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Op-Ed

UK and Canada co-host world's first ministerial conference on media freedom

By Michael Davenport, British Ambassador to Kuwait & Louis-Pierre Emond, Canadian Ambassador to Kuwait

British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and Canadian Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland will next month co-host in London the world's first ministerial conference on media freedom. Our aim is to shine a light on abuses and raise the cost for those who would harm journalists for doing their jobs.

The London Conference will bring together foreign ministers with journalists, media professionals and leaders of international and civil society organisations. We look forward to broad international participation, including from Kuwait.

The United Kingdom and Canada are committed to promoting media freedom across the globe. It is an essential component of economic prosperity, social development and resilient democracy. It is a right to which all governments have committed, as enshrined in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which guarantees "freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers".

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres reflected in February this year that the media has become significantly less free in recent years, including through unprecedented threats to journalists and media outlets, and attempts to control the media.

Media freedom is indeed under attack across the world. Reporters Without Borders assess that 2018 was the most dangerous year on record to be a journalist - at least 99 journalists were killed, another 348 imprisoned and 60 held hostage. The latest World Press Freedom Index describes how the number of countries regarded as safe, where journalists can work in complete security, continues to decline. Nine in ten cases of killed journalists remain unresolved.

Journalists face particular threats in war zones and at the hands of extremists. Unfortunately, however, journalists face dangers beyond conflict and extremism.

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By B Izzak

KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf yesterday strongly defended Kuwait's policy in managing its foreign investments estimated at around \$600 billion, but acknowledged some investment funds performed badly. Speaking during a grilling by MPs Riyadh Al-Adasani and Bader Al-Mulla, the minister also defended the government's budget policy, saying that subsidies to public services have been maintained in this year's budget, which means there will be no further increases in charges or fuel prices.

The grilling ended after several hours of intense debate without lawmakers presenting a no-confidence motion. They only submitted a recommendation calling on the National Assembly's financial and economic affairs committee to investi-

gate all issues in the grilling and report back to the Assembly within three months. He said over 95 percent of Kuwait's investments are invested in stable countries and instruments, and that out of 420 funds in which Kuwait Investment Authority (KIA) is dealing with, there have only been a few bad performers. He said the Future Generations Fund grew by 152 percent, and the authority has risk management centers in Kuwait, the US and Ireland.

The minister however acknowledged a massive loss of close to €600 million in Kuwait's investment in French nuclear company Areva, saying what KIA had done was the best available option to stop further losses. He also said public funds may have lost more than KD 500 million in the investment in the so-called port fund.

Continued on Page 24



KUWAIT: Finance Minister Nayef Al-Hajraf speaks during his grilling at the National Assembly yesterday. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Iran frees Lebanese convicted of spying

BEIRUT: Iran yesterday freed a Lebanese man detained in 2015 on charges of spying for the United States, a gesture that comes amid soaring tensions between Tehran and Washington. A US resident in his 50s, Nizar Zakka was arrested in Sept 2015 during a visit to Iran, where he was convicted the following July. He is the head of The Arab ICT Organization, a non-profit that advocates the growth and development of information and communications technology in the Middle East.

Before his arrest, he had been taking part in a conference in Tehran at the invitation of Shahindokht Molaverdi, then vice-president for women and family affairs, according to his family. He was stopped on his way to the airport, his family and lawyer have said. At the time, Iranian state television said he was accused of "deep ties to the military and intelligence services of the United States". It broadcast photographs of a man in military uniform it said was of Zakka at a US base.

Yesterday, Zakka arrived in Lebanon, after his release by Iranian authorities. He was escorted back to his native country by Lebanon's General Security chief Abbas Ibrahim, who was in Tehran one day earlier, according to the security service. In a speech at Lebanon's presidential palace, Zakka declined to elaborate on the circumstances behind his arrest but dis-



BEIRUT: Lebanese President Michel Aoun (right) meets Nizar Zakka after he was freed by Iran at the presidential palace in Baabda yesterday. — AFP

missed the case against him. "There was no espionage," he said after meeting President Michel Aoun, accusing Tehran of "kidnapping him" on false charges and staging a "show trial".

For his part, the general security chief denied speculation Iran's Lebanese ally Hezbollah played a primary role in brokering Zakka's release. "The issue was resolved at the request of the president," Ibrahim told reporters. "Hezbollah definitely played a role but the basis (for the release) was a request from the president." His comments came in response to a report by Iran's Fars news agency on Monday that Zakka's release followed "the request and mediation" of Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah. — AFP

Indian toddler dies after 110 hours down well

NEW DELHI: A two-year-old Indian boy stuck in a narrow well for more than four days was pulled out dead yesterday, triggering protests over delays in reaching the toddler. The case of Fatehveer Singh captured national attention after he fell into the 33-m deep well in the Punjab state district of Sangrur while playing on Thursday. The disused well was just 23 cm wide, complicating desperate efforts by dozens of rescue workers and volunteers as locals and television cameras looked on.

"The child is not alive anymore. He was pulled out at 5 in the morning by the NDRF (National Disaster Response Force) personnel," Vijay Inder Singla, a state

Continued on Page 24



BHAGWANPURA, India: Family members and close relatives carry the coffin of two-year-old boy Fatehveer Singh to the cremation ground to pay their last respects yesterday. — AFP

News in brief

Catholic Church fined

KUWAIT: The manpower authority's official spokesperson Aseel Al-Mazyad said the Catholic Church in Kuwait was fined KD 100 for not respecting the condition of employing Kuwaitis as a certain percentage of its staff, despite the fact that Christian Kuwaitis are very few in number. Mazyad said the authority executes the Cabinet's decisions in this regard, namely resolution number 1104/2008 pertaining the ratio of the national workforce in non-governmental bodies including worship places. She also noted resolution number 962/2010 excluded some bodies from the previous resolution, including worship places. Mazyad said other churches are excluded from this condition. — A Saleh

Man dies of heat stroke

KUWAIT: Kuwait saw the first death in the country due to high temperatures, as an Egyptian suffered from heat stroke in Surra. Temperatures have exceeded 50 degrees Celsius in the past two days. A security source said interior ministry operations received a call about a man who had fallen near a walking lane. Police and paramedics went to the scene and found the man had already died. The coroner said the death was due to heat stroke. — Al-Rai

Fans of Israeli team demand player named Mohamed adopt alias

JERUSALEM: Far-right supporters of Israel's Beitar Jerusalem football club yesterday demanded that new player Ali Mohamed find an alias for his surname due to its Muslim associations. "Like other players in the past, Ali Mohamed will have to find himself a nickname if he

is going to play at Teddy," the hardcore "La Familia" group posted on its Facebook page, which has 36,000 followers. Beitar, based at Jerusalem's Teddy Stadium, has historically been considered anti-Muslim and anti-Arab. But despite his name, the 23-year-old striker from Niger is actually Christian, Israeli media reported.

The first division club, which has its roots in the nationalist right, is the only Israeli side never to have fielded an Arab player, although Arabs account for 17.5 percent of the country's population. In 2013, the club's signing of two Muslim players from Chechnya sparked tension. Reaction from fans led to the team having to employ bodyguards for them and the club's offices were

torched. In 2017 club manager Eli Cohen resigned under pressure after pledging never to sign a Muslim player.

Last year Beitar's new owner said such events were in the past and religion would no longer be a criterion for signings. That stance was reiterated on the official club Facebook page on Monday evening. "We are proud to have signed Ali Mohamed, the best foreign player in the league," it stated. "We have read the reactions and threats following the transfer of Ali Mohamed and we will not let a minority tarnish the reputation of the club," it said. Beitar Jerusalem has been working to change its image in recent years and in 2017 received an award for its fight against racism. — AFP

Local

Amir, Crown Prince receive Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad, Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad

Amir condolences with Mali, Nigeria, Burkina Faso presidents over deadly attacks



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received separately at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir and His Highness the Crown Prince also separately received Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir addressed a cable of condolences to the President of Mali, Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, over the demise of scores of people in an armed attack on a village in the heart of the country. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad and His Highness the Prime

Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah addressed cables of identical content to Mali's president.

In the meantime, His Highness the Amir addressed a cable of condolences to Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari over armed attacks that took place in Zamfara leaving scores of people dead and wounded. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent cables of identical content to the Nigerian president.

Furthermore, His Highness the Amir has cabled the President of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kabore, on deaths inflicted in an armed attack in a northern region. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent cables of similar sentiments to the president of Burkina Faso.



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Chief of the Kuwait National Guard Sheikh Meshaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, the personal envoy of the Bahraini Prime Minister. — KUNA photos

Premier receives condolences from Bahraini counterpart

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah received yesterday Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa, the personal envoy of the Bahraini Prime Minister, and his accompanying delegation. The visiting envoy and his entourage expressed condolences to His Highness the Premier on the demise of his mother.

His Highness Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak had on Monday received a call from the Bahraini Prime Minister Prince Khalifa Al Khalifa to express condolences over the death of His Highness the Prime Minister's mother. In his reply, His Highness the Prime Minister thanked Prince Khalifa for his heartfelt condolences, wishing him continued health and prosperity. — KUNA



His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah receives condolences from Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al Khalifa.

Kuwait calls on Belgrade, Pristina to reduce tension

NEW YORK: Kuwait acknowledged the importance of continuous international calls upon Belgrade and Pristina to overcome their disputes and reach an agreement for sake of regional peace. This was brought up by the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi during the Security Council session on Kosovo late on Monday. In his speech, Ambassador Otaibi called on the two sides to exercise restraint, calm and address issues of concern through dialogue, and demonstrate the necessary political will to ensure full normalization of relations between the two sides.

Kosovo police, ordered by the court, searched and monitored areas throughout Kosovo, mainly in the Zubin Potok municipality, to combat corruption and crime, which led to the arrest of a United Nations Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) member that Kosovo's government described him as an undesirable person. Otaibi said. He underlined respecting the diplomatic immunity enjoyed by the UN staff under the Vienna Convention on diplomatic relations as well as the neutrality and commitment to their mandate. Otaibi welcomed the Balkan conference, which was called for by both Germany and France last April, urging both



NEW YORK: The Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi speaks during a Security Council session on Kosovo late on Monday. — KUNA

sides to resume dialogue and implement the Belgrade and Pristina agreements.

The ongoing work of the UNMIK collaborating with the UN Kosovo Team (UNKT) to implement the joint recommendations of the UN Trust-building Forum in Kosovo in May 2018 was also welcomed, he said adding that Kuwait

fully supports EU's efforts in Brussels to settle outstanding issues between Belgrade and Pristina. Kuwait realizes the right of each state to form its national institutions in accordance with its constitution and national legislation as Kosovo's decision does not contradict with the UN resolution 1244. — KUNA

Hague Forum to translate theory into practice: Babtain

THE HAGUE: The World Forum for the Culture of Peace which kicks off at the Peace Palace in the Hague, the Netherlands, tomorrow will send a humanitarian message to the whole world to establish peace and security. "In this forum, we will not only provide suggestions and recommendations, but we will work to put the theories into reality. We have issued seventeen approaches to cultivating a culture of peace from schools to university," the chairman of the foundation Abdul Aziz Saud Al Babtain, the organizer of the major event, said in a statement yesterday. "We are keen to invite personalities to participate in decision-making and influence in the official and public opinion to enable these approaches, in addition to what will result in the Forum to practice on the ground," he noted.

"First of all, I would like to express my respects to the guests of the forum from around the world, who share common visions and aspirations for a just peace to prevail among the peoples and provide them with the security that is expected today and in the future," said Abdul Aziz Saud Al Babtain. "The whole world is concerned with it. It reflects the symbolism and significance of the place concerned with justice. From here we send a humanitarian message to the



Abdulaziz Al-Babtain

whole world that we came from Kuwait, the state of peace and its Amir, the Leader of Humanitarian Action, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, to cooperate together to spread love and peaceful co-existence," he added. State leaders, world cultural personalities and influential policy makers from around the world are expected to take part in the one-day event which will be dominated by three themes: education and the protection of cultural heritage, promoting the culture of peace through education, and culture of peace manuals. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah meets with his Tunisian counterpart Khemaies Jhinaoui. — KUNA

Kuwaiti Deputy PM meets Tunisian FM in New York

NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah met on Monday with his Tunisian counterpart Khemaies Jhinaoui at the headquarters of Kuwait's mission to the United Nations in New York. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled congratulated Jhinaoui on the election of Tunisia as a non-permanent UN Security Council (UNSC) member for 2020-21 after the North African country won 191 votes at the UN General Assembly.

The Kuwaiti minister arrived in New York City on Sunday, to lead the delegation of

Kuwait in the third presidency of Kuwait to the Security Council since its accession to the UN in 1963, and second for Kuwait during its non-permanent membership of the UN Security Council for the period 2018-2019. The meeting was attended by Assistant Foreign Minister for the Minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, Assistant Foreign Minister for International Organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen and Kuwait Deputy Permanent representative to the UN Bader Al-Munayyeh. — KUNA

Local

UN Security Council okays Kuwaiti draft resolution on missing persons in war

Comprehensive framework on how to deal with missing people's tragedy: Kuwait

NEW YORK: The United Nations Security Council has unanimously approved a draft resolution put forward by Kuwait to protect civilians in the midst of armed conflicts. The UN resolution, approved amid a session presided over by Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah yesterday, brings into focus the humanitarian consequences of war and conflicts, as the matter is all too familiar to a country that was invaded by its larger neighbor Iraq back in 1990.

Kuwait sees the resolution, which is the first UN decision on the matter of missing persons in war, as a comprehensive framework on how to deal with the tragedy of people missing as armed conflicts break out. The UN resolution explicitly states that all parties involved in armed conflicts have the primary responsibility to safeguard civilians, urging them to allow the safe and unimpeded access of humanitarian aid. It deplores such practices as the deliberate targeting of civilians and other protected persons in situations of armed

conflict, calling upon all parties to put an end to these tactics, in accordance with their obligations under international humanitarian law. It further calls on all member states to engage in networking and exchange of expertise, as well as other means of cooperation and coordination with state institutions and national commissions dealing with the matter.

The measure encourages member states to increase their voluntary financial, technical and logistical assistance for states in support of the process of searching for missing persons in armed conflicts, which includes the recovery and identification of bodies. It emphasizes the importance of allowing families to know the fate and whereabouts of their missing relatives, consistent with applicable international humanitarian laws. The UN resolution also addresses post-conflict peace building and reconstruction efforts, which include negotiations over such issues as prisoners of war, detainees and missing persons, all of whom are protected under international law. — KUNA



NEW YORK: Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs a United Nations Security Council session yesterday held to discuss a draft resolution put forward by Kuwait to protect civilians in the midst of armed conflicts. — KUNA

Drugs found on Kuwait-bound boat

By Hanan Al-Saadoun and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: The coastguard foiled an attempt to smuggle drugs into the country, the Interior Ministry announced yesterday. Officers found 94 pieces of hashish, a heroin joint and a small bag of shabu (methamphetamine), in addition to drugs paraphernalia. The drugs were found on a boat that police followed based on information received about a potential smuggling attempt through sea. Two people who were on board were arrested and sent to the proper authorities.

Businessman sentenced

The criminal court yesterday sentenced a businessman and former lawmaker to 10 years in prison with labor for issuing a dud cheque for KD 240,000. Security sources added that the suspect fled a hospital and left for Saudi Arabia through the Salmi border exit with the help of his sister and two policemen, who were also sentenced to two and four years in prison for assisting a fugitive.

Firemen hurt

An apartment on the fifth floor of a Fintas building caught fire that spread to the ventilation shaft, causing a blaze on the first and second floors. The building was evacuated and the fire was brought under control. Two firemen suffered heat exhaustion and were taken to Adan Hospital. In another incident, three vehicles caught fire in Maidan Hawally. Salmiya fire station men dealt with the fire and prevented it from spreading.

Safety inspection

Inspection teams at Kuwait Fire Service Directorate continued their safety inspection campaigns under the direct supervision of the Deputy Director General for the Prevention Sector Maj Gen Khalid Fahd. The campaign resulted in issuing citations to 30 facilities that were warned of closure if the violations were not corrected in a maximum of 72 hours.



KUWAIT: This photo released by the Interior Ministry yesterday shows drugs confiscated on a boat bound for Kuwait yesterday.



Firefighters seen during a safety inspection tour.



A vehicle engulfed in flames in Maidan Hawally.



Firefighters tackle a blaze in an apartment on the fifth floor of a Fintas building.



KUWAIT: Jahra municipality inspection teams recently removed a total of 32,000 cubic meters of waste and changed 97 garbage containers during a recent campaign, the inspection team's leader Fahad Humoud said, adding that the teams also made 34 warning notices, removed 28 ATVs and removed 98 illegal ads as well.

Kuwaitization policy facing difficulties in govt sector

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: Well-informed governmental sources said the Civil Service Commission (CSC) received responses from several government bodies in which they expressed difficulty in laying off expats working for fixed monthly payments, which had been requested by CSC to help Kuwaitize the government sector within five years. The sources added these bodies explained the expat workers get fixed low payments that do not overburden ministries' budgets and that they do jobs that Kuwaitis "do not or would not do," while that their employment does not contradict with citizens' employment if they apply for the job.

Further, the sources said that the concerned government bodies promised to keep such employment within minimal limits, to annually provide CSC with job numbers, tasks and salaries, as well as the finance ministry's approval. The sources also noted that CSC replied by emphasizing the need to lay off any of those expats in case of the availability of Kuwaitis to replace them. Meanwhile, the sources said 63 percent of the Jahra labor city construction has been completed, adding that the city is expected to be ready by next year and is one of six due to be built.

Disabled parking

Recent statistics by the public authority for the disabled said the total number of violations filed in 2018 against drivers

for using disabled parking spaces was 11,500, while the number was 87,000 in 2015, 81,000 in 2016 and 37,000 in 2017. In another concern, the media department manager at the public authority for the disabled Doha Al-Khamees said the authority's educational sector will receive disabled citizens' scholarship applications from June 9 to 20, 2019.

Scholarship applicants

Assistant undersecretary for scholarships and cultural relations at the ministry of higher education Fatima Al-Sannan said registration for scholarship applicants will be on until June 20, adding that new majors had been added this year including aviation engineering, airport management and cyber security. Sannan added 2,000-3,000 students will be accepted in the program this year.

People born abroad

Kuwait was ranked second worldwide in terms of people born abroad, including Kuwaitis and expats. Statistics by Pew Research Center published by the Canadian Le Journal de Quebec showed 76 percent of Kuwait's population was born elsewhere, after the UAE, where 88 percent of the population was born abroad. The statistics showed Qatar came third with 65 percent, Bahrain with 48 percent and Singapore with 46 percent.

The study showed Sweden came first amongst Western countries with 30 percent of its population born abroad, followed by Australia with 29 percent, New Zealand with 23 percent, Canada with 21 percent and Austria with 19 percent. Further, the study showed 32 percent of Bosnians live abroad, followed by 28 percent of Jamaicans, 28 percent of Syrians, 26 percent of Armenians and 5 percent of Canadians. Expatriates make up 70.4 percent of Kuwait's population, according to the latest statistics.

Palestinian official praises Kuwait's support

GENEVA: Palestinian Minister of Labor Nasri Abu Jaish lauded Kuwait's support for the Palestinian workers at various levels. The Palestinian official said yesterday that he discussed with Kuwaiti

Minister of Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel, on sidelines of the International Labor Organization convention, bilateral issues and the Kuwaiti support in reply to a report by the ILO secretary general regarding conditions of the Palestinian workers. He hoped to gain its further support for holding an international conference to back up the Palestinian labor fund, adding that the talks with minister Aqeel touched on prospects of employing skilled Palestinians in Kuwait. Meanwhile, Aqeel said her meeting with minister Abu Jaish was fruitful, re-affirming Kuwait's unwavering support for the Palestinian cause. — KUNA

Decorator dead in Ahmadi worksite mishap

KUWAIT: A decorator fell to his death from a building under construction in Ahmadi while installing the decor. Meanwhile, two Egyptian workers were taken to hospital after falling while maintaining a large manhole. Firemen helped in getting the two out of the sewer.

Hit and run

An Egyptian man was taken to the intensive care unit (ICU) after a car ran him over then drove away from the

scene. Eyewitnesses called police, who went along with paramedics and rushed the victim to Jahra Hospital's ICU in a critical condition. Detectives are working on identifying the driver.

Sexual assault

Detectives are looking for a Pakistani man who sexually assaulted his neighbor's son. A source said that a 43-year-old Pakistani man told police his 12-year-old son was sexually assaulted by his Pakistani neighbor. When the victim was asked what happened, he said he was in front of the building when the suspect pulled him into the elevator and took him to his apartment, where he committed immoral acts and gave him KD 10. He then asked him to remove his clothes, but the boy refused and escaped. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai



KUWAIT: A worm's-eye view of Kuwait Towers. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Bilingual communication most demanded skill this year: Research

Being a team player, having a great personality and demeanor also in high demand

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KUWAIT: Most MENA employers demand 'good communication in English and Arabic' as well as 'being a team player' as top skills for their hires this year, according to research by Bayt.com and YouGov. "Hiring activities never stop across the region or on our job site," said Omar Tahboub, General Manager of Bayt.com. "Employers are making many job opportunities available on Bayt.com and they are revealing which qualifications are most useful so that job seekers can plan and upgrade their skills accordingly. At all time, we are available as the #1 hiring partner for 40,000+ companies, organizations, and governments, as well as the tool for job search and career planning for 36 million professionals."

High demand

Candidates' skills that are in demand in the region this year include good communication in Arabic and English (63 percent) as the top skill, followed by being a team player (51 percent) and having a great overall personality and demeanor (44 percent).

Regarding educational and academic qualifications, 'Business Management' (29 percent) and 'Engineering' (26 percent) are the most sought-after academic qualifications amongst employers in the MENA region. For employers looking to hire, nearly 4 in 10 state that they are looking for candidates with managerial skills, while 33 percent are searching for those with sales and marketing skills and 31 percent want candidates with mid-level (3-7 years) experience.

Jobs ahead

In the MENA region, English and Arabic are the most sought-after languages employers hire for in combination with other core skills like teamwork. The most in-demand jobs for people with a bilingual skill set in the coming three months will be for 'sales executives' (23 percent), 'accountants' (19 percent), 'sales managers' (16 percent), 'project managers' (14 percent), and 'marketing executives' (13 percent).

Looking at specific roles companies are looking to fill in the next three months in the GCC, the most common positions are reported to be 'sales executives' (27 percent), 'accountants' (18 percent) and 'sales managers' (17 percent). In the Levant: 'accountant' (21 percent), 'sales executive' (17 percent) and 'project manager' (14 percent). In North Africa and Egypt: 'accountant' (21 percent), 'sales executive' (18 percent) and 'craftsman' (17 percent). In terms of industries with the highest hiring potential to hire in the next three months, the reported industries are 'HR', 'Advertising / Marketing / Public Relations', and 'Healthcare / Medical Services'.

Proactive hiring in the long-term

By highlighting the added advantage of learning and



Omar Tahboub

becoming proficient in a language, teamwork and other soft skills, candidates can demonstrate that they have gained abilities for real business needs: multitasking and perception.

Business management, engineering required

These are most useful in industries that are most likely to hire: namely 'HR' (84 percent are planning to hire), 'Advertising / Marketing / Public Relations' (75 percent are planning to hire), 'Manufacturing' (73 percent are planning to hire), and 'Hospitality / Recreation' (71 percent are planning to hire). Banking/ Finance emerges as the main industry attracting national talent and fresh graduates talent, while Advertising/ Marketing/ Public Relations attracting top female talent.

"Our research is a key indicator of the MENA region's hiring activities. A higher probability for hiring with private sector multinational companies can be observed with most companies looking for good communication skills in Arabic and English as the top skill for potential candidates. In addition to providing an overview of current market trends, the findings will have practical significance for employers and HR making their short and long term plans," said Kerry McLaren, Head of Omnibus MENA at YouGov.

The data was collected online from Jan 10, 2019 and Feb 25, 2019. Results are based on a sample of 1,107 respondents, 901 of whom were of working status, from the following countries: UAE, KSA, Kuwait, Oman, Bahrain, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya, Sudan, Pakistan, and others.

Kuwait's non-oil exports up by 17% in May

KUWAIT: Kuwait's non-oil exports edged up by 17 percent in May, compared with the same month of last year, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry said yesterday. Kuwait's total exports to Arab and foreign countries hit roughly KD 9.4 million (around \$31 million) in May against KD 8 million (about \$26.5 million) in the same

month of last year, it said in a press statement. The oil-rich country's exports to Arab countries, excluding the GCC members, totaled KD 4.4 million (\$14.5 million), compared with KD 5 million (\$16.5 million) to foreign countries, it added.

Kuwaiti exports to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) member states amounted to KD 2.5 million (around \$8.3 million) last May, according to the statement. Iraq was Kuwait's main importer, followed by Jordan, Lebanon, Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia, while Qatar topped the list of GCC importers, chased by Saudi Arabia, UAE, Oman and Bahrain. Regarding Kuwait's exports to other world countries, Italy came first, while Turkey, Belgium, Bulgaria, France and Portugal followed respectively, the statement added. — KUNA

Local



KUWAIT: Zain's volunteers at Jaber Al-Ali mosque.



Zain's team with Rijeemy officials.

Zain's annual Ramadan social campaign embodied spirit of giving

Company welcomed holy month with plethora of social contributions

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, concluded its annual campaign for the Holy Month of Ramadan with a plethora of humanitarian, social, religious, sports, and recreational contributions. Zain's extensive program of various social, charitable, and humanitarian initiatives planned for the holy month came in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy that closely focuses on giving back to the community. The company carefully selected the activities and programs that most presented an added value to all segments of the society, which all embodied the spirit of giving. In this report, Zain showcases the initiatives and programs it undertook during this past Ramadan:

Ramadan Machla

Zain kicked-off its Ramadan campaign before the beginning of the holy month, where it delivered 'Ramadan Machla' (supplies) to a number of its strategic partners of non-profit organizations, who in turn distributed them to underprivileged families in Kuwait. The 'Ramadan Machla' initiative is one of the main pillars of Zain's annual Ramadan campaign, which came in line with the company's Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategy. Every year, Zain prepares boxes containing essential food supplies and delivers them through the network of its strategic partners of non-profit organizations. This year, the company favored delivering vouchers instead of the boxes to give every family the opportunity to choose specific supplies as per their different needs.

Zain delivered the 'Ramadan Machla' vouchers to strategic partners of non-profit organizations: the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Kuwait Food Bank, Direct Aid, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Social Care Centers, and Zakat House. The vouchers were distributed to underprivileged families in Kuwait who were in need of support during the month of fasting. The vouchers were used at Saveco, an all-inclusive one-of-a-kind one-stop mega market, considered one of the biggest in Kuwait and the region, and offers a vast range of products and services. Zain also dedicated a day of special deals and exclusive offers for voucher holders in collaboration with Saveco.

Zain Quran App

Zain launched an all-new update to its Quran App, which the company gifts to its customers during Ramadan of every year. The app offered the best Quran reading experience on iOS and Android smart devices, and this year supported Apple Watch. The app featured a user-friendly interface and many great features, including reading all pages of the Holy Quran, downloading and listening to the Holy Quran in the voices of over 20 famous reciters, read Tafseer (interpretations) to understand the meaning of verses, searching the whole text of the Holy Quran, as well as synchronizing usage between multiple devices. The app also included a dark mode feature for easy reading in the dark, prayer times and Athan notifications, Qibla direction, and much more. Customers were able to download the app for free by searching 'Zain Quran' in the App Store and Google Play Store.

Iftar halls

Every year, Zain launches the iftar halls initiative, which is a main pillar of the company's Ramadan campaign. Through this initiative, Zain provided fasting individuals with daily iftar meals under the supervision of its volunteers team. The banquets were spread in two main halls in Jleeb and Jahra as part of a strategy to cover the most populated areas of Kuwait in order to assure the maximum amount of individuals' iftar needs are covered. This year, Zain offered nearly 35,000 daily iftar meals in total during the holy month.

'Zain Al-Khair' online donation portal

Before the holy month of Ramadan, Zain launched 'Zain Al-Khair' (khair.kw.zain.com), an online donation portal that allows Zain customers - both prepaid and postpaid - to donate to any of the listed charitable organizations with any amount ranging from KD 1 to KD 80. Customers were simply able to select the preferred organization, pick one of the available projects to donate to, then specify the donation amount. The donated amount was then automatically added to the customer's monthly phone bill or prepaid balance with ease.

All the charitable organizations listed in the portal were certified and licensed by the official authorities in Kuwait, and each one featured a number of different charity projects to choose from. The current list included: Al-Najat Charity, Al-Manaber Al-Quraniya Society, Social Reform Society - Rahma International, Social Reform Society - Namaa, Kuwait Food Bank, International Islamic Charitable Organization, Sheikh Abdullah Al-Nouri Charity Society, Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, and the Kuwaiti Charity Society for Serving the Holy Quran and its Sciences. More organizations will be added to the portal during the upcoming period.

