

Friday Times

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The heat is on



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By Shakir Reshamwala

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It is well known that Kuwait is one of the hottest countries in the world, if not THE hottest country. But the heat this year is so intense - and summer has just begun - that the weather is the talk of the town these days. Even when the fasting month of Ramadan fell in the hottest months of the year - June, July and August - in the past decade, the topic of temperature wasn't trending the way it is this year. Luckily, the holy month ended this year just before the blast furnace kicked in.

The past four years have been the hottest on record, and this year seems to be no different. This week, Mitribah in the north of Kuwait recorded the highest temperature worldwide of around 52 degrees Celsius. The rest of Kuwait didn't fare any better, with the mercury hitting more than 50C in many areas. Mitribah has consistently figured as the hottest place on earth for years, even hotter than Death Valley in California that holds the all-time record for the highest temperature ever recorded (56.7C) in 1913, but which is viewed as suspect by weather historians. An earlier 90-year record held by El Azizia in Libya of 58 degrees Celsius in 1922 was ruled as inaccurate a few years ago.

While some people bicker and sneer that the "hottest" temperature is taken in the shade, it seems this is the only way to measure actual air temperature. According to weather experts, the temperature is the same in the sun or shade - it's the solar radiation that makes the air feel 10-15 degrees warmer than it actually is, and makes our bodies feel hotter. Moreover, if the thermometer is placed in direct sunlight, it will heat up and record the wrong air temperature.

Meanwhile on social media, everyone is posting images of temperatures of 50C+ as shown by their vehicles' thermometers. Photoshopped images of the weather display on the meteorological building on the Fifth Ring Road showing a reading of 62 degrees Celsius have been doing the rounds too. And can the memes and jokes be far behind? An image shows Kuwait as a planetary body between the Earth and the Sun. Another message warns of extreme heat conditions - with showers of barbecued birds!

But the birds of Kuwait are smart and know how to protect themselves from the heat, unlike the poor cleaners and construction workers who are forced to venture out and work under the blazing sun for meager pay. Despite an 11 am to 5 pm ban on working outdoors, it is not uncommon to see workers toiling in the open. While it may be true they could be "loose laborers" working outside of their own volition or working for a smalltime contractor with disregard for the law, it is inhuman and could lead to death or injury, apart from financial penalties. Enforcement of the ban should be strict for the safety of all.

Of course, those with time and resources have decamped for cooler climes. This is the peak travel season, with the country emptying out fast. Some unscrupulous travel agencies have taken advantage of those looking for deals, selling fake cut-price tickets and then flying the coop. Even those booking with legit travel agents and websites are allowing themselves to be fleeced, paying top dinar to secure that dream holiday or family vacation. But the exodus means the streets are clearer, and those left behind can enjoy a stress-free commute...one has to look on the bright side of things (or sun-blindingly brightest for that matter).

Stay safe everyone!

9 tips to beat summer blues in Kuwait



SCRIBBLER'S NOTEBOOK

By Jamie Etheridge

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The start of the summer holidays is a magical time for children and families who are heading off for a break from Kuwait's scorching summer heat. Whether they are leaving for good or only a few months vacation abroad, the delight and joy is evident.

For those of us left behind, it can be hard not to feel a bit abandoned. If you are on social media, it can seem like everyone you know is heading to the airport while you are heading to work. This can be depressing and further compounded by the summer weather which forces most of us to stay indoors.

To combat Kuwait's summer blues, here are some tips for turning your boring summer into a productive and fun one:

1. Do some professional development. Summers are slow periods in Kuwait for business and this is the perfect time for staff to brush up on soft skills like customer service, management practices, working with particular software programs. Leverage the down time in the office to build your resume.

2. Learn a new art or craft. There are many skills and crafts individuals can learn through online courses, local workshops or a combination of the two. Teach yourself food photography or learn to paint. Learn coding or how to draw zentangles. There are literally thousands of things that can be learned if you have time, dedication and patience. Go for a 30-day challenge to improve one skill set like drawing and sketching or black and white photography.

3. Volunteer somewhere. If you have the free time, why not help out a local community group, charity or other organization that contributes to making Kuwait better for us all? Check the list of volunteer groups in the box.

