Good luck with that. Having just topped qualifying for this summer's X Games, the teenager is hot property. At a shade under 1.42 meters tall (4ft 6in), Okamoto makes skateboarding look ridiculously easy with her smooth-flowing technique, ice-cool temperament and the ability to bust out hair-raising aerial spins with an effortless grace. Less than a week before her 13th birthday, she won the Dew Tour park final at Long Beach, a qualifier for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, forcing people to sit up and take notice.

### 'I get obsessed'

Okamoto followed that by storming to victory at the X Games qualifier in Idaho to book her first appearance at the extreme sports event, to be held in Minneapolis from August 1-4. “It didn't really sink in that I'd won,” the Aichi-born skater said at a skate park in rural Ama, near Nagoya in central Japan. “It gave me a little more confidence,” added Okamoto, who took up skateboarding in primary school. “But I really didn't come away thinking it was that big a deal.”

Despite her modesty, the way Okamoto nonchalantly pulled off successive “McTwists”—a spectacular front flip with a 540-degree rotation—stunned commentators in Idaho. “It took me over a year to be able to do that 540 in practice,” revealed the Japan Open champion, who has her sights on success at prestigious international events such as the X Games and Vans Park Series. “I love the challenge of trying new techniques—I get obsessed with that.” With half-Japanese sensation Sky Brown opting to skate for Britain, the pressure is on the likes of Okamoto and Sakura Yosozumi, who holds the world and Asian park titles, to nail down Japan's two Olympic spots.

On her 11-year-old rival Sky, Okamoto said: “She's always smiling—and she's got big tricks, which are very cool.” But Okamoto detests the p-word. “I don't feel any pressure,” she insisted, still battling jet-lag after returning from Los Angeles.

### 'Love the feeling'

“I'm too soft on myself sometimes and can be my own worst enemy. After I won, I'd get carried away and then my level would drop off—that kind of stuff kept happening, so I'm trying hard to fix that and just focus on myself.” After



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto shows her skateboarding skills during a training.



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto shows her skateboarding skills during a training.

dropping into another run of big-air jumps, Okamoto added: “I love that feeling of flying. I want to be a skater who can compete with the best in the world.” But while Japan has strength in depth in women's skateboarding—with 10-year-old Kokona Hiraki, Mami Tezuka and Kisa Nakamura all making the top 10 in Long Beach along with Yosozumi—the Olympic hosts have fewer contenders in the men's.

Enter Kensuke Sasaoka, the reigning Asian Games champion. The Japanese number one could be joined at Tokyo 2020 by two-time Olympic snowboarding silver medalist Ayumu Hirano, who underlined his skateboard credentials by scooping the national title earlier this year. But Sasaoka looks to be Japan's best medal hope. “Foreign skaters are so strong in terms of style, speed and technique,” said the 20-year-old, who models his skating on flamboyant Brazilian Pedro Barros, a six-time X Games gold medalist. “I've still got a lot of catching up to do but hopefully I can close that gap.” Sasaoka, whose older brother Kent coaches Okamoto, is on course to qualify for the Olympics and has no fears about competing on the biggest stage of all. “It would be awesome to make the Olympics but I don't want to just take part,” said the Japan Open champ. “I want to aim for the top spot and leave everything out there.” — AFP



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto shows her skateboarding skills during a training.



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto shows her skateboarding skills during a training.



Japanese schoolgirl Misugu Okamoto shows her skateboarding skills during a training.

## Food for... trash? India's first 'garbage cafe' to offer meals for plastic

Hungry, but don't have cash? No problem, bring plastic waste and get a free meal, said the mayor of an Indian city where the country's first “garbage cafe” will open next month. The small restaurant in the eastern city of Ambikapur will provide hearty food to homeless and poor people and encourage citizens to keep their streets clean, said mayor Ajay Tirkey. “Everybody is welcome to donate plastic. The cafe will be mainly run by

women... Preparations are in full swing!” he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation yesterday.

Single-use plastics are banned in many states, but Indians still generate 26,000 tons of plastic waste every day, according to government data. The waste is often dumped in streets, drains and landfills. The Garbage Cafe, inspired by similar cafes that have opened in countries including Cambodia and Belgium, wants to change that. In

exchange for one kilogram (2.2 lb) of plastic, the cafe will serve a curry with rice, lentils, and papadams, said Tirkey, estimating that would take a couple of hours to collect.

For half that weight, punters will receive a breakfast of samosas, lentil doughnuts or stuffed flatbreads. A waste management system set up in 2015 and run by women who go door-to-door collecting plastic for recycling, has helped make Ambikapur one of India's cleanest cities. The

city built a road made entirely of plastic in 2015, India's first and earns 1.2 million rupees (\$17,400) a month selling plastic and recycled paper to private companies, according to Tirkey. In a similar move earlier this year, a school in northeastern Assam state started providing free schooling to students in exchange for plastic waste. — Reuters



# Iran open to UK tanker swap amid hopes for 'progress'

## Tehran challenges Trump drone claim, warns of confrontation if Hormuz status changed

**TEHRAN:** Iran hinted yesterday it is open to a tanker swap with Britain as the owners of a UK-flagged ship seized by the Islamic republic expressed hopes for "positive progress" after speaking to its crew. The seizure of the Stena Impero has been seen as a tit-for-tat move after British authorities detained an Iranian tanker off Gibraltar this month on suspicion it was shipping oil to Syria in breach of EU sanctions. "We don't want tensions with some European countries," Iran's President Hassan Rouhani said in comments to a cabinet meeting posted on his government's website.

In a clear reference to the tense standoff with the British, Rouhani said if they were to "cease the incorrect acts that they have done, including that of Gibraltar, Iran's response would be" appropriate to their actions. Iran's Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps seized the Stena Impero on Friday, surrounding it with attack boats before troops rappelled onto its deck from a helicopter.

The oil tanker and its 23 crew have since been impounded at the southern port of Bandar Abbas for allegedly breaking "international maritime rules". The owners of the vessel said on Wednesday they had finally been able to speak to the crew of 18 Indians, three Russians, a Latvian and a Filipino. "Stena Bulk can confirm that we have had direct communication with the crew of the Stena Impero since late yesterday (Tuesday)," the Swedish shipping company said in a statement.

It said "everyone was safe with good cooperation

with the Iranian personnel onboard". "We do of course appreciate this step... and that this is a first sign that we will soon see more positive progress from the Iranian authorities," said its chief executive, Erik Hanell.

### Duel over drones

Iran's high-seas standoff with Britain comes amid rising hostilities between the Islamic republic and UK ally the United States. The arch-enemies have been locked in a battle of nerves since President Donald Trump withdrew the US from a landmark 2015 deal aimed at limiting Iran's nuclear program and began reimposing sanctions. Since the Trump administration began a "maximum pressure" campaign against Iran this year, the situation has worsened with drones downed and tankers mysteriously attacked in sensitive Gulf waters.

The Revolutionary Guards yesterday denied losing a drone and challenged the Americans to prove Trump's claims they could find it at the bottom of the sea after the US military said it downed an unmanned aircraft last week. "I officially declare that none of Islamic Iran's drones have been downed," Guards' Major-General Hossein Salami was quoted as saying on the force's official website. "If our enemies have any claims on downing Iranian drones, they should show their proof," he said.

Iran, which last month shot down a US Global Hawk drone that it said had ventured into its airspace, has repeatedly denied it lost any of its own unmanned aeri-

al vehicles. In reaction to the Iranian denials, Trump insisted on Tuesday that the US downed a drone. "You can see it laying right down on the bottom of that beautiful bed of water," the US president said in remarks posted on the White House website.

Iran's defense minister Brigadier-General Amir Hatami responded to Trump yesterday by saying the Islamic republic had put on display the wreckage of the US drone it shot down. "If anyone claims that they have downed one of our drones they must show its (wreckage)," Hatami said according to the semi-official ISNA news agency.

### Sanctions 'ceasefire'

During the cabinet meeting, Rouhani also said Iran would be open to talks should there be a "ceasefire" in US economic sanctions against the Islamic republic. "In this regard some countries are intermediaries, though they themselves say they are not mediators and are just expressing their own views," said Rouhani. "There has been correspondence from both sides on this issue and we are continuing this," the Iranian president added.

Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe visited Tehran in June for talks aimed at defusing tensions between Iran and the United States. Earlier this month French President Emmanuel Macron sent his top diplomatic adviser, Emmanuel Bonne, to Iran "to piece together a deescalation" strategy. Both Japan and France have denied acting as intermediaries between Iran and the United States.