'Ya Baghi Al Khair Aqbel 3'

This Ramadan, Zain launched the third edition of its charitable initiative 'Ya Baghi Al Khair Aqbel' in collaboration with



35,000 daily iftar meals throughout Ramadan

Direct Aid. As part of the initiative, Zain donated 500 Fils (half a KD) each time a customer paid their bill anytime during the holy month of Ramadan through one of Zain's electronic or direct channels, including Zain's website, Zain's smartphone app, any of Zain's Quickpay machines, and the company's main branches available throughout the country. The collected donations were used to support Direct Aid's Medical Sciences College project at Kenya, where six classrooms will be built for the Environmental Health section in the college.

'2,000 Projects' campaign

This year, Zain also collaborated with Direct Aid to support the '2,000 Projects' campaign, which was held throughout an entire day to receive donations through the official online portal and Zain's SMS service. All of the campaign's proceeds will go to supporting 2,000 projects in Africa, 500 of which are water wells, 500 health projects, as well as 1,000 develop-



Zain's team and officials at Social Care Centers.



Zain Al-Shuhour campaign's logo.

mental projects for empowering family economies.

Al-Roudhan Football Tournament 40

Zain was the Strategic Partner of the 40th edition of Al-Roudhan Ramadan Football Tournament for the fourth consecutive year, which came under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. On Ramadan of every year, the Kuwaiti audiences, especially young ones, eagerly look forward with great passion to Al-Roudhan Tournament, given the fact that it witnesses high levels of professionalism and excitement through both the competing local teams as well as the international football stars hosted.

This year, Al-Roudhan tournament witnessed the participation of Italian legend Francesco Totti and Ivorian legend Didier Drogba, who both took part in a special iftar banquet along with Zain customers who won a competition on the company's social media channels. The event also hosted Croatian legend Luka Modric, who won the Ballon d'Or as world player of the year 2018, as well as Portuguese legend Luis Figo.

Zain and Al-Roudhan's organizing committee, both being Kuwaiti organizations proud of their national identity, organized a Girgian celebration where candy was distributed to the attending crowds while hosting a traditional performance. The event also witnessed a special friendly match between ministers and members of the parliament, which was held under the patronage and attendance of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Speaker of the National Assembly Marzouq Al-Ghanem. The match ended with a 3-2 win for the parliament team.

As it does every year, Zain was present



From Al-Roudhan Tournament.

at Al-Roudhan Tournament on a daily basis, where it interacted with the audiences through various competitions, activities, and entertainment programs. The company also distributed valuable prizes and held daily challenges and competitions on its official social media channels, and more.

'Rijeemy' Health Program

This year, Zain was the strategic partner of the 'Rijeemy' Health Program, which is considered one of the biggest health and sports programs in Kuwait during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The event was held on a daily basis at Mall 360, and aimed at promoting a healthier and more active lifestyle during fasting. The event worked to elevate the level of health awareness among people who are fasting during Ramadan, especially while fasting, through engaging participants in exciting activities.

Social Visits

Every Ramadan, Zain is keen to reach out to the many segments of the community, including orphaned children, the elderly, and people with special needs, by visiting the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Care Centers to share the joyful blessings of the Holy Month with them.

Zain believes in the importance of embracing the beautiful values of the Islamic religion as well as the noble traditions of the Kuwaiti heritage all year round and especially in the Holy Month of Ramadan. Zain also shared the joys of the Holy Month with children and patients in a number of the biggest hospitals in Kuwait. The company's team always visits the hospitals during this blessed time of year to distribute gifts and girgian to children and their families and celebrate the occasion in a family atmosphere full of joy and happiness.

Zain also shared the joys of girgian with special needs children in collaboration with Al-Kharafi Activity Kids Center, where the company's volunteers visited the children and their families to distribute Girgeean and gifts while also organizing many other fun activities.

Qiyam prayers and last 10 days of Ramadan

During the last 10 days of Ramadan and during Qiyam prayers, Zain was present at Jaber Al-Ali mosque, where the company's volunteers offered hospitality services to worshippers to contribute in lightening the hot weather conditions and offer a more comfortable atmosphere.

Cultural and Recreational Programs

Every Ramadan, Zain is keen on diversifying the content of its campaign to include cultural and recreational programs. This year, Zain sponsored 'Jaber Khater,' a social and cultural show hosted by social media influencer Fahad Al-Beshara. In the show, Beshara discussed many topics related to good deeds, politeness, and the values of the Holy Month in a simple and creative way on social media channels. The show presented ideas in a modern way to attract the attention of viewers, especially young ones.

As for the classic Ramadan competitions that the public eagerly waits for every year, Zain sponsored 'Kanz FM' daily radio show throughout the whole month. Customers enjoyed participating in the show's quizzes and winning valuable prizes on a daily basis.



Zain's iftar halls.



Pompeo restricts gay flags at US embassies

Indian town on edge after murder of two-year-old girl

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SANAA: A Yemeni boy holds a rifle as Muslim worshippers pray at a square in the capital Sanaa. —AFP

Saudi intercepts attack Houthi drones

Iran-aligned militia steps up attacks on the kingdom

RIYADH: Saudi air defense forces have intercepted two drones launched by Houthi rebels from neighboring Yemen, state media reported, as the Iran-aligned militia steps up attacks on the kingdom. The drones targeted Khamis Mushait in the kingdom's south and caused no damage or casualties, the Saudi-led coalition fighting in Yemen said in a brief statement released yesterday by the official Saudi Press Agency (SPA).

The rebels said earlier via their news outlet Al-Masirah that they had targeted the King Khalid airbase near Khamis Mushait. The attacks come as SPA reported the coalition was intensifying air raids on Houthi positions in the northern Yemeni province of Hajjah. The rebels have stepped up drone and missile attacks on the kingdom amid tensions between Shiite power Iran and the United States, Saudi Arabia's main ally.

Last month, the Saudi air force shot down a bomb-laden drone deployed by Houthi rebels that targeted Jizan airport, close to the southern border with Yemen, the coalition said. The airport is used by thousands of civilians every day, but the coalition reported no casualties and warned the rebels of a strong response.

The Saudi-led coalition intervened in Yemen in March 2015 to push back an advance by the Houthi rebels, who still hold the capital Sanaa, and to restore to power President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi. Since then, the conflict has killed tens of thousands of people, many of them civilians, relief agencies say. It has triggered what the UN describes as the world's worst humanitarian crisis, with 24.1 million more than two-thirds of the population-in need of aid.

Embattled Yemen envoy
Meanwhile, the UN Security Council on Monday expressed full support for the UN envoy for Yemen after he came under sharp criticism from Yemen's president. The dispute threatened to derail fragile efforts to implement a ceasefire truce agreed in December in Sweden. In a statement, council members

"underlined their full support" for envoy Martin Griffiths and "called on the parties to engage constructively and continuously" with him.

The statement followed talks in Riyadh between UN political chief Rosemary DiCarlo with the Saudi foreign minister and with President Abedrabbo Mansour Hadi, the Saudi-backed leader of Yemen, to try to defuse the row. Saudi Foreign Minister Ibrahim Al-Assaf and Abdel Aziz Hamad Aluwaisheg from the Gulf Cooperation Council "both expressed their support for the work of the United Nations in Yemen and for the efforts of the special envoy," said UN spokesperson Eri Kaneko.

DiCarlo, the UN undersecretary general for political affairs, also held "productive" talks with Hadi, a UN statement said, without providing details. The

UN Security Council is due to discuss Yemen on June 17. Hadi has accused Griffiths of siding with the Houthi rebels, telling UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres in a letter last month that he "can no longer accept these offenses" by the envoy. The president has taken issue with Griffiths over the rebel handover last month of ports to a "coast guard" that the government says is in fact rebel fighters in different uniforms. Successive UN envoys to Yemen have grappled with disagreements from both sides in their efforts to end the devastating war.

British diplomat Griffiths was appointed in February 2018, replacing Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed of Mauritania after the Houthis broke off ties with him. His predecessor, Jamal Benomar, quit in 2015 after a Saudi-led military coalition intervened in Yemen to push back the Iran-aligned Houthis, who continue to hold the capital, Sanaa. The conflict, which has killed tens of thousands of people, has had a devastating toll on civilians and triggered the world's worst humanitarian crisis, according to the United Nations. — Agencies



UN council backs embattled Yemen envoy

From hiding, former envoy accuses pope of 'blatantly lying'

WASHINGTON: A longtime Vatican dissident broke months of silence Monday to accuse Pope Francis of "blatantly lying" in denying knowledge of the sexual abuse allegations against a now-defrocked American cardinal. Retired Italian Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano told the Washington Post in a series of emails that Francis and his predecessor Pope Benedict XVI must come clean about what they knew of ex-Washington archbishop Theodore McCarrick's alleged decades of abuse.

Vigano said it is "immensely sad" that Francis was "blatantly lying to the whole world to cover up his wicked deeds" in allegedly protecting McCarrick. Vigano reiterated his earlier claims that he warned Francis in 2013 about McCarrick. "How could anybody, especially a pope, forget this?" he said, according to the Post.

Vigano, an iconoclastic Catholic conservative who has rocked the Vatican for years with accusations of corruption and abuse at the highest levels, disappeared last August after penning a sweeping 11-page attack on Francis and Benedict over McCarrick. In that letter, he said he warned church leaders in



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis walks as he celebrates the Pentecost mass in Saint Peter's square at the Vatican. — AFP

2006 about allegations that McCarrick engaged in inappropriate sexual conduct and abuse with male seminarians over a period of decades. The allegations only became public in 2018.

He also wrote of deeply embedded "homosexual networks" that "are strangling the entire church." Vigano, who is backed by an ultra-conservative US church faction, called for the pope to resign over his alleged silence. Francis has rejected the criticism, denying he knew of the powerful McCarrick's transgressions. But the pope has become more vocal in

calling for the church to be honest and open about the priest sex scandals.

Vigano, 78, whose 2012 accusations of corruption in the Vatican sparked the "Vatileaks" scandal, would not divulge to the Post where he is staying since he retired from the church. He said his life "is quite normal," without providing any details. But he defended his August letter. "My silence would make me complicit with the abusers, and lead to yet more victims," he said. "The results of an honest investigation would be disastrous for the current papacy," he added. — AFP

Light exposure during sleep linked to weight gain in women: Study

WASHINGTON: Women who sleep with the television or a light on in the bedroom may be more likely to gain weight, according to a new study published Monday. The research, which was published in the Journal of American Medical Association (JAMA) Internal Medicine, relied on a survey of almost 44,000 US women, with a follow-up five years later.

The women were classified according to their level of exposure to artificial light at night (ALAN) which came from a variety of sources, from small nightlights or clock radios to light shining in from the street to televisions or room lights. One of the key findings was that women who slept with a television or a light on in the room were 17 percent more likely to have gained five kilograms (11 pounds) or more during the study period.

The correlation remained strong even after controlling for factors like sleep duration, diet, and physical activity. Although the authors cautioned they could not definitely draw a causal link, they said their findings added to a growing body of evidence that supports sleeping in a dark room. "Public health strategies to decrease obesity might consider interventions aimed at reducing ALAN while sleeping," wrote Dale Sandler and Yong-Moon Mark Park of the National Institute of Environmental

Health Sciences in North Carolina and coauthors. They suggested that the light may be suppressing production of melatonin, thereby disrupting circadian rhythm and eating patterns.

Other possibilities were that light acts as a "chronic stressor" disrupting the release of stress hormones such as glucocorticoids that play a part in regulating food intake, or that there may be another mechanism at work that affects metabolism directly. The authors acknowledged several limitations including that the data was self-reported and they did not know how intense various light sources were. High light exposure may also "reflect a constellation of measures of socioeconomic disadvantage and unhealthy lifestyle behaviors, all of which could contribute to weight gain and obesity."

Commenting on the paper, Malcolm von Schantz, a professor of Chronobiology at the University of Surrey in Britain said: "What is novel with this paper is that it is a longitudinal study comparing the weight of the same individuals at baseline and more than five years later." He added: "These new findings won't change the advice to maintain good sleep hygiene, and avoid light and electronic distractions in the bedroom, but they add further strength to the case for this advice." — AFP

International

Fear, kidnap worries in Ghana after abduction of Canadians

Rise of kidnapping for ransom could dent hard-earned reputation

ACCRA: It was a shocking attack; two young Canadian women grabbed as they stepped from a taxi outside a golf club in Ghana - and still missing one week later. But the abductions have also shed light on other attacks in a country popular with tourists, raised fears of copy-cat Nigeria-style abductions, and sparked warnings of rising crime if security forces don't crackdown on the gangs responsible. "Ghana had long had an enviable reputation as the safest country in West Africa, avoiding the violence that has plagued most of its neighbors," said Nnamdi Obasi, an analyst from the International Crisis Group (ICG).

"The rise of kidnapping for ransom could dent that hard-earned and well-deserved reputation. It could also harm tourism, an important industry for the country," The Canadians, charity volunteers aged 19 and 20, were abducted last Tuesday, 4 June, in Kumasi, Ghana's second-largest city, some 200 kilometers northwest of the capital Accra. The police, who have not released the names of the women, are working with Canadian authorities to find them. "The combined efforts to trace the ladies is still going on," assistant commissioner of police David Eklu said yesterday.

Tourism dent

Ghana, better known for its palm-fringed beaches, hosts over 1.3 million tourists a year. Many visitors, especially from North America, also come to see the grim reminders of the slave trade. Tourism plays a big role in Ghana's economy, making up some five percent of GDP. So the kidnaps are a big worry. "Who wants to visit a country that is not safe to visit?" said Adam Bona, who heads Security Warehouse Limited, a Ghanaian company fitting electronic alarm and security systems. "We want to be in a country you can walk around without looking on your shoulder, and the latest

wave of kidnapping makes things dangerous."

Businesses relying on tourism are fearful. "We are concerned because it could affect our business," said Samuel Owusu Oppong, who runs a backpacker hostel in Accra. "Seeing such things will make people stay home." Violent crime towards foreigners is rare, but analysts point to a rising number of kidnappings for cash. Last year, three Ghanaian women were kidnapped in the southern port of Takoradi.

In April, an Indian man was reportedly abducted, also in Kumasi, by an armed gang demanding a cash ransom. He was swiftly rescued by police. The Estonian consul was also briefly abducted in April, but released soon after. "Everyone is a target - but foreigners are becoming the main focus because they get more attention," said Vladimir Antwi-Danso, from the Kofi Annan International Peace Keeping Training Centre, in Accra. "If it's about ransom, it means the kidnappers can ask for huge sums of money for themselves."

Nigerian influence?

Some fear that the example of nearby Nigeria, where abductions take place nearly daily, has inspired criminals. "The surge of kidnapping for ransom in Nigeria could be having an unhealthy demonstration effect on criminal groups in Ghana and elsewhere in West Africa," Obasi said.

"It is important to track down and punish the perpetrators of these crimes, in order to prevent a climate of impunity that could embolden other criminals," he added. Earlier this year, local media quoted President Nana Akufo-Addo as warning that kidnapping must not become commonplace in Ghana. "Our brothers and sisters in Nigeria have known it," Akufo-Addo said, according to Ghanaian newspapers.

"But we have not known it in this country, and we



KUMASI: Photo shows the Silver Spring residence in Kumasi, where two Canadian women, 19 and 20 years old, were living before having been kidnapped late on June 4. — AFP

need to do something about it, to make sure that it doesn't become a feature of our society." The vast majority of visits are safe, but foreign embassies err on the side of caution when they issue travel advice. Canada's High Commission warns citizens to "exercise a high degree of caution due to petty crime" in Ghana - as it does for France or Britain. "Violent crimes, including armed robbery and kidnapping, may occur," the Canadian government travel advisory warns.

Bulwark of stability

Ghana is a country of some 30 million people, where more than two-thirds of people follow Christianity and the rest Islam and other religions. It has long been seen as a bulwark of stability in a region struggling to contain multiple groups of Islamist fighters. "Ghanaian security sources say previous kidnappings had been for ransom - and that they do not think the most recent incident is terrorism-related," Obasi added. — AFP

Nuclear stalemate one year after Trump-Kim summit

SEOUL: When Kim Jong Un and Donald Trump shook hands before the world's cameras in Singapore a year ago on Wednesday, they pledged change and progress. But now they are gripped by diplomatic recriminations after a failed second meeting in Hanoi. In Singapore - the first-ever summit between a sitting US president and a North Korean leader - Kim signed a vaguely-worded deal on denuclearization, touted by Trump as a historic breakthrough.

But a second meeting in Vietnam in February ended abruptly - without even a scheduled lunch - after the two failed to agree on what the North would be willing to give up in exchange for sanctions relief. The process remains deadlocked and analysts say the two sides have sobered up since. "Immediately after the Singapore summit, we had a tidal wave of completely unrealistic, almost comical expectations," said Andrei Lankov, a professor at Kookmin University in Seoul. "Then it became clear what has been obvious - the North Koreans are not going to surrender nuclear weapons," Lankov told AFP.

Kim declared an end to nuclear tests and long-range missile launches last year amid a rapid rapprochement, paving the way for the Singapore meeting. Since Hanoi, Pyongyang has accused Washington of acting in "bad faith" and given it until the end of the year to change its approach. And last month the North fired short-range missiles for the first time since Nov 2017. "We have gone from what felt like a spirit of hope and optimism to now a clear path of uncertainty," said Harry Kazianis of the Center for the National Interest.

'Military and diplomatic surrender'

US officials say privately there has been no direct contact with the North Koreans since the Hanoi summit and have expressed increasing frustration over Pyongyang's silence. The North has instead spoken through its state media, demanding the removal of Trump's top aides - Secretary of State Mike Pompeo and National Security Adviser John Bolton - and warning of a "new path" if Washington does not change course. The two leaders went to Hanoi with very different approaches - the US wanting an "all-for-all" deal while Pyongyang sought a "step-by-step" process - and have blamed each other for the failure to reach an agreement.

Washington accused Pyongyang of effectively demanding an end to all sanctions for partial disarmament, while the North said it wanted some of the meas-



SINGAPORE: In this file photo taken on June 12, 2018, US President Donald Trump and North Korea's leader Kim Jong Un shake hands following a signing ceremony during their historic US-North Korea summit at the Capella Hotel on Sentosa island. — AFP

ures eased in return for closing all the nuclear production facilities at its Yongbyon complex. "The current impasse will continue indefinitely unless both sides can come to grips with why it has occurred in the first place," Kazianis told AFP.

In Hanoi the US had in essence demanded "an unprecedented military and diplomatic surrender" by Pyongyang, he said, but added the North should not expect "the most crippling sanctions" to be removed for only closing the Yongbyon facility. The two leaders will drag out the current stalemate "to prevent engagement from running completely off the rails", the Eurasia Group said in a brief, forecasting a slight possibility of a third summit this year.

'Cycle of provocation'

Officials in Washington say they have proposed working-level talks to Pyongyang but are not planning another summit until a deal is hammered out. And with a US president who says he is in "no rush" and appears content with the status quo, analysts say the ball is now in North Korea's court - even as Pyongyang insists otherwise. Trump has dismissed worries about the North's recent missile tests, reiterating his trust in Kim who he described as "a man who perhaps wants to get attention".

With sanctions still in place, the US expected pressure to mount on the North to offer concessions, said Go Myong-hyun, an analyst at the Asan Institute for Policy Studies. But Go warned that Pyongyang appeared to be "heading back towards its traditional cycle of provocation". The missile launches were "a friendly reminder to Donald Trump that North Korea exists and that they still are ready to talk", Lankov said, adding the North had been "explicit" about resuming nuclear testing unless the US accepts its conditions. — AFP

women have spoken to a person or an institution about their suffering and only 6.6% have brought their case before justice, the survey said. Ben Ghala said she was referred to the Araafa listening and counseling centre after she went to the hospital to seek treatment for her injuries. "We live under oppression and we live in pain. The blow I received in my head deteriorated my vision," she said. Ben Ghala did not identify the relative who she said had abused her.

The Araafa centre can help only a small proportion of the women who say they have been abused. Last year, it offered advice to 146 women subjected to all kinds of violence and abuse. Morocco has dozens of such centers across the country. "I had a miscarriage because of the beating and the mental pressures I was enduring," said Raja, an unemployed 19-year old, who said her husband had been violent and who now lives with her parents. "I can't understand why that violence happened. Was it a habit or a mental illness or something else?", she said. Charifa, 26, told Reuters she had been beaten by her husband, who expelled her from the house and prevented her from seeing her son and daughter, aged 7 and 6. — Reuters

N Korean leader's brother was CIA informant

SEOUL: Kim Jong Nam, the estranged half brother of North Korean leader Kim Jong Un who was killed in Malaysia in 2017, was a CIA informant, the Wall Street Journal reported yesterday. Citing "a person knowledgeable about the matter", the paper said Kim Jong Nam had met with CIA operatives several times.


Kim Jong Nam, who was once seen as heir apparent to the North's leadership, died after having his face smeared with the outlawed VX nerve agent as he waited at Kuala Lumpur airport. According to the Journal's source there was a "nexus" between Kim Jong Nam and the CIA, but the paper said many details of his connection with the intelligence agency were unclear.

The source said Kim Jong Nam travelled to Malaysia in February 2017 to meet his CIA contact, but that may not have been the only purpose of his trip. Kim Jong Nam died after being attacked at Kuala Lumpur International Airport on February 13, 2017 in a Cold

War-style assassination that shocked the world. Two young women, one Vietnamese and one Indonesian, were arrested and charged with the murder. They insisted they were tricked by North Korean agents into carrying out the hit and had thought it was a reality TV show prank.

Malaysian prosecutors eventually dropped the murder charges against them and Indonesian Siti Aisyah was released in March this year while her Vietnamese co-accused Doan Thi Huong was freed in May. South Korea has accused the North of ordering the hit, which Pyongyang denies. Once seen as leader Kim Jong II's natural successor, Kim Jong Nam apparently fell from grace after being deported from Japan in 2001 for trying to enter on a forged passport to visit Disneyland.

Since then he had been living in virtual exile, mainly in the southern Chinese enclave of Macau. He had spoken to Japanese and other overseas media with surprising candour on various occasions and 2011 he told a Japanese newspaper that he opposed the idea of the North's dynastic power transfer. "Several former US officials said the half brother, who had lived outside of North Korea for many years and had no known power base in Pyongyang, was unlikely to be able to provide details of the secretive country's inner workings," the Journal said. — AFP



عمليات الخفجي المشتركة

AL-KHAFJI JOINT OPERATIONS

الشركة الكويتية لتفط الخليج
KUWAIT GULF OIL COMPANY (K.S.C.)

ارامكو للأعمال الخليج
ARAMCO GULF OPERATIONS

TENDER ADVERTISEMENT

Aramco Gulf Operations Company Limited ("AGOC") and Kuwait Gulf Oil Company (K.S.C.) ("KGOC"), (Al Khafji Joint Operations) invites intending bidders to participate for the **Tender No.: GT600IT18-Enhancement of KJO Digital Radio Trunking System**

Each intending bidder may purchase the tender documents upon payment of **Saudi Riyals One Thousand (SR 1,000) or Kuwaiti Dinars Eighty (KD 80) only** which is non-refundable by visiting our Contracts Department at Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia, or KGOC's Kuwait Office located in Al-Ahmadi, Tender & Contracts Section. The bidder may visit our KJO website: www.kjo.com.sa and follows the path: E- Services > Tendering > Contractors > Ongoing Tenders to review part of tender documents, before purchasing.

The sale of Tender Documents will be effective from **June 11, 2019 until 12:00 Noon, June 24, 2019.**

Attending the Pre-Tender Meeting and Site Visit are Mandatory.

A Pre-Tender meeting shall be held for interested bidders at Auditorium Hall, Office Park Building, at Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Saudi Arabia, **at 10:00 AM local time on June 24, 2019.** A site visit shall be held soon after the pre-tender Meeting.

The bidder shall note that he shall be required to provide an irrevocable bank guarantee from a bank in Saudi Arabia or Kuwait, in the sum of **United States Dollars Sixty Thousand (US\$60,000.00/-) only**, to warrant the bid proposal. Such bank guarantee shall be on behalf of the bidder himself and valid for (120) days from the closing date the tender, any bid proposal received without the said bank guarantee will be rejected.

The bid proposal shall be delivered by hand-delivery or thru courier service to the Contracts Department in Al-Khafji Joint Operations, Al-Khafji, Saudi Arabia on or before the closing date **14:00 Hours, Monday, July 22, 2019** of the time stipulated in the tender document.

FOR MORE INFORMATION, YOU MAY CONTACT THE FOLLOWING NOS.

Tel No: +966(13)765 4483
E-Mail: ctdtenders@kjo.com.sa

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Many women in Morocco face abuse at home

RABAT: Bearing pictures of scars and bruises she said she had suffered at home, Fatna Ben Ghala sought help at a women's counseling centre in a poor neighborhood near Morocco's capital Rabat after she and her mother endured domestic violence by a relative. The case of Ben Ghala, 40, and her mother was not unusual. Some 54.4% percent of women, amounting to millions in a country with a population of about 35 million, have been subjected to violence, according to a survey released last month by the Solidarity, Family and Social Development Ministry.

The survey, which showed the 25-29 age group is most vulnerable, also pointed up the amount of work to be done to remedy the abuse. Only 28.2% of abused

International

Where's Johnson? UK candidate criticized for avoiding scrutiny

Come out of your bunker, Boris: Daily Mail

LONDON: Boris Johnson, the favorite to succeed British Prime Minister Theresa May, was criticized yesterday by rivals who said the former foreign minister was avoiding public scrutiny in the contest. After three years of political deadlock over Brexit, the ruling Conservative Party is picking a new leader from 10 candidates and hopes to have a new prime minister in place by the end of July. Johnson, who led the official campaign to leave the EU in the 2016 referendum, is the frontrunner to replace May despite a long record of scandals and gaffes. Betting markets give him a 60 percent probability of winning the top job.

But rivals have turned on Johnson over his pledges to cut taxes for the wealthy, deliver Brexit with or without an exit deal and his apparent desire to keep a low profile. Rival Matt Hancock said: "I certainly think that everybody who puts their name forward to be prime minister should be open to scrutiny, should be accountable."

"Everybody should participate in the proposed TV debates. And I think we've got to ask the question: why not?" he told BBC radio. "I've got nothing to hide and that's why I am here." When asked about Johnson, Mark Harper, another candidate, said: "If you've got nothing to hide, you won't mind answering questions." A spokesman for Johnson did not immediately respond to requests for comment. Johnson left his home in London yesterday morning without comment, a Reuters reporter said. He is

due to begin his campaign today. "Time to come out of your bunker, Boris" the Daily Mail, Britain's second-most-read newspaper, said in an editorial. "Usually he positively craves media attention ... Yet for weeks now he has been stuck in his trench, drib-



Why is Johnson avoiding scrutiny? Hancock asks

bling out vague policy ideas," the newspaper said. Rivals say he is avoiding the limelight because the contest is his to lose - a stray word or poorly placed joke could deprive him of his best chance at getting Britain's top job.

'Boris'

Johnson made his name as a European Union-bash-

ing journalist in Brussels, then entered politics in the Conservative Party. He also raised his profile through a series of appearances on a television comedy. He upset some Europeans before Britain's Brexit referendum by comparing the goals of the EU with those of Adolf Hitler and Napoleon. His quick wit and eccentric style helped him shrug off a series of scandals, among them getting sacked from the party's policy team while in opposition for lying about an extra-marital affair. That and other episodes earned him the tabloid nickname "Bonking Boris".

But where others would have floundered, Johnson became increasingly popular, culminating in his two victories in usually left-leaning London's mayoral contests in 2008 and 2012. He was considered a favorite for the top job when David Cameron resigned after the 2016 referendum. But his close ally, Michael Gove, abruptly deserted him and announced his own candidacy.