4. Set yourself a goal and start going to the gym. Decide to run a 5k and begin training or set up a workout plan with a personal trainer. Having a goal and a deadline can be a great way to combat the summer blues and also working out boost endorphins and promotes a greater sense of well being.

5. Read. One of the best things you can do for yourself and your children, if you have them, is to read. Globally recognized business leaders like Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Oprah, etc read a book a week in order to continue learning and growing. There are several amazing new and used books shops around Kuwait and a wide range of fiction and nonfiction available.

6. Put down the play station and pick up an instrument. Slow periods like summertime are perfect for learning new musical instruments. Work on the 20 hour rule: 1. Deconstruct the skill. 2. Learn enough to self-correct. 3. Remove practice barriers. 4. Practice at least 20 hours. (Watch Josh Kaufman's Ted Talk: The first 20 hours — how to learn anything)

7. Get some outdoor time, even in the night. Going for walks can help lift your mood and also improve your health. Get a step tracker and log 10,000-15,000 steps a day.

8. Join a sports team, go fishing, join a chess club or start a group to play/practice your favorite hobby.

9. Learn to cook or if you already know how to cook, learn to cook a new cuisine or a new dish. Create your own dishes mixing and combining your favorite flavors, textures and foods.

There is really an endless supply of ways you can boost your mood and lift your spirits and if all else fails, start planning your holiday for next summer.

Volunteer opportunities in Kuwait

Abeer2 - Abeer2 works with people with mental disabilities in collaboration with parents under the umbrella of the Voluntary Work Center in Kuwait. <http://www.abeer2.com/index.php/en/ct-menu-item-13>

Abolish153 - Local human rights and women's right activist group advocating for women's equality before the law.

AlKout Youth Group - A youth volunteer group that believes in doing good and serving society and the country.

+965 66878712

BAACH - Bayt Abdullah Children's Hospice provides care and support to children with life limiting or life threatening illnesses.

Basta Kuwait - A local and sustainable non-profit organization that focuses on buying, selling and donating clothing, home goods and books. @bastakwt or email: bastakwt@gmail.com

Dar Al-Athar Al-Islamiyyah - Local cultural organization and museum that provides educational opportunities for children, cultural programs and viewing of the Al-Sabah collection. <http://darmuseum.org.kw/>

Injaz-Kuwait - Works with students aged 11-24 years through implementing programs in middle schools, high schools, vocational colleges and universities to prepare them for the future.

<http://www.injaz-kuwait.org/>

KAACH - Kuwait Association for the Care of Children in Hospital helps children and their families cope with the stresses of hospitalization.

<http://www.kacch.org/volunteering.html>

Kareq8 - local animal protection organization that adopts or helps rescue abandoned animals. @kareq8

Kharaf Activity Kids Center - provides play-based learning environment for children with disabilities and special needs.

<http://www.kharafi-akc.org.kw/en/>

Kuwait Cancer Control Center - provides care and support for people with cancer. Contact the KCCC Social Work department at 2484-9100 ext. 5097/5092/5132.

<http://www.kuwaitcancercenter.com/index.php>

Kuwait Red Crescent Society - Provides aid and relief for communities in need. Training for volunteers available. krcs.org.kw

Loyac - Organizes a variety of social and community based programs for the enrichment of Kuwait.

https://www.loyac.org/Local/Community/Volunteering/Programs_EN.aspx

ReFood - Local food bank that provides food for those in need.

<http://www.refoodkuwait.org/volunteer>

Trashtag Kuwait - Local community group that organizes beach and park cleanups to support Kuwait's environment. @trashtagkuwait

Attack on tankers threat to int'l peace and security: Kuwait

Suspected tanker attacks risk sparking conflict: Analysts

UNITED NATIONS: Kuwait's Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Sabah described attacks on two oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman as a threat to international peace and security. "This is the most recent event in a series of acts of sabotage that are threatening the security of maritime corridors as well as threatening energy security of the world," he said yesterday. The United States meanwhile called attacks on commercial shipping "unacceptable" and told the UN Security Council that the latest assaults that left one tanker ablaze and both ships adrift "raise very serious concerns."