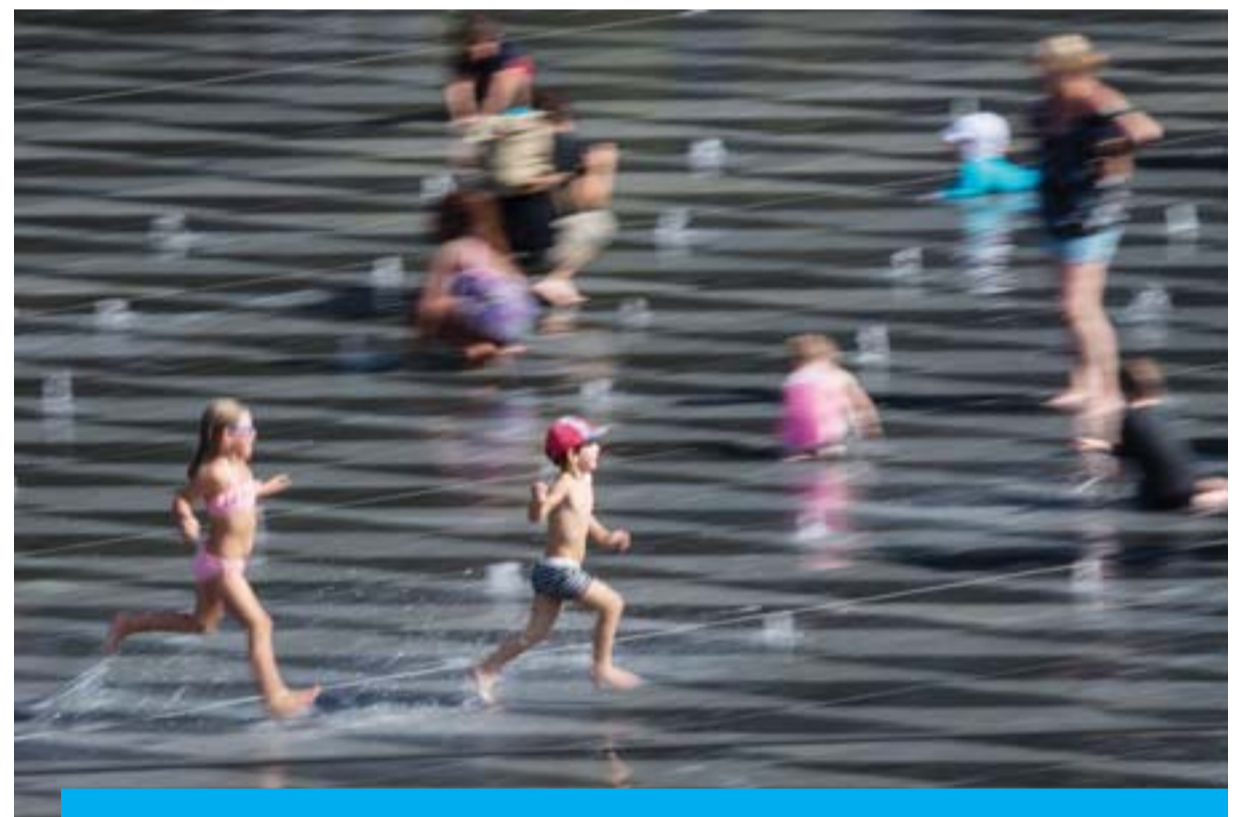
Meanwhile, the military adviser to Iran's supreme leader was quoted yesterday as saying that any change in the status of the Strait of Hormuz, which Tehran says it protects, would open the door to a dangerous confrontation. In a series of news flashes, Al Jazeera TV quoted Hossein Dehghan, a commander of Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards, as also telling the channel that Tehran would not negotiate with the US administration under any circumstances and that if Washington decided to go to war then all American bases in the region would be targeted.

It later aired excerpts of the interview which had an Arabic-language voice over. Britain has called for a European-led naval mission to ensure safe shipping through the world's most important oil artery after Iran seized a British tanker last week. The United States, which has imposed economic sanctions on Iran aimed at halting its exports of oil, is trying to rally support for a global coalition to secure Gulf waters.

Dehghan said all countries should be able to export their oil through the strait or else no one could, Al Jazeera said. It quoted him as accusing Abu Dhabi, the political capital of the United Arab Emirates, of becoming a US center to strike Iran's national security, but added that the Gulf Arab state had sent a delegation to Iran to discuss peace. UAE officials were not immediately available to comment. Jazeera quoted Dehghan as saying Iran would not negotiate its missile program with anyone, dismissing US threats of a war as a ruse. — Agencies



AALBORG, Denmark: People cool off in the fountains at Toldbod Plads yesterday. — AFP



NANTES, France: Children run through water as they enjoy the Water Mirror during a heatwave yesterday. — AFP

## Warming 'unmatched' in 2,000 yrs

**PARIS:** World temperatures rose faster in the late 20th century than at any other time in the last 2,000 years, according to research released yesterday which experts said undermines climate deniers questioning of mankind's role in global warming. As Europe sweltered in a second record-breaking heatwave in a month, the three peer-reviewed papers offered the most detailed overview of regional temperature trends dating back two millennia.

Climate variability — the fluctuation of surface temperatures over time — has long been the subject of

debate. While average global temperatures are currently around one degree Celsius hotter than pre-industrial times, there have been a number of periods of cooling and warming over the centuries. This had led skeptics of manmade global warming to suggest that human activity is not the main driver of climate change.

Researchers used data compiled from nearly 700 temperature indicators, from tree rings, sediment cores, coral reefs and modern thermometer readings, to provide a comprehensive timeline of our planet's recent climate history. The findings are clear: At no point in modern human history did temperatures rise so quickly and so consistently as in the late 20th century — the period where the world's post-war, fossil fuel-powered economy reached unprecedented heights of production and consumption.

The first paper, published in the journal Nature, examined regional temperature trends over time. Scientists have long known of periods of unusual climate activity, such as the Little Ice Age, a centuries-

long epoch where northern Europe experienced colder winters on average than in the start of the 20th century. The study found that temperatures in the Little Ice Age and other anomalous periods did not rise or fall in global lock-step as had long been assumed, and varied regionally for much of the last 2,000 years.

"When we go back in the past these are really regional phenomena, but they are not global," said Nathan Steiger, from Columbia University's Lamont-Doherty Earth Observatory. This is in marked contrast to current warming trends. "Whereas in the contemporary warm period it really is global - 98 percent of the globe has this coherent warming after the industrial revolution - and that very much stands out in contrast to the climate variability that's happened before in the past 2,000 years."

"Finally stop climate deniers"

A second paper, in Nature Geoscience, examined rates of surface warming, averaged over sub-periods each a few decades long. They found that pre-industrial

temperature fluctuations were largely driven by volcanic activity. But they also concluded that humans had never witnessed such rapid global warming as in the latter part of the 20th century.

Author Raphael Neukom from the University of Bern, Switzerland, told AFP the finding "highlights the extraordinary character of current climate change". A third study found that global temperatures leading up to the industrial period were cooled by a series of volcanic eruptions, which led to droughts in Africa and weak monsoons.

Commenting on the studies, Mark Maslin, Professor of Climatology at University College London, said their results "should finally stop climate change deniers claiming that the recent observed coherent global warming is part of a natural climate cycle". "This paper shows the truly stark difference between regional and localized changes in climate of the past and the truly global effect of anthropogenic (man-made) greenhouse emissions." — AFP

## Boris becomes British premier...

Continued from Page 1

Watched by his girlfriend Carrie Symonds, the former London mayor said "the doubters, the doomsters, the gloomsters are going to get it wrong again".

But he added: "It is of course vital at the same time that we prepare for the remote possibility that Brussels refuses any further to negotiate and we are forced to come out with no-deal." European Council president Donald Tusk was quick to congratulate Johnson, adding: "I look forward to meeting you to discuss - in detail - our cooperation."

Johnson was on Tuesday elected leader of the governing Conservative party by its members, and was confirmed prime minister in a meeting Wednesday with Queen Elizabeth II. His ascent is the culmination of a life-long ambition for the politician who, with his jokes and absurd anecdotes, has enjoyed celebrity status in Britain for decades. But before he even took office, several pro-European ministers quit in protest at his threat of a "no deal" Brexit, fearing the economic consequences.

Opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn challenged Johnson to call a general election, saying he "has no mandate from the people". While Johnson won a landslide in the contest to become Tory leader, a YouGov survey Wednesday found his approval rating was just 31 percent

among the public. Beloved by many for his apparent refusal to take life too seriously, the former journalist is accused by others of demonising minorities in his articles and incompetence. His appointment was disrupted by climate protesters, who briefly stopped his convoy heading to Buckingham Palace for his meeting with the queen.

Johnson is expected to swiftly announce his new cabinet, and his first appointment proved predictably contentious. He named as a top adviser Dominic Cummings, a combative character who helped lead the victorious "Vote Leave" campaign during the 2016 referendum. A source in Johnson's campaign team said he would build a diverse cabinet with more women and a record number of ethnic minority politicians. Sajid Javid, the son of Pakistani immigrants and currently May's interior minister, was appointed as finance minister.