Gove, again one of his main rivals for the leadership, on Monday taunted Johnson. "If I get through, which I am sure I will, actually, to the final two against Mr Johnson, this is what I will say to him: 'Mr Johnson, whatever you do, don't pull out. I know you have before, and I know you may not believe in your heart that you can do it, but the Conservative Party membership deserve a choice,'" Gove said. — Reuters



LONDON: Conservative MP Boris Johnson leaves his home in London yesterday. The contest to replace Theresa May as Britain's next leader formally has begun, with candidates lining up to define themselves against the 'bluff and bluster' of frontrunner Boris Johnson. — AFP

News in brief

7 die; migrant boat sinks

ATHENS: At least seven people died yesterday when a boat carrying migrants sank near the Greek island of Lesbos, the coastguard said. Assisted by an EU border patrol boat, the coastguard said it had rescued 57 people and is continuing to search for survivors. No information was given on the nationalities of the migrants. But a coastguard source said the dead were four women, a man and two young girls. More than 300 refugees and migrants have died this year while trying to cross the Mediterranean to Europe, according to the International Organization for Migration. Greece is hosting some 70,000 mostly Syrian refugees and migrants who have fled their countries since 2015, and crossed over from neighboring Turkey. — AFP

Wreckage of missing plane

NEW DELHI: Indian authorities yesterday spotted the wreckage of a plane missing with 13 air force personnel aboard after days of searching a remote mountainous region close to China. The Soviet-built AN-32 plane, carrying eight crew and five passengers, disappeared from radar on June 3 in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, prompting a frantic search by the Indian Air Force (IAF) and ground teams. "The wreckage of the missing #An32 was spotted today... at an approximate elevation of 12,000 ft by the #IAF Mi-17 Helicopter undertaking search in the expanded search zone," the IAF said on Twitter. "Efforts are now continuing to establish the status of occupants & establish survivors." — AFP

Ukraine hospital fire kills 6

ODESSA: Six people died when fire swept through a psychiatric hospital for war veterans in the Ukrainian city of Odessa, authorities said yesterday. The fire erupted late Monday evening in the one-storey building, Ukraine's emergency services said in a statement. "Six people died and four have been hospitalized," the statement said. Nine other people escaped unharmed. The facility provided mental health care for veterans of the Soviet Union's 1980s war in Afghanistan and World War II. Police and emergency services did not immediately comment on whether the fire was started deliberately, but said it did not appear to have originated inside the building. Paramedics continued to search the hospital after the fire had been extinguished, looking for any patients who could have been left behind, an AFP journalist said. — AFP

Roadside bomb kills six

KANDAHAR: At least six people were killed yesterday after a roadside bomb ripped through their vehicle in southern Afghanistan. It is the latest violence to hit the war-weary country where ordinary Afghans continue to bear the brunt of decades of conflict. The vehicle was travelling from Kandahar's Dand district to the provincial capital when the bomb detonated near the car, killing everyone inside, according to provincial police spokesman Qasim Afghan. "Four children - two girls and two boys - are among those killed in the blast. They are all members of one family," he said. Haji Abdullah, governor of Dand district, said the bomb was placed by the Taliban on a road frequently used by foreign and Afghan forces. — AFP

NYT's anti-Semitism row

NEW YORK: The New York Times (NYT) has announced it will no longer include daily political cartoons in its international edition, weeks after apologizing for publishing a caricature of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu deemed anti-Semitic. The cartoon, published in April, depicted Netanyahu as a guide dog wearing a Star of David collar and leading a blind Donald Trump - who was wearing a kippah, or a Jewish skullcap. It prompted an uproar within the Jewish community, with Israel's ambassador to the UN likening the drawing to the content of Nazi propaganda tabloid Der Sturmer. Editor James Bennet said the paper had planned for a year to cease running political cartoons in the international print version of the Times, in line with the US edition. The decision will come into effect on July 1, Bennet said in a Monday statement. — AFP

Germany to ban gay 'conversion therapy'

BERLIN: German Health Minister Jens Spahn said yesterday he plans to write a law this year to ban so-called conversion therapies that aim to make gays and lesbians heterosexual. "My position is clear: homosexuality is not an illness, which is why it does not need to be treated," said Spahn, who is gay and married to a man. "I would very much like to have a bill this year that could then be presented to parliament," he told a Berlin press conference.



PLAYAS DE TIJUANA: Photo captures an aerial view of US (left)-Mexico border fence in Playas de Tijuana, Baja California state. — AFP

Travelers' images exposed in US data breach

WASHINGTON: Images of tens of thousands of travelers crossing the United States' border have been stolen from an immigration subcontractor in a data breach, US media reported on Monday. The images were snatched from the network of a subcontractor for US Customs and Border Protection (CBP), after the company copied data to its database without the agency's consent, according to The New York Times. The data included images of drivers in their cars and license plates taken over a six-week period at an undisclosed border crossing, the newspaper said.

An unnamed official said as many as 100,000 people may have had their images stolen, the Times reported. "As of today, none of the image data has been identified on the

When Iran was at 'edge of the abyss'

TEHRAN: A decade has passed since Iran held its most bitterly contested elections ever, the aftermath of which shook the Islamic republic to its core over allegations of mass electoral fraud. Massive demonstrations and counter demonstrations by protesters and state supporters raged across major cities for 19 months, nowhere more so than in the capital Tehran, in what was later described by Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei as the "edge of the abyss".

As the world watched on in amazement, the so-called Green Movement that started out with "silent" demonstrations against ultra-conservative Mahmoud Ahmadinejad's re-election as president and demands for an independent recount evolved into running battles between protesters and security forces.

The advent of camera-equipped mobile phones and the spread of the internet meant images of the protests fanned out quickly, causing the main focus of the demonstrations

Medical experts consider psychological or spiritual interventions to change someone's sexual orientation pseudo-scientific, ineffective and often harmful.

The most controversial techniques involve administering electric shocks as subjects view images of homosexual acts, or injections of the male hormone testosterone. In Germany, there are an estimated 1,000 attempts a year to "re-educate" homosexuals - from family members, "coaches" and therapists, and sometimes involving prayers and even exorcisms, said Joerg Litwusch-Barthel of the anti-discrimination Magnus Hirschfeld Foundation.

Early last year the European Parliament adopted a non-binding text that called on EU members to ban the practice, something that so far only Malta and some Spanish

regions have done. Spahn has commissioned two reports and a 46-member expert panel which have concluded that a ban is both "medically necessary and legally possible," his ministry said.

Several people who underwent such therapies testified about their suffering to the panel, said the ministry in a statement. One gay patient reported how during standard psychotherapy, the doctor suddenly declared sexual conversion a "therapy goal" and pursued it through "indoctrinating conversations". When electric shock treatment was also proposed, the patient terminated the treatment. The health ministry said it plans to release a final report in August, to pave the way for a law to be written before the end of the year. — AFP

Pompeo restricts gay pride flags at US embassies

WASHINGTON: Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has barred US embassies from flying the rainbow flag of the gay pride movement on flagpoles, the State Department confirmed Monday after criticism. Pompeo, an evangelical Christian, has said that he defines marriage as a union between a man and a woman but has also said he respects employees regardless of sexual orientation.

"The secretary has the position that, as it relates to the flagpole, that only the American flag should be flown there," State Department spokeswoman Morgan Ortugas told reporters. But she said that US diplomats overseas were free to display rainbows flags elsewhere at embassies in June - Pride Month, with this year marking the 50th anniversary of New York's Stonewall uprising that sparked the modern gay rights movement. "Pride month, that we're in right now, was celebrated around the world by many State Department employees," she said.

The previous administration of president Barack Obama, an advocate of gay rights equality, let US embassies fly the pride flag without no questions asked and even lit up the White House in the rainbow colors when the Supreme Court legalized same-sex marriage nationwide in 2015. News of Pompeo's orders, first reported last week by NBC News, provoked outrage among advocates of gay rights. "At a time when LGBTQ+ communities around the world face persecution, this Trump @StateDept decision is a blatant attack on LGBTI rights," said Senator Ed Markey, a Democrat from Massachusetts.

"As we celebrate Pride Month, this decision must be reversed. I am demanding the Trump admin explain this hate," he tweeted. Chad Griffin, head of the Human Rights Campaign, the lead US gay rights group, said that the flag order "sends a chilling message not only to LGBTQ people in this country, but around the globe." A number of US embassies have already highlighted their celebrations of Pride Month. The US embassy in New Delhi was lit up in the rainbow colors as a sign of solidarity in a country where the Supreme Court last year overturned a colonial-era ban on gay sex. One of the most prominent gay members of President Donald Trump's administration is Richard Grenell, the US ambassador to Germany. — AFP

Mousavi. On Friday, June 12 when polling stations opened, the turnout-officially at 85 percent-forced voting hours to be extended late into the night. The first signs that something had gone awry came when Iranians realised the SMS messaging system had been disabled overnight.

Reformists soon claimed telephone lines to their vote tallying centers had been cut and many observers had not been allowed to enter polling stations. Later on, some of Mousavi's main campaign centers in Tehran were closed by security forces. Mousavi held an impromptu press conference late at night and claimed victory, warning that any reports to the contrary would be a sign of fraud. The final official count showed Ahmadinejad had won with nearly 63 percent of the vote, and within hours sporadic protests began in Tehran and soon spread to other major cities. As the vote breakdown was published, reformists pointed to irregularities and claims of mass fraud gained traction. Ahmadinejad's victory rally on June 14 in which he called protesters "dirt and rubbish" riled many voters. When Mousavi and the other reformist candidate Mehdi Karubi, who had officially gained 34 and one percent respectively, called for a counter rally in Tehran on June 15 the response by supporters was beyond expectations. — AFP



Mike Pompeo

Dark Web or internet," CBP said in a statement quoted by the Times. CBP hasn't identified the name of the subcontractor hacked but the newspaper identified it as Perceptics, which makes license plate readers and works with the agency on border security matters.

Facial recognition is being deployed in airports around the United States, aiming to help speed boarding and arrivals and also monitoring for suspects and people who may have overstayed their visas. US customs authorities are also reported to be studying the technology to help identify illegal immigrants. Supporters of the technology argue that facial recognition systems can help police fight crime and make streets safer.

But rights groups have raised concerns about the technology, particularly its use by law enforcement, because of its reliance on huge databases with little oversight and potential for error. Last month, San Francisco passed a ban on law enforcement's using facial recognition. Civil liberties activists decried the reported CBP breach. "The best way to avoid breaches of sensitive personal data is not to collect and retain it in the first place, @CBP," the American Civil Liberties Union said on Twitter. — AFP

to switch from electoral fraud to repression. The determination of the state to stamp out what it considered to be "sedition" at any cost, including mass trials and death sentences, gradually brought the movement to a standstill. One of the reformists arrested in the first wave of the crackdown was journalist and activist Ahmad Zeidabadi.

"History will look back at the defeat of the green movement as a bitter event that left its supporters extremely and deeply frustrated and disillusioned," said Zeidabadi, who was detained the day after the election. Amir Mohebbian, a conservative politician and analyst, said the circumstances had changed in many ways since 2009 when "the state realized that the opposition and America" were behind the riots, and therefore used its "full powers to take control of the situation".

'Where is my vote?'

The 2009 election campaign might well have been one of the most dynamic in the Islamic republic's history. The one-on-one TV debates between candidates changed the mood of the campaign from festive to a bitter face-off, none more so than an explosive encounter between Ahmadinejad and his main challenger Mir Hossein

International

Drones, money, cheap drugs: Laos route spewing meth into Thailand

Drug gangs now using drones along Thai-Laos border

NAKHON PHANOM: As dusk falls along the Mekong River, a nightly dance begins between Thai border security and Laos drug gangs now using drones, scouts and a pool of poor fishermen to shift record amounts of meth into Thailand. Landlocked, secretive and with ungovernable borders, Laos has become a sluice for transporting Made-In-Myanmar meth to the drug hungry markets of Southeast Asia and Australia, where billion-dollar seizures are now being made.

Whisked over the remote mountains of Laos - one of the world's last surviving communist countries - shipments are regularly slipping into Thailand, the region's drug superhighway. "It's coming in from over there," Thai navy captain Sumnuan Kamdee said, gesturing across the wide Mekong, which bisects Thailand and Laos.

"Drugs have become a national threat." Armed with M4 rifles and night vision goggles, his Mekong River Unit scours the water in speedboats in Nakhon Phanom, one of Thailand's poorest border provinces in the northeast. But the border is long and cannot be fully policed. Once inside the kingdom, tons of highly addictive crystal meth, known as "ice", and hundreds of millions of yaba pills - caffeine-laced methamphetamine tablets gobbled by everyone from laborers to ravers - are consumed or warehoused before being smuggled onwards. A months-long Thai military-led crackdown in the northern jungles of the kingdom's section of the notorious "Golden Triangle" has blocked the quickest drug route south. But with big money to be made, the narco gangs have carved new

routes west and east - through Laos and across the Mekong. In the fading light, as the limestone karst scenery of Laos elbows into the night sky, black-clad Thai military rangers wait in mosquito-infested bushes for suspicious crossings. But the drug gangs are also quick to adapt. "They have drones (from Laos) searching the river to see if there are any officials," Phoomsak Kampoo, district chief officer of Tha Utain district of Nakhon Phanom said. "And they have scouts watching for checkpoints on this (Thai) side."

Cheap as a beer

On smaller runs, Laos fishermen will cut their engines and drift close to the Thai bank before lobbing wax-covered parcels of 2-3,000 yaba pills towards the shore, where Thai couriers scamper out to claim them. But bigger, multi-million-dollar shipments are becoming more frequent. Experts say the Golden Triangle region is now likely to be the biggest meth production hub in the world. Yet without the ultraviolence of the Latin American cartels, it captures fewer headlines.

On May 31 the Mekong River Unit received a tip off that led to a 133-kilo haul of crystal meth a few kilometers down river in Mukdahan province. It was a fraction of the near three tons of "ice" seized by Thailand between just May 31 and June 4 - on top of nearly five million yaba tablets. Despite the intense anti-drug operations, meth is still getting through to more lucrative overseas markets.

Australian border authorities announced a record 1.6 tons haul of ice in Melbourne last

Friday - with an estimated street value of US \$840 million - wrapped in packets of Chinese-branded tea and hidden in a shipment of stereo speakers shipped from Thailand. At that price, losses are easily absorbed by the drug networks. "If just one out of ten shipments gets through, they still get their money," a senior Thai drug official told AFP, requesting anonymity. Inside Thailand, street prices are plunging - evidence of a huge oversupply from the meth lords who have slashed costs by using cheaper precursor chemicals. The tiny pink or green vanilla-scented yaba pills now go for as little as 30 baht (less than a dollar) in some border zones, drug officials told AFP - as little as a bottle of Thai beer. A kilo of ice is down to around \$11,000 in Bangkok - and just \$4,800 in Laos. "Meth is destroying lives, families and communities," police major-general Pornchai Charoenwong, deputy commissioner of the Narcotics Suppression Bureau said.

Spotlight on Laos

Under pressure, Laos is co-operating with neighboring law enforcement. "But frankly Laos really needs to up their game when it comes to tackling organized crime, drug trafficking and border control," said Jeremy Douglas of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).

The high profile 2017 arrest of Laos drug lord Xaysana Keophimpa at Bangkok's main airport was hailed as a new era of intelligence sharing. But with scant details from Laos it is not clear which of Xaysana's alleged associ-



NAKHON PHANOM: An armed Thai navy personnel rides in a boat during a patrol along the Mekong river bordering Thailand and Laos in Tha Utain, Nakhon Phanom province. — AFP

ates has been prosecuted. Meanwhile, meth continues to cascade across the Mekong region. Vietnam has made record seizures this year, including 700 kilos of ice hidden in tea packets in Nghe An province, which borders Laos. Cambodia is also reporting a spike in drug movements over its Laos border.

"Myanmar to Laos, then through Cambodia... this is now one of the main drug routes from the Golden Triangle." Cambodia's

Deputy National Police Chief Mok Chito said. The falling drug prices are curdling a public health and crime crisis in local communities riddled with addiction and petty drug dealing. In a remote Thai village near the Laos border, a recovering addict explained how his life slowly unraveled after being introduced to yaba aged 15. "I lost money, friends and my health," Nat - not his real name said. "It took away ten years of my life. I am trying to get it back." — AFP

Four passengers die in 'unbearable' heat on Indian train

NEW DELHI: Four people died in 'unbearable' heat while travelling by train in northern India, which has been in the grip of a heatwave for two weeks, officials and passengers said yesterday. The four died Monday while travelling from Agra - the city of the Taj Mahal - to Coimbatore in the country's south. "Heat seems to be a factor," Indian Railways spokesman Ajit Kumar Singh told AFP, "it is really unfortunate". "When the train was approaching Jhansi, we got a call from the on-board staff that one of the passengers is unconscious," Singh said. "We rushed medical staff to the station but they found that three of the passengers were already dead." A fourth person died later in hospital.

Temperatures have hovered around 45 degrees Celsius (113 Fahrenheit) in Jhansi, in northern Uttar Pradesh state, in recent days, Singh said the Kerala Express train had no technical problems, but the tourists were not in air-conditioned coaches. A passenger who was a part of the group that boarded in Agra said the train was stiflingly hot. "Shortly after we left Agra, the heat became unbearable and some people started complaining of breathing problems and uneasiness," the passenger was quoted as saying by News18 television.

"Before we could get some help, they collapsed." One of the dead was 81 years old, the channel said. Much of India has been sweltering in temperatures that have risen above 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in northern Rajasthan state. A number of deaths from heatstroke have been reported. Temperatures touched 50.3 degrees Celsius in the Rajasthan town of Churu recently, just below India's record of 51 degrees. — AFP



UTTAR PRADESH: Indian people fill water from a tanker of the Allahabad municipal corporation near Sangam, the confluence of the rivers Ganges and Yamuna and mythical Saraswati, during a hot day in Allahabad. — AFP

Three killed in fresh political violence in India's West Bengal

KOLKATA: Three people died in fresh political violence between members of Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party and a local rival in restive West Bengal state, authorities said yesterday. Modi's Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) and the Trinamool Congress - which runs the state - have accused each other of instigating weeks of violence during and since India's recent election.

A police official said the bodies of two BJP members were found hanging from a tree in Howrah district over the past 48 hours, while a Trinamool stalwart was killed by a

crude bomb blast late Monday, east of Kolkata. On Saturday four people died and at least 18 were injured in gun battles between BJP and Trinamool supporters in Sandeshkhali district.

The BJP, which has traditionally held sway in the Hindi-speaking belt in the north, has been trying hard to pick up support in West Bengal. In the elections that ended last month with a big national victory for Modi, the BJP increased its tally of seats in the state to 18 from just two at the last vote in 2014.

Yesterday locals in Sandeshkhali remained tense. "There is a continuous sense of fear," resident Rabin Mondal told AFP by telephone. "We are spending sleepless nights. Many have fled." Last month, a BJP supporter was shot dead in the state capital Kolkata, and a car belonging to a Trinamool member was pelted with rocks. In February, a Trinamool lawmaker was shot dead. Political killings are rife across India. National Crime Bureau data showed more than 100 political murders in 2016, but experts say the figure was likely much higher. — AFP

Indian town on edge after murder of 2-year-old girl

NEW DELHI: Indian authorities yesterday deployed hundreds of police and suspended the internet in a northern town following the brutal murder of a two-year-old girl over a \$144 loan owed by her family. The mutilated body of the Hindu girl was found on a rubbish dump last Sunday in the Aligarh district of Uttar Pradesh state. The fact that her alleged killers were from India's minority Muslim community has stoked tensions with the majority Hindu population in the Tappal area where she lived.

Right-wing Hindu groups, including those backing Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), have led the protests in Tappal, urging authorities to mete out "instant justice" to the perpetrators. A prominent leader of the far-right Vishwa Hindu Parishad group was stopped by police from visiting the girl's family on Monday, and on Sunday members of another radical group gathered to demand the death penalty for the accused.

The groups also tried to organize a "grand assembly" but police thwarted their attempt. "We have clamped section 144 (prohibiting unlawful assembly) and internet has been suspended in Tappal," district magistrate Chandra Bhusan Singh said yesterday. "Additional police forces have been deployed as a precautionary measure. The situation is normal as of now." Police were also clamping down on those sharing fake social media posts which were likely to "inflame communal passions", the Press Trust of India news agency reported.

Despite police reporting the child is not believed to have been sexually assaulted, unverified social media posts have claimed otherwise-tapping into deep-seated anger about sexual violence against children in the country. The Times of India daily reported yesterday that a Muslim family in a minibus in the area was allegedly attacked on Sunday by men on motorcycles and only escaped because a Hindu woman was travelling with them.

"They beat me, my daughter who wore a veil and our driver," Shafi Mohammad Abbasi, one of the seven members of the Muslim family, told the newspaper. "Pooja (the Hindu woman) stepped out and boldly confronted the attackers." — AFP



WEST BENGAL: Indian supporters of the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) hold placards as they observe 'Black day' during a silent protest rally against the recent killings in Sandeshkhali in West Bengal. — AFP

News in brief

Businessman paid to spy

WASHINGTON: A United Arab Emirates businessman linked to a probe of illegal donations to Donald Trump's political campaign was paid by his country's intelligence agency to spy on the US president's administration. The Intercept reported Monday. Rashid Al-Malik received tens of thousands of dollars a month for gleaning information on Trump administration policy toward the Middle East in 2017, the website said, citing a former US official and documents. He reported back to the UAE's National Intelligence Service on topics of interest to the oil-producing Gulf state-including US efforts to mediate a Gulf feud involving Qatar-as well as meetings between US officials and Saudi Arabia's powerful Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, The Intercept said. — AFP

3 jihadists, 9 kids expelled

PARIS: Three French jihadists and their nine children returned to France yesterday after being expelled by Turkey, legal sources said, a day after France took back 12 children of French jihadists from camps in northern Syria. The returns mark an acceleration in the repatriation of children of French nationals who travelled to Iraq or Syria to join extremist groups, amid growing pressure on Western countries to take back their combatants. The three adults—a 35-year-old man and the two mothers of his children—were taken into custody and the children were placed under the protection of the state. The French foreign ministry stressed that the trio's return was unrelated to the repatriations of children from French jihadist families stranded in Syria. — AFP

Sri Lanka MPs defy president

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's parliament yesterday defied President Maithripala Sirisena and resumed an investigation into security lapses surrounding the Easter suicide bombings that killed 258 people, officials said. The Parliamentary Select Committee (PSC) began hearing testimony from Muslim leaders who claimed they repeatedly alerted the authorities to dangerous radicalization, a parliamentary official said. President Sirisena last week asked his coalition cabinet to halt the hearings, which have already revealed senior police and security officials directly under him had ignored repeated intelligence warnings. Sirisena sacked his intelligence chief over the weekend after he told the hearing that the April 21 attacks could have been avoided if police had been allowed to arrest the ringleader as early as last year. — AFP

NZ quashes China extradition

WELLINGTON: A New Zealand court yesterday stopped a murder suspect from being extradited to China, saying it could not send him to a country where torture was "widespread" and "systemic". The Court of Appeal quashed a ministerial decision to extradite Kyung Kim to China, saying to do so when there was a risk he would be tortured breached New Zealand's international obligations. The 99-page judgment, which included a damning assessment of Beijing's justice system, comes amid huge protests by Hong Kong residents against a proposed law to allow extraditions to mainland China. Kim's lawyer Tony Ellis said the decision was a precedent-setting human rights victory. "It is a judgment that has profound human rights importance which will resonate throughout the Common Law world, it is not just important in New Zealand," he said in a statement. — AFP

Analysis

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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



People battle a blaze in an agricultural field in the town of Qahtaniyah in Hasakeh province near the Syrian-Turkish border on Monday. — AFP

Cousins in command seal family rule over Iraq Kurds

The succession of two powerful cousins to the top government posts in Iraqi Kurdistan has sealed the Barzani family's "monarchic" rule over the autonomous region, analysts say. With his son and nephew at the helm, veteran leader Masoud Barzani is expected to remain the region's "real boss," despite no longer holding a formal government position. Yesterday, the region's parliament named Masoud's eldest son Masrour Barzani, 50, as the region's new premier after seven years as its top security official.

He succeeds his 52-year-old cousin Nechirvan - sworn in as president the previous day. Their party, the Kurdistan Democratic Party (KDP), was founded by the cousins' storied grandfather Mustafa - and while the clan's domination of the KDP was long apparent, their rise through democratic means clinches its control over public institutions. "The Barzanis were already strong enough within the KRG, but now they are becoming even stronger," said Kamal Chomani, a Kurdish analyst with the Tahrir Institute for Middle East Policy. "They know it is not possible in Iraq and the Kurdistan region to legally establish a monarchy, but they have established one practically," he told AFP.

Iraqi Kurdistan has been split for decades between the KDP and its rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK). In Oct 2017, the KDP spearheaded a controversial independence referendum that prompted Baghdad to reoccupy large swathes of Kurdish-held territory and led to Masoud's resignation as president. But a year later, the party made a resounding comeback in regional elections, winning 45 of the 111-seat Kurdish parliament. It could therefore comfortably elect Nechirvan as president in late May despite a PUK boycott, and Masrour's nomination sailed through a few weeks later.

The 'real boss'

With the cousins in command, analysts expect the KRG's decision-making process - and the policies themselves - will be increasingly influenced by family politics. Megan Connelly, a doctoral candidate at the State University of New York and analyst on Kurdish affairs, said the grandiose Barzani family home would rival government bodies as the centre of gravity for policymaking. "The assertion of Barzani headquarters as this alternative institution is becoming quite apparent right now," she said.

As a result, Connelly told AFP, the presidency as an independent institution would "definitely be weaker, and Nechirvan will struggle to step out of Masoud's shadow". Indeed, the first speech after Nechirvan's swearing-in on Monday did not go to the new president but to his uncle, Masoud. And in a March interview with Al-Monitor, Nechirvan admitted Masoud remained "the real boss", describing him as "the one person who cannot be removed from the scene".

The elder Barzani would also likely have a role mediating any dispute between his son and nephew. "Nechirvan and Masrour Barzani will remain united in the face of external challenges facing their family and the KDP," said Chomani. "However, their internal conflicts over power and resources, as well as monopoly of the market, will intensify."

'One, big, warring family'

The phenomenon of family rule is not limited to the KDP, with the PUK, too, dominated by the Talabani family. One of its founders, Jalal Talabani, served as federal president of Iraq from 2006 to 2014 and his son, Qubad, served as the KRG's deputy premier and could return for another term. The Barzanis and Talabanis have been bitter rivals for decades, fighting a civil war in the mid-1990s that left thousands dead before Masoud and Jalal signed a peace agreement. Now, said Connelly, the older generations "sit across the table and they bring their sons and their grandsons. This is almost one, big, warring family".

The familiarity has sparked bitterness among opposition parties, including the New Generation movement, founded in 2018 to channel public anger at the region's elite. "Bringing Masrour as PM is the final step towards establishing family rule in Kurdistan through democratic means," said Sarkawt Shamsaddin, a New Generation MP in Iraq's federal parliament. He told AFP the muted public reaction showed residents were "demoralized." "They are tired of KRG politics, party politics and polarization. The situation has been normalized, which is really dangerous," said Shamsaddin.

In the short term, the formalization of family rule would likely stymie opposition parties' attempts at affecting change, he said. But it may sow the seeds of long-term activism if party members unhappy with the domination of a single clan splinter off into new factions. "This is how I think change will come," said Shamsaddin. — AFP

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

Kurds and Syrian regime battle for wheat

Gazing over his wheat field in northeastern Syria, farmer Adel Othman expects a bumper crop this year, but two rival authorities squabbling over his harvest have dashed his enthusiasm. After successive droughts and eight years of civil war, both the local Kurdish authorities and the Damascus regime are desperate to buy up his region's produce to feed their people and maintain the peace. In a country where millions depend on bread as a staple food to survive, both want the wheat grown in the country's northeastern breadbasket region of Hasakeh.

Farmers in the Kurdish-held region like Othman have been caught up in the middle, with only two potential buyers, neither offering a satisfactory price. Our "livelihood should not be transformed into a political bargaining chip," said the 55-year-old, his sky-blue shirt streaked in places with dry earth. The regime is offering a better price, but the Kurds have said no wheat can leave the region under their control. "We'll sell our crop to the highest bidder," Othman said in Kurdish by his field in the area of Amuda. "In the end, a farmer needs to make a profit," he said, his short black hair slightly unruly above a thick moustache.

'Food crisis'

Farmers are especially eager to sell their crop to make up for poor harvests in previous years, but also to save them from fires - some claimed by the Islamic State group - that have ravaged fields in the region. Long marginal-

ized, Syria's Kurds have largely stayed out of the eight-year civil war, instead setting up their own institutions in areas under their control. But they did lead the US-backed fight against IS in Syria, and are now hoping that will give them leverage in retaining a degree of autonomy in the northeast.

"The Kurds do not want to let wheat out because the production is barely enough to feed the local population," Syria expert Fabrice Balanche said. "If the wheat went off to Damascus because of the higher price, it would cause a food crisis," he added. According to the World Food Programme, 6.5 million people in Syria are "food insecure", or do not know where their next meal is coming from. This year Syria is anticipating an ample crop yield after abundant rain, following a wheat harvest last year that was the worst since 1989.

The Syrian government is expecting 850,000 tonnes of wheat from Hasakeh. The head of the Damascus government's agriculture office in Hasakeh, Amer Sello, told AFP he expected to snap up most of the province's harvest. "Government cereal reception centres will see growers flock because of the attractive prices," he said. The Kurds last month increased their buying price for a kilo of wheat from 150 to 160 Syrian pounds (\$0.37), but that is still not enough to compete with the regime's offered 185.

The Kurdish grain authority chief, Salman Bardo, accused the regime of announcing its higher price "to sow discord between the people and the autonomous administration". The Kurds would not permit the regime to ferry

the cereal to other parts of Syria, he said. "We will not allow it to leave northeast Syria," he added, without providing further details on how this would be achieved.

'Wheat weapon'

Syria's war has killed more than 370,000 people since it started in 2011 with the brutal repression of anti-government protests. After successive Russia-backed victories against rebels and jihadists since 2015, President Bashar al-Assad's regime today controls some 60 percent of the country. But Syrians in these areas are struggling to get by in an economy ravaged by war, as well as facing fuel shortages the regime blames on international sanctions.