Council diplomats said the United States told them it planned to raise the issue of "safety and freedom of navigation" in the Gulf during a closed-door meeting of the Security Council that was scheduled for yesterday. "It is unacceptable for any party to attack commercial shipping and today's attacks on ships in the Gulf of Oman raise very serious concerns," acting US Ambassador to the UN Jonathan Cohen told a council meeting on UN and Arab League cooperation yesterday morning. "The US government is providing assistance and will continue to assess the situation," he said.

UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres warned at the meeting that the world cannot afford "a major confrontation in the Gulf region." "I strongly condemn any attack against civilian vessels. Facts must be established and responsibilities clarified," he said. The attacks were the second in a month near the Strait of Hormuz, a major strategic waterway for world oil supplies. The United States and Saudi Arabia blamed Iran for last month's attacks using limpet mines on four tankers off the coast of the United Arab Emirates, a charge Tehran denies. Arab League Secretary-General Ahmed Aboul Gheit called on the Security Council to act against those respon-

sible to maintain security in the Gulf. "Some parties in the region are trying to instigate fires in the region and we must be aware of that," he told the 15-member council, without specifically naming anyone.

All-out conflict

The suspected attacks on tankers at the mouth of the oil-rich Gulf threaten to block vital crude supplies to the world and trigger an all-out conflict involving Iran, analysts said. The latest incident left two tankers in flames yesterday in waters near the strategic Strait of Hormuz, a narrow channel that is a chokepoint for more than a third of the globe's seaborne oil exports. It comes just a month after another mysterious incident in which four tankers — two Saudi, one Norwegian and one Emirati — were damaged nearby off the Emirati port of Fujairah.

"We are in a dangerous moment in the region with this emerging pattern of attacks," said Elizabeth Dickinson, senior analyst with International Crisis Group. "Any miscalculation or misunderstanding risks a spiral toward more direct confrontation," she said. "In the meantime, the region's conflicts are increasingly polluted by the regional quagmire of tension between Iran on the one hand and the United States and its regional allies on another."

Yesterday's suspected attacks follow accusations from the United States that Saudi Arabia's regional arch-rival Iran was "almost certainly" behind the May 12 sabotage attacks off Fujairah.

They also come after Iran-aligned Houthi rebels in Yemen claimed attacks on a Saudi oil pipeline and Abha airport in the southwest of the kingdom. The incidents were harming the efforts of Gulf states to "push back on the image of a dangerous region for investment and trade", said Karen E. Young, resident



scholar of American Enterprise Institute.

Growing risk factor

"Without certainty on who is making these attacks on tankers, and for what purpose, the risk factor continues to increase," Young said. "The Houthi attacks on Saudi territory are the southern flank, making the entire Arabian peninsula nearing conflict zone status."

The stakes are high for the Gulf states and Iran and Iraq, which together produce over a quarter of the world's oil output and export about 20 million barrels of oil per day mostly through the Strait of Hormuz.

Yesterday's attacks were the latest sign that geopolitical tensions were mounting, and there

was a "significant and increasing risk that events morph into outright conflict," London-based Capital Economics said in a commentary. "It might only take an error or miscommunication to spark a broader conflict. And the increased regularity of attacks means that the risk of this is growing," it warned.

The Saudi pipeline attack exposed that even alternative routes to the Strait of Hormuz were vulnerable, Capital Economics said. "If conflict further disrupted shipping routes or resulted in damage to oil facilities, oil prices could spike to well over \$100" a barrel, it said.

Iran 'hitting back'?

Oil prices shot up by more than four percent on Thursday soon after the suspected attacks before subsiding slightly, reflecting how volatile the market can be at the time of geopolitical tensions.

"The attack will serve to deepen tensions between Iran and the United States, which have gradually escalated throughout 2019," industry analyst Dryad Global said. "It is a realistic possibility that Iran or a proxy were behind this attack, however the situation remains fluid and there are a number of competing narratives that require examining," it said.

Iran's oil exports, which hovered around 2.5 million bpd a year ago, have already dropped substantially due to the resumption of US sanctions after President Donald Trump withdrew from a landmark nuclear deal with Tehran.