Brexit is the priority for Johnson after May repeatedly failed to get her divorce plan through parliament, forcing her to twice delay Britain's departure date. In a short speech before tendering her resignation to the queen, May wished Johnson "every good fortune". A heckler shouted "Stop Brexit" as she stood with her husband Philip by her side, to which she retorted: "I think not."

Brexit aside, the most immediate problem facing Johnson is a stand-off with Iran after Tehran seized a UK-flagged tanker in the Gulf last week. Johnson is also expected to seek to repair ties with Washington, after a rift caused by the leak of diplomatic cables criticizing the White House. US President Donald Trump was one of the first to congratulate Johnson on his victory saying he would be "great" and describing him as "Britain Trump". — AFP

## Spotlight on suicide pushes...

Continued from Page 1

last year recorded by the parliament's human rights committee. The increase in cases, some of which were broadcast on social media, is forcing political, religious and media institutions to grapple with the problem primarily affecting Iraq's youth.

And the real numbers could be even higher, as relatives of those who try to end their lives often refrain from reporting cases to authorities to avoid public shaming. Suicide is forbidden by Islam - Iraq's official religion - as well as by minority religions in the country. For Ahmad, a 22-year-old from Nasiriyah, south of Baghdad, his family forbidding him to marry the neighborhood girl he loved pushed him to attempt suicide twice using poison. "I had nothing left but suicide, as my parents don't understand marrying for love," he told AFP.

Iraq has been battered by nearly four decades of instability, barely allowing communities to recover from one conflict before being slammed with another. Social pressures and staggering unemployment also play a role. Among Iraqi youth, 17 percent of men and 27 percent of women are out of work, according to the World Bank. "Suicide is increasing among adolescents and young adults because they are the most unhappy demographic when it comes to employment, education, and care," said Amal Kobashi, who heads the Iraqi Women's Network and has followed the issue. "Until now,

there are no real government mechanisms to resolve the reality of this demographic. This could be pushing them to desperation and suicide," she told AFP.

In recent months, gruesome videos have emerged on social media of young Iraqis broadcasting suicide attempts live, including by hanging, jumping off bridges or using firearms. Kobashi said they could be cries for help in a country with few mental health resources and where therapy is still seen as a last resort for people deemed by some as "crazy". "Some resorted to social media to bring attention to their situation so people would empathize," Kobashi said, adding that could ultimately be a "positive" outcome.

An Iraqi mental health specialist, speaking anonymously to discuss sensitive cases, confirmed she was seeing more youth among her patients. She suspected that the current period of relative stability meant Iraqis were finally coming to grips with their trauma. "We spent years just on survival mode, trying to get through terrorism. So now, people are finally starting to pay attention to other social trends," the specialist said.

As more cases come to light, media outlets, including state television, have hosted special programmes on suicide, bringing the issue into mainstream discussion. Government officials have also taken notice and the country's top religious authority for most Shiites, Grand Ayatollah Ali Sistani, has demanded authorities "work on resolving these issues". But there is a lingering "lack of sensitivity" on mental health issues, the specialist warned. "Suicide is being talked about more, but not always in a healthy way. There are clerics who blame it on a lack of faith," she said. "That doesn't help victims or their families." — AFP



Sports

# Yankees earn crazy 10-inning victory over Minnesota Twins

**MINNEAPOLIS:** Didi Gregorius went 5-for-5 with seven RBIs and scored the winning run in the 10th inning as the New York Yankees rallied for a wild 14-12 victory over the Minnesota Twins in a battle of division leaders Tuesday night in Minneapolis. Gregorius had a three-run homer and two two-run doubles. He singled with one out in the 10th off reliever Kohl Stewart (2-2), advanced to second on a bloop single by Austin Romine, then scored the winning run on a single by Gleyber Torres. Romine later scored the final run on a wild pitch. Aaron Hicks, who made a game-saving diving grab on a bases-loaded liner by Max Kepler in the gap in left-center to end the game, hit a two-run homer in the ninth. Aaron Judge went 3-for-6 with two doubles and two RBIs for New York, which snapped a two-game losing streak. Aroldis Chapman (3-2), despite walking three batters and allowing the tying run to score in the bottom of the ninth, picked up the victory. Minnesota's Miguel Sano hit two home runs, including a 457-foot two-run shot off Zack Britton in the bottom of the eighth to give Minnesota an 11-10 lead, and drove in five runs.

## METS 5, PADRES 2

Robinson Cano snapped out of his season-long doldrums by producing the first three-homer game of his career, accounting for all of New York's runs in a win over visiting San Diego. After singling in his first at-bat, Cano hit a solo homer leading off the fourth against Chris Paddack (6-5) to break a scoreless tie. It was Cano's first homer at Citi Field since April 6 against the Washington Nationals. He added a two-run homer off Paddack in the sixth and a two-run shot off Logan Allen in the seventh. It was the 14th three-homer game in Mets history and only the third in a home contest after Kirk Nieuwenhuis (July 12, 2015) and Lucas Duda (July 29, 2015). Cano entered the night with just six homers and a .243 batting average.

## NATIONALS 11, ROCKIES 1

Trea Turner hit for the cycle, and Stephen Strasburg threw six scoreless innings to win his sixth consecutive start as Washington smashed visiting Colorado. Turner hit a homer leading off the first inning, a single in the second, a triple in the fifth and a double in the Nationals' eight-run seventh. It was the second cycle of his career, with the first coming at Colorado on April 25, 2017. Turner, who grounded into a double play in the sixth inning, completed the fourth cycle in the majors this season. Strasburg (13-4) allowed just three hits and struck out eight while walking two. He has not lost since June 15.

## GIANTS 5, CUBS 4 (13 INNINGS)

Pablo Sandoval went the opposite way for a walk-off home run to left field with one out in the 13th inning, sending San Francisco past visiting Chicago for its fifth extra-inning win in the past eight days. After the Cubs forced extra innings with single runs in the seventh and eighth to forge a 4-4 tie, neither team scored again until Sandoval, a switch hitter batting left-handed, launched a Brad Brach (3-3) pitch barely over the glove of a leaping Robel Garcia for his 12th homer of the season. Sam Coonrod, promoted Monday from Triple-A, recorded his first major league win in just his fifth big-league appearance with a 1-2-3 top of the 13th, including strikeouts of Javier Baez and Kris Bryant. The win was the Giants' 10th in their past 11 games and improved their record in extra innings to 10-2 after six straight victories.

## BLUE JAYS 2, INDIANS 1 (10 INNINGS)

Justin Smoak tied the score with a ninth-inning homer and won it with an RBI single in the 10th inning as Toronto came back to defeat visiting Cleveland. It was the first win by the Blue Jays in six games this season against the Indians. Toronto's Ken Giles (2-2) pitched around a single and a walk in the top of the 10th to earn the win. Cleveland starter Trevor Bauer allowed no runs, three hits and three walks while striking out nine in 7 2/3 innings.

## ATHLETICS 4, ASTROS 3 (11 INNINGS)

Ramon Laureano roped a run-scoring double down the third base line in the 11th inning, and Oakland pulled out a victory at Houston. The Astros had their six-game winning streak snapped after Laureano drove home Matt Olson, who reached on a one-out single and took second on a walk to Mark Canha. Olson also hit a three-run home run off Astros closer Roberto Osuna in the ninth. Yusmeiro Petit (3-2) pitched two scoreless innings with two strikeouts for the win. The blown save by Osuna negated the stellar effort of Astros starter Wade Miley, who took a shutout into the ninth inning.

## PHILLIES 3, TIGERS 2 (15 INNINGS)

Rhys Hoskins smacked a go-ahead single in the 15th inning. Roman Quinn hit his first homer of the season, and visiting Philadelphia edged Detroit. Scott Kingery opened the 15th against Daniel Stumpf (1-1) with a triple off the right field wall. Hoskins followed with a single to right. Jose Alvarez (1-2) pitched two innings of scoreless relief to get the victory. Nicholas Castellanos had two hits and an RBI for the Tigers while Harold Castro scored both Detroit runs.



MINNEAPOLIS: Austin Romine #28 of the New York Yankees slides safely into home plate after a wild pitch by the Minnesota Twins during the tenth inning of the game. — AFP

## ANGELS 5, DODGERS 4

Mike Trout and Kole Calhoun hit home runs and also threw out runners at the plate as the visiting Los Angeles Angels remained perfect against their crosstown rivals by holding on for a victory. Calhoun, the Angels' right fielder, threw out Cody Bellinger at the plate for the final out of the game after Enrique Hernandez's single. Trout, the Angels' center fielder, cut down Max Muncy at the plate in the second inning on a throw that was clocked at 98.6 mph, and he also hit a home run estimated at 454 feet into the second deck down the left field line in the fifth inning. The Angels improved to 3-0 against the Dodgers this season and will go for a sweep of the interleague season series Wednesday. Corey Seager had two hits for the Dodgers and drove in a run, but he missed out on a second RBI on Trout's throw home. The Dodgers got a sacrifice fly from Muncy in the ninth before Calhoun's throw nailed Bellinger.