"Assad needs access to cereal crops in northeast Syria to prevent a bread crisis in the areas of western Syria that he controls," Syria analyst Nicholas Heras said. But in the almost 30 percent of the country they control, the Kurds and their US ally also need to cling on to the wheat as a trump card in ongoing negotiations. Damascus and the Kurds have started talks to discuss the future of the northeast, but so far without success.

At a national level, endless rounds of UN-brokered peace talks have also failed to end the war. "Wheat is a weapon of great power in this next phase of the Syrian conflict," Heras said. And the Kurds and their US ally "have a significant stockpile of this wheat weapon", Heras said. "It can be used to apply pressure on the Assad regime, and through the regime on Russia, to force concessions in the UN-led diplomatic process." — AFP

In Alabama, an increased blurring of church-state line

In Alabama, look up - almost anywhere - and you'll see a church. In this state already ranked as one of the most religious in the country, the traditional separation between church and state has been increasingly blurred. Soon, classrooms in Alabama's public schools may be allowed to hang crucifixes and other religious iconography on their walls; and the religious conservatives who dominate the state have been a potent force in the heated debate over abortion rights.

As a largely religiously driven push to outlaw abortion nationwide gains steam - with two Supreme Court justices

appointed by President Donald Trump seen as likely to approve such a reversal - Alabama this year passed one of the country's most restrictive laws, banning most abortions even in cases of rape or incest. It will take effect in November unless blocked by legal challenges.

The religiosity of Alabamians is undeniable. Eighty-two percent of Alabama's 4.8 million people say they believe in God "with absolute certainty," according to a 2016 Pew survey. Compare that to the 40 percent in Massachusetts who say so. Some secular-minded Alabamians say they find the pervasive influence of religion repressive, and Americans elsewhere see events in that state as part of a growing threat to the long unbreakable line separating church and state. "I shouldn't have to follow the rules of a belief system that I don't belong to," said 25-year-old Margaux Hartline. Growing up in Alabama, she was taught that a young girl had to remain a virgin until marriage. She is now a lesbian activist and a fierce defender of abortion rights in this southern state deep in the country's "Bible Belt". Hartline and Amanda Reyes, a spokeswoman for the

nonprofit Yellowhammer Fund, which subsidizes abortions for low-income women, say the state's deeply conservative values lead to a neglect of women's needs.

They point to a shortage of health care services and bemoan the schools' conservative approach to sex education. The high schools, Reyes said, teach that sex "should only be done in the context of heterosexual marriage." Is it acceptable, then, to use condoms or other contraceptive methods? "Oh no," she said, with a surprised laugh. "Oh my God, Mercy!" Sex education is not a required subject in Alabama. But if it is taught, teachers must follow the guidance laid out in a 1975 state law advocating abstinence - a stance backed by many religious conservatives. Under that law, abstinence is promoted "as the only guaranteed way of preventing sexually transmitted diseases and unexpected pregnancies," said Michael Sibley, a spokesman for the Alabama Department of Education. Local school systems do "have the ability to teach about contraception if their local board supports that policy" - but that is said to happen rarely. — AFP

Freedom and fear: Kosovo remembers war, 20 years after

Twenty years ago tears were flowing in Kosovo - of joy or of despair depending which side you were on - as NATO troops rolled in, ending the war with Serbia. For Kosovo Albanians, June 12, 1999 was a day of liberation from Belgrade's repression. But for the Serb minority, it was a loss that ushered in a new chapter of fear and uncertainty. Today marks the 20th anniversary of that turning point. Kosovo's government will celebrate with fanfare, in a ceremony featuring a speech from former US president Bill Clinton, a core ally during his time in office.

NATO's three-month intervention ultimately halted the violence between Albanian separatists and Serb forces under the direction of strongman Slobodan Milosevic. But while the violence was ended, the two sides have never fully reconciled. Relations between Kosovo's Albanian and Serb communities remain fraught. Memories of June 12 trace that split. Shpresa Gashi, a 68-year-old Kosovo Albanian singer, recalls the "explosion of emotions" after news arrived that the international troops had entered Kosovo.

Over the course of a year and a half, the conflict had claimed 13,000 lives - the vast majority Kosovo Albanians. At the time, Gashi was one of the hundreds of thousands of people who had fled to neighboring states as war broke out. "It was the first time I saw joy among refugees from Kosovo," she recalled. Esat Rexhepi, a 72-year-old living in Pristina, also cherishes the memory of that "wonderful day". "I put on my best suit, put on a tie and went out to welcome NATO troops," he remembered, smiling.

For Edita Brajshori, a 40-year-old Pristina hairdresser, what lingers is the sound of music pouring out of apartment windows that had been shuttered for months. "It was possible to hear loud music in Albanian for the first time after so many years," she told AFP.

But fear and bitterness still dominate the memories of Kosovo's Serbs, a community caught up in the crossfire. Serbs have lived for centuries in Kosovo, a southern region considered a cradle of their Orthodox Christian faith. After the war, many were pressured to either flee or sequester themselves in enclaves. There was also a series of revenge attacks on their community, seen as score-settling after years of oppression suffered by ethnic Albanians under Milosevic. According to Belgrade, 200,000 Serbs ultimately left Kosovo to take refuge in Serbia. Around 120,000 remain, mainly in the north near the border. "I was crying... I watched our army withdraw and foreigners arrive," said Dobrosav Jakovljevic, a 73-year-old Serb who now lives in Kosovo's north, a poor region. — AFP

Do you have the right people in your organization to defend your cyber interests?

The simple answer to that is probably no!

By Dan Dirienzo, Director, Global Cyber Solutions, Raytheon.

The (ISC)² workforce study notes there is a skills shortage of approximately 3 million professionals worldwide. The shortage of cybersecurity talent remains the single biggest challenge many organizations face and therefore, the key is to ensure talent have the right tools and skillsets to become future cyber defenders that can protect national cyber assets.



Digital criminals are likely lurking on your network right now. Forgotten systems with critical vulnerabilities offer unregulated access to key systems and data. That's why organizations, big and small, need to have the right cyber posture, whether it's through in-house cyber security capabilities or are working with an experienced third party that has the knowledge and capacity across the entire cyber domain.

Most importantly, organizations need to shift to a proactive security posture: to survive in today's digital ecosystem.

There are only two incident response approaches: those that include a proactive threat hunting program and those that don't. Therefore, organizations must work to identify signs of compromise as early as possible. Proactive cyber threat-hunting should be built into organization's incident response plan and can no longer be a reactive activity.

If you respond to cyber incidents after breaches are successful, you're already too late, according to experts. The aftermath of a cyberattack is what truly impacts an organization, and could be felt for

a few hours, days, weeks, months and even years that follow.

So how do you go about adopting a proactive cyber approach?

I share below the steps and guidelines to implement a successful, proactive hunting and incident response strategy:

STEP 1: MAKE A PLAN

The first step to proactive cyber security is making sure you have a plan in place to respond to incidents should they occur.

STEP 2: START SEARCHING

Thanks to the creation of modular, reusable malware, today's advanced cyber adversaries are able to bypass legacy security controls and extract critical data from even the most closely monitored enterprises.

By proactively hunting and having the right visibility and understanding of attacker tools and methodology, compromises can be identified in days instead of weeks and months.

STEP 3: RESPOND AND AUTOMATE

The best threat hunters work smarter, not harder. Once a hunter has used the tools to identify a hidden threat, the incident response process kicks in.

STEP 4: COMMUNICATE

The first step to developing and implementing an effective communications strategy is to engage your communications department. They will work with your team to develop a plan that engages the entire organization, from legal and HR to your supply chain. When an incident is identified, having an effective communications plan in place is critical to a successful response.

STEP 5: PRACTICE

Practice makes perfect. Your organization should actively practice identifying and responding to incidents.

Business

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by escalating trade tensions**13** Gulf Bank congratulates winner
of its 5th monthly salary draw**14** NBK launches 'Go Business +' for
its Business Banking Customers

The Amazon logo at the entrance area of the Amazon logistics center in Lauwin-Planque, northern France. US retail giant Amazon has moved past hi-tech titans Apple and Google to become the world's most valuable brand, a key survey showed.—AFP

Amazon dethrones Google as top global brand

Survey shows US retail giant's brand value surges by 52% to \$315 billion

LONDON: US retail giant Amazon has moved past hi-tech titans Apple and Google to become the world's most valuable brand, a key survey showed yesterday. The brand value of Amazon surged by 52 percent to \$315 billion, global market research agency Kantar said in its 2019 100 Top BrandZ report.

Amazon jumped from third to first place to eclipse Google—which slid from first to third place with Apple holding on to the second spot. The Seattle-based retail behemoth, founded by Jeff Bezos in his garage in 1994, topped the table thanks to key acquisitions, superior customer services and a disruptive business model, Kantar said in a statement. "Amazon's smart acquisitions, that have led to new revenue streams, excellent customer service provision and its ability to stay ahead of its competitors by offering a diverse ecosystem of products and services, have allowed Amazon to continuously accelerate its brand value growth," said Kantar. The agency, which is owned by British advertising group WPP, added that Amazon showed "little sign" of any slowdown in its growth. The top ten companies were once again dominated by US firms,

with Apple on \$309.5 billion, Google on \$309 billion and Microsoft on \$251 billion. Payments specialist Visa had the fifth biggest value at almost \$178 billion, while social networking group Facebook was the sixth largest at nearly \$159 billion. For the first time, Alibaba beat Tencent to become the most valuable Chinese brand. E-commerce leader Alibaba was the seventh biggest at \$131.2 billion, up two places on the previous year. Internet giant Tencent fell three spots to stand at number eight with a value of \$130.9 billion. In a sign of Asia's growing impor-

ance, 23 of the top 100 brands were Asian—including 15 from China. The leading brands have embraced "disruptive" business models to beat traditional rivals in the technology, finance and retail sectors.

"Amazon's phenomenal brand value growth of almost \$108 billion in the last year demonstrates how brands are now less anchored to individual categories and regions," said Doreen Wang, Kantar's global head of BrandZ. "The boundaries are blurring as technology fluency allow brands, such as Amazon, Google and Alibaba, to offer a range of services across multiple

consumer touchpoints. "Using their consumer experience and expertise, these brands are crossing over into the business services sector, creating new opportunities for brand growth.

"Disruptive ecosystem models are flourishing in regions such as Asia, where consumers are more technology-enabled and where brands are integrating themselves into every aspect of people's daily lives." Brand value on the key survey is calculated on the basis of the companies' financial performance and their standing among consumers across the globe.—AFP

China says will respond if US escalates trade tensions

BEIJING: China will respond firmly if the United States insists on escalating trade tensions, the foreign ministry said yesterday after US President Donald Trump said further tariffs were ready to kick in if no deal was reached at a G20 summit this month. Trump has repeatedly said he is getting ready to meet Chinese President Xi Jinping at the Osaka summit at the end of June, but China has not confirmed it. China did not confirm a planned face-to-face meeting between President Xi Jinping and his American counterpart Donald Trump, after the US leader threatened new tariffs against Beijing amid an escalating trade war, Trump said a meeting with Xi has been "scheduled" during the G20 summit in Japan later this month, and that he expected the Chinese leader to attend.

"We have noticed that the US has repeatedly publicly expressed its expectation that the Chinese and US heads of state will meet during the G20 summit," foreign ministry spokesman Geng Shuang told a regular briefing. "If there is any news in this regard, we will release it in due time."

A Trump-Xi meeting would mark a turning point in the bruising trade dispute between the world's two biggest economies, which has spooked markets worldwide and sparked worries about the global economy.

Trump said last week he would decide after the meeting of the leaders of the world's largest economies whether to carry out a threat to impose tariffs on at least \$300 billion in Chinese goods. On Monday, Trump said he was ready to impose another round of punitive tariffs on Chinese imports if he cannot make progress in trade talks with Xi in Osaka. Chinese Foreign Ministry spokesman Geng Shuang again would not be drawn on confirming a Xi-Trump meeting at G20, saying information would be released once it was available to the ministry.

"China does not want to fight a trade war, but we are not afraid of fighting a trade war," he said, adding China's door was open to talks based on equality. "If the United States only wants to escalate trade frictions, we



MIAMI BEACH, Florida: The Bremen Express cargo ship prepares to dock at PortMiami, which saw China as its top trading country in 2018, as trade tension continues between the US and China.—AFP

will resolutely respond and fight to the end."

US Commerce Secretary Wilbur Ross yesterday downplayed this month's summit in Japan, saying it would not be "a place where anyone makes a definitive deal." "At the G20, at most it will be ... some sort of agreement on a path forward, but certainly it's not going to be a definite agreement," Ross told CNBC in a television interview.

Tensions between Washington and Beijing rose sharply in May after the Trump administration accused China of having reneged on promises to make structural economic changes during months of trade talks. The United States is seeking sweeping changes, including an end to forced technology transfers and theft of US trade secrets. It also wants curbs on subsidies for Chinese state-owned enterprises and better access for US firms in Chinese markets.

On May 10, Trump raised tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese goods up to 25 percent and took steps to levy duties on an additional \$300 billion in Chinese imports. Beijing retaliated with tariff hikes on a revised list of \$60 billion in US goods. The US government has also angered China by putting Huawei Technologies Co Ltd on a blacklist that effectively bans US companies from doing business with the Chinese firm, the world's biggest telecoms equipment maker. Investors worry China will retaliate by putting US companies on a blacklist or banning exports to the United States of rare earth metals, which are used in products such as memory chips, rechargeable batteries and cell phones.—Agencies

Trump renews Mexico tariff threat amid row

MEXICO CITY: US President Donald Trump renewed his threat Monday to impose tariffs on Mexico as controversy erupted over what exactly is in the countries' new migration deal, which the Mexican government admitted would be reviewed in 45 days. Trump reignited the pressure three days after granting a reprieve from tariffs that he had threatened to apply from this week to force the major US trading partner to boost measures against illegal immigrants trying to enter the United States.

In a series of statements and tweets, Trump alluded to still-secret provisions in the deal that he said would need approval by the Mexican Congress. "If for any reason the approval is not forthcoming, Tariffs will be reinstated!" he tweeted.

Faced with a surge of Central American immigrants fleeing poverty and gang violence, Trump had already declared a national emergency in an effort to build his promised border wall with Mexico, and had also more than once threatened to shut the frontier before mooting the tariffs.

The president did not go into details Monday, but Mexico said it had agreed to discuss one of Trump's top demands, a so-called "safe third-country agreement"—in which migrants entering Mexican territory must apply for asylum there rather than the US—if the flow of undocumented Central Americans continues. Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard, who led the Mexican negotiating team in Washington last week, said he had rebuffed the US demand for such a measure, but agreed to revisit the matter in 45 days.

"In the meeting with the vice president of the United States, they were insistent on the safe third-country issue," Ebrard told a press conference. "We told them—I think it was the most important achievement of the negotiations—let's set a time period to see if what Mexico is proposing will work, and if not, we'll sit down and see what additional measures" are needed, he said. Told by reporters at the White House that Mexico has not confirmed its legislature will vote on the unspecified further measures, Trump answered: "I don't think they'll be denying it very long."

Under the deal, Mexico agreed to bolster security on its southern border and expand its policy of taking back asylum-seekers as the United States processes their claims. Trump angrily rebuffed criticism over a New York Times report that said the main terms of the deal were not new, and had in fact



SAN DIEGO: Trucks wait in line to exit the inspection facility and enter the United States at the Olay Mesa port of entry at the US-Mexico border in San Diego, California.—AFP

been agreed on months before his tariff threat. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo sidestepped controversy, instead praising Mexico and highlighting what he said was an example of "diplomacy at its finest."

"It's the biggest effort to date that the Mexicans have committed. It's something that we pressed for," he said. "We will work closely with them to make sure that that is a successful effort."

Controversial deal

Trump's tariffs were to start at five percent Monday and rise incrementally to 25 percent by October. Economists had warned the pain of those threatened levies and Mexican retaliatory measures would have been acute for both countries, with potentially global spillover.

Markets were relieved over the deal struck Friday. But what is known of the agreement has drawn criticism from human rights groups who condemn what they call a Draconian crackdown on migration and the criminalization of immigrants. And as the contours of the deal continued to come to light, it appeared to grant Mexico only a temporary reprieve—with confusion surrounding key elements.

Ebrard said Friday that the promised deployment of 6,000 officers from Mexico's newly created National Guard to the southern border would begin Monday.

However, he appeared to backtrack Monday, saying the deployment would happen "as quickly as possible." There was no sign of a new deployment in Tapachula, the entry point for the migrant caravans that have crossed Mexico in recent months, AFP correspondents said. Local officials said the federal government had indicated the new deployment could take around a week. In the meantime, it has sent 400 federal police reinforcements to the border, they said.—AFP

Business

Gulf Bank congratulates winner of its 5th monthly salary draw

Winner claims a cash prize of up to 12 times his salary

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the winner of its fifth monthly Salary Account draw of the year. This month's lucky winner, Wadha Nafae Al-Otaibi, will take home a cash prize of up to 12 times her salary.

The draw, which took place live at Q8 Pulse 88.8 FM (Diwanayat Ayaqout and Al-Ansari show), in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce, is the fifth salary draw this year. To date, Wadha Al-Otaibi is one of five winners of this year's monthly draws, each of whom took home cash prizes.

With the new 2019 Kuwaiti salary offer, new customers who transfer their salaries to Gulf Bank are automatically enrolled in the monthly draws, giving them the chance to win cash prizes of up to 12 times their salary. Customers are also enrolled in a yearly draw of Kuwait's largest salary prize, a cash prize of up to 100 times the winner's salary.

Gulf Bank's Salary Account also gives new customers the opportunity to receive either a KD 100 cash gift upon transferring their salaries to Gulf Bank or an

interest-free loan of up to KD 10,000. Customers must have a minimum salary of KD 500 and are eligible for the offer following their first salary transfer to Gulf Bank.

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

To find out more about Gulf Bank's Salary Account, customers can visit one of the Gulf Bank's 58 branches or log on to www.e-gulfbank.com. Customers can also contact the Customer Contact Center on 1805805 or direct their queries through the WhatsApp service on 65805805 for assistance and guidance.

Gulf Bank is one of the leading conventional banks in Kuwait with total assets of KD 6 billion for year ending 31 December 2018. The Bank provides a broad offering of consumer banking, wholesale banking, treasury, and financial services through its large network of 58 branches and more than 200 ATMs in Kuwait.



BoE policymakers bang drum for higher rates despite Brexit clouds

LONDON: Bank of England Deputy Governor Ben Broadbent added his voice to reminders from the central bank that it still wants to raise interest rates, but one of his colleagues, Gertjan Vlieghe, struck a different note by highlighting recent weak data. The US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank have sounded more dovish after trade tensions grew between the United States and China, but the BoE has kept the door open for tighter policy.

Governor Mark Carney told investors last month that they were wrong to price in just one BoE rate rise over the next three years. While Britain's economy is shrouded in uncertainty about Brexit, data yesterday showed that wages are growing strongly, raising the prospect of inflation pressure ahead.

But financial markets think the BoE is more likely to cut rates than to raise them over the coming year, given the risk of a disorderly departure from the European Union on Oct. 31 as well as the slowing world economy. Broadbent said yesterday he still shared the BoE's view from early May that rates would need to rise faster than markets expect. "Were the economy to develop in line



LONDON: BoE Governor Mark Carney attends a monetary policy committee in London. —AFP

with our projection ... interest rates would probably have to rise by a little more than what was in the curve at the time of the forecast," he told legislators.

Broadbent said he was not particularly bothered if markets disagreed with the BoE's outlook, given the deep uncertainty about Brexit which could change the outlook significantly. The BoE's forecasts assume that Britain will avoid an abrupt departure from the EU.

Global risks

Two other BoE policymakers, chief economist Andy Haldane and Monetary Policy Committee external member Michael Saunders, have made the case for a rate rise more forcefully in recent days. Haldane said the time was nearing for a rate rise to nip inflation pressure in the bud, while Saunders said Brexit uncertainty was not a reason to delay tighter policy

for ever. But Vlieghe, another MPC external member, was more cautious when asked about his colleagues' views yesterday.

"The news since May I think has been ... a little disappointing and in terms of both the global downside risks and the domestic downside risks my read is that they have both intensified," Vlieghe said at a panel discussion hosted by the National Institute of Economic and Social Research (NIESR). NIESR forecast on Monday that Britain's economy was on track to contract during the current quarter for the first time since 2012, after official data showed a 0.4 percent fall in GDP in April. This decline was driven by planned closures by car factories which had feared disruption around the original Brexit date of March 29 date.

Saunders, speaking at a business event in Southampton late on Monday, said the BoE had forecast a slowdown in the second quarter after pre-Brexit stockpiling boosted first-quarter growth.

Speaking to legislators yesterday, just before Broadbent, he said he expected consumer spending to beat the BoE's forecasts, adding to inflation pressures.

Britain's job market continues to be strong - bucking the subdued trend in most of the economy since June 2016's Brexit referendum - and official data yesterday showed faster-than-expected wage growth and job creation during April. Pay excluding bonuses rose at its fastest annual pace since May 2008 in April alone, up 3.8 percent on the year. "If the BoE wants to push back against a dovish market ... this data may provide some ammunition," HSBC economist Elizabeth Martins wrote in a note to clients. The BoE announces its next policy decision on June 20. — Reuters

Cubans left frustrated by slow and costly Internet rollout

HAVANA: Six months on from the euphoria that greeted full Internet access for mobile phones on the communist-run island, frustrated Cubans complain it is too expensive, too slow and crippled by government censorship. Hundreds have joined a Twitter campaign to call for affordable rates.

"We are hungry, hungry for information, hungry for online surfing, hungry for knowledge and intellectual freedom," summed up one user. "It's not possible that the Internet is a luxury in the 21st Century," said another campaigner using the hashtag #BajenLosPreciosDeInternet—"drop Internet prices" in Spanish. Another accused state-owned telecommunications company Etecsa of spying on the population. Etecsa "is spying on us and censoring us with full impunity."

Blocked sites

"Cubans' purchasing power is one of the lowest in the American continent, so is the minimum wage and access to the Internet is not among the cheapest," said Norges Rodriguez, who runs a technology blog, Yucabyte.org. Mobile packages run from \$7 for 600 megabytes to \$30 for 4 gigabytes. Those prices put it out of reach for the vast majority of Cubans who subsist on a wage of around \$30 a month paid by public sector jobs. Uptake is poor for home Internet. Only 79,000 homes have signed up to the service, — out of a population of 11.2 million.

"If you want to connect to the Internet at home 24 hours a day, seven days a week, you have to pay the equivalent of \$800 a month. "There is no flat rate on that service, as you have in the rest of the world," he said. Rodriguez said the Havana government also banned any news sites critical of the government. "The government has blocked all media websites with content they dislike."

The ongoing US embargo means sites like Google, Apple and Amazon cannot be accessed from Cuban IP addresses, said Rodriguez. The government recently greenlit the importation of routers to allow private wifi networks, albeit using state-monopoly Etecsa servers.

Critics say the dollar-an-hour cost makes it too expensive. Before the roll-out of 3G technology in December-opening up the online world to the country's 5.3 million smartphone users—the Internet was available to the general public only via wifi hotspots, payable by the hour.

No turning back

Last year, Abraham Jimenez discovered that his online magazine, El Estornudo, was blocked. "Readers started to write to me saying they couldn't access it, and when I realized I couldn't either, I thought it was a server problem," he says. Sixteen months later, the site—which offers an independent view of the news—remains inaccessible in Cuba. He never received an official explanation over why it was blocked.

He says the Havana government is scared about the reach of social networks, especially since the arrival of 3G. "This has generated a different discourse from the official discourse, with real life effect," says Jimenez. "Now, once they organize online, Cubans can demonstrate against animal abuse, for the rights of the LGBT community, protests like that would have been unthinkable in the past."

"That's what the government is afraid of," Larry Press, professor of information systems at the University of Texas and author of a blog on the Internet in Cuba, agrees. "When the Internet was first launched, Cuba was possibly one of the most advanced nations in Latin America and the Caribbean" because of connections built-up by the Soviet Union. "In the pre-Internet network they were doing quite well. Then they got an Internet connection that was subsidized by the United States. They decided not to follow the Internet, to not let it in," fearing a large-scale rollout would lead to social unrest and a political shift similar to Moscow's Perestroika. — Reuters

Fiat Chrysler taps Aurora for self-driving vehicles

WASHINGTON: Fiat Chrysler Automobiles said Monday it would develop self-driving systems for its commercial vehicles in partnership with Aurora Innovation, a tech startup led by a former Google car executive. Under the partnership, Aurora will supply a self-driving platform that comprises the hardware, software, and data services that aim for "level 4" autonomy which can navigate without human intervention.

"As part of FCA's autonomous vehicle strategy, we will continue to work with

strategic partners to address the needs of customers in a rapidly changing industry," said Mike Manley, FCA's chief executive. "Aurora brings a unique skillset combined with advanced and purposeful technology that complements and enhances our approach to self-driving."

The deal is the latest for Aurora, co-founded by former Google car executive Chris Urmson, and which has integrated its technology into sedans, SUVs, minivans and trucks. "We are thrilled to forge a partnership with FCA US to develop a meaningful business model for delivering the benefits of self-driving commercial vehicles," said Sterling Anderson, Aurora co-founder and chief product officer.

Aurora earlier this year secured \$530 million in new funding that included a "significant" investment from Amazon. The funding round led by Silicon Valley venture capital powerhouse Sequoia reportedly valued the startup launched just two years ago at



BURLINGAME, California: The Fiat logo is displayed near a car at a Fiat dealership in Burlingame, California. — AFP

more than \$2.5 billion.

Aurora is developing the technology for autonomous vehicles, but leaving the making of cars to other companies, working alongside, rather than compet-

ing with automakers. Volkswagen said last year it would work with Aurora to create self-driving cars, hoping to deploy fleets of autonomous taxis to city streets by 2021. — AFP

Underlying US producer inflation pushing higher

WASHINGTON: US producer prices increased solidly for a second straight month in May, boosted by a surge in the cost of hotel accommodation and gains in a range of other services, pointing to a steady pickup in underlying inflation pressures. The report from the Labor Department yesterday likely supports the Federal Reserve's view that the recent weak inflation readings are probably transitory.

Fed policymakers are scheduled to meet on June 18-19 against the backdrop of rising trade tensions, slowing growth and a sharp step-down in hiring in May that have led financial markets to price in at least two interest rate cuts by the end of 2019. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell said last week that the US central bank was closely monitoring the implications of the trade tensions on the economy and would "act as appropriate to sustain the expansion." A rate cut is, however, not expected next Wednesday.

Producer prices excluding food, energy and trade services rose 0.4 percent last month, matching April's gain, the government said. The so-called core PPI increased 2.3 percent in the 12 months through May after rising 2.2 percent in April. Weaker energy and food prices, however, partially offset the increase in services last month. That led the producer price index for final demand to edge up 0.1 percent in May after gaining 0.2 percent in April. In the 12 months through May, the PPI climbed 1.8 percent, slowing from April's 2.2 percent advance.

Economists polled by Reuters had forecast the PPI would nudge up 0.1 percent in May and rise 2.0 percent on a year-on-year basis. US Treasury yields ticked up and the dollar rose to a session high against a basket of currencies after the release of the data. US stock index futures were trading higher.

Food prices fall

The services-led increase in the core PPI last month is likely to translate into a slightly higher reading for other underlying inflation measures in May. According to a Reuters survey of economists, core consumer prices probably increased 0.2 percent last month after nudging up 0.1 percent in April. The consumer price data will be published today. The Fed's preferred inflation



Shoppers carry bags of purchased merchandise at the King of Prussia Mall, United States' largest retail shopping space, in King of Prussia.

measure, the core personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index, increased 1.6 percent in the year to April after gaining 1.5 percent in March. Data for May will be released later this month.

In May, wholesale energy prices fell 1.0 percent after rising 1.8 percent in the prior month. Goods prices slipped 0.2 percent last month after gaining 0.3 percent in April. Wholesale food prices fell 0.3 percent in May. Core goods prices were unchanged for a second straight month. Prices for hotel accommodation surged 10.1 percent in May, the most

since April 2009.

That accounted for nearly 80 percent of the rise in services prices in May. Services prices rose 0.3 percent after gaining 0.1 percent in April. The cost of healthcare services increased 0.2 percent last month after increasing 0.3 percent in April. There were increases in the prices for both inpatient and outpatient care last month. Those healthcare costs feed into the core PCE price index. There were also gains in prices for passenger transportation and portfolio management. — Reuters

Business

NBK launches 'Go Business +' for its Business Banking Customers

NBK is the first bank in Kuwait to launch this service

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) launched the latest of its services aimed at providing an advanced banking experience on par with international standards, introducing the Go Business + service in partnership with Mastercard and available for its Business Banking customers who benefit from a range of offers and discounts. NBK is the first bank in Kuwait to launch this service.

Customers holding an NBK Business Banking Credit Card benefit from the service with access to many offers provided by international brand names including basic business services and special features for employees.