Analyst Ilan Goldenberg also said Iran was most likely to have carried out yesterday's attack as a result of being squeezed by US sanctions. "This is purely a function of Trump's escalatory 'maximum pressure' campaign. You can't just keep poking someone and expect them to sit around and take it. Eventually (they) hit back," he tweeted. "I still do not think we are on the brink of war. But chances of conflict just went up," said Goldenberg, a Middle East expert at the Center for a New American Security. — Agencies

Acts of sabotage mounts in Gulf amid jitters, summer heat

KUWAIT: The Gulf region and waters have turned into a scene of recurring incidents and attacks, the latest of which was yesterday's explosions that ruptured hulls of two giant oil tankers in the Gulf of Oman. The chain of Sabotage incidents have recently included attacks on Saudi vital and oil installations and four ships including two Saudi tankers off the United Arab Emirates. Earlier this week, a projectile fired by the Houthi militia slammed into the Saudi international airport Abha, wounding a number of people. The incident drew a wave of condemnations from various corners of the world. The attacks on the ships on May 12 came two days before Saudi oil installations in the province of Al-Duwadmi and Afif were targeted with terrorist attacks by the Houthis,

who sent in booby-trapped drones. The aerial attack resulted in damage and a fires.

During yesterday's events, the US Fifth Fleet, based in Bahrain, affirmed that the two oil tankers were damaged in the Gulf of Oman, adding that seamen were evacuated off the two giant sea vessels. The fleet received distress calls from the two tankers. According to media reports, three explosions were reported on board of the Norwegian-owned tanker Front Altair after it was "attacked" along with the Singapore-owned ship Kokuka Courageous. The Marshall Islands-flagged tanker, a 111,000-tonne vessel, was carrying a cargo of the highly flammable ethanol from Qatar to Taiwan, according to the official Iranian news agency IRNA. The Panama-flagged Kokuka Courageous was headed to Singapore from Saudi Arabia with a cargo of methanol, and 21 of its crew jumped and were rescued, IRNA said. Britain expressed deep concern and Russia called for abstention from speedy

conclusions, calling for probing circumstances of the two incidents that happened close to one of the main arteries through which at least half of the world needs of crude oil pass—the Hormuz Strait.

Kuwait denies rumors

In Kuwait, the Government denied buzzing rumors about declaration of a maximum state of emergency in the North Gulf state, the national crude oil carrier, Kuwait Oil Tankers Company, declared that it was proceeding its operations regularly and was prepared to deal with any emergency. Kuwait, with a capacity to produce more than three million barrels of oil a day, is one of the region's exporters of the crude to the world, depending on giant tankers for transporting the vital product. Such recurring incidents have been taking place in the Gulf, amid a fiery US-Iranian war of words, fiery rhetoric and saber-rattling, in addition to sweltering summer heat that has hit 50 degrees. — KUNA

KEEPING KUWAIT'S BEACHES CLEAN

Corporate CSR initiatives, volunteer organizations and community groups like @trashtagkuwait often organize beach clean ups in a bid to help protect and contribute to Kuwait's environment.

But the state of Kuwait's beaches is also often a controversy. During the winter break and again during Eid, videos circulated on social media showing vast amounts of garbage and waste left by crowds gathered at the beaches and seashores.

The litter-strewn beaches are then cleaned by the usually invisible army of street cleaners. So today we are highlighting the role of these hard working men who spend hours daily sweeping Kuwait's streets and picking up after visitors to the beaches.

— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



There are no expats in Kuwait

By Nejouad Al-Yagout

If we are going to tax people for polluting our beaches, that is noble, but if we are going to tax expats alone, something is inherently misaligned within us. Laws are not exclusive. Fine us all for leaving plastic on our shores, for throwing cigarettes out of car windows. Fine families - local and expat - whose children throw candy wrappers on sidewalks. But when we say tax the expats, we create a divisive society of us vs them and polarize people who leave their homes for a better life only to be demeaned and ostracized.

I will reiterate this again: Anyone who lives in Kuwait regardless of their race or nationality or religion is Kuwaiti.