## RED SOX 5, RAYS 4

Christian Vazquez belted a tiebreaking, pinch-hit home run to lead off the seventh inning, and Chris Sale struck out 10 in six innings as Boston beat Tampa Bay

in St Petersburg, Fla. Vazquez stroked a 92 mph fast-ball from Colin Poche (2-4) deep to left for his 16th homer to snap a 2-2 tie. JD Martinez went 3-for-4 for the Red Sox, who have won six of their past nine. Travis Arnaud smacked a two-run homer, and Tommy Pham was 2-for-4 with a double and an RBI walk for Tampa Bay.

## ROYALS 5, BRAVES 4

Pinch hitter Lucas Duda clubbed a 435-foot home run in the eighth inning to start a three-run rally, and Kansas City hung on for a victory at Atlanta. Duda connected for his fourth career homer off reliever Anthony Swarzak (2-3), who lost his first decision since joining the Braves from the Mariners in mid-May. The home run also ended Swarzak's 17-inning scoreless streak and sent the Royals to their eighth win in their last 11 games. Duda's 13th career homer against the Braves broke a 2-2 tie. Atlanta's Dallas Keuchel retired the first nine batters he faced, yielding his first hit on Whit Merrifield's bunt to lead off the fourth inning. He allowed two runs on three hits and two walks in six innings and struck out a season-high 12, one short of matching his career best. — Reuters

## Tour de France top form guide with five stages to go

**NIMES:** AFP Sports takes a look at the form of the top four contenders for Tour de France victory ahead of three decisive Alpine stages starting today.

### No.1 JULIAN ALAPHILIPPE (DECEUNINCK-QUICK STEP)

The daredevil 27-year-old classics specialist has been the star of the Tour. The number-one ranked cyclist in the world swept the French public up in a wave of enthusiasm after his swashbuckling attacks through the Champagne hills in the first week. Experts expected him to flame out quickly but he then stormed the Pau time-trial to inflict a psychological wound on rivals. Then came a personal triumph, coming second on the mythical Tourmalet mountain summit way above the treeline, leaving the Pyrenees 1min 35sec ahead of second placed Geraint Thomas. The former soldier showed his first sign of weakness on the final Pyrenean stage, but has otherwise tapped into deep resources whatever the challenge.

### No.2 at 1min 35sec GERAINT THOMAS (INEOS)

The affable 33-year-old defending champion is well placed to take a second title as he waits for Alaphilippe to falter in the Alps so he can concentrate on dealing with Thibaut Pinot, seen as a bigger danger. The way he handled his stage eight fall brought widespread praise, and in the skirmishes atop La Planche des Belles Filles, he launched an impressive attack to put time into his key rivals. He then led Ineos as they joined the Alaphilippe-sparked 38km rampage that blew five rivals out of contention on the way to Albi. But Thomas fluffed his lines at the Pau time-trial complaining of overheating, and suffered weakness where he was expected to show strength, at the Col du Tourmalet, conceding time to Alaphilippe for a second day. Thomas fell again on Tuesday, a third tumble so far, and appears unsure who his real rival is.

### No.3 at 1min 47sec STEVEN KRUIJSWIJK (JUMBO)

This quiet, clever 32-year-old has been under the radar after he suffered on La Planche des Belles Filles climb, which he dislikes, and because he was unable to follow Thibaut Pinot at the second Pyrenean stage. But The Dutch climber always rides best in the third week and has based his entire Tour preparations around repeated ascents of the final 33km climb to Val Thorens on Saturday. Coming out of the Pyrenees, however, he is well poised to challenge for final victo-



GAP: Great Britain's Geraint Thomas (C) rides with teammates of Great Britain's Team Ineos cycling team during the seventeenth stage of the 106th edition of the Tour de France cycling race between Pont du Gard and Gap. — AFP

ry. He has too strong climbers in his team in George Bennet and Laurens de Plus to back him up, and few could argue that Jumbo have been the form outfit of 2019. Detractors say he always has a bad day at some stage.

### No.4 at 1min 50sec THIBAUT PINOT (FDJ)

The emotional Frenchman is a legendary climber but a nervy descender and says he dislikes the heat, of which he'll get a good dose this week as a heatwave engulfs France. After gaining

time on the early stages to lead the Ineos pair of Thomas and Egan Bernal he got caught napping on the narrow road to Albi losing a 1min 36sec advantage to Thomas, Bernal and others. But with true Gallic flair Pinot vowed to win on the Tourmalet and did so with a volcanic explosion of joy. He again gained time on the second Pyrenean mountain stage to set himself up as the man to beat in the mountains. There is a huge groundswell of public support for the handsome FDJ captain, who is cheered throughout each stage. — AFP

## An Olympic dispute: Japan rejects Korea anger over map

**TOKYO:** Japan has rejected a South Korean complaint over an Olympic map that depicts disputed islands as Japanese territory, Tokyo said yesterday as it marks a year until the 2020 Games. The map of Japan, on a Tokyo 2020 website illustrating the Olympic torch relay route, depicts the islands known as Dokdo in Korean and Takeshima in Japanese as about the size of a full stop.

"South Korea, through the Japanese embassy in South Korea, has lodged a protest on the issue," cabinet secretary Yoshihide Suga told a daily briefing. "Japan told the South Korean side that the protest is not acceptable given that Japan owns Takeshima and given Japan's position on the Sea of Japan." South Korea's foreign ministry confirmed that the government had summoned an official from the embassy in Seoul last week over the issue.

The government will "continue to sternly respond to Tokyo's unreasonable claims", it added in a statement. The disputed islands are claimed by both countries, and their depiction in maps produced by the two sides has frequently caused tensions. At the Winter Olympics opening ceremony in Pyeongchang in February 2018, the two Koreans marched together behind a unification flag that did not include the islands, after Tokyo denounced the emblem used at a practice event.

Suga at the time said it was "unacceptable" for the flag to depict the disputed territory. And Tokyo was infuriated when custom-made furniture for a summit between the leaders of North and South Korea featured maps showing the disputed islands as part of Korean territory. Relations between Japan and South Korea have often been strained by lingering resentment over Japan's 1910-1945 occupation of the peninsula.

And ties have deteriorated in recent months, with Japan putting export restrictions on Seoul after South Korean courts ordered Japanese firms to compensate victims of wartime forced labor. The islands row comes as Tokyo marks the year-to-go countdown until the opening ceremony of the 2020 Games, with organizers touting "unprecedented" ticket sales. — AFP

## Andy Murray 'excited' to team up with brother

**LONDON:** Andy Murray says he is "excited" to be teaming up with his brother Jamie at the Washington Open, reuniting the pairing that helped Great Britain win the Davis Cup in 2015. The former world number one has so far been restricted to doubles action since returning to the game following a hip operation in January, winning his first tournament back at Queen's in June before suffering early exits at Eastbourne and Wimbledon. "I am going to be competing in Washington next week in the doubles with my brother Jamie," Andy Murray said in a video posted on Twitter ahead of the tournament, which starts on Monday. "I am very excited to be on the court with him and go back to Washington. It is a city I have always enjoyed visiting. "It should be fun and I am hoping to have a good summer over in the States, keep progressing physically and hopefully get on the singles court soon."

Jamie Murray, 33, won the Washington doubles title last year with former partner Bruno Soares, a pairing that also won Australian and US Open titles. The Murray brothers last played together at the Rio Olympics, but were a prolific partnership during Great Britain's 2015 Davis Cup victory, while they have won two ATP Tour titles together, in Tokyo in 2011 and in Valencia the year before. — AFP

## US track championships set for fastest show on earth

**LOS ANGELES:** The United States athletics championships are set to be the fastest show on earth this week as a new generation of sprinting stars take center stage in the battle for places at the World Championships in Doha. With Usain Bolt's near-decade of dominance now over, a crop of hungry young Americans are vying to fill the void left by the Jamaican's retirement in what promises to be a new golden era for US sprinting.

American sprinters have clocked the quickest times in the world this year over 100m, 200m and 400m, and have also set the pace in the 110m hurdles. With only the top three finishers in each event guaranteed a place on the team for Doha, the stage is set for four days of ferocious competition when the championships begin at Drake University in Des Moines, Iowa today. Leading the pack are sprinters Christian Coleman and Noah Lyles, who are developing a burgeoning rivalry over the 100m and 200m.