"Go Business +" is a Mastercard platform that supports entrepreneurs and helps them focus on the development of their business by facilitating easy and quick communication with suppliers and negotiating the best prices with world leading brands.

NBK customers can request access to the service by visiting www.gobusinessplus.com/kw where they can register, and then search and claim offers through the mobile app of the service. Commenting on the campaign, Deepankar Wavare, (Head of Cards and Loans), National Bank of Kuwait, said, "We have a strong and long-standing partnership with Mastercard and continue to collaborate to



Deepankar Wavare

develop products and services that provide an enhanced banking experience to our customers. The launch of "Go Business +" comes as part of our endeavors and targets our Business Banking customers to give them more advantages when banking with us." Wavare added that NBK commits to providing the most advanced solutions catering to the needs of every customer and in particular Business Banking customers,

helping them run their business easily and conveniently, gaining time and effort, and supporting their success.

Girish Nanda, General Manager, Mastercard said, "Supporting the long-term profitability and growth of businesses is a key priority for Mastercard in Kuwait and across the region. The Go Business platform is an innovative network that enables entrepreneurs to redeem incredible discounts across a broad range of leading brands

through a single portal. We are certain NBK cardholders will embrace the new service to reap its many benefits, and we will continue to work with a like-minded partner such as NBK to redefine the everyday banking experience for business banking customers."

NBK Business Banking customers have access to a wide range of banking products and services including: Business Banking Officers, Points of Sale, Business Banking Credit Cards, Online Salary Transfers, Online Banking, Insurance, Business Loans, Letters of Credit, and local invoices. NBK also provides 9 Business Banking branches tailored to the needs of customers and located across Kuwait, including: Head Office, Surra, Shuwaikh, Mubarak Al-Kabeer, Arraya Tower 2 (5th floor), Fintas, Ghazali, Sharq, and Ras Salmiya. These branches provide a team of professionals with different expertise to service Business Banking customers. Customers benefit from a one-on-one experience with their Business Banking Officer for credit, financial and investment consulting, commercial finance and treasury. Customers can complete their banking transactions in a seamless and convenient, and visit NBK.com to learn more about the Business Banking products and services.



Burgan Bank announces winner of Al-Thuraya salary account draw

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank, announced yesterday Husain Mustafa Mohammad Al-Fahad as the lucky winner of the Al-Thuraya Salary Account monthly draw.

The draw rewards new and existing customers who transfer their salary to Burgan Bank by offering them a chance to win a Nissan Patrol SUV every month. With every KD 10 available in the account, the customer receives one chance to enter the draw. The Al-Thuraya account holders have the option to hold money in Kuwaiti dinar and other major currencies and can access account-related services such as standing orders, loans and credit cards, and benefit from the discounts and offers throughout the year. Customers wishing to open the Al-Thuraya account can do so by simply visiting the nearest Burgan Bank branch and obtain all the necessary details.



Mimecast report: Native email security systems open doors to vulnerabilities

DUBAI: Mimecast, a leading email and data security company, yesterday announced the availability of its latest quarterly Email Security Risk Assessment (ESRA), an aggregated report of tests that measure the efficacy of widely used email security systems. The report shows the need for the entire industry to continue to work toward a higher standard of email security.

Many organizations think their current email security systems are up to the task of protecting them from phishing. Unfortunately, many of them fall short and do not keep their organizations safe. The latest quarterly ESRA report shows that many email attacks ranging from opportunistic spam to highly targeted impersonation attacks are getting through incumbent email security systems both in large number and variety. The report found 26,305,457 spam emails, 27,156 malware attachments, 55,190 impersonation attacks and 466,905 malicious URLs, were all missed by these incumbent providers and delivered to users' inboxes, an overall false negative rate of 11 percent of inspected emails.

Impersonation and phishing attacks are becoming a growing problem. According to the recently launched State of Email Security 2019 report, 85 percent of the 1,025 global respondents experienced an impersonation attack in 2018, with 73 percent of those victims having experienced a direct business impact - like financial, data or customer loss. Not only that, but 94 percent of the respondents said they experienced a phishing attack, with 55 percent noting an increase in this type of attack year over year. This reaffirms the need for the industry to continue to provide better efficacy in their email protection to help organizations strengthen their cyber resilience to keep their data and communications safer.

"Today's threat landscape continues to evolve as cybercriminals adapt their attack methods, particularly email-borne attacks, to evade the detection of traditional security solutions. This is becoming a huge problem for companies regardless of size across the globe. The ESRA results offer deep insights so our customers can better understand the types of attacks threatening their business," said Joshua Douglas, vice president of threat intelligence at Mimecast. "Through better email security, paired with improved security awareness, Mimecast can help customers build a comprehensive cyber resilience strategy that prepares them to take on and defend against both known and unknown cyber threats."



Joshua Douglas

CI affirms KAMCO's 'BBB' credit rating with a 'stable' outlook

KUWAIT: KAMCO Investment Company, a leading investment company with one of the largest AUMs in the region, announced that Capital Intelligence Ratings ("CI") has affirmed the Company's long-term credit rating at 'BBB' and short-term at 'A3' with a stable outlook in a recently released report.

CI's report highlighted KAMCO's substantial assets under management, growing investment banking business and recent acquisition of a majority stake in Global Investment House ("Global"). KAMCO's AUM reached \$13.8 billion as of 31 March 2019, including the effect of acquiring the majority stake in Global. Aside from the sharp increase in AUM, the acquisition grants access to greater geographies, capacities and fund offerings. CI also stated

KAMCO Credit Ratings by Capital Intelligence



that KAMCO's liquidity has improved, and that the Company holds a good track record and strong market position in asset management.

Faisal Mansour Sarkhou, CEO of KAMCO, said, "Capital Intelligence's affirmation of KAMCO's credit rating underscores the Company's solid performance, strong financial position and growth prospects. We believe CI's

rating acknowledges the strength of our team, and business, which we plan to further enhance throughout executing growth and expansion strategy. We will continue to harness the full potential of our organizational resources, while taking advantage of new opportunities in regional emerging capital markets to achieve sustainable measurable results for our stakeholders."

Huawei P30 Pro: 5 features that prove it is the flagship champion

KUWAIT: Today's smartphone market has been overloaded with a wide range of devices to choose from. However, what sets each device apart are the innovative technologies it packs, something Huawei is reputed for constantly bringing outstanding flagships. Bringing ultimate performance and superb cameras without compromising on battery, Huawei recently announced the Huawei P30 Pro, the latest device from the company and easily one of the most powerful ones, further strengthening its position as a leading smartphone innovator. Here are five features of the Huawei P30 Pro that make it a super phone.

1. Power of four: SuperZoom, SuperSpectrum, Ultra-wide and Time of flight

The Huawei P30 Pro houses a never-seen-before Quad Leica Camera that consists of a 40MP main camera with the Huawei SuperSpectrum sensor, a 20MP Ultra-Wide angle lens for horizontal and vertical shooting, an 8MP telephoto lens with SuperZoom capabilities and a Huawei Time of Flight (ToF) camera for beautiful portrait shots with rich bokeh and sophisticated depth information capture.

This setup packs a few of Huawei's latest innovations, including SuperSpectrum, lets more light to enter the camera sensors, allowing for crisp and clear photos and videos even in low light conditions and SuperZoom which allows the camera to zoom up to 5x optical zoom, 10x hybrid zoom and 50x digital zoom and still click clear pictures, even of the moon. It also includes Dual-View Video[1], a unique feature that uses multiple cameras for different perspectives, and a split-screen for one close-up and one wide-angle view at the same time. Feature will be enabled via HOTA update at a later date.

2. Powerful hardware for unrivalled performance

The Huawei P30 Pro is powered by the Kirin 980, Huawei's fastest chipset yet. More than just delivering efficient performance, the chipset also plays a key role in handling complex processes to create the perfect shot. It also includes GPU Turbo 3.0, which improves gaming experience by enhancing graphics and ensures smoother performance with no lag. Huawei P30 Pro users can also enjoy 8GB of RAM for faster processing. Storage options include both 256GB and 512GB, giving users more space for all their photos, videos, apps and more.

3. Supersized 4,200 mAh battery with 40W SuperCharge

The Huawei P30 Pro packs a massive 4,200 mAh battery that will stay strong even after an entire day of intensive use. Additionally, the phone also comes with a 40W Huawei SuperCharge, which can bring back up to 70 percent charge in just 30 minutes. This is possible even on the go, thanks to Huawei's patented Car SuperCharge technology. The phone also supports 15W Huawei Wireless Quick Charge. Users can also use the Wireless Reverse Charge technology, which enables the device to work as a power bank for selected electronic devices that support Qi Wireless charging.

4. Acoustic Display Technology and In-Display Fingerprint Sensor

Packed into the Huawei P30 Pro's massive 6.47 inch FullView display are innovative features that enhances



user experience. This includes the Huawei Acoustic Display Technology, which takes away the need for having a telephone receiver on the screen, paving the way for even slimmer bezels. The display also houses an In-Display Fingerprint Sensor where users can just place their finger on the display to unlock it.

5. Stunning gradient colors inspired by nature

In addition to these premium features, Huawei has not forgotten about design, bringing together stunning elements both for good looks and durability. Inspired by nature, the stunning gradient colors of Breathing Crystal and Aurora on the Huawei P30 Pro represent the beauty of salt flats and its different looks during the day. This is achieved by a strenuous process which also boosts durability, leading to the IP68 rating, protecting the phone against water and dust.

There is a lot more to see in the Huawei P30 Pro with its industry-leading innovations in its supercamera, performance and battery, making this the smartphone you need to get. You can now buy your Huawei P30 Pro from all leading retail outlets and Huawei stores.

Under pressure, Fed faces an outlook clouded by trade wars

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's attacks on the Federal Reserve have broken one set of precedents, his talk of stacking the central bank with political allies has strained another, and his on-again off-again tariff threats have made the economic outlook harder than ever to predict.

While the Fed may well find reason to cut interest rates in recent weak job and inflation readings, doing so could also put a safety net under Trump policies that, to the eyes of many policymakers, have to date done more harm than good. "There is a kind of feed the beast aspect to it," said former Fed vice chair Alan Blinder. "Among the many things the Fed has to take as given is trade policy. And if in fact trade policy is going to push the economy into a slump, that is a reason to cut interest rates ... If the Fed comes in to bail him out you encourage bad behavior."

Fed Chair Jerome Powell and other officials insist they can only consider what is happening in the economy and the appropriate policy response, and not try to second guess what the administration does or might do. Trump on Monday renewed his attacks on the Fed, claiming that central bank policy put him at a disadvantage in his trade negotiations with China because that country, with closer political control of its central bank, could devalue its currency or use other tools to offset the tariffs Trump has imposed on Chinese imports. "Our Fed is very destructive to us... They haven't listened to me," Trump said in a CNBC interview. "They're not my people."

In fact, Trump elevated Powell to the Fed leadership and appointed three of the other four sitting Fed governors. Trump has for a year berated the Fed for raising rates and other policy steps that Fed officials say are the best way for keeping the recovery under way. That broke a roughly 30-year run of presidents largely staying away from specific policy recommendations for the Fed, even if they were sometimes generically critical of the central bank.

Earlier this year, Trump threatened a fuller assault by considering the appointment of two highly partisan political allies to the central bank, straying from a tradition of more technocratic appointments.

The surprise announcement in early May of higher tariffs on China and a threatened imposition of levies on Mexican imports added to the minefield the Fed must now navigate. Though Trump in the end chose not to impose the tariffs on Mexico, the prospect of using an economic lever for the non-economic end of border control showed how in the Trump era policy could shift abruptly for central bankers who try to keep their focus on medium- and longer-term outcomes. "We take all kinds of things...into account," St. Louis Fed President James Bullard said last week before Trump called off the Mexican tariffs. "There are some good policies in there. There may be some bad policies in there. But we have to take everything into account." Recent economic data are already complicating the Fed's job. Policymakers have expected the economy to slow, but also regarded the likely slowing as modest, and not enough to warrant a rate cut. The story shifted after Trump's latest trade war salvo. "I don't feel backed into a box," to cut rates, Dallas Federal Reserve bank president Robert Kaplan said last week. — Reuters

What's On



CBK concludes its Ramadan social and charity program



The Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently concluded its Ramadan special and charity program especially designed to highlight the spirit of integration and social communication. Commenting on the program, the assistant general manager for media and PR affairs, Amani Al-Wer' said that CBK continues with its mission of serving all social sects with special social,

and distributed Gergian to hospitalized kids, visited geriatric homes and disabled centers in addition to the annual Ramadan gift for the staff", she elaborated.

Moreover, Al-Wer' added that CBK also held an Iftar banquet for the 112 operator employees and police pilots at Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmed Air base. She added that CBK also organized a special competition throughout the

month for social media users and, by the end of the Ramadan, CBK's PR staff and other volunteering CBK employees distributed Eid clothes to cleaning and construction workers within its 4th campaign of 'Hawwin Alaihom' (Make it easier for them). "Our team also celebrated the Eid with kids at special care houses", she concluded.

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New office-bearers for NSS Kuwait

NSS Kuwait area wise annual general body meetings had been conducted during the month of May 2019. Annual reports and audited accounts were presented and approved in the meetings. The Pradhinidhi Sabha and executive members were also elected for all the respective areas. Thereafter in the meeting held on 31st May, 2019, the executive members unanimously elected the following office-bearers for the year 2019-2020.

President: Prasad Padmanabhan, Vice President: A. P. Jaya Kumar, General Secretary: Sajith C Nair, Jt Secretary: Aneesh P Nair, Treasurer: Hari Kumar, Jt Treasurer: Nishanth Menon, Welfare Coordinator: Radha Krishnan MK, Jt Welfare Coordinator: Rajesh Kumar R.N. IT/Public

Relation Coordinator: Sujith Sureshan, Advisory Board: Baiju Pillai, KP Vijaya Kumar and Girimandiram Sasikumar, Auditors: Gunaprasad G Nair and ASB Thambi.

Area Coordinators: Abbasiya/Jahara/ Hassawi: Sreenivasn, Mangaf: Vijayakumar, Fahaheel/Mina Abdullah: S Omanakuttan, Abuhalifa/ Mahboulla: Syam, Farwaniya/Khaitan: CS Biju Mon, Riggae: Naveen Nair, Salmiya: Akhil Vasudevan and Sharq: Madhu Veltiyar.

Vanitha Samajam: Convener: Dr Manjusha Rajesh, Abbasiya/Jahara/Hassawi (Coordinator): Anju Anilkumar, Mangaf (Coordinator): Chandra Lekha, Fahaheel /Mina Abdullah (Coordinator): Santhi Anilkumar, Abuhalifa /Mahboulla (Coordinator): Sunitha Harikirshnan, Farwaniya /Khaitan (Coordinator): Dhayna Anil, Salmiya: Thejaswi and Sunil Menon will continue as patron of NSS Kuwait. President Prasad Padmanabhan in his presidential address welcomed newly elected executive members, General Secretary Sajith C Nair gave felicitation speech, and Treasurer Hari Kumar conveyed vote of thanks.



Health

Indian temple helps nurture 'extinct' turtle back to life

Hajo: The black softshell turtle is officially extinct in the wild, but a centuries-old Indian temple and its nature-loving caretaker are helping the creature make a tentative comeback. The northeastern state of Assam was once rich in freshwater turtles, but habitat loss and over-exploitation — they were once a popular local food — have massively depleted their population.

The black softshell turtle was declared extinct in the wild in 2002 by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, while the Indian softshell turtle and the Indian peacock softshell turtle are classified as vulnerable. But all the while, the pond of the Hayagriva Madhav temple in the Hajo pilgrimage centre has provided a safe haven, thanks to the sacred status of turtles protecting them from harm. "There are plenty of turtles in the temple pond," said Jayaditya Purkayastha, from conservation group Good Earth.

The group has teamed up with the temple authorities in a breeding program. "The population of the turtle in Assam has gone down by a great extent. So we thought we needed to intervene and do something to save the species from extinction," he said. In January his organization's first batch of 35 turtle hatchlings, including 16

black softshells hand-reared at the temple, was released into a nearby wildlife sanctuary.

A key figure is the caretaker of the temple pond, Pranab Malakar, who long before environmentalists became involved took a keen interest in the turtles' wellbeing. "I used to take care of them as I like them. Later, after I became associated with Good Earth, it became my responsibility," he said. "No one harms them here as they are incarnations of Lord Vishnu (a Hindu deity). I was born and grew up here. We have been seeing the turtles since our childhood. People respect them," he said.

Malakar collects eggs laid by the turtles on the sandy banks of the pond — a new concrete bank had to be demolished a few years ago — and gingerly puts them into an incubator. The project has been so successful that Good Earth has identified 18 other temple ponds in the area which could also be used for similar initiatives. But it is not without its challenges. For one thing, some of the hundreds of daily visitors to the temple outside Guwahati throw bread and other food to the turtles — which they clearly like. "This has triggered some biological changes among the turtles in the pond. They have also lost their natural tendency of hunting for food," Purkayastha said. — AFP



Hajo: Turtle caretaker Pranab Malakar holds a turtle near the pond at Hayagriva Madhava temple. — AFP

Indian students hope to set example on plastic recycling

CHENNAI: Armed with bags full of discarded plastic, students at a school in north-east India are hoping to set a precedent by helping the planet — and getting free tuition. The Akshar Forum school in Pamohi in Assam state in north-east India encourages pupils to bring in at least 20 pieces of plastic waste every week in exchange for free schooling.

For despite a ban on single use plastic across many Indian states, it continues to be widely used with thousands of tons of plastic waste generated daily that is dumped in streets, drains or landfill, according to the Central Pollution Control Board. Mazin Mukhtar, school co-founder, said they came up with the idea this year of collecting plastic waste to turn into eco bricks to use in construction, which could also help students earn some money and keep them out of manual child labour.

"Initially parents did not comply and thought it was very strange that we were asking for their trash," Mukhtar said in a telephone interview. "Now everyone sends plastic waste." Amariyoti Kashyat, head of Guwahati-based charity Environ that works on solid waste management, praised the project as a "very positive and unique initiative". "These are problems created by us and there is no proper system for management of plastic waste. These children are teaching their parents and that is the first step," he said.

Teenager Prasanta Rangshal carries an extra bag to school every other day, packed with old plastic packets and wrappers. Before joining the school three years ago, Rangshal, 14, worked in the stone quarries near his home having dropped out of education at the age of nine to help support his grandmother. — AFP

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- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery
- ◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
- ◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
- ◆ Transanal minimally invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

مستشفى دار الشفا Dar Al Shifa Hospital
Tel: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
Laposcopic and Bariatric Surgery

Academic Certificates - Training

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

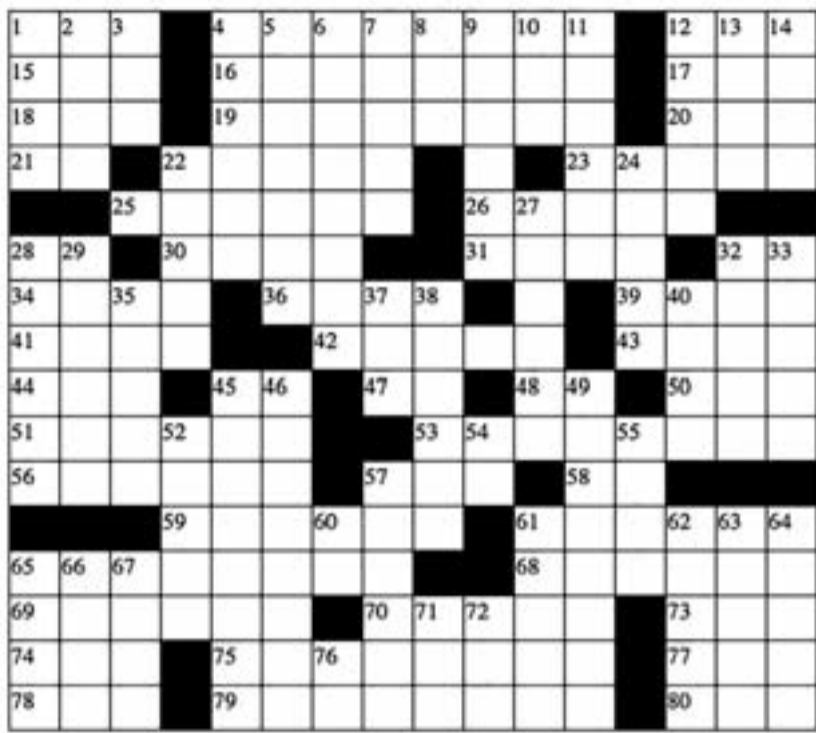
Scope of clinical Practice.

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

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

Stars

CROSSWORD 2229



ACROSS

1. Wet spongy ground of decomposing vegetation.
4. Having no leaves.
12. The compass point that is one point east of due south.
15. A drug combination found in some over-the-counter headache remedies (Aspirin and Phenacetin and Caffeine).
16. A genus of herbs of the family Cruciferae.
17. Someone who is morally reprehensible.
18. A beverage made by steeping tea leaves in water.
19. German baroque composer (1681-1767).
20. A condition (mostly in boys) characterized by behavioral and learning disorders.
21. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
23. Indigo bush.
25. A dough of flour and water and shortening.
26. Either of two large African antelopes of the genus Taurotragus having short spirally twisted horns in both sexes.
28. A unit of energy equal to the work done by an electron accelerated through a potential difference of 1 volt.
30. The dialect of Albanian spoken in northern Albania and Yugoslavia.
31. A rapid series of short loud sounds (as might be heard with a stethoscope in some types of respiratory disorders).
34. (Greek mythology) Winged goddess of victory.
36. An administrator in charge of a division of a university or college.
39. A narrow way or road.
41. (Greek mythology) Daughter of Zeus and Demeter.
42. A group of southern Bantu languages.
43. Oval reproductive body of a fowl (especially a hen) used as food.
44. A hospital unit staffed and equipped to provide intensive care.
47. An associate degree in nursing.
48. A colorless and odorless inert gas.
50. Hormones (estrogen and progesterin) are given to postmenopausal women.
51. Bony fishes of the southern hemisphere that breathe by a modified air bladder as well as gills.
53. Peruvian shrub or small tree having large glossy leaves and cymes of fragrant yellow to green or red flowers.
56. Not paid.
58. Being ten more than one hundred ninety.
59. (electronics) Designating sound transmission from two sources through two channels.
65. Not made with leavening.
68. In truth (often tends to intensify).
69. A room equipped with toilet facilities.
70. Place in a line or arrange so as to be parallel.
73. A master's degree in business.
74. Greenwich Mean Time updated with leap seconds.
75. Succulent carpet-forming plant having small brilliant reddish-pink flowers.
77. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
78. A unit of force equal to the force exerted by gravity.
79. Tropical trees having one-seeded fruit.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
2. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
3. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
4. Somewhat late.
5. Subject to popular election.
6. Any substance that can cause an allergy.
7. Characterized by intense emotion.
8. A rapid escape (as by criminals).
9. An implement used to erase something.
10. Estrangement from god.
11. A shoe consisting of a sole fastened by straps to the foot.
12. A burn cause by hot liquid or steam.
13. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
14. Tropical starchy tuberous root.
22. East Indian cereal grass whose seed yield a somewhat bitter flour, a staple in the Orient.
24. Administer an oil or ointment to.
27. Of or relating to the lips of the mouth.
29. A basic polypeptide antibiotic (trade name Viocin) administered intramuscularly (along with other drugs) in the treatment of tuberculosis.
32. Feeling or showing anger.
33. Protective outer layer of seeds of flowering plants.
35. German arms manufacturer and son of Friedrich Krupp.
37. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
38. (Roman Catholic) A diplomatic representative of the Pope having ambassadorial status.
40. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
45. The battle in 1356 in which the English under the Black Prince defeated the French.
46. A step to one side (as in boxing or dancing).
49. The property of being extremely abundant.
52. Of or in or relating to the nose.
54. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
55. Any of a number of fishes of the family Carangidae.
57. Wish harm upon.
60. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
61. To some (great or small) extent.
62. A subsidiary proposition that is assumed to be true in order to prove another proposition.
63. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
64. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
66. A short personal letter.
67. Grains used as food either unpolished or more often polished.
71. A boy or man.
72. Being one more than two.
76. An uproarious party.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find this to be one of those days you are in true admiration of the beauty that surrounds you. You may see beauty in everything and everyone you encounter today. This brings a sense of peace and harmony into your world and you may find this to be a delightful day. Be careful not to overspend today because this mood tends to make you want to bring home every beautiful treasure you find. Not the best day for a trip to the mall. You will want everything you see! Take a stroll in the park and enjoy the beauty of the nature that surrounds you. This will keep your money in your wallet and a sense of peace in your heart.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

After much thought and reflection you may come to realize how much you truly appreciate where you are in life. Through many challenging situations, and past you may not be very proud of, you have successfully been able to turn the stumbling blocks you have encountered into stepping stones. Seeing others go through some of the same hard times you have draws you to them and gives you a desire to reach out and help. You may feel especially kind to a close friend in need. This is a person you are led to take under your wing. You may find this person looks up to you. Your kind words will have more of an impact than you can ever imagine.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

It may seem if your sexual needs are coming to mind quite frequently. You crave power and control. The great mysteries of life and death seem are subjects you find intriguing. This is a time you long to mend fences and let by gones be by gones. This is a time you crave peace and lasting friendships.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

If you could snap your fingers and disappear that is just what you would do today. You need an escape from reality. Always being responsible is starting to wear you down. You work hard and never take any time for yourself. A massage, a good book, even a night out at a quiet restaurant would be a welcome break for you. You work hard and need to always remember to take a break. Take to reward yourself for all you do. You will find spoiling yourself a little will help you be much more productive in the long run.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You have always had that strong shoulder that others seem to lean on. Today is no exception. You may find your phone ringing off of the hook with friends in need. Your advice is in high demand. The level of respect your friends have for you is to be envied. You are the friend others wish to have. Being the one everyone turns to in their time of need can be exhausting. Who is there when you need a friend to confide in? You may find someone older or in authority can offer you the support you need today.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Variety is the spice of life. This seems to be your motto at this time. You may find yourself drawn in different directions or drawn to new experiences. You can't seem to sit still. You are finding you are happiest when on the go. You have a desire for knowledge and you are gathering it from all new experiences. You may find others being drawn to you and expressing admiration toward your desire for knowledge and for the wisdom you possess. This day could bring a variety of emotions as well. You may go from feeling on top of the world to feeling misunderstood. Remember, Virgo, this day is about your pursuit knowledge and it is ok to do just what makes you happy.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

A desire for the unusual seems to overcome you today. A desire to broaden your horizons and experience more of what this world has to offer you. The in and outs of your regular world seem to have you bored and unsatisfied. Planning a trip or planning an outing with friends will satisfy your needs. Spend time with friends from different cultures and religions. A new outlook on the same day to day issues will be enlightening. Your eccentric ways could bring a new outlook into their lives as well. Spend some time learning to appreciate the beauty that surrounds you.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

It seems the more independent you become the more you face conflict with those close to you. This is a time you may be trying too hard to be different. This could be met with disapproval from your peers. Not everyone is fond of the changes they see you making. This could cause a great deal of pressure in your life. You well know when making decisions under pressure you seem to freeze and never seem to do the right thing. Take your time. Relax and wait until some of the stress passes. Save the decision making for later. These issues are not matters of life and death.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Communication is important. When it is put in writing, what you thought was a compliment could be interpreted as criticism. Something you thought was completely innocent or innocuous may be seen as derogatory. Misunderstandings that are in writing are difficult to overcome. They can result in a lifetime of hard feelings. Be thoughtful about what you put on social media. Consider the possible reactions before you send a text, a tweet, or an email.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This may be a great day to enjoy a good book or catch a movie. An escape from reality may be just what you need. This could clear your mind and leave you feeling refreshed and rejuvenated. You feel your most secure when surrounded by friends. You may be feeling a real need for a change in your life. You may feel as if you want to throw out the old and bring in the new. You have had this on your mind for a while and today seems the day you really begin to act on it. It seems a change in the right direction may bring great reward into your life. You will send enjoy world you have no desire to escape from.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Sexual needs seem to be a major focus for you now. There are just some things and some one you can not seem to get off of your mind. This is a great desire for some special time to be spent with a special someone. You desire power and control. These thoughts have your mind racing and you start focusing on a plan to accomplish your goals and satisfy your desires. The great mysteries of life and death fascinate you and you have a desire to live each day to the fullest. You may appear to be at ease and loose today. Everything seems to be working together, and you will be able to communicate and express yourself well.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

This is day you may feel as if you are spinning your wheels. It seems to be a very superficial day for you. Everything and everyone seems fake to you. It seems as if you are going through the motions, it is a very repetitive and senseless day for you. You find no depth nor meaning in your actions nor the ones around you. You can not seem to get beneath the surface. It may seem as if your feelings are going against what you value. You could find this difficult for you to deal with.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Pies, Mmmm! - Word Search

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

- | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|---------------|---------|-----|---------|---------|----------------|-----------|-----|-------|-------|---------|--------|-----------|---------|
| BANANA CREAM | CHERRY | CHOCOLATE CREAM | COCONUT CREAM | CUSTARD | EGG | FLAPPER | KEYLIME | LEMON MERINGUE | MINCEMEAT | MUD | PEACH | PECAN | PUMPKIN | RAISIN | RASPBERRY | RHUBARB |
|--------------|--------|-----------------|---------------|---------|-----|---------|---------|----------------|-----------|-----|-------|-------|---------|--------|-----------|---------|

Yesterday's Solution

Parkinson's Disease - Solution

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

- | | | |
|------------|-------------|-----------|
| AGONIST | EARLY ONSET | POSTURE |
| CHALLENGE | EXERCISE | RED TULIP |
| CHARCOT | FLEXIBILITY | RIGIDITY |
| COGNITION | FREEZING | SENSORY |
| DISORDER | GAIT | STAGES |
| DOPAMINE | IDIOPATHIC | TREATMENT |
| DYSKINESIA | LEVODOPA | TREMORS |
| DYSPHAGIA | NEURON | |

Yesterday's Solution

R I B A C A L Y P H A B T U
O C A N A I L H E A D O A R
T A R S A L M W E R A C L I
C O N C E P T H I P E C A C
A M A S S X C I I I
H A N D I C A P O D D C A
A G S C R A B A T E L A N
D E C D N A B I R U L A
E N L A R G E D M A N A N
A D A M L A S S A B A B A
N A P E A B U T U T A R A S
E L S E E N R O L
E D E R L E I R I D E S C E
M A D U R B A N I S E H A T
M B A D I E R E S I S W B N
Y A M E N D A M E B A A G A

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 12, 2019



Aerial view showing an agriculture field next to a native Cerrado (savanna) in Formosa do Rio Preto, western Bahia state. — AFP

INVENTOR OF GUILT-FREE DESSERTS IS WORLD'S TOP PASTRY CHEF



French pastry chef Jessica Prealato of the Plaza Athenee hotel poses for a portrait in Paris. — AFP photos



Her desserts are often not at all sweet and she couldn't give a fig if people complain that they don't look great on Instagram. But that did not stop Jessica Prealato being named the best pastry chef on the planet Tuesday by the World's 50 Best Restaurants ranking. The 32-year-old French woman, who is about to have her first child, is the creator of a whole new genre of guilt-free patisserie. For Prealato it is not about how a dessert looks, it's how it tastes-and the feel good glow afterwards. The subtle and sublime creations she turns out at the three-star Michelin restaurant of the Plaza Athenee hotel in Paris are a rebuff to the sugar-rush burn of food porn.

Yet even she has not dared to have her father-a patissier forged in full-on sugar worship of French tradition-taste her creations that match strawberries with pine shoots and lemon with seaweed. "He would not understand what I do at all," she told AFP. Prealato has eschewed the sugar high to go for what her boss at the Plaza Athenee, the French superchef Alain Ducasse, calls "naturalité"-or naturalness-bringing out the full range of flavours that an ingredient already has. What Prealato also does is use ingredients that would never normally make it onto a dessert trolley. So you have malted beer sorbet with barley crumble and hop galettes, cherry olive vinaigrette or vanilla Jerusalem artichokes with truffles.

Sugar as seasoning

"We shake people up," Prealato laughed. She has already produced a book of 50 of her desserts called "Desseralite", including her "All Rhubarb", where the often astringent plant is served roasted, raw, fermented, grilled and poached. "I love to use vinegars and try every style of cooking so that I get the most flavours out of a product," said Prealato, one of a tiny number of female patisserie chefs working in three-star restaurants. Some of her peers have criticized her for the unfussy way she presents her food, claiming that it is not sophisticated enough for such an upscale establishment.

And four years ago when she was starting out at Alain Ducasse at the Plaza Athenee she said that the famed chef left her in tears when he refused to taste one of her first fruit-based desserts. "I can see why now," she said. "I had presented it like a patisserie chef usually would, with lots of mousse, cream and a tuile. "For him, a dessert didn't have to be about these things." So Prealato "took everything away... today I rarely ever work with chocolate or coffee." Instead her desserts play with sourness and acidity, and she uses sugar as others would salt-for seasoning.

Pretty isn't everything

"I understand why some clients may not like that," she said. Initially hurt by such negative feedback, Prealato has become used to it. It also makes being



crowned the world's best pastry chef all the more sweet. "I am amazed. It's enormous for me. I never would have guessed that my patisseries would go that far." With a frankness rare at the top of her profession, Prealato admitted that "they aren't exactly beautiful to look at.

"They may seem very simple but a huge amount of work goes into making them," she said. On average it takes a month to create a new recipe and her dessert menu changes rapidly with the seasons. Nor does the Earth generally shake when Prealato puts them on Instagram-unlike her Parisian rival Cedric Grolet who won the title last year and has more than 1.3 million fans who eagerly share his visually stunning creations. "My poor 20,000 followers!" Prealato joked.

Unlike Grolet-who like her is something of a sugar skeptic-she said she doesn't have the time to make her desserts look good by putting them on a white background. Nor does she have anything against traditional French patisserie, which she loves-she just doesn't want to spend her life making them. "I came here (to work with Ducasse) because I was sick of doing chocolate pistachio and cherry almond all the time. Some of the classics "are so good I don't see how you can revisit them," she said.

None of the members of her Franco-Italian family of cooks and patissiers have tasted her latest creations. "When I go home we don't talk about my work, and my parents don't really know what I am up to, which is fine by me. "We love to sit down together and eat food you can share-it's often not fancy at all." —AFP

World's most costly painting on Saudi prince's yacht

Since its sale for a record \$450 million, the whereabouts of the "Salvator Mundi," said to be painted by Leonardo da Vinci, has become one of the art world's greatest mysteries. On Monday, London-based art dealer Kenny Schachter, writing for the website Artnews, offered answers: the painting now resides on the gargantuan yacht owned by powerful Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Since its record-setting sale at Christie's in 2017, the painting, in which Jesus Christ is depicted emerging from darkness blessing the world with one hand while holding a transparent globe in the other, has never been exhibited in public, triggering doubts about its ownership, whereabouts and authenticity. Many art experts are split over whether the painting is genuine, saying it was not painted by the Italian master personally but instead by his workshop.

The Wall Street Journal first reported that the painting was bought by Saudi prince Badr bin Abdullah, who acted in the name of the Saudi crown prince, known by his initials MBS. Riyadh never confirmed or denied that report. AFP could not corroborate Schachter's column, and in a nod to the opaque nature of international art sales, he wrote, "In the murky Middle Eastern waters nothing is quite crystal clear." But citing several sources including two involved in the sale, Schachter claims the painting "was whisked away in the middle of the night on MBS's plane and relocated to his yacht, the Serene."

After saying the painting was originally found in shards and had to be reconstructed before its auction, he asks, "what harm could the occasional splash of seawater do?" Schachter later wrote that the painting will remain onboard the massive yacht until it is relocated to the Al-Ula governorate, which Saudi Arabia is aiming to transform into a culture and tourism destination. — AFP



In this file photo Christie's employees pose in front of a painting entitled 'Salvator Mundi' by Italian polymath Leonardo da Vinci at a photocall at Christie's auction house in central London ahead of its sale at Christie's New York. — AFP



French boxer Ana Gasquez trains in a gym of Havana. — AFP photos



Cuban boxer Idamelys Moreno (left) trains in a gym of Havana.



Cuban boxer Idamelys Moreno trains in a gym of Havana.

Women boxers striking a blow for equality in Cuba

In the musty funk of a Havana boxing gym, Idamelys Moreno smacks a series of whomping right hooks into a heavy punching bag. For the past four years, she has ripped it up in training to try to emulate dozens of Cuban men in winning Olympic boxing gold. But she and other big-hitting women are punching not so much a glass ceiling as a glass wall: In Cuba, only men are allowed to compete in boxing tournaments. "They haven't given us our chance," fumes Moreno, a muscular 27-year-old with burning ambition and a simmering frustration.

Ducking and feinting, her stance constantly shifts as she works her way around the swinging bag, the room resounding as her heavy blows dent its synthetic leather. The island's boxing greats beam down from posters on the walls, among them three-time Olympic champion Teofilo Stevenson.

"She's a boxer with a lot of enthusiasm and enormous physical capacities, but she is nowhere near her full potential yet," said her coach Emilio Correa, who won Olympic silver in 2008 and World Championship gold in 2005. Cubans are rightly proud of their unique boxing tradition which has brought a haul of 37 Olympic golds and 76 World Championship winner's medals—all by men. But featherweight Moreno—whose haymaking right fist has been honed by sparring with men—pleads: "If they'd give us the opportunity, we can also build on the medal collection that the men have won."

Moreno is not the only woman working the bags. Taking turns to spar with her are Yuria Pascual, a 26-year-old biologist, and Ana Gasquez, a French woman who says she was drawn to Cuba by the mystique of its boxing tradition. Ever ambitious, Moreno has set her sights on "a world and Olympic medal". Pascual says: "If men can do it, why can't we?"

Male bastion

It's an ugly paradox for these women that since 2006 Cuba has been represented in the female programs in all Olympic sports, including weightlifting and wrestling—but not in that last bastion of Cuban machismo, inside the ropes of a boxing ring. It is generally accepted here that boxing is a man's sport, far too dangerous to accommodate women. Elsewhere, gender equality in sports has evolved and boxing joined the ranks of women's Olympic events at the London Games in 2012. Moreno dismisses the views of Cuban men that boxing is too dangerous for her, insisting body protection is more than adequate.

"All combat sports are dangerous. But we have protection for the chest, the head and mouth." The official reluctance to recognize female boxing "will end up discouraging" young women who want to climb into the ring, says Moreno. They have role models aplenty across the globe, including Ireland's undisputed lightweight world champion Katie Taylor, whose path to professional success

began with Olympic gold at London 2012.

Help from the boys

Ironically, women are welcome to train in countless boxing gyms across Cuba and Gasquez acknowledges the gesture from male counterparts at boxing's grassroots level. "Boys help us, they don't discriminate against us," she says. It's the officials in suits that draw their ire. Women seemed primed for a breakthrough in 2016, when Cuban Boxing Federation President Alberto Puig announced the possibility of opening competition to females. But three years on, nothing has changed.

They continue to train, fueled by optimism that the Cuban Sports Institute may eventually give a green light to women's boxing ahead of the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo. For these young boxers, it's impossible not to think of Namibia Flores, held up as an example to women boxers but who reached the age of 40 — the age ceiling for competition—without ever realizing her dream of bringing a women's gold medal to Cuba. "I don't want the same thing happening us," vows Moreno.

Correa, the coach, says that if women's boxing is eventually sanctioned by Cuban authorities, the potential for the sport is "massive—because this is the island of boxing." Alcides Sagarra, considered by many as the father of Cuban boxing, believes it is only a matter of time before women take their place among the sport's icons. "Cuban women



Female boxers train in a gym of Havana.

cannot be denied their rights to participate in boxing competitions," said Sagarra, 82. He has a keen eye for developing talent, having trained more than 80 Cuban Olympic and world champions, including the legendary Stevenson who died in 2012. Their talent is still raw, he says, but is willing to make a prediction: "They will eventually have a good level." — AFP



Samoa bans hit Elton John biopic over gay sex scenes

Samoa has banned the blockbuster Elton John biopic "Rocketman" from cinemas over depictions of gay sex, which remains illegal in the Pacific island nation. Samoa's Principal Censor Leiataua Niuapu confirmed the ban to local media this week, saying the film contained too many scenes that were "not good for public viewing". Niuapu told the Samoa Observer that the movie "violates laws against same-sex marriage and doesn't go well with cultural and Christian beliefs here". "It's a good story, in that it's about an individual trying to move on in life," he said.

"He (Elton John) went through a difficult family life and managed to move on and become very successful. But there are acts that are not good for public viewing and against the law." Samoa is a devoutly Christian nation and gay sex can attract jail terms of up to seven years, according to London-based lobby group Human Dignity Trust, although it notes authorities do not actively enforce the laws. The country is also well known for its acceptance of fa'afafines—men who dress as women and adopt female mannerisms—known locally as the third sex.

"This censorship is yet another way for moral seekers to bash a few people for no good reason," Tuisina Ymania Brown, a Samoan fa'afafine who is co-secretary of Geneva-based rights group ILGA. She said fa'afafines were part of Samoa's cultural fabric and the "Rocketman" ban was a contradiction of the tolerance they enjoyed. "Now are we saying that art that celebrates fa'afafines are not allowed?" she told Newsline Samoa.

"The power of the church has now reached into censoring the celebration of art. There are more important issues we should focus on, such as gender-based violence (and the) church paying taxes." Samoa also banned the 2009 movie "Milk" about pioneering US gay activist Harvey Milk, but last year's "Bohemian Rhapsody" was screened without attracting any complaints. In Russia, the gay sex scenes were cut from "Rocketman", prompting condemnation from Elton John and the stars of the movie. — AFP



In this file photo US actress Julianne Moore poses as she arrives for the screening of the film "Les Misérables" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP

Czech film festival to honor Oscar-winner Julianne Moore

American Oscar-winning actress Julianne Moore will be honored at the Karlovy Vary film festival in the Czech Republic at the end of the month, organizers said yesterday. Moore won the 2014 Best Actress award for her role in "Still Alice". She is also known for "The Big Lebowski", "Hannibal", "The Hours" and "The Kids Are All Right." Moore will receive the Crystal Globe award "for outstanding contribution to world cinema" at the opening ceremony, the organizers said in a statement.

Together with her husband, screenwriter and director Bart Freundlich, Moore will introduce their latest film "After the Wedding". "Six Feet Under" and "Sharp Objects" star Patricia Clarkson will receive the same Crystal Globe at the final ceremony, the organizers said. The 54th edition of the festival in the western Czech spa city of Karlovy Vary, which sold 140,000 tickets to 501 screenings last year, will run from June 28 to July 6. — AFP



In this file photo Actor Kevin Hart (right), his wife Eniko Parish (left) and children Hendrix, Heaven and Kenzo walk the carpet at the 'The Secret Life of Pets 2' Los Angeles Premiere at Regency Village Theatre in Westwood, California. — AFP

'X-Men' flops as 'Secret Life of Pets 2' tops box office

"X-Men: Dark Phoenix" flopped to the franchise's worst opening weekend as its mutant superheroes were beaten at the box office by fellow new entry "Secret Life of Pets 2." "Dark Phoenix" could only conjure up \$32.8 million at North American theaters over the three-day weekend, industry watcher Exhibitor Relations said Monday. Its opening haul—by far the lowest of the dozen "X-Men" titles released over the past two decades—was described as "disastrous" by Variety.

Starring Game of Thrones' Sophie Turner alongside James McAvoy, Jennifer Lawrence, Michael Fassbender and Jessica Chastain, the movie cost \$200 million to make. It is said to be the final installment of the current "X-Men" film series. It was forced into second place by Universal's new animation "The Secret Life of Pets 2", which pocketed \$46.7 million over the same period. A sequel to the 2016 hit tale of what animals do when their owners are away, "Pets 2" features the voice of Harrison Ford as a straight-talking pooch.

In third place was Disney's live-action "Aladdin," at \$24.7 million. The Guy Ritchie feel-good film stars Will Smith as the genie. Dropping from last weekend's top spot to fourth place was "Godzilla: King of the Monsters," taking in \$15.5 million. And in fifth was Paramount's "Rocketman," the biopic about singer Elton John, at \$13.8 million. Actor Taron Egerton, who plays John, has drawn strong reviews, including a warm endorsement from the singer himself. Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were:

"Ma" (\$7.8 million)
"John Wick: Chapter 3 - Parabellum" (\$7.4 million)
"Avengers: Endgame" (\$4.9 million)
"Pokemon: Detective Pikachu" (\$3.2 million)
"Booksmart" (\$1.6 million). — AFP

Egypt asks UK to halt auction of Tutankhamun sculpture

The Egyptian embassy in London requested that Britain prevent the planned sale by Christie's of an ancient sculpture representing King Tutankhamun's head and return it to Egypt, Cairo said. "The Egyptian embassy in London requested the British foreign affairs ministry and the auction hall to stop the sale," Egypt's foreign ministry said. Christie's has announced that the brown quartzite head of the pharaoh—measuring 28.5 centimeters high and more than 3,000 years old—would take place on July 4. It said it expected the sale,

from the Resandro Collection—one of the world's "most renowned private collections of Egyptian art"—to fetch more than four million pounds (4.5 million euros, \$5.1 million). The foreign ministry also requested the sale of all Egyptian items planned by Christie's during auctions on July 3 and July 4 be stopped, stressing the importance of securing valid ownership certificates before the sale of these items. The statement also said the antiquities ministry had requested the UN cultural agency UNESCO stop the sales. — AFP





Models present creations by British designer Oliver Spencer on the second day of the Spring/Summer 2020 London Fashion Week Men's fashion event in London.



ZOMBIES AND WOMEN: LONDON MEN'S FASHION

Models in zombie make-up and a growing number of women on the catwalks were among the eye-catching features of Men's Fashion Week, which wrapped up in London on Monday. The models from the Art School collection by designer duo Eden Loweth and Tom Barratt wore white contact lenses and vacant expressions as they sashayed down the catwalk. The show was accompanied by the live sounds of singer-guitarist Anna Calvi, surrounded by an occult salt circle. Barratt himself took part in the catwalk show wearing a leopard-print dress showing part of his torso.



Blurred lines
Highlighting the trend of gender fluidity, more women took part in the catwalk shows and the line between masculine and feminine styles was increasingly blurred. "I don't think it is especially modern to tell people what they should wear. I think it is for them to choose," designer Edward Crutchley, one of the rising stars of British fashion, told journalists after his show. "It is never a piece designed for a man or a woman, it is never specifically gendered," he said of his collection, featuring baggy trousers, plunging necklines and summery prints with flowers and parrots in soft pastels. "I wanted beauty and glamour and I wanted that it looked expensive... because it is expensive!" he said.

Chunky trainers
Worn with a blue wool jacket with purple satin sleeves at Alexander McQueen or with a canary yellow and turquoise number at Iceberg, chunky basketball trainers were as ubiquitous as they would have been in the 1980s. Irish designer Robyn Lynch meanwhile went for more casual footwear comfort with large sandals worn with socks.

Burnt orange
The spring/summer collections for next year looked like a sunset to sea. The dominant colors were burnt orange, sand and sky blue, including in the collection by Turkish designer Hussein Chalayan. Named "Post-Colonial Body", the collection explores the influence of colonization on Japan and South America. Orange and



Models present creations by fashion house Fashion East on the second day of the Spring/Summer 2020 London Fashion Week Men's fashion event in London. — AFP

blue also featured in the collection by Oliver Spencer, who was inspired by the night markets of Hong Kong and Wong Kar-wai's cult film "In the Mood for Love".

Spencer told AFP after the show that his style was that of "a travelling guy... he is very sustainable, he is really into linen, into organic cottons, he cares about the environment. "He wants to invest in good pieces of clothing, he doesn't want short fast fashion," he said.

sportif". Saul Nash also re-imagined sportswear with his collection featuring technical performance wear pieces such as white running vests, steel gray nylon pants and blue tracksuits. The designs by Nash, a dancer and designer, were loose-fitting to allow for easier movement. Nash said he was "inspired by the kinetic body and the subversion of sportswear". — AFP

'Le Goth sportif'
Black jumpers, heavy chains and earrings worn with basketball pumps with Vibram soles. This was the look that Italian fashion house Iceberg dubbed "Le Goth





Guillaume de Bernadac teaching children how to use cutlery during an etiquette and manners class in central Shanghai. — AFP photos



Guillaume de Bernadac (back left) and Miona Milakov (back right) posing for photographs with children after an etiquette and manners class in central Shanghai.

CHILDREN OF CHINESE ELITE WALK RED LINE TO 'PERFECTION'



Danielle Liu balancing a book on her head during an etiquette and manners class in central Shanghai.



Danielle Liu eating during an etiquette and manners class in central Shanghai.



Miona Milakov (center) teaching children how to balance a book on their head during an etiquette and manners class in central Shanghai.

Danielle Liu stares straight ahead, a book balanced precariously on her head, and carefully walks along a red line on the floor. The 10-year-old's mother hopes the exercise will help make Danielle "a little lady" and allow her to shine among the offspring of China's ultra-competitive elite. Danielle is with seven other young children spending their Saturday holed up on the top floor of a five-star hotel in central Shanghai for a class in etiquette and manners. The four boys look dapper in bow ties, suits and shiny black shoes. The four girls are all billowing dresses and angelic smiles.

"You have a stability problem," Guillaume de Bernadac, the self-styled French doyen of all things etiquette in Shanghai, tells one boy of his attempt to walk and keep the book on his head. If the children, who in this class are aged between nearly seven and 11, enjoy that exercise, they are less keen on having to sit straight and keep their elbows off the table at lunch. "I'm scared," Zachary repeats as he attempts to eat his pea-and-mint soup while keeping two pieces of white paper tucked under his armpits. The paper is to ensure they eat with their elbows in, but soon enough, the carpeted floor is littered with A4. The children also have a red ribbon tied behind their shoulders to stop them slouching. Those that do are gently upbraided by de Bernadac or his staff in English or Chinese.

'Fierce competition'

Danielle's mother Cheng Liyan, who also uses the English name Shirley, wants her only child to be "perfect". "To be lady-like, to be athletic, also academic, I hope she can develop herself in an all-round way," said Cheng, a teacher, in near-faultless English. Danielle already takes part in extra-curricular swimming, piano and dancing, which is her favorite. "I always talk to her and ask if she likes it," said Cheng, but admitted there is



Miona Milakov (left) guiding Zoey Zhang on how to walk during an etiquette and manners class in central Shanghai.

"fierce competition" to stand out in Shanghai, China's most international city and which has a population of about 25 million.

Cheng and the other parents pay the 31-year-old de Bernadac 2,688 yuan (\$390) for four hours of practical instruction for one child. Against a soundtrack of classical music, the children learn social skills, dining manners and deportment—hence the books on heads to teach them to walk nicely. Other exercises include how to introduce themselves and greet people, including "air kisses", and even what topics are appropriate to discuss at the dinner table. De Bernadac, who first came to China as a student,

says that demand has surged since he started his company Academie de Bernadac in 2014. Shanghai authorities recently approached him about designing programmes for schools across the city and he also does classes for adults and private firms.

'Fast-tracked to adulthood'

De Bernadac is adamant that he is not simply trying to make the kids more Western. "Our point is really to say if you go abroad, or even within China if you move to an international environment where you may be facing other cultures, we give you the keys to adapt," he said. De Bernadac has no formal training, but according to him, his great grandfather and his great-great uncle were sent to Morocco in the 1920s as tutors to the nobility.

Among the subjects they taught was "how to be polite, how to behave" and the then-future king, Hassan II, was among their students, he said. De Bernadac, who sports a cravat and well-rehearsed smile, said that the interest in his classes in Shanghai and other main cities in China shows the country wants to be "part of the global village". "The elite are ready to make some effort, some steps, towards the international community," he added.

Cheng, sitting elegantly next to daughter Danielle when class is done, brushes off concerns that at their age, these children should be playing outside and having fun. Apart from the dining part, the children mainly seem to enjoy being fast-tracked to adulthood. "Kids should be kids, that's true, but at least they should have some discipline," said Cheng. She explained: "For example in a public situation, they can't yell, they can't scream. It's so inappropriate." — AFP

British art dealer unveils pioneering robot artist

Billed as "one of the most exciting artists of our time", Ai-Da differs from generations of past masters in one inescapable way: she is a robot. Ai-Da is the brainchild of Aidan Meller, who claims she is the world's first ultra-realistic humanoid artist, able to draw creatively thanks to in-built artificial intelligence (AI) technology. The 46-year-old art dealer unveiled Ai-Da dressed in a brown wig and period-style painter's blouse in Oxford on Wednesday, ahead of an exhibition of her first works opening next week in the English university city. "She is fully algorithmic... fully creative," Meller told reporters, standing alongside his creation. "She is not an expensive printer. We do not know what she's going to do," he insisted.

As he spoke, an occasionally blinking Ai-Da, built with cameras for eyes and a robotic arm to draw with, worked on a sketch of him from behind a desk. Forty-five minutes later, a delicate expressionist drawing of Meller, comprising deft pencil strokes, emerged. Several dozen of Ai-Da's other works adorned the nearby walls. They include similarly styled pencil sketches of historical figures from Leonardo da Vinci to Alan Turing. There are also colorful paintings and sculptures based on her initial sketches, completed by human assistants. Ai-Da can currently only hold certain hard tools like pencils, not brushes. Meller told AFP the artwork was "genuine innovation".

Capturing the zeitgeist

Meller, also an art gallery director, first dreamed up Ai-Da—named after Ada Lovelace, the English mathematician and writer often called the world's first computer coder—



An oil painting entitled Bee-Shattered Space, created by other artists based on an illustration by Ai-Da the AI humanoid robot artist is seen in an exhibition space during a launch event for Ai-Da's first solo exhibition in Oxford.

eight years ago. But he only began seriously working on the project in 2017, after concluding that the common thread linking history's greatest artists was that they had all captured "the zeitgeist of their time". Reasoning that the coming age of AI was today's equivalent, Meller set about creating a robotic artist to fuse his ideas into one grand artistic endeavor. "It's a nuts project, completely left of field," he said.

With the help of British robotics company Engineered Arts, and researchers at both Leeds and Oxford universi-

ties, Ai-Da was finally completed in April. Meller was eager for her to adopt a female persona because he argued the art and coding worlds need more women represented. "She's got a persona, she's an avatar, she's fiction, she's real," he said.

The avatar uses her camera "eyes" to capture what is in front of her, which an internal computer—and its machine-learning technology—translates into the coordinates of a corresponding image to be plotted on a page. She can move, allowing what Meller calls "performance art" which features in several videos at the upcoming exhibition.

Meller hopes that Ai-Da will also eventually be able to intuitively communicate and perhaps describe her own artwork. But for the moment she is given voice by a human helper listening from her home studio outside Oxford, who responded to reporters' questions.

Racking up sales

Despite technology's paramount role in the work produced by Ai-Da, Meller is adamant it is also the fruit of a "highly creative" process. "She has the incredible technologies and abilities to produce remarkable, innovative, creative artwork," he said, noting no two works are ever the same.

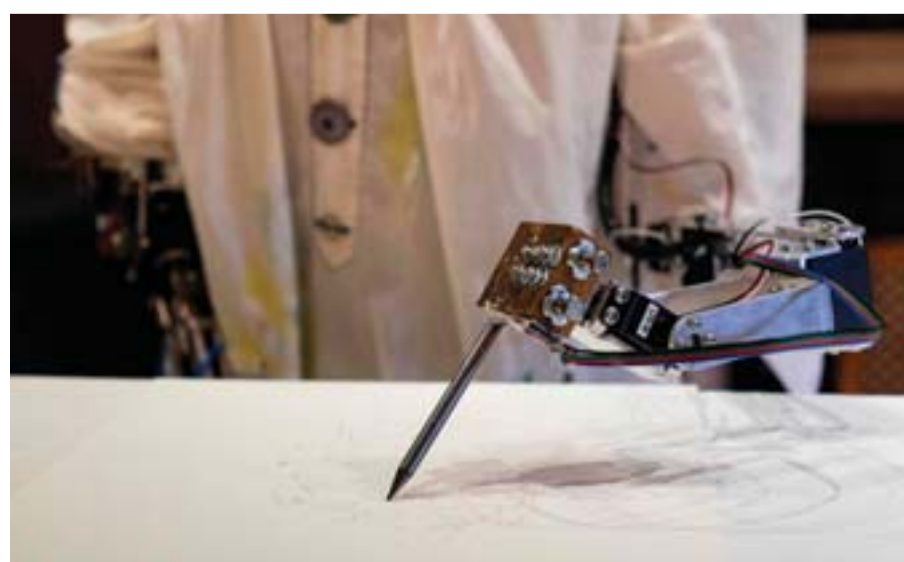
Meller is cagey about how much the project has cost, saying only that funding has come from sales of the resulting artworks. He noted that everything in this first exhibition had already sold, for over £1 million (\$1.27 million, 1.13 million euros). — AFP



A picture shows the back of Ai-Da the AI humanoid robot artist.



Gallery Director and inventor of Ai-Da the AI humanoid robot artist, Aidan Meller, (right) poses with Ai-Da and an oil on canvas painting (left) created by other artists based on a sketch by Ai-Da during a launch event for its first solo exhibition in Oxford.



Ai-Da the AI humanoid robot artist draws a portrait of her creator Aidan Meller.



An illustration by Ai-Da the AI humanoid robot artist described as depicting British Mathematician and code breaker Alan Turing is seen at a press conference.