Coleman has the fastest 100m time in the world this year, a tidy 9.81sec set at the Prefontaine Classic Diamond League meeting in Stanford three weeks ago. Lyles, meanwhile, whose 9.86sec in Shanghai is the second fastest time this season, has also been the man to beat over 200m, clocking a world-leading 19.50sec in Lausanne on July 5. Lyles has decided against running in the 100m this week, meaning his duel with Coleman will most likely come in his strongest event, the 200m on Sunday.

### "Target on my back"

The rapidly maturing Coleman, a double silver medalist in the meanwhile says he is growing accustomed to being the sprinter everyone else wants to beat. "At one time I was one of those guys looking at the guys on the top saying 'I want to be like that,'" he said. "Now that I'm one of the guys with a target on my back I have to keep working hard to make sure it doesn't happen."

Coleman, a superb starter, believes his success this season can be traced back to brutal training sessions designed to help him sustain top speed once he explodes out of the blocks. "They're pretty hard," Coleman said of his training sessions. "Other guys will be tired, but I'll be throwing up." Lyles meanwhile will be relieved that he does not have to worry about the additional challenge of Michael Norman in the 200m. Norman, who beat Lyles over the 200m at the Rome Diamond League meeting in early June, will concentrate on the 400m, where he has been in electrifying form since turning professional in May. The 22-year-old from California clocked an astonishing world-leading 43.45sec in his first race since turning professional this year, the joint fourth-fastest time over the distance in history. — AFP

## Sports

# Sun eclipsed at world swim as Milak crushes Phelps record

## Brutal schedule looked to have taken its toll on Sun

GWANGJU: Chinese giant Sun Yang suffered defeat yesterday after an emotional week in which he has clashed with rival swimmers over doping allegations, while Hungarian teenager Kristof Milak shattered Michael Phelps's 200m butterfly world record. Triple Olympic champion Sun had already retained his 200 and 400m crown in Gwangju but he finished a distant sixth in the 800m final behind Italian Gregorio Paltrinieri, who claimed gold in seven minutes, 39.27 seconds from Norway's Henrik Christiansen.

A brutal schedule looked to have taken its toll on Sun, who has been involved in angry confrontations with Australian Mack Horton and Britain's Duncan Scott after they snubbed him at two different medal ceremonies in response to bombshell claims made in a FINA doping panel report. The leaked document alleged that Sun destroyed blood samples after he was visited by testers last year. After taking bronze behind Milak, South Africa's Chad le Clos weighed in as the sample-smashing row rumbled on.

"They should all be banned for life, the guys that have cheated," he sniffed. "What Duncan did was fantastic." Sun has yet to address the subject but the 27-year-old admitted a pile-up of races had taken its toll. "I was exhausted," winced the Chinese idol. "My legs and arms felt sore — the hardest part is juggling a tight schedule but I'll have to do that at the 2020 Tokyo Olympics." An 11-time world champion, Sun accused Horton of "disrespecting China" by refusing to step onto the podium for the winner's national anthem after the 400m final at the weekend.

And Sun, who has complained privately of being shunned by other athletes in Korea, went eyeball to

eyeball with Scott after Tuesday's 200m medal presentation. The Briton ignored Sun's offer of a handshake and would not join him on the top step for photos, sparking a fiery reaction from the Chinese star. He wagged his finger in Scott's face and yelled: "You loser, I win!" Both men received formal warnings from FINA, as did Horton, but several athletes have come out in support of their silent protests.

### 'Great move'

Le Clos added: "He respected the podium, didn't shake his hand and I respect that. Great move by him." Horton called Sun a "drug cheat" at the 2016 Rio Olympics in reference to a three-month ban Sun had previously served for taking a stimulant he has always maintained was approved medication for a heart problem. The Australian reignited their war of words with his snub at the weekend, prompting Chinese state-run media to brand him a "clown" and online trolls to leave death threats on his social media accounts.

Meanwhile, Milak stormed to gold in the men's 200m fly, clocking a blistering 1:50.73 to obliterate Phelps's 10-year-old mark by almost eight tenths. "It's a tremendous honour to beat such a great record," said the 19-year-old, who was in elementary school when American legend Phelps went 1:51.51 at the 2009 world championships in Rome. "Everyone will try to catch me, but I will be ready." Elsewhere, Italian Federica Pellegrini retained her 200m freestyle title in 1:54.22, while Britain's Adam Peaty completed an unprecedented hat-trick of world doubles in the 50 and 100m breaststroke as he romped to gold in the



GWANGJU: Hungary's Kristof Milak competes in the final of the men's 200m butterfly event during the swimming competition at the 2019 World Championships at Nambu University Municipal Aquatics Center. — AFP

one-lap final in 26.06.

The 24-year-old, who smashed his own 100m world record earlier this week, also helped Britain to bronze in the mixed 4x100m medley relay. Cate Campbell blew past American Simone Manuel with an

extraordinary anchor leg to bring Australia gold in 3:39.08. "I feel like a bear who's been in hibernation," said Campbell after two days off. "I was starting to get a little bit restless — there are only so many episodes of 'Friends' I can watch." — AFP

## Alarm in New Zealand as school rugby numbers drop

WELLINGTON: As the All Blacks chase a third straight World Cup in Japan, the schoolboy rugby competitions that forged many of New Zealand's stars face an "alarming" fall in player numbers amid concerns about elite schools poaching top talent. Schoolboy rugby is a big deal in New Zealand — senior matches are televised nationally and the rivalries between some schools date back more than a century.

Before Jonah Lomu, Richie McCaw and Dan Carter became All Blacks legends, they were honing their skills for Wesley College, Otago Boys' High and Christchurch Boys' High respectively. The prestigious Auckland Grammar boasts that 51 All Blacks have emerged from its rugby program, while Christchurch Boys' High (46) and Wellington College (35) have similar pedigrees. "It's part of the fabric of New Zealand society, rugby in all walks of life is, and certainly we've got strong traditions in our schools," said Peter Gall, who co-authored an independent report into secondary schools rugby released earlier this year.

The report, commissioned by New Zealand Rugby, found that while the game was booming among schoolgirls, boys were increasingly turning to alternative sports such as basketball. "The numbers of boys playing the game at secondary school is trending downwards at an alarming rate, especially considering the overall secondary school roll has been steadily increasing," it said.

"Decreasing numbers of players leads to fewer teams and problems in forming meaningful, viable competitions." Figures from School Sport NZ show the number of schoolboy rugby players declined from 25,841 in 2014 to 21,532 in 2018, a fall of 17 percent. Over the same period, basketball's popularity surged 41 percent from 13,130 to 18,498. In Auckland, the number of secondary school rugby teams fell from 225 to 181 between 2013 and 2018, a trend Gall said was echoed nationwide.

### 'Brazen' poaching

The report pointed to a range of reasons for the decline, including the "fragmented



WELLINGTON: In this picture taken on July 3, 2019, Nelson College's Taya Brown (C) is tackled by Whanganui's Harry Godfrey during the Quadrangular Rugby Tournament match between Nelson College and Whanganui Collegiate. — AFP

and confusing" structure of schoolboy competitions, a lack of qualified coaches and concern over the physical nature of the game. It also said the hyper-competitive nature of some competitions, with schools running rugby programs akin to semi-professional academies, was "creating disquiet and questionable outcomes".

The report's release came shortly after controversy blew up in the Auckland 1A competition, when schools threatened to boycott St Kentigern College over its recruitment policies. The row highlighted many of the concerns in Gall's report, with the wealthy private school accused of using scholarships to lure top talent that delivered it five titles in seven years.

"They're not building from the ground up, from year nine to 11. They're going after the superstars and it's brazen," Napier Boys' High principal Matthew Bertram said at the time. St Kentigern eventually backed down and signed a code of conduct imposing conditions on player recruitment. But Gall said the issue was not confined to one school. Students cited in the report said that a win-at-all-costs mentality had detracted from their enjoyment of rugby.

### 'At war with the clubs'

Gall said a major problem was in-fighting

always wanted to win a second one. I didn't want to just have Houston," said Herman, who shot a final round two-under 70. He rolled in three birdies and had one bogey on Sunday to finish with a 26-under 262 total on the Keene Trace Golf Club course in Nicholasville, Kentucky. Kraft was in contention on the back nine until he made back-to-back bogeys on 16 and 17 which left Herman needing just a par on the par-four 18 to take the title.

Herman coolly landed his approach on the green then two putted for the victory. "If you are not making birdies you are going to be chasing," Herman said. "We just held off everyone else. It was just the two of us coming down stretch he made a couple of mistakes." Kraft shot a 70 while Austria's Sepp Straka made a late charge but finished two shots back in sole third place after a six-

between schools, clubs and provincial unions over control of schoolboy competitions. He said without good governance it was difficult to adopt policies to make the game more inclusive, encourage participation and place emphasis on values, rather than just winning. "It can't be done on an ad hoc basis, there needs to be more planning and strategic thinking about how to grow the game," he said. "There needs to be a lot more cooperation... and less self-interest. "There's some provinces where the clubs are at war with each other and at war with the school and the schools are at war with the clubs and the provincial union. That can't go on."

In response to the report, New Zealand Rugby has appointed a secondary schools manager and is formulating a new structure to oversee how the game is run. Gall said one benefit of maintaining a healthy schoolboy rugby scene was the conveyor belt of talent for the All Blacks and other New Zealand teams. "Rugby's still a big sport and has a large following, it's not like it's going to fall over," he said. "It will always be there at schoolboy level but, saying that, by building up the base of the pyramid with greater participation rates you're creating more opportunities for the cream to rise to the top." — AFP

under 66. Australia's Matt Jones fired a 63 to finish in a tie for fourth with Austin Cook who had a 70.

The 41-year-old Herman is a former assistant pro at one of President Donald Trump's golf courses in New Jersey. He says he played a round recently with the President and got some putting advice which he put to good use. "He gets me going in the right direction with golf," said Herman. "I took his advice and put a new putter in play." Some might find it odd that a PGA Tour player would be taking advice from Trump, who has been accused of inflating his golf accomplishments and his claims to have won 18 club championships have also been widely challenged by a number of golf experts. But Herman said his former employer inspires him. "He motivates me and puts me in a good spot," Herman said. — AFP

## Russian boxer Maxim Dadashev dies after fight

MOSCOW: Russian boxer Maxim Dadashev has died from brain injuries sustained in a fight in Maryland, the Russian boxing federation announced on Tuesday. "Maxim Dadashev has died in the United States following injuries sustained during his fight with Subriel Matias," the federation said in a statement. The 28-year-old underwent emergency brain surgery in Washington after his super-lightweight bout with Puerto Rican Matias on Friday was stopped after the 11th round by his cornerman James "Buddy" McGirt.

Dadashev, known as "Mad Max", was unable to walk to the dressing room and was immediately hospitalized. Doctors operated to relieve pressure from swelling on his brain. McGirt, who said after the fight he "couldn't convince" his fighter to stop but opted to throw in the towel when he saw him "getting hit with more and more clean shots as the fight went on," told ESPN on Tuesday he was wracking his brain wondering if he could have done things differently.



LAS VEGAS: In this file photo taken on October 20, 2018, Maxim Dadashev (L) of Russia battles with Antonio de Marco of Mexico during a super lightweight bout. — AFP

## No-deal Brexit could spell end of 'Kolpak' players

LONDON: A no-deal Brexit could mean "Kolpak" cricketers are gone from the English county game by 2021, according to updated guidance from the England and Wales Cricket Board. The Kolpak ruling means that citizens of countries that have signed European Union Association Agreements, who are lawfully working within an EU country, have the same free movement rights as EU citizens.

Kolpak signings as well as cricketers with EU passports are currently eligible

"It just makes you realize what type of sport we're in, man," McGirt told ESPN — which streamed the fight on its ESPN+ platform. "He did everything right in training, no problems, no nothing. My mind is like really running crazy, right now. Like what could I have done differently? But at the end of the day, everything was fine (in training). "He seemed OK, he was ready, but it's the sport that we're in. It just takes one punch, man."

Russian boxing chief Umar Kremlev told Russian media that Dadashev's body would be repatriated home and that his family would receive financial aid. Dadashev's widow, Elizaveta Apushkina, also issued a statement, confirming the fighter's death "with great sadness. "He was a very kind person who fought until the very end. Our son will continue be raised to be a great man like his father," she said of the St. Petersburg-born fighter who trained in Oxnard, California.

Dadashev took an unbeaten 13-0 record into the 140-pound non-title fight. Dadashev, whose manager Egis Klimas also handles Vasily Lomachenko and Sergey Kovalev, turned pro in April of 2016 and relocated to Southern California to pursue his ring ambitions, eventually signing with promoters Top Rank. Top Rank chairman Bob Arum issued a statement recalling Dadashev as "a terrific young man." ESPN, which streamed the bout on ESPN+, also issued a statement. — AFP

## Herman wins Barbasol Championship

LOS ANGELES: Jim Herman finally earned that elusive second PGA title of his career, winning the Barbasol Championship by one stroke over Kelly Kraft who stumbled to the finish with two bogeys down the stretch. Herman's only other win on the PGA Tour came three years ago when he captured the Houston Open by one shot over Henrik Stenson of Sweden.

"The last couple of years have been a little lean. A lot of missed cuts. I never lost hope. I

to play in England without counting as an "overseas" player, employment rulings that would both be directly affected by Britain's withdrawal from the European Union. The ECB has issued an email to the 18 first-class counties noting a series of potential implications. One such outcome involves the United Kingdom departing from the EU on October 31 without an agreement, which has frequently been floated by incoming prime minister Boris Johnson.

In that case new Kolpak registrations would be impossible and existing deals would likely cease at the end of the 2020 season. There are dozens of Kolpaks signed to counties, with the most high-profile including former South Africa international Morne Morkel, Wayne Parnell, Duanne Olivier, Simon Harmer and Kyle Abbott. Some would be easily earn overseas deals in the event of their current status being revoked but many more would expect to leave the county circuit. — AFP

## Sports

# Besieged Bale scores as Real Madrid rally for friendly win over Arsenal

## Asensio stretched off with serious looking knee injury

WASHINGTON: Gareth Bale shrugged off uncertainty over his Real Madrid future Tuesday, his second-half goal helping the La Liga giants rally for a friendly win over Arsenal. Madrid clawed back from two goals down to finish full time at 2-2, and prevailed 3-2 in the penalty shootout dictated by the International Champions Cup exhibition tournament format.

Welsh star Bale didn't play in Madrid's 3-1 loss to Bayern Munich in Houston on Saturday, manager Zinedine Zidane saying Monday he declined to dress for the match as the club pursued options for off-loading him. Zidane said at the weekend he thought it would be "best for everyone" if Bale's departure could be arranged quickly — comments Bale's agent branded "disrespectful" of a player who helped the side to a Spanish league title and four Champions Leagues since arriving from Tottenham six years ago.

Zidane insisted Monday he meant no disrespect, and Bale duly came in at halftime on Tuesday and made a statement. "He had a good game and I'm happy for him," Zidane said. "I do not know what's going to happen, for now he's with us. It did not change anything." First-half goals from Alexandre Lacazette — who converted a penalty in the 10th minute — and Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang had put Arsenal up 2-0 at the break — by which time both teams were reduced to 10 men. Bale pulled one back in the 56th minute, latching onto a loose ball and slotting it home.

Marco Asensio drilled the equalizer three minutes later, blasting a low Marcelo cross past Emiliano Martinez. Minutes later Asensio was on the ground,

apparently injured with little contact to be stretchered off. Bale continued to offer reminders of his worth — clearing a goal-bound Aubameyang drive off the line following a goalmouth scramble, and missing just wide with a curling effort off his left foot 10 minutes from time. Eddie Nketiah, who scored three goals in Arsenal's two prior friendlies — a 3-0 win over Fiorentina and a 2-1 victory over Bayern Munich — missed two good chances late. Bale's fortunes dipped in the shoot-out, when he came up first for Madrid and saw his effort saved easily before the Spanish side prevailed.

### Arsenal out fast

Arsenal had appeared on their way in the early stages at FedEx Field, home of the NFL's Washington Redskins. Madrid's Nacho, cautioned for a clumsy tackle on Sead Kolasinac in the first five minutes, received a second booking and was sent off for a deliberate handball in the eighth after sticking his arm out to stop a ball from Lacazette on the line.

Lacazette took the ensuing penalty, his attempt hitting both posts before crossing the line to put Arsenal up 1-0 with a man advantage. Lacazette then turned provider for Aubameyang, who doubled the score in the 24th minute.

But Arsenal's comfort level dropped in the 40th, when Sokratis Papastathopoulos was sent off for a second bookable offense — a foul on Luka Modric — minutes after he'd been shown a yellow card for yanking back Toni Kroos on the counter.

Arsenal had won the first three games of their North



LANDOVER: Real Madrid's Welsh forward Gareth Bale (L) celebrates with Real Madrid's Spanish midfielder Marco Asensio after scoring a goal during the International Champions Cup football match between Real Madrid and Arsenal at FedExField. — AFP

American tour, starting with a 3-0 win over Major League Soccer's Colorado Rapids and now head back across the Atlantic. Real Madrid take on Atletico

Madrid on Friday at MetLife Stadium in East Rutherford, New Jersey, home of the NFL's New York Giants and New York Jets. — AFP

## Buffon saves Juve after De Ligt own goal in Inter friendly

NANJING: Matthijs de Ligt scored an own goal on his first start before veteran goalkeeper Gianluigi Buffon rescued Juventus in a 4-3 penalty shootout win over Inter Milan yesterday. It may only have been a friendly between the Italian arch rivals, but tempers threatened to boil over at times, especially in a feisty second half in stifling Nanjing.