This aerial photo taken yesterday shows a farmer drying wheat with a tractor during harvest season in Lianyungang in China's eastern Jiangsu province. — AFP

Israeli court finalizes Jerusalem church land sale to settler group

JERUSALEM: Israel's top court gave final approval yesterday for the 2004 sale of properties by the Greek Orthodox Church to a Jewish pro-settlement organization in mainly Palestinian areas of annexed east Jerusalem. In its Monday decision, the supreme court rejected the church's appeal against a district court's 2017 approval of the same deal. Three companies linked to a group named Ateret Cohanim in 2004 secured the long-term lease of three buildings owned by the Greek Orthodox Church—the Petra hostel and the New Imperial Hotel, both located by the Jaffa Gate, and a residential building in the Muslim Quarter.

Ateret Cohanim works to "Judaize" east Jerusalem in its entirety by purchasing real estate in the city's Palestinian areas through front companies. The deal made Ateret Cohanim the owner of the majority of the properties between the Old City's Jaffa Gate and Arab market. A source close to the Greek Orthodox patriarchy of the early 2000s told AFP in 2017 that the church was unaware of the land sale. The sale triggered Palestinian anger and led to the 2005 dismissal of Patriarch Irineos I.

In a statement yesterday, Palestinian Greek Orthodox Archbishop Atallah Hanna described the

Supreme Court's decision as "illegal and illegitimate". "The seizure of the historic Jaffa Gate properties by extremist settler organizations is a new catastrophe to the misfortunes suffered by the Christians in this Holy City," he said, calling for the deal to be cancelled in a lawful manner.

The Greek Orthodox Church is the largest and wealthiest church in the Holy Land. Its Jerusalem patriarchate commands massive wealth, largely in land portfolios in Israel, the occupied West Bank and Jordan, with Palestinians often accusing it of selling or leasing properties to Israel. Israel took over mainly Palestinian east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War and later annexed it in a move never recognized by the international community. It now considers the entire city its capital, citing the Jewish historical and biblical connection there.

The Palestinians see east Jerusalem, which includes the Old City, as the capital of their future state. Some 320,000 Palestinians live in east Jerusalem, while the Israeli settler population there has grown to 210,000. The Jerusalem district court had dealt with claims against the deal for nine years before approving it. The supreme court said the earlier ruling was sound and "the appeal is rejected". — AFP



JERUSALEM: This picture taken yesterday shows a view of the Petra Hostel (right) and the New Imperial Hotel (left) in the Old City of Jerusalem near Jaffa Gate. — AFP

First electric scooter death in Paris as controversy rages

PARIS: A man died in Paris after his electric scooter collided with a lorry, sources said yesterday, the first such fatality involving the increasingly-popular devices in the French capital as concern grows over their safety. The 25-year-old was riding the scooter in the bustling Goutte d'Or neighbourhood in the north of the city when the accident happened late Monday. He was rushed to hospital where he died of his injuries, the Paris emergency services said.

The lorry driver has been detained with prosecutors opening an investigation into "involuntary homicide". A source close to the case, who asked not to be named, said the lorry driver had priority on the road at the time. It was the first deadly accident involving an electric scooter within the city limits, police and the mayor's office confirmed. According to press reports, an 81-year-old man died in April in Levallois-Perret outside Paris, days after being knocked over by an electric scooter.

Just a year after they first appeared on the Paris streets, mushrooming electric scooters have become a gigantic headache for the Paris authorities who are now rushing to implement some kind of framework for their use. Monday's deadly accident has "underlined the need to emphasize the elementary rules that users must respect," deputy mayor Emmanuel Gregoire told AFP.

"The police need to act to penalize users who, for example, cross a red light," he said.

Mayor Anne Hidalgo had on Thursday announced a ban on parking electric scooters on the pavement and said their speed on roads should be limited to 20 km per hour. Paris has already introduced fines of €135 for riding electric scooters on the pavement. Fans have embraced scooters as a quick and cheap way to get around since the "dockless" devices are unlocked with a phone app and can be left anywhere when a ride is finished.

But critics say they are a grave safety risk both for users and pedestrians while scooters strewn randomly across the city have also become an eyesore. French Transport Minister Elisabeth Borne yesterday said she was in favor of new mobility options but admitted the development of the scooter market was "totally anarchic, and this poses safety problems". She said legislation would be in the pipeline later this year to provide a framework on rules for scooter usage.

But the government was still against making it obligatory to wear a helmet on a scooter or on a bicycle for the over 12s, she said. "The French are tired of having obligations imposed on them. What we recommend is a helmet is worn and everyone takes their responsibility," she said. The mobility benefits of scooters, as well as the dangers inherent in using them, is making their increasing popularity an issue not just in France but across Europe. Germany in May authorized battery-powered scooters on its streets and cycle paths but banned them from pavements to protect pedestrians. Also in May, a young man aged 27 died after being hit by a car while riding an electric scooter just after they were launched in the Swedish city of Helsingborg. — AFP

value of inventories has been reduced from some KD 8.6 billion to around KD 4.5 billion, adding that transfers between chapters of the budget are mainly to finance the employment of Kuwaitis.

The two lawmakers had charged that the ministry of finance is responsible for losses of billions of dollars in Kuwaiti investments abroad and locally, some of them very suspicious. MP Adasani said hundreds of millions of dinars were lost by the social security institution by not taking timely action against its former managing director who fled the country, claiming the ministry has not taken proper legal action against him.

He highlighted a corruption case in port investments, alleging an organized gang was stealing public funds through some fake companies, charging that some overseas interference has taken place to protect those involved. Adasani also said some KD 290 million was lost by the Touristic Enterprises Co. MP Mulla claimed the government keeps investment information confidential because it does not want anyone to see its management failures.

Indian toddler dies after 110...

Continued from Page 1

lawmaker, told AFP. The toddler, who had oxygen supplies but no food or water, was flown in an air ambulance to a hospital in the capital Chandigarh where he was declared dead. Authorities had dug a hole parallel to the well and inserted a 36-inch wide pipe into it, in an attempt to reach the trapped toddler.

Villagers angry about the failed rescue mission gathered at the site Tuesday and shouted slogans against the state government. Protesters also blocked a main road briefly before police were deployed to prevent further trouble. The rescue operation was "delayed due

to lack of required technical assistance," resident Kultar Singh was quoted as saying by local media.

The bore well was dug by the child's family in 1984. They used to draw water from it to irrigate the fields but stopped using it after 1991. Punjab Chief Minister Amarinder Singh has ordered a crackdown on open wells across the state. "Very sad to hear about the tragic death of young Fatehveer," he tweeted yesterday. "Have sought reports from all DCs (deputy commissioners) regarding any open bore well so that such terrible accidents can be prevented in the future."

The tragedy underscored the dangers of uncovered wells which are common across northern India. A one-and-a-half-year-old child was rescued in March, in Haryana state, after being trapped for two days. In 2006, a six-year-old child was recovered safely in the same state after being stuck in a well for 48 hours. — AFP

UK and Canada co-host world's first...

Continued from Page 1

Media freedom is also under threat from increasing intolerance of independent reporting, widespread and growing corruption, and the breakdown of law and order. We must work together to stop the alarming increase in attacks on journalists and the media. Next month's conference is an important milestone in our two governments' wider media freedom campaign. It is a response to the UN Secretary-General's call "to protect journalists and media workers and to create the conditions they need to do their essential work, and to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators of attacks".

Canada and the UK want to see a renewed and strengthened commitment from the international community to the safety and protection of journalists. The conference itself will seek to arrive at commitments and a joint pledge along four main themes:

First, participants will discuss measures to enhance the safety of journalists, with particular focus on female journalists, activating international mechanisms, and ways of ending impunity through more prosecutions of those abusing journalists' rights.

Second, the conference will look at national legal and professional frameworks for protecting journalists and safeguarding media freedom. We anticipate in particular the launch of Joint Declarations by Special Rapporteurs on Media Freedom.

Third, there will be a focus on rebuilding trust in the media and countering disinformation.

Fourth, we will look at media ownership and its impact on media independence, with a view to coming up with recommendations on media sustainability.

Our joint expectation is that the London Conference will inspire common action worldwide. All participants will be invited to make a solemn pledge and specific commitments. Countries will also be encouraged to design National Action Plans on journalists' safety, supported by an international task force. We also plan to hold the first meeting of the High Level Panel of Legal Experts on Media Freedom, to be convened by the Foreign Secretary's Special Envoy Amal Clooney, and to launch a global Media Freedom Defence Fund to support follow-up.

As the British Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt said in a recent speech, "We want to build a coalition of governments committed to a stronger diplomatic response when media freedom is curtailed, and to ensure greater support when countries do the right thing, remove restrictions and push out the frontiers of free expression.... A free media is not an optional extra, still less a 'Western' value: it forms one pillar of a thriving society, benefiting people in every corner of the world."

The Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Hon. Chrystia Freeland, PC, MP said:

In any democracy, journalists must have the ability to report facts freely, to defend, expose and advance the truth without fear of retaliation, reprisal, violence or imprisonment. Canada will always defend this right. We are very pleased to co-host this conference with the United Kingdom, and we look forward to joining all participants in London later this year."

Finance minister defends foreign...

Continued from Page 1

Hajraf said more than 95 percent of the issues raised in the grilling were from long before he became a minister, which means that raising these issues involves a constitutional violation. He said the state's finances and investments have improved, saying this will be illustrated when the country's financial status is discussed in the Assembly, adding that such finances and those of defense will be kept confidential.

The minister declined to explain what is happening in the Philippines with regards to Kuwaiti investment in order to safeguard measures being taken by the investment authorities. Hajraf said it is not possible that "all our investments everywhere will be successful, because investments are subject to loss and profit". He said the

Sports

Diamondbacks top Philadelphia in record 13-homer game

Rockies out-slug Cubs despite Chicago's 3-HR inning

PHILADELPHIA: The Diamondbacks hit a franchise-record eight home runs, and they combined with the Phillies for a major-league-record 13 homers as Arizona won 13-8 at Philadelphia on Monday. Arizona's Eduardo Escobar hit two home runs and finished with four hits and five RBIs. Ildemaro Vargas also hit two home runs while Jarrod Dyson, Ketel Marte, David Peralta and Alex Avila each homered for the Diamondbacks. Marte had three hits and two runs as the Diamondbacks won their fifth in a row. The Diamondbacks' previous season high for home runs in a game was five. The Phillies added five home runs—two by Scott Kingery and one apiece for Jean Segura, Rhys Hoskins and Jay Bruce. Kingery also had a triple in his 3-for-5 game for the Phillies, who dropped their second in a row.

ROCKIES 6, CUBS 5

Charlie Blackmon homered and had three hits, Nolan Arenado and Ian Desmond also hit home runs, and Colorado beat Chicago in Denver. Ryan McMahon had a tiebreaking single in the eighth to lift the Rockies. Scott Oberg (4-0) pitched an inning of relief, and Wade Davis got the final three outs for his eighth save. David Bote, Anthony Rizzo and Kyle Schwarber all hit third-inning homers for the Cubs.

ANGELS 5, DODGERS 3

Wilfredo Tovar's fielder's choice plated the tiebreaking run, and Mike Trout smacked a two-run homer as the Los Angeles Angels rallied to beat the Los Angeles Dodgers to begin the Freeway Series at Anaheim, Calif. The Angels pushed across two runs in the bottom of the eighth without benefit of a hit as they won for just the third time in the past eight games. Ty Buttrey (4-2) worked the eighth, and Hansel Robles worked out of a ninth-inning jam for his eighth save. Chris Taylor delivered a two-run double for the Dodgers, who fell for only the fourth time in the last 17 games.

BRAVES 13, PIRATES 7

Host Atlanta hit a season-high five home runs, including two by Ozzie Albies and a grand slam by

Ronald Acuna Jr., and the Braves rolled over Pittsburgh. Acuna delivered his 15th homer to highlight a five-run outburst in the second inning that erased a 1-0 deficit and put the Braves ahead to stay. Albies added a solo homer in the third and another in the seventh, his eighth and ninth. Freddie Freeman hit his 18th homer in the fourth, a two-run shot. Atlanta third baseman Josh Donaldson and Pittsburgh starter Joe Musgrove and manager Clint Hurdle were ejected in the first inning. Donaldson was grazed by a fastball and exchanged words with Musgrove. Donaldson shoved catcher Elias Diaz, who was trying to shield his pitcher, and players from both teams rushed onto the field.

RAYS 6, ATHLETICS 2

Aided by three home runs, Charlie Morton extended his unbeaten streak to 21 games with seven shutout innings as Tampa Bay won the opener of a three-game series with Oakland in St. Petersburg, Fla. Brandon Lowe, Kevin Kiermaier and Ji-Man Choi hit two-run homers, helping the Rays prevail in their first meeting of the season with the A's. Morton (8-0) struggled early but retired the last 14 batters he faced before turning a 4-0 lead over to the Tampa Bay bullpen. The veteran, whose unbeaten streak began last August against Oakland, allowed just two hits and two walks in his seven innings. He struck out seven.

RANGERS 4, RED SOX 3 (11 INNINGS)

Elvis Andrus hit a tiebreaking single in the 11th inning as Texas rallied past host Boston to begin a four-game series. Andrus' game-winner drove in Danny Santana, who began the frame with his fourth hit of the game, a double. Jesse Chavez (2-1) escaped a bases-loaded jam with two outs in the 10th to get the win for Texas, and Chris Martin pitched a perfect bottom of the 11th for his second save. Ryan Brasier (2-3) took the loss for Red Sox, who tied the game in the bottom of the ninth after blowing the lead in the top of the ninth.

CARDINALS 4, MARLINS 1

Marcell Ozuna scored two runs in his return to his



PHILADELPHIA: Jarrod Dyson #11 of the Arizona Diamondbacks lined out to end the top of the fifth inning against the Philadelphia Phillies at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The Diamondbacks defeated the Phillies 13-8. — AFP

former home stadium, and Michael Wacha pitched six scoreless innings as St. Louis won at Miami. Ozuna went 2-for-3 with a double, a single and a walk as the Cardinals snapped a three-game losing streak despite getting just four hits. Ozuna is 5-for-7 in his past two games and is hitting .462 in seven career games against the Marlins. Wacha (4-2) improved his career record against Miami to 3-0. He allowed five hits—all singles—and two walks, striking out four in his first win since May 9. He had been relegated to the bullpen after losing his second straight start on May 22.

NATIONALS 12, WHITE SOX 1

Trea Turner doubled, tripled and homered, and Anibal Sanchez pitched six strong innings to boost

Washington past host Chicago. Kurt Suzuki smacked a ninth-inning grand slam as part of a six-run rally that punctuated the Washington rout. Suzuki knocked in five runs, Adam Eaton had three hits, and Juan Soto, Howie Kendrick and Victor Robles added two hits apiece. Washington's 16-hit attack proved to be plenty of support for Sanchez (2-6), who limited Chicago to one run on four hits and one walk with one strikeout.

METS-YANKEES, PPD

The opener of the annual Subway Series between the New York Yankees and New York Mets at Yankee Stadium was postponed due to heavy rain. The game will be made up as part of a day-night doubleheader Tuesday. — Reuters

Land of the rising scrum: Japan packs down for World Cup

FUKUOKA: A newly refurbished stadium, tattoo-friendly baths and enough traditional street bars to satisfy the thirstiest fan: Japan's southern port city of Fukuoka is pulling out all the stops for the Rugby World Cup.

With just 100 days to go until rugby's showcase kicks off in Asia for the first time, organisers are confident everything is in place for what could be the most open World Cup yet. Fukuoka's 20,000-seat, saucer-shaped stadium, surrounded by trees, is being spruced up with new lighting, seats and screens, and fresh turf.

The city hosts three group matches, including games involving Ireland and France, and organisers are leaving nothing to chance amid headlines of beer shortages and bans on tattoos at onsens, traditional Japanese baths.

Onsens generally bar people with tattoos, given their historic link to organised crime in Japan, but officials are surveying establishments willing to relax the rules for the tournament.

"By the time the tournament rolls around, we will be able to offer a full list of onsens that fans can enjoy," Kazuhiro Shinohara, head of the regional organising committee, told AFP. But with beer-guzzling supporters descending en masse, Shinohara is in no doubt as to the priority after fears host cities had underestimated rugby fans' drinking capacity. "The biggest point in our view is nightlife and alcohol—more than anything, rugby fans drink a lot of beer," he said, adding he was briefing establishments to ensure kegs are full.

Fukuoka will be the only host city where fans can slake their thirst at traditional street bars, or "yatai", tiny stalls seating only a dozen or so which sell booze and comfort food.

BAR-HOPPING FANS

A Fukuoka speciality, around 100 yatai line the city streets, the idea being to visit several in an evening—good news for bar-hopping fans.

Business was clearly booming for Frenchman Remy Grenard, 42, a rare foreign yatai owner, with several customers waiting for a coveted spot at his bar.

Offering wine and cassoulet stew, a French twist on



FUKUOKA: A ground keeper works on the pitch at the Fukuoka Hakatanomori stadium, one of the venues for the 2019 Rugby World Cup, in Fukuoka. — AFP

the traditional offering, Grenard is hoping for a flood of visitors during the World Cup.

"They told me there would be 3,000 French fans in one day," joked Grenard as he chatted with customers, only stopping to extinguish a brief kitchen fire or pose for selfies with locals. "Only problem, I've only got 10 seats and I would need a month to feed them all!"

After previously warning local organisers to raise their game, tournament director Alan Gilpin told AFP they were "exactly where we want to be with 100 days to go". Ticket sales had shown "incredible demand", Gilpin said. "We're heading for a sell-out, so that's great." On the pitch, Gilpin said there were "genuinely more contenders than there have been in a World Cup for a very long time" with "more unpredictability" than ever.

AN 'UNFAMILIAR' SPORT

Not everything has been plain sailing though, with a recent mix-up on the ticketing website forcing refund requests to refund tickets listed for the wrong venue. The ejection of Japan's Sunwolves from Super

down with my emotions," Thomas said Monday after practicing at sun-drenched Pebble.

"I just feel like he handled that really well. So maybe if I got in that scenario then I could — I hate to say channel my inner BK, to boost his ego—but definitely show some of those characteristics." Thomas has had his own experience defending a big lead. He took a seven-stroke lead into the final day of the 2017 Sony Open, and won by the same margin. "It's still, to this day, the most nervous I've been teeing off," Thomas said, adding that the pressure only increased with reporters helpfully pointing out that "No one has ever blown a seven-shot lead in the history of the PGA Tour on Sunday."

"Every question I got was led with that," he said. "It was tough at the Sony Open. So I can't imagine how it was at the PGA Championship." Koepka passed the test and arrived at Pebble Beach this week chasing history. He can become just the second golfer, after Willie Anderson in 1903, 1904 and 1905 to win three straight US Open championships after his victories at Erin Hills in 2017 and wind-whipped Shinnecock Hills last year.

Thomas says there's no better place to pursue such a feat than the scenic course on the rugged northern

Rugby, meanwhile, has raised doubts about how to capitalise on the World Cup to build the game in the country and across Asia. On the streets of Fukuoka too, organisers face a challenge to promote rugby in baseball-mad Japan.

"I am not personally interested in it," said Tomoaki Ueda, a 50-year-old salesman, adding that his American-football-playing colleague is more excited. "I am from the baseball generation."

Takashi Tsukamoto, a 35-year-old maintenance worker, admitted: "I don't even know when it will be held. Baseball and football are big in Fukuoka—rugby is not even shown on regular TV."

Kazuhiro Obata, who is in charge of supervising the matches in Fukuoka, is aware of the issue, admitting rugby is "unfamiliar for many Japanese" but urged the public to seize a "once-in-a-lifetime" chance to see the world's best. "Our duty is to convey to people how brilliant it is," he said. "If they watch it, I am absolutely convinced people would feel the appeal of rugby. There's no sport like it." — AFP

California coast.

"Every major has their 'Oh, wow, you won the US Open at Pebble Beach or you won the Open Championship at St. Andrews,'" Thomas said. "This is as good as it gets for a US Open."

Koepka was on the course Monday. So was 15-time major champion Tiger Woods—whose 15-shot US Open triumph at Pebble in 2000 remains a monumental achievement. "From what I've heard from everybody, the course is absolutely perfect," said Thomas, who limited himself to the practice areas on Monday. "Jordan (Spieth) said it's the best poa annua greens he's ever seen in his life."

"I'm excited to check it out. I really do love US Opens," Thomas said. "I love the test, the grind. They just have a different feel to them, like all the majors do." With an iconic venue at their disposal, the US Golf Association will be under the microscope.

Woods and world number three Rory McIlroy went on record last month saying they wished the USGA would go back to traditional US Open style course set-up of tight fairways and dense rough, and perhaps forego some of the gimmicky multiple teeing grounds, graduated rough and chipping areas that have featured in recent years.—AFP

Stronger, faster, but not higher: Tokyo Olympics to warn on weed

TOKYO: In what you might call a joint statement, Tokyo 2020 organisers yesterday noted the need to warn countries with relaxed cannabis laws that weed isn't allowed in Japan.

"There are countries and regions around the world that have relaxed rules recently on the use of cannabis," noted Tokyo 2020 CEO Toshiko Muto.

"The use of cannabis constitutes a violation of the law in Japan and that needs to be fully communicated," he added. Muto said the topic was raised by a member of the Tokyo 2020 executive board as something that should be transmitted to the heads of country teams when they visit Tokyo ahead of the Games.

Cannabis rules in Japan are strict, with up to five years' prison for personal use and seven years for dealing. Cannabis is also listed as a performance-enhancing drug by the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The US anti-doping agency USADA notes on its website that marijuana could "decrease anxiety and tension, resulting in better sport performance under pressure". "Due to the illegal nature of marijuana in most countries, the use or abuse of marijuana does not exhibit the ethics and moral judgment that upholds the spirit of sport," the body adds.

The issue hit the headlines in Japan when two Japanese snowboarders were punished after traces of marijuana were detected in their hair following a party in December 2015.

One of the athletes admitted taking the drug at a party while on tour in Colorado, where cannabis was legalised for recreational purposes in 2012, provided the user is 21 years old. Skateboarding and surfing, two counter-culture pursuits with reputedly high rates of drug use, are among the sports that will be contested at Tokyo 2020. — AFP

Thomas hopes for chance to 'channel inner Koepka'

PEBBLE BEACH: Justin Thomas says missing the PGA Championship with a wrist injury was difficult but instructive, and he hopes he'll have a chance to apply what he learned watching Brooks Koepka's Bethpage triumph when the US Open tees off this week at Pebble Beach.

"I feel like I learned a lot," said the world number seven, who claimed his lone major title at the PGA Championship at Quail Hollow in 2017. The seven-shot lead Koepka took into the final round at Bethpage last month dwindled to one stroke on the back nine before he emerged with the victory—his fourth major triumph.

"Watching how he handled that and the adversity that was thrown at him and just the shots that he hit when he needed to, because I know that I can get a little bit up and



HAMILTON: Justin Thomas of the United States plays his shot from the third tee during the final round of the RBC Canadian Open at Hamilton Golf and Country Club in Hamilton, Canada. — AFP

Sports

Finch hopes washouts don't hurt Australia's World Cup

Australia call-up Mitchell Marsh after Stoinis's side strain

TAUNTON: Australia captain Aaron Finch hopes the holders don't become the latest World Cup team to be derailed by bad weather. Heavy rain has forced two no-results in the World Cup so far and Finch has been anxiously eyeing the forecast to see if Australia could be the next victims when they face Pakistan at Taunton today.

Pakistan's match against Sri Lanka was washed out on Friday before the clash between South Africa and the West Indies was abandoned after less than eight overs play on Monday. There is rain predicted in the Taunton area today and Finch conceded luck with the weather could play a role in who makes the semi-finals from the 10-team group stage.

"I think it (weather) might play a huge part in the next few days," Finch told reporters yesterday. "Next week it starts fine and looks good across the country for the remainder of the tournament. "So it's important that you get early wins on the board because you don't want to be on the wrong end of a couple of washouts that might leave you just outside that top four."

Australia failed to qualify for the semi-finals of the 2017 Champions Trophy in England following their rained-off matches against New Zealand and Bangladesh before they lost to England on D/L method.

If the match does get underway, Finch expects unpredictable Pakistan to provide a stern test. They lost to the West Indies by seven wickets in their opening match, but shocked tournament favourites England

with a fine performance.

"I think Pakistan are obviously a very dangerous side," Finch said of Pakistan, who have only won one of their last 14 matches against Australia. "We've seen consistently throughout, especially ICC tournaments, that they win a lot of games and they get themselves in a position to win the tournament.

"They had a great Champions Trophy. So regardless of what kind of form Pakistan go in with, they're always incredibly dangerous." Pakistan survived a defeat against India in their opening game of the 2017 Champions Trophy before crushing their arch rivals in the final, leaving Finch a firm admirer of several of their players.

"They've got some world-class players. Obviously Babar (Azam) is in great touch batting at No. 3 and holding their batting together," Finn said. "(Mohammad) Amir coming back and he looks to be back to his best. He's swinging the ball again. Wahab (Riaz) has been fast and aggressive. Shadab (Khan) is a great bowler.

"Hasan (Ali) had a great Champions Trophy as well," said Finch of the pace bowler who was the player of the Champions Trophy with 13 wickets in 2017. "When you look down their side there's no player that you can disregard. They've got a lot of experience on their side. They've got a lot of match winners."

Meanwhile, Australia are flying Mitchell Marsh to England as cover for Marcus Stoinis after his fellow all-rounder suffered

a side strain that ruled him out of today's World Cup match against Pakistan in Taunton.

Stoinis sustained the injury during champions Australia's 36-run defeat by India at the Oval on Sunday. Australia, however, will wait to decide whether to bring in Marsh as a permanent tournament replacement for Stoinis—a decision that will require the approval of the World Cup's event technical committee.

International Cricket Council regulations allow injured players to be replaced during the World Cup but they cannot then rejoin their squad if they regain full fitness later on in the tournament. "Stoinis has a bit of a side strain," Finch told reporters in Taunton yesterday.

"He won't be available for tomorrow. So we're going to have to juggle around especially that all-rounder spot and have got Mitch Marsh flying over just as a bit of a precaution. "(We're) not exactly sure on how many games he'll miss," added Finch. "It's still being assessed. Over the next couple of days we'll have a clearer picture on what that looks like.

Finch, explaining how Stoinis had been injured, added: "It was towards the back end of his second spell (against India), and he came back and bowled two overs at the death. "He was in some discomfort, it wasn't ideal, but he still managed to bowl a couple of overs."

Stoinis, 29, was out for a duck against India but took two for 62 with his lively



TAUNTON: Australia's captain Aaron Finch speaks at a press conference at The County Ground in Taunton, southwest England yesterday, ahead of their 2019 World Cup match against Pakistan. — AFP

medium pace including a superb and caught bowled to dismiss MS Dhoni. Marsh was not included in Australia's original 15-man squad for the World Cup but is a member of the Australia A side which will begin a tour of England in the run-up to the Ashes Test series that starts after the one-day international showpiece event.

"He (Marsh) was meant to fly over with the Australia A side on Friday. He's just coming a couple days early as a bit of precaution," said Finch. "Australia have two

wins from their three World Cup matches so far, having beaten both Afghanistan and the West Indies before losing to India.

They are now fourth in the table with four points. Pakistan have three points after a win, a defeat and a no-result washout. All 10 teams play each other once in the round-robin group stage, with the top four qualifying for the semi-finals. New Zealand now lead the standings with six points following three wins from as many matches. — AFP

Amir aims for another Taunton triumph as Australia await

TAUNTON: Mohammad Amir will hope to enjoy another landmark occasion at Taunton when Pakistan face Australia there in a World Cup match today. The group fixture at southwest county Somerset's headquarters sees Amir back at the ground where he made his return to first-class cricket in England three years ago. Amir was the rising star of world cricket when his career came to a stunning halt during a Lord's Test in 2010 after both he and new-ball partner Mohamed Asif were caught bowling no-balls on the orders of then Pakistan captain Salman Butt as part of a newspaper sting operation.

The trio all received five-year bans from cricket and jail terms. That same 2010 season had seen Amir produce a superb display of swing bowling in taking three for 20 as Pakistan dismissed Australia for just 88 on the first day of a 'neutral' Test at Headingley.

Those skills remained intact as Amir marked his 2016 return to the first-class game in England in 2016 with a haul of three for 36 against Somerset at Taunton. All three wickets—including that of former England opener Marcus Trescothick—owed much to late swing.

The intervening years have not been easy for Amir, however, and he almost missed what is his first World Cup after taking just five wickets in 14 matches before a recent one-day international series in England.

Amir did not bowl in the washed-out first match against England and missed the last four games with chicken pox. England won the series 4-0. But having been left out of Pakistan's preliminary squad for the World Cup, the 27-year-old made it into the final 15.

His World Cup debut was a rare Pakistan highlight after they slumped to 105 all out against the West Indies, with Amir taking three for 26 in a seven-wicket loss at Trent Bridge. He was in the wickets again at the Nottingham ground, but this time in a winning cause, with two for 67 as Pakistan surprisingly beat tournament favourites England by 14 runs last week. But Pakistan's progress was checked by a total washout against Sri Lanka at Bristol. Pakistan have won just one of their last 14 matches against champions Australia, the five-times World Cup winners. That vic-



NOTTINGHAM: File photo shows Pakistan's Mohammad Amir (C) celebrates after taking the wicket of England's Jos Buttler during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between England and Pakistan at Trent Bridge in Nottingham, central England, on June 3, 2019. — AFP

tory was inspired by Mohammad Hafeez's 72 at Melbourne in January 2017. And it was Hafeez's 84 that laid the foundations for an impressive total of 348 for eight against England. "We have not won many matches against Australia but we had not won too many against England either," said Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed.