The game ended 1-1 after 90 minutes, with Cristiano Ronaldo drawing Juventus level with a deflected second-half free-kick following De Ligt's own goal on 10 minutes. Then the 41-year-old Buffon — more than twice De Ligt's age — sprang to the fore in the shootout, making a triumphant return to the Serie A champions after a year with Paris Saint-Germain. Dutch teenager De Ligt, who joined Juventus last week from Ajax for a reported 75 million euros (\$85 million), came on as a substitute during Sunday's 3-2 defeat to Tottenham Hotspur in Singapore.

New Juventus coach Maurizio Sarri named the 19-year-old to start in the "Derby d'Italia", but the central defender got off to the worst possible beginning, directing the ball past goalkeeper Wojciech Szczesny with his knee to give Inter the lead. De Ligt, who



NANJING: Juventus's Cristiano Ronaldo runs with the ball during the International Champions Cup football tournament at the Nanjing Olympic Sport Center in Nanjing. — AFP

was one of the most coveted players in world football before sealing his big-money move, was largely untroubled for the rest of the half before being substituted at the break.

It was only a pre-season friendly as part of the International Champions Cup, but Antonio Conte's Inter dealt out some rough treatment to Ronaldo. Three times in the first half, in a match played in sweltering condi-

tions in eastern China, the Portuguese forward was sent sprawling to the turf. There was a flashpoint in the 51st minute when Juventus substitute Merih Demiral — who was to score the winning penalty — lashed out while waiting for his side to take a corner. Minutes later skipper Leonardo Bonucci talked himself into a yellow card as the referee struggled to regain control. — AFP

## He's Asia's Beckham: Spurs boss hails Son

SHANGHAI: Tottenham Hotspur manager Mauricio Pochettino heaped praise yesterday on Son Heung-min and said he regarded the South Korean superstar as Asia's answer to David Beckham. The 27-year-old forward was undoubtedly the focus of attention for fans in Shanghai, where Spurs play Premier League rivals Manchester United in a friendly today.

Pochettino's side, beaten by Liverpool in the final of the Champions League, arrived in China from Singapore, where Son was similarly feted. "We can see how people love Sonny in Asia, he's an icon. We joked a bit, but I compare him with David Beckham," said Pochettino. "But I'm not surprised and it's good to see how people love him and how important he is to people." The Argentine manager, who will be expected to mount a Premier League title challenge with his side this season, praised the way that Son bounced back from a difficult first year in England.

Son joined the Londoners from Bayer Leverkusen four summers ago, but

showed only flashes of his potential in his debut season and was linked with a move away from Spurs. But he has gone on to become a key player and last season was outstanding, scoring 12 goals in 31 Premier League matches and racking up seven assists. Pochettino praised Son's "fantastic mentality" and desire to keep improving, saying: "He is a good example for all the fans and people, not only here in Asia but in the whole world."

"His first season was tough, it was tough to adapt to England, to new football, new culture, new habits. "But after the first season his adaptation was unbelievable and he became a very important player for us." The affable Son, who was mentioned by some experts as a potential player of the year in the Premier League last season, said that he was proud to be a flag-bearer for Asian footballers. He said the Spurs players, among them striker Harry Kane, "deserved" to win a trophy this season — something that has eluded them under Pochettino since he arrived at the club in 2014.

"Seeing how hard the players work, how professional we are, I am so proud of this team," said Son.

"Until now we don't have anything, it's tough, but we are looking forward to being successful. "I am sure we can do better than last season." A torrential downpour struck towards the end of an open Spurs training session on yesterday morning and there is the possibility of more rain later in the day, and on the day of the match. — AFP

## Messi given one-match ban for Copa red card

ASUNCION, Paraguay: Argentina star Lionel Messi was hit with a one-game suspension by South American football bosses over his dismissal during the Copa America third-place play-off against Chile earlier this month. However, CONMEBOL made no mention of Messi's "corruption" accusation against the regional governing body that he made after receiving his red card.

Messi was harshly dismissed in the first half of Argentina's 2-1 win over Chile after a clash with defender Gary Medel. Television images suggested Messi did nothing wrong as Medel appeared to repeatedly try, unsuccessfully, to headbutt the Barcelona forward. While most observers acknowledged that the Chile captain deserved to be sent off, Paraguayan referee Mario Diaz de Vivar controversially also gave Messi his marching orders.

CONMEBOL's disciplinary commission hit Messi with "an automatic one-match suspension," adding late on Tuesday that it could not be appealed by the Argentine Football Association (AFA). It means the 32-year-old five-time Ballon d'Or winner will miss the first of Argentina's qualification matches for the 2022 World Cup in Qatar, due to be played in March. He was also fined \$1,500.

"Corruption and the referees are preventing people from enjoying the football and they're ruining it a bit," Messi said after the Chile match. Messi had also hit out at the organizers after Argentina's semi-final elimination against hosts Brazil in their previous match. "Brazil were the hosts and they're managing a lot in CONMEBOL these days, which makes it complicated" for everyone else, Messi had said after his side were denied what appeared like two clear penalties in a 2-0 defeat.

The CONMEBOL commission made no mention, however, of Messi's comments, for which he was expected to face harsher punishment. The announcement came after CONMEBOL, earlier on Tuesday,



SAO PAULO: In this file picture taken on July 6, 2019 Argentina's Lionel Messi gestures during the Copa America football tournament third-place match against Chile at the Corinthians Arena. — AFP

sanctioned AFA president Claudio Tapia for his blistering attack on Ecuadoran referee Roddy Zambrano, who had refused to consult VAR over the two Argentine penalty claims in their 2-0 defeat to Brazil. Tapia had hit out at "serious and gross refereeing mistakes" while questioning whether "the principles of ethics, loyalty and transparency" had been observed during the match. CONMEBOL stripped Tapia of his role as the regional body's representative on the FIFA executive committee.

In other news, Everton defender Yerry Mina has been charged with misconduct in relation to a breach of the Football Association's betting regulations, the FA has announced. It is alleged the Colombian international participated in an advertisement for betting activity that he is prohibited from engaging in.

It is understood the charge relates to an advert which Mina, who has until Friday to provide a response, appeared in for Betjuego in his home country of Colombia earlier this year. Stringent rules are in place with regard to sports betting in order to prevent, among other things, match-fixing and spot-betting. Last week, Daniel Sturridge was fined £75,000 (\$94,000) and handed a six-week suspension after being found guilty of breaching different betting rules. — AFP

## Hoeness to step down as Bayern president

BERLIN: Uli Hoeness is set to step down as president of Bundesliga giants Bayern Munich with reports yesterday saying he will not stand for re-election in November. According to Germany's top-selling daily Bild and other media outlets, the 67-year-old will also quit as head of the club's supervisory board following its annual general meeting this autumn.

He is set to walk away after 40 years in charge of Bayern and reportedly has former Adidas boss Herbert Hainer, his deputy on the club's board, in mind as successor. Hoeness joined Bayern as a player in 1970, retiring nine years later to become the club's general manager and has overseen its fortunes ever since — apart from two years in jail for tax evasion, from June 2014 to February 2016.

The Bundesliga champions, who have just finished a tour of the USA, declined to comment when asked for confirmation by AFP subsidiary SID. "I once said, 'It's not over yet!', but the day is not far off when I say 'That was it,'" Hoeness recently told club magazine '51'. Bayern stars were stunned by the reports. "First of all, I was shocked, I wasn't prepared for that," admitted left-back David Alaba following Tuesday's 1-0 win over AC Milan in Kansas City. "I think it's unimaginable for FC Bayern to be without him. "Regardless of whether he has a post at the club, he will always have an influence."

Defender Joshua Kimmich was equally shocked. "I haven't heard the bomb drop yet, when is he going to quit?" After a knee injury forced the West Germany international into retirement, Hoeness became general manager in 1979 and 30 years later was promoted to club president in 2009. — AFP

## Neymar will go to China with PSG despite tensions

PARIS: Neymar will travel on an upcoming tour of China with Paris-Saint Germain, the club said Tuesday, as the troubled Brazilian superstar's future remains up in the air amid mounting signs he is unhappy at the French champions. The 27-year-old, who has been repeatedly linked to a move to Barcelona, failed to show up to PSG's pre-season training on July 8, with his camp maintaining he had a prior agreement to stay away.

The club threatened to take "appropriate action" against the world's most expensive player, who said he had stayed in Brazil to attend a charity five-a-side football tournament run by his foundation. Neymar, who joined PSG in 2017 for 222 million euros (\$264 million at the time), rejoined the team a week later on July 15. He also didn't help the strained relationship by controversially saying that his best football memory was beating PSG when he played for Barcelona.

Just days before rejoining PSG, he cited as his favorite football memory his role in the 2017 Barcelona team that overturned a 4-0 first-leg deficit by winning 6-1 in the second leg of their last-16 Champions League tie. He also recently posted a 10-second video of himself in a Barcelona shirt and a quote from the Bible: "No weapon turned against you will prosper." It has been a troubled summer for Neymar. He missed Brazil's triumphant Copa America campaign on home soil due to an ankle injury and was also questioned by Brazilian police over allegations he raped a woman — accusations he denies.

PSG referenced the ankle injury in its statement naming the squad on Tuesday, saying that "daily physical work will continue and complete recovery and integration with the group is scheduled for training in China". It added that x-rays of the fracture showed "completely normal progress and a very good improvement". PSG land in Shenzhen, China, and will play friendlies against Inter Milan in Macau on Saturday and Sydney FC in Suzhou on July 30. — AFP

## 25 Tour de France top form guide with 5 stages to go



## 26 Sun eclipsed at world swim as Milak crushes Phelps record



## 27 Besieged Bale scores as Real Madrid rally for friendly win over Arsenal



TOKYO: A man walks in front of the Olympic Rings displayed in the Tokyo's Nihonbashi district yesterday, as the city marks one year before the start of the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. — AFP

# Tokyo marks one year till 2020 Olympics

## 'I can truly say I have never seen an Olympic city as prepared as Tokyo'

**TOKYO:** Tokyo promised a high-tech Olympics complete with robots as it marked a year to go until the 2020 Games yesterday, hoping to leave behind some bumps in the road including an ongoing corruption investigation. Organizers have battled everything from fears over deadly heat to persistent questions about the cost of the Games and how Tokyo won its bid.

But as the one-year countdown began, they touted speedy progress on venue construction and pledged a historic Games. "I can truly say I have never seen an Olympic city as prepared as Tokyo, with one year to go before the Olympic games," said International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach at a ceremony yesterday. "All the elements that make a truly outstanding Olympic Games are in place," he added, predicting "an amazing experience" for athletes.

Officials pointed to "unprecedented" ticket sales and applications by 200,000 people for just 80,000 volunteer positions as evidence of building excitement for the Games. "The six years since Tokyo was picked have zipped by, but I'm glad that preparations have gone very smoothly," Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe said, before the symbolic handing-out of invitations to

national Olympic committees. Tokyo 2020 President Yoshiro Mori said Bach praised the speed of the city's preparations as "an Olympic record".

### High-tech showcase

Half of the new permanent venues have been completed, and organisers say construction of the rest is on track. Tokyo residents lined up for hours to try out Olympic sports at one of the events to celebrate the landmark. Twelve-year-old Yukimasa Nakahara queued from 5:30 am with his mother for the chance to pitch baseballs. "I'm looking forward to the Olympics... We've won tickets for a baseball game for the bronze medal," he told AFP with a big smile.

While cooler weather this summer has assuaged fears raised by a deadly heatwave last year, organizers say they have a raft of safety measures planned in case temperatures soar. Tactics from misting towers to flower beds — which don't radiate heat, and which organizers say also have a "psychological" cooling effect — will be tested this week at a beach volleyball event. With the countdown under way, organizers have also been stepping up efforts to promote the Games as a showcase for

Japan's high-tech know-how.

Japan's reputation as an industrial innovator has flagged since the last time it hosted the Games, in Tokyo in 1964, when it wowed the world with bullet trains. But government and businesses are hoping to dazzle visitors with everything from driverless airport transport to robot greeters and mascots. The organizers have even teamed up with two Japanese astronauts who will send messages of support from the International Space Station to those carrying the Olympic torch through the country.

### Millions apply for tickets

The torch relay, featuring a rose-gold cherry blossom-shaped torch, will start from a sports centre in Fukushima that housed workers battling to remove radioactive waste after the 2011 tsunami. It will pass through other areas of north-east Japan devastated by the disaster, with authorities hoping to demonstrate the region's recovery.

Organizers also want the Games to be the "most sustainable ever" and are making everything from medals to podiums from recycled materials. Designs for the medals were unveiled yesterday, featuring a rough outer ring

similar to a meringue encircling a smooth shining centre. Organizers said the design was intended to resemble stones that had been polished — a symbol of the daily striving of athletes preparing for the Games.

The preparations haven't all been plain sailing for the organizers, with persistent questions over the cost of the Games, despite cuts of more than \$4 billion. The last version of the budget, released in December 2018 stood at 1.35 trillion yen (\$12.1 billion), unchanged from 2017. Organizers have also faced a series of embarrassing sideshows, including the resignation of Japan's Olympics minister in April after a string of gaffes. That came just a month after the head of Japan's Olympic Committee Tsunekazu Takeda said he would step down as French investigators examine payments made before Tokyo was awarded the 2020 Games.

But the clouds appear to have done little to dull enthusiasm for the Games, at least in Japan. Organizers say more than 7.5 million residents registered for a lottery to buy tickets during a first round in July. Demand was so high that the registration period was extended and organizers will hold a follow-up in August for those who were unsuccessful the first time around. — AFP

## Going for gold: Tokyo 2020 medal designs unveiled

**TOKYO:** Tokyo Olympic organizers yesterday unveiled medals designed to reflect the "energy" of athletes as the city marked a year to go until the opening ceremony of the 2020 Summer Games. The medals, which will be made from recycled materials collected from old electronics, are intended to "resemble rough stones that have been polished and which now shine," organizers said.

The gold, silver and bronze awards each have a rough, almost meringue like surface on the outer ring, encircling a smooth, shining centre. "The medals collect and reflect myriad patterns of light, symbolizing the energy of the athletes and those who support them," the organizers said. The medals were unveiled at a ceremony marking the year-to-go countdown until the Tokyo 2020 Games, with International Olympic Committee chief Thomas Bach praising the city's readiness.

"I can truly say I have never seen an Olympic city as prepared as Tokyo, with one year to go before the Olympic Games," Bach said. "All the elements that make a truly outstanding Olympic Games are in place," he added, predicting "an amazing experience" for athletes. The Olympic medals design was chosen from more than 400 entries from professional designers and design students. "I never dreamed that the design I submitted only as a memorial to this lifetime event would be actually selected," designer Junichi Kawanishi said. "I hope the medals will be seen as paying tribute to the athletes' efforts, reflecting their glory, and symbolizing friendship."

Ryohei Miyata, who chaired the board that chose Kawanishi's design, said the medals showcased Japanese metal molding tech-



TOKYO: This undated handout photograph released yesterday by Tokyo 2020 shows the back side of medals for the Tokyo 2020 Olympic Games. — AFP

niques. The medals will come on ribbons that use traditional Japanese chequered patterns and graphics that symbolizes kimono layering techniques. Miyata said there is "a beautiful balance between the design of the medals and their ribbons. It makes me want to strive for a medal myself." The medals, which will weigh in at between 556 and 450 grams (20 ounces and 16 ounces) each, are being manufactured from metal extracted from mobile phones and other small electronics donated by the Japanese public as part of a campaign to make Tokyo 2020 eco-friendly. — AFP

## Want to stay relevant? Fight me, Pacquiao tells Mayweather

**MANILA:** Manny Pacquiao challenged Floyd Mayweather to face him again in the ring yesterday as the retired American star taunted the Filipino great about fighting on into his forties. Pacquiao, 40, who beat Keith Thurman on a split decision at the weekend, bit back at Mayweather on social media after the American accused him of trading on his name.

"You come to my fight and then use my name in a post but I'm the one that is trying to stay relevant? if you want to be relevant again... #MayPac2," Pacquiao tweeted. Mayweather, who retired at 40 in 2017 with the unprecedented win-loss record of 50-0, had earlier claimed that Pacquiao's "entire legacy and career has been built off its association with my name". "It's about time you all stop using my brand for clout chasing and clickbait and let that man's name hold weight of its own," he posted on Instagram.

"When we finally fought, I won so easily that everyone had to eat their words!" added Mayweather, alongside a picture of his 2015 defeat of Pacquiao. But Mayweather, who was ringside in Las Vegas as Pacquiao became the oldest welterweight world champion in boxing history, stayed silent about a rematch as he answered the Filipino in a later post. "Bottom line, I make more money than you... I beat you mentally, physically and financially!" he wrote. "Remember, you fight cause you have to, I fight when I want to!" Mayweather is one of just seven pro fighters to have beaten Pacquiao, the only boxer to have won world titles in eight weight divisions. — AFP