"But we have finally beaten England and that has given us a lot of positives. "We will go with the aggressive approach we showed against England." The wicket-keeper expects to face an Australia side stung by a 36-run loss to India last weekend—their first defeat of this World Cup following wins over Afghanistan and the West Indies. "We know Australia will try to come back and with (Steve) Smith and (David) Warner back they are at their best again," said Sarfaraz. "We respect all our opponents and

are ready for them."

Australia will hope opener Warner, for all he has already scored two fifties this World Cup, is back to his destructive best at Taunton. Warner's 56 off 84 balls against India—of which 48 were dots—helped contribute to a slow run-rate that left Australia with too much to do at the end of their innings.

The left-hander was also involved in the run-out of Australia captain and opening partner Aaron Finch. But Finch backed Warner, who along with Smith is playing in his first major tournament for Australia since serving a year-long ban for ball-tampering.

"They (India) bowled very well to Warner and he needs some more time. He's a world-class player and will get us off to a flyer," said Finch. — AFP

Thumb injury leave India star Dhawan's World Cup in doubt

NOTTINGHAM: India's Shikhar Dhawan is set to discover the extent of a thumb injury that threatens the opening batsman's ongoing participation at the World Cup. Dhawan led India to their second straight win of the 50-over tournament with a 109-ball 117 against reigning champions Australia at the Oval on Sunday but took a hit to his left thumb during the course of his innings.

Team physio Patrick Farhart is due to make a decision on the extent of Dhawan's injury later Tuesday but reports in the Indian media have suggested the 33-year-old has fractured his thumb.

The left-handed batsman suffered the injury as a result of a nasty blow from a rising delivery by Australia paceman Nathan Coulter-Nile but still went on to complete his 17th one-day international century. Dhawan, however, played no further part in the match after his dismissal, with substitute Ravindra Jadeja taking the field in his place as India comfortably defended their total of 352 for five to complete a 36-run victory.

The Virat Kohli-led side are up against New Zealand in Nottingham on Thursday before taking on arch-rivals Pakistan in the showpiece match of the 10-team round-robin group stage in Manchester on Sunday. — AFP

ICC won't change bails after WCup wicket problems

LONDON: The International Cricket Council have ignored pleas from World Cup stars to resolve the bail controversy that threatens to spoil the tournament. India captain Virat Kohli and Australia skipper Aaron Finch joined forces to condemn the "unfair" problem on Sunday.

Australia's David Warner avoided being bowled early in his side's unsuccessful run-chase against India when he deflected Jasprit Bumrah's delivery onto the wicket via his boot.

Not for the first time in this tournament, the ball struck the stumps but failed to dislodge the bails, meaning Warner earned an unexpected reprieve. It was the fifth incident in the tournament of the 'zing' bails, which contain lights that flash when the ball hits the wicket, failing to come off when hit.

But despite calls for a change to the bails from Kohli, Finch and former England captains Michael Vaughan and Nasser Hussain, tournament organisers have no plans to make a switch back to the traditional wooden style.

"We wouldn't change anything mid-event as it would compromise the integrity of the event - the equipment is the same for all 10 teams across all 48 games," the International Cricket Council, the sport's global governing body, told Sky Sports in a statement yesterday.

"The stumps have not changed in the last four years. They have been used in all ICC events since the 2015 Men's Cricket World Cup and in a range of domestic events. "This means they've been used in more than 1000 games—this is a statistical anomaly.

"This issue has always been part of the game, with the accepted concept being that it requires some force to disturb a batsman's 'castle'." — AFP

Bangladesh-S Lanka washout sets World Cup record

BRISTOL: Sri Lanka's World Cup match against Bangladesh was abandoned without a ball being bowled due to rain in Bristol yesterday. The umpires' decision left tournament organisers with the unwanted record for the most number of abandoned games at a World Cup, surpassing the two each at the 1992 tournament in Australia and New Zealand and the 2003 edition in southern Africa.

It was the second successive World Cup match at Bristol that had fallen victim to bad weather, with Sri Lanka's group game against Pakistan at southwest county Gloucestershire's headquarters on Friday another no-result washout that did not witness a single delivery. Rain has also been forecast for today's match between Australia and Pakistan in Taunton. No reserve days have been scheduled for the 10-team round-robin stage, despite the well-known risks of rain during a British summer.

Asked whether there should be reserve days in the group phase, Bangladesh coach Steve Rhodes, a former England wicket-keeper, said: "Yes, I would (have them). "I know logistically it would have caused problems. But we can put a man on the moon, so if we have to travel a day later, so be it." — AFP

Mack flops at Aussie trials

BRISBANE: Olympic champion Mack Horton was ruled out of the individual races at next month's world championships when he finished third in the 800 metres at the Australian trials yesterday. Emma McKeon, Australia's most successful swimmer at the Rio Olympics, held off rising star Ariarne Titmus to book her spot in the 200m freestyle next month in South Korea.

But Horton, who had already missed out in his pet event, the 400m, and the 200m, completed an unwanted treble when he was beaten in the 800m.

Horton, who beat China's Sun Yang for gold in the 400m at Rio, came third in the 800m behind Jack McLoughlin, who touched in 7:46.79, a new personal best.

Only the top two in each final earn selection for individual races at the world championships, and only if they swim under the designated qualifying time.

No one made the grade alongside McLoughlin, who also edged out Horton in the 400m on Sunday. The strapping 24-year-old announced himself last year, claiming 1500m gold at the Commonwealth Games before upsetting a top field to win the 400m and 800m at the PanPacs in Tokyo. "That was all right. I kind of wanted to go faster," he said of his best-ever 800m time. "But I'm pretty happy with how it is going so far."

He swims the 1500m on the penultimate day of the trials on Thursday. McKeon, who shared silver with American superstar Katie Ledecky behind Italian great Federica



Mack Horton

Pellegrini at the last worlds in Budapest, came out of the blocks first and never looked back, hitting the wall in a personal best one minute 54.55 seconds.

It was fractionally outside the Commonwealth record set by teenager Titmus last year, setting the pair up as serious challengers for gold next month.

"I haven't done a PB in that race for quite some time. I think I lost a bit of confidence for a bit," said McKeon, who collected a gold, two silver and a bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics. "I'm usually out pretty fast... I just focus on my stroke count and timing."

McKeon has also qualified for the 100m butterfly, while Titmus fired a warning shot to Ledecky with a new Commonwealth record in the 400 metre freestyle this week. In other racing yesterday, David Morgan qualified in the 200m butterfly. — AFP

Sports

Ramos and Morata on the spot as Spain cruise past Sweden

Spain stay top of Group F, now five points clear of second-placed Sweden

MADRID: Sergio Ramos and Alvaro Morata both scored penalties as Spain beat Sweden 3-0 on Monday to keep their perfect start to Euro 2020 qualifying intact. Spain struggled to break down a determined Sweden defence at the Santiago Bernabeu until Ramos struck in the 64th minute after Sebastian Larsson blocked Marco Asensio's cross with his hand.

Two late goals in two minutes then gave the score a deceptively comfortable look as Ramos deferred a second spot-kick to Morata, who had won the foul, before Mikel Oyarzabal curled in a third.

Victory means Spain stay top of Group F, now five points clear of second-placed Sweden, with four wins out of four. Their advantage reflects an impressive return to form after a disappointing performance in the UEFA Nations League, even if the previous three successes came against Norway, Malta and the Faroe Islands. Luis Enrique has been absent from matches since missing Spain's win over Malta in March due to a family emergency and he was away from the bench again, leaving his assistant Robert Moreno in charge. "We can still improve in lots of ways," said Moreno. "We're looking for perfection."

Moreno confirmed on Sunday he has been in constant contact with Luis Enrique and Ramos has insisted the situation is not affecting the players.

There have been many given a chance to impress, with eight changes from the 4-1 thrashing of the Faroe Islands on Friday taking the number of starters to 24 in the last four games alone.

Dani Parejo and Fabian Ruiz both impressed in midfield but Asensio and Isco lacked spark again in the final third, with Rodrigo Moreno also ceding ground to Morata in the central striker spot.

Kepa Arrizabalaga had little to do in goal but his third consecutive start suggests he is now not just an alternative to Manchester United's David de Gea but the side's preferred keeper. "I think in Spain we don't watch so much foreign football," Moreno said. "If they'd seen the end of the season Kepa had, nobody would be surprised by our decision."

Sweden's disciplined defence carried them to the World Cup quarter-finals almost a year ago and Spain only really rattled them for five minutes in the opening half. The first of a flurry of chances saw Fabian's shot palmed over by Robin Olsen, who then parried away a dipping volley from Parejo.

Even when Spain had the ball in the net it was crossed off, incorrectly, for offside, after Rodrigo tapped in Parejo's cutback. VAR, not in use until the tournament's finals, would surely have intervened.

Albin Ekdal was also fortunate not to concede a penalty when he placed both hands on the shoulders of Ramos but referee William Collum was not so tolerant after half-time. Asensio's cross was blocked by the outstretched arm of Larsson for a clear spot-kick, leaving Ramos to whip right-footed into the bottom corner.

Sweden had not been without chances of their own, Ludwig Augustinsson firing a shot into Ramos before Robin Quaison hit straight at Kepa. But they capitulated late on as Spain added two in the 85th and 87th minutes. First Morata, on for Asensio, drew a foul from Filip Helander with an aggressive run into the box and, after Ramos deferred, struck the penalty into the corner. Then, Oyarzabal, who had replaced Rodrigo, darted inside Augustinsson and curled a brilliant shot between Olsen's hand and the far post to wrap up a hard-earned win. — AFP



MADRID: Spain's forward Alvaro Morata shoots a penalty kick to score Spain's second goal during the UEFA Euro 2020 group F qualifying football match between Spain and Sweden at the Santiago Bernabeu stadium in Madrid. —AFP

Equal pay in soccer? Norway still far from the goal

OSLO: Guro puts in 60 to 70-hour weeks, half her time spent on football and the other half at her job, but that's just the way it is if you're a woman football player in Norway. The Scandinavian country made headlines when it announced in October 2017 that its national women's team would earn the same as their male counterparts, in a groundbreaking move.

But equal pay for other professional football players remains a pipe dream, even in this egalitarian nation. While top division wages in Norway come nowhere near the astronomical sums earned by the Messis and Ronaldos of the men's top leagues, men still earn way more than women, who typically make just a few hundred euros a month even though they are signed to professional contracts.

To make ends meet, most women players hold down jobs off the pitch, or study and live off student loans.

"You really have to love what you do, because otherwise you don't have the heart to do it," says Guro Bergsvand, a defender for the Stabaek club who by day is head of administration for an IT company.

Her daily routine is jam-packed and disciplined. Everyday, she leaves the house at 6:00 am for a workout. Then she has a "normal" workday at the office, and rounds it all off with football practice. She usually returns home around 7:00 pm or 8:00 pm.

"It's not easy. Your employer also has to understand you, they have to understand that women play football. Because not everyone does," she says.

Norway is one of the leading women's football nations, winning the World Cup in 1995, two European Championships in 1987 and 1993, and an Olympic gold medal in 2000. It is also home to the first women's Ballon d'Or winner, Ada Hegerberg, a role model for aspiring young talents-and who has complained about the lack of respect the Norwegian Football Federation has shown women's football and has therefore boycotted the national team for two years. For that reason, Hegerberg is absent from the World Cup in France where Norway play their first match against the host nation on Wednesday.

But the women's professional league remains sorely underfunded. Almost eight of 10 players in the women's

Toppserie earn less than 100,000 kroner (10,200 euros, \$11,590) a year, according to a report by newspaper VG. And 13.6 percent of them don't make a cent.

In 2017, the club Avaldsnes had to resort to online crowd funding to make ends meet to be able to travel to Montenegro for the Champions League qualifiers. The same year, the average income for a single player at Rosenborg, which won the men's top division, was higher than that of all of the women combined who played for LSK, which won the women's top division.

Even at Lillestrom, the lowest-ranking team in the men's division, the average player's wage was more than 3.5 times what LSK players earned that year.

Because of the strain of having a full-time occupation in addition to football, many young talents burn out quickly and give up the game too early. Others go abroad, like the Hegerberg sisters-Ada plays for European champion Lyon and Andrine for Paris Saint-Germain, or Caroline Graham Hansen who just left Wolfsburg for Barcelona.

And some quit their studies, at the risk of putting their future careers in jeopardy. "It was too difficult. I tried for a long time to find a balance between my studies and full-time football," says Kristine Leine, a defender with Roa IL, who has taken a break from nursing school. — AFP

Hopeful Messi keen to end Argentina title drought

RIO DE JANEIRO: With Neymar sidelined by an ankle injury, Lionel Messi heads into the Copa America this weekend as the competition's main attraction but one with a desperate need to end more than a decade of hurt with Argentina.

The five-time Ballon d'Or winner has one of the most impressive trophy hauls in football history but there is a glaring void when it comes to national team accolades. Four Champions League crowns and 10 La Liga titles with Barcelona are not matched by Argentina success.

And the 31-year-old knows he's running out of time to rectify that anomaly. "I want to end my career having won something with the national team, or at least try to do so as many times as possible," he told Fox Sports last week.

Four finals played with Argentina, four defeats, including the last two Copa finals on penalties against Chile. But the most painful was the 2014 World Cup final to Germany at the iconic Maracana, where Messi will hope to return on July 7 for the Copa title decider.

That Germany defeat began a run of losing finals in three successive years and after the last of those, a bitterly disappointed Messi announced his international retirement. He and his team-mates came in for a torrent of abuse and criticism.

"People were attacking us from every side," he said. His retirement lasted just six weeks, though, and it was his hat-trick in Argentina's final qualifier that secured a 3-1 win in Ecuador that sent the team to the World Cup in Russia last year.

But, as so many times before, Messi was unable to recapture his Barca form while on international duty and dejection followed as the albiceleste were sent home in the second round after a 4-3 defeat to eventual winners France.

But while Messi then missed Argentina's next six matches-all friendlies-there was no talk of retirement this time. His son Thiago "loves it when I play for the national team," Messi told Fox. But the disappointments have kept piling up despite a 10th La Liga crown secured in May.

Messi had made no secret at the start of the season that winning the Champions League for the fifth time was his priority as he wanted to bring that "beautiful cup back to Camp Nou". Things looked so good as Barca took a 3-0 advantage to Anfield for the semi-final second leg last month.

What happened next-an inspired Liverpool stormed to a 4-0 victory and 4-3 aggregate success-left as bitter a taste in Messi's mouth as had the Germany loss five years ago. "To lose a final of the World Cup is the most important of all, it is a big disappointment," he said in May.

But he admitted that the Liverpool loss felt a bit worse "because we were winning and we didn't expect them to come back".

Messi has long been talisman for club and country but he will be even more so in Brazil with a rejuvenated squad full of inexperienced campaigners. But that hasn't dampened expectation either within the group or the country as a whole.

"We're going there with the same hope and desire as ever. Argentina is going through a process of change with young and new lads," he told TyC Sports last week. "For most of them it's their first official tournament, but that won't stop Argentina trying to win the competition," he added. It's 26 years since Argentina last won the Copa America, despite contesting four of the last five finals. —AFP

Pogba's remedy for racist abuse is play well not walk off

LONDON: Manchester United midfielder Paul Pogba said the best way to quell racist spectators is to perform well on the pitch not as some suggest walk off if there is racial abuse. The 26-year-old was a pivotal figure as France won the World Cup last year and said in an interview with The Times that nothing wins people around better than success.

Pogba is expected to start against Andorra in Euro 2020 qualifying on Tuesday night and played 90 minutes in a loss in Turkey on Saturday when the home fans caused outrage in France by jeering the Marseille. Racism reared its head last season with Manchester City's Raheem Sterling being abused by a group of Chelsea fans. Then Sterling and other black England players were the targets of Montenegro supporters in a Euro 2020 qualifier.

One of those players, Tottenham Hotspur defender Danny Rose said he "can't wait to see the back of football" because of the lack of decisive action to tackle racism. Rose said he was "shocked" at the lightness of UEFA's punishment in ordering Montenegro to play just one game behind closed doors. Pogba told the newspaper he had once handed his Juventus shirt to a fan who had been making monkey noises at him. "Leave the pitch? You want to play, you want to score for your team," said Pogba. "And at the end they (racist abusers) will come and ask for a picture." Pogba also responded to critics who say he has not justified his then world record £89.3 million (\$113.5 million) move from Juventus in 2016. "I became another player because of the transfer," he said. "Because it was the biggest transfer of history at the time, you get judged differently."

"You expect more because of the price tag. A good game becomes a normal game, a top game will be a good game."

He proved a popular target when United started poorly last season under Jose Mourinho. Critics contrasted Pogba's outstanding World Cup performances with those for his club. He also came under fire as United's early good form under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer—who replaced Mourinho when the latter was sacked in December—tailed off at the end of the campaign. As a result, United finished sixth and missed out on Champions League football. However, Pogba can point to being the only player selected in the Premier League team of the season to come from outside the top two-champions Manchester City and Liverpool. —AFP



VALENCIENNES: Australia's forward Samantha Kerr celebrates after scoring a goal during the France 2019 Women's World Cup Group C football match between Australia and Italy, at the Hainaut Stadium in Valenciennes, northern France. —AFP

Australia superstar Kerr enters Ronaldo's orbit

SYDNEY: Sam Kerr's star has been shining so brightly since her Australia debut at just 15 that she has become not only one of global football's elite players but one of its most marketable faces.

Kerr is the all-time leading scorer in the US National Women's Soccer League. She has twice been shortlisted for FIFA player of the year. And earlier this year the forward was the female face alongside five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo and 2018 World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe at the launch of sportswear giant Nike's latest boot campaign.

Kerr first played in the Women's World Cup as a teenager in 2011 in Germany and the 25-year-old scored on Sunday in her ninth finals game for the Matildas, albeit in a shock opening 2-1 defeat to Italy in Valenciennes.

She is reportedly on course to become the first Australian woman footballer to earn more than a million dollars a year, as her profile soars on the back of unstoppable recent form for the Chicago Red Stars which saw the two-time NWSL Golden Boot winner named the league's player of the month for May.

It could have been very different. Born to an Indian father and Australian mother, she played Aussie Rules in Western Australia as a youngster and was convinced she

would one day represent her beloved West Coast Eagles, like her brother.

She switched to football aged 12 and made her debut for the Matildas as a substitute against Italy in 2009 before she was even 16. She admits that shifting from Australian Rules—where there was little hope of earning a living as a woman—was not easy.

"The change from AFL to football was really hard. I remember I struggled a lot," Kerr told the Daily Telegraph ahead of her third World Cup.

"I'm really thankful for my time in the AFL, but I'm also thankful I had to make the switch, because there was no pathway for me at that time in AFL. I think nowadays, if there was a pathway, I probably would have stayed."

She made her debut for the W-League's Perth Glory at 15 and spent four years at the club before moving to Sydney FC. Known for her pace, agility and heading ability, as well as her trademark backflip goal celebrations, Kerr headed to the United States in 2013, first to Western New York Flash, then Sky Blue FC in New Jersey and now Chicago.

While her onfield achievements have grabbed attention, and countless awards, she has also won plaudits for her work behind the scenes as an advocate for women's sport. She was named "Young Australian of the Year" in 2018 and was hailed as "inspirational, well-grounded, professional and mature".

Kerr has helped drive change in Australian football with a minimum wage now in place in Australia's W-league and players treated as true professionals. "We work hard first and foremost but we also enjoy it. We love being a part of this team and we love representing Australia," she said recently. —AFP

25 Thomas hopes for chance to 'channel inner Koepka'



26 Thumb injury leave India star Dhawan's World Cup in doubt



27 Ramos and Morata on the spot as Spain cruise past Sweden



Roord heads late Dutch winner

'We were looking for a win and Kiwis were looking for a draw'



LE HAVRE: Netherlands' midfielder Jill Roord (C) celebrates after scoring a goal during the France 2019 Women's World Cup Group E football match between New Zealand and the Netherlands, yesterday, at the Oceane Stadium in Le Havre, northwestern France. —AFP

LE HAVRE: Jill Roord came off the bench and headed home from close range in added time yesterday to give the Netherlands a 1-0 women's World Cup victory over New Zealand in Le Havre.

The victory lifts the European champions into a tie with Canada atop Group E. "I think we can play better than we did today. But we were looking for a win and New Zealand were looking for a draw, and I'm very glad we finally got what we wanted," said Dutch coach Sarina Wiegman. "I'm very relieved, of course."

The Football Ferns, stout in defence and sharp on the counter attack, were left with nothing but disappointment. "The players will be absolutely devastated

but we're a resilient group and I'm pretty confident we'll bounce back," said New Zealand coach Tom Sermanni.

The stars of a lively match were the two goalkeepers, Sari van Veenendaal for the Netherlands and New Zealand's Erin Nayler. Both were busy and both, at different stages, underwent on-field treatment after brave saves.

The Dutch had almost 70% of possession and almost three times as many goal attempts but New Zealand went painfully close three times. "The Dutch were the dominant team but we created some great chances," said Sermanni.

In the first half, Olivia Chance hit the bar and Rosie White drew a sprawling save from Van Veenendaal with a long-range strike. Early in the second half Sarah Gregorius, who is of Dutch descent, shinned a volley into the ground that gave Van Veenendaal time to lunge to her right and claw the ball round the post.

At the other end, centre-backs Rebekah Stott and Abby Erceg coped well with the physical presence of Dutch forward Vivianne Miedema and the lively skills of the attackers around her. When the Dutch did carve a clear chance, they were frustrated either by Nayler or some anxious finishing, until the final moments.

"We found it tough to create openings," said FIFA's

player of the match Lieke Martens. "New Zealand defended well and it was not our best match, that's clear." The Dutch swung one more hanging cross to the far post where Lineth Beerensteyn bullied Ali Riley into a tame header back across the goal and Arsenal's Roord guided the ball past the advancing Nayler.

"We can't go away from the game saying we have regrets, we have disappointment," said Sermanni, who has coached four of the nations in this year's World Cup. "We've got to look at the positive things we did."

Later in the day Group F kicks off with Chile facing Sweden in Rennes and the USA and Thailand end the first set of games in Reims. —AFP

Warriors edge Raptors to keep title hopes alive

TORONTO: Clutch 3-pointers by Stephen Curry and Klay Thompson enabled the defending champion Golden State Warriors to edge Toronto 106-105 on Monday and sustain their hopes of winning a third consecutive NBA Finals. But any joy from the victory was dimmed by a right Achilles injury to Kevin Durant only 12 minutes into his first game after being sidelined for a month by a right calf injury.

Curry scored 31 points while Thompson added 26 as the Warriors pulled within 3-2 in the best-of-seven championship series, forcing a sixth game Thursday at Oakland, California, with game seven if needed in Toronto on Sunday.

"Do or die," Curry said. "It wasn't pretty in the second half but we just made the shots." Durant's long-awaited return ended with the All-Star forward being helped off the court. "You could kind of just feel the life just go right out of us," Warriors forward Draymond Green said. "But to Steph's credit, he rallied the troops."

"He talked to everybody, went around the huddle and just told everybody to stay locked in and do this for Kevin. And I think we did a good job of coming together." Durant, the 2017 and 2018 NBA Finals Most valuable Player, departed the arena on crutches but became an inspiration to his teammates.

"We do it for Kevin," Thompson said. "He wants us to compete at the highest level and we'll think of him

every time we step on the hardwood." Durant posted on Instagram: "I'm hurting deep in my soul right now. I can't lie, but seeing my brothers get this win was like taking a shot of tequila. I got new life."

He also breathed life into Golden State's title quest, Curry said. "We understand the moment and I think we can rally, considering how the second half went," Curry said. Durant, Golden State's top playoff scorer with 34.2 points a game, will have an MRI today.

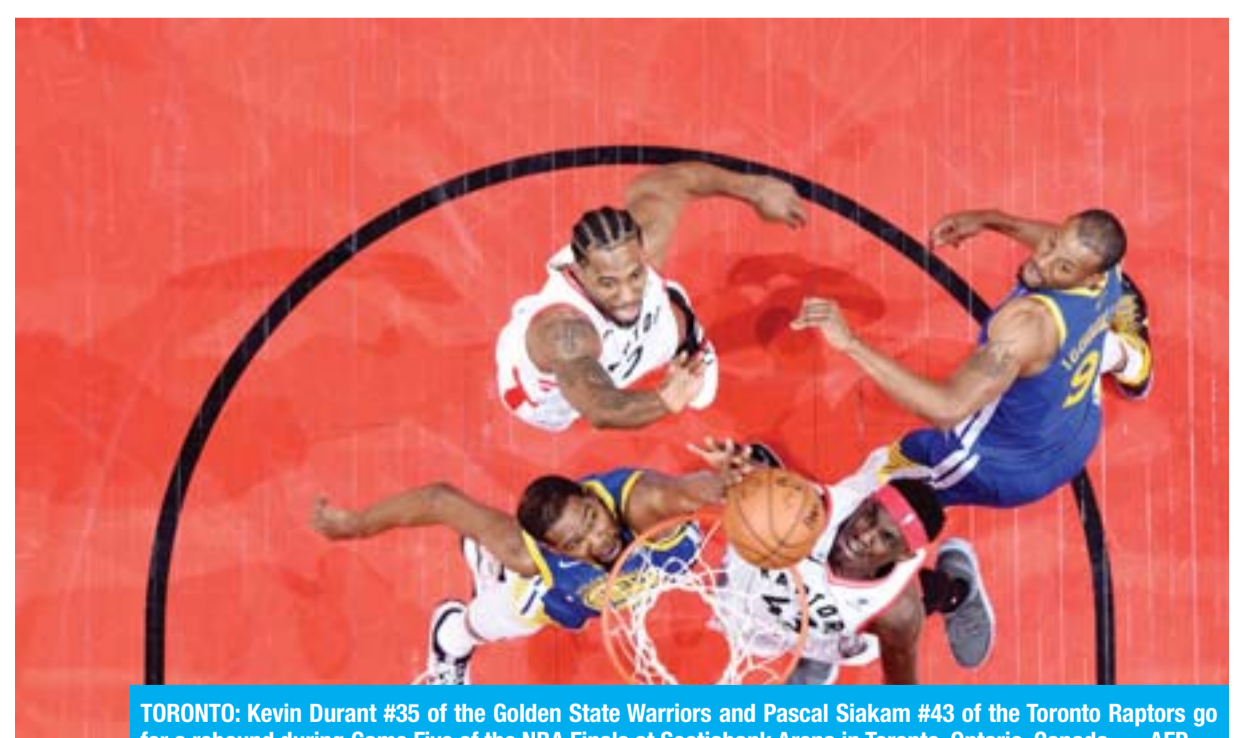
"On the one hand I'm so proud of them, just the amazing heart and grit they showed, and on the other I'm just devastated for Kevin," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "So it's a bizarre feeling we all have right now, an incredible win and a horrible loss at the same time."

The Warriors seek their fourth title in five seasons while the Raptors suffered an agonizing near-miss in their bid for the first title in their 24-season history. History remains on the Raptors' side. Only once in 34 prior situations has a team led the NBA Finals 3-1 and lost the title, that being in 2016 when LeBron James-led Cleveland rallied to defeat Golden State.

Kawhi Leonard, who led Toronto with 26 points, sank a back-to-back 3-pointer and jumper to give the Raptors, who trailed by 14 points in the third quarter, their largest lead at 103-97 with 3:28 remaining.

"In this day and age, up six with three minutes to go, doesn't mean a whole lot," Raptors coach Nick Nurse said. "I felt good at that point. Just needed to make a couple more plays." Golden State answered with Thompson and Curry sinking 3-pointers and Thompson nailing another that put Golden State ahead to stay at 106-103 with 57 seconds to play.

Kyle Lowry cut the lead to the final margin with 30 seconds remaining and, after Golden State's DeMarcus Cousins was whistled for a foul trying to set a screen,



TORONTO: Kevin Durant #35 of the Golden State Warriors and Pascal Siakam #43 of the Toronto Raptors go for a rebound during Game Five of the NBA Finals at Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. —AFP

the Raptors had one last chance to swipe the title. But the Warriors double-teamed Leonard and Green blocked a Lowry corner 3-point shot at the buzzer.

"It has got to be the greatest," Green said when asked to compare the win to others in Golden State's history. "Down six with a couple minutes to go in an elimination for these guys to win a championship, we could have thrown in the towel. We could have folded,

but we didn't."

Durant had missed nine playoff games but he briefly made the Warriors look like the team that dominated the past two NBA Finals. Disaster struck 2:14 into the second quarter when Durant planted his right foot and pulled up, then sat on the court and grabbed his leg. Durant was helped off the court, his dramatic comeback over far too soon. —AFP