Taiye Selasi, author of *Ghana Must Go*, was born in England and raised in the United States. Her father was born in the Gold Coast, raised in Ghana and lived in Saudi Arabia for three decades, while her mother, also born in England like her, hailed from Nigeria but lived in Ghana. A critic once claimed that Selasi cannot represent Ghana "when she's never known the indignities of traveling abroad on a Ghanaian passport". And Selasi acknowledged that however a bitter pill that may have been to swallow, it was an accurate criticism.

Another time, when someone introduced her as a multinational, she thought Nike, a globally recognized footwear company, is multinational. But she is a human being. And then, after an enlightening discussion with Colum McCann, who told her that all experience is local, she had her epiphany. In "Don't Ask Where I'm From, Ask Where I'm A Local", a Ted Talk, Selasi, in a question obviously inspired by McCann, challenged her audience by saying: "What if we asked, instead, of Where are you from? - Where are you a local?" She insists, "[t]his would tell us so much more about who and how similar we are."

Imagine that: The next time you meet someone, you ask him or her: Where are you a local? The question "Where are you from?" which holds so many stereotypes and racist implications would disappear as we leave behind notions of nationalism and tribalism and instead come together with locals of various backgrounds according to a communal bond.

If we observed people according to a shared experience within a specified location drawn by man-made borders, we would not have laws catered to the benefit of locals or at the expense of expats. All the people in Kuwait would be considered locals. And this is how we should live - as unified members of shared and relatively similar experiences. Whether we are from this country or that country will not matter when we are sitting on a plane and we meet someone who, like us, lives in Kuwait, but is not necessarily from Kuwait. We will bond with our fellow passenger based on a notion of common ground (literally and figuratively).

Come on Kuwait, let's wake up and show the world what it means to be a microcosm of our planet. Let's show the world that racism and arrogance, like borders, are imposed upon us and play no role in the evolution of our consciousness and personal and collective identities. We cannot afford to blame everyone except ourselves for our collective mess. We cannot afford to think we are superior in any way.

Because we are not. Life is cyclical and what goes around comes around and what is plenty in one cycle is scarce in another. Isn't it time we work with expats - I mean fellow locals - to create an inclusive society that flourishes as a community? The beauty of Kuwait's diverse society will rest on us saying yes to a cosmic invitation to coexist.



Local

Animal lovers protest stray dogs' poisoning in Kuwait

'That action must not be seen in a country of humanity'



KUWAIT: Animal lovers protest the poisoning of stray dogs in a peaceful stand at the Iradah Square. —Photos by Joseph Shagra

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Under the slogan 'Spay Do Not Poison,' Kuwaitis and animal lovers held a peaceful stand at the Iradah Square in Kuwait City yesterday to call the government to stop poisoning stray dogs. Recent reports and videos have appeared on social media recently showing stray dogs which posters say were dying after ingesting poison left by personnel working for the Public Authority of Agricultural Affairs and Fish Resources.

Noura Al-Hadad, animal rights activist and the protest's organizer, told Kuwait Times that the stand was held for the rights of animals, pointing out the 'growing problem' of stray dogs and street cats that are harmed, poisoned and abused. "We are standing today against the poisoning of stray

dogs in Kuwait, the state of humanity," she said. "We gather today to ask authorities who are responsible to stop poisoning the dogs because there are many better ways to reduce the number of stray animals. Also, we wish people to live with these creatures and know their rights."

Hadad explained that the problem usually starts in newly populated areas, which were inhabited by stray dogs and cats before residential buildings were built there. Due to lack of awareness, people who move to those areas become afraid of stray animals they see on the streets, she explained. "This peaceful stand is attended by dozens of people who are standing at a temperature of 50 C degrees only to propose solutions other than poisoning," Hadad remarks. "Dogs suffer from poisoning for up to five days be-

fore they die. People are here because of a video that spread on social media of helpless puppies, not more than three months old, which were poisoned and left to suffer to death. That action must not be seen in a country of humanity that is ruled by the Amir of humanity."

About alternative methods to avoid poisoning stray dogs, Hadad said that sterilization, which takes a period of time to be applied, is the best solution for both sides, but it may take from three to five years to see the results. "Awareness campaigns should also be held in schools, media, social media and other channels about animals rights," she added. "The government must put in place animal protection laws. Our religion is merciful and our country is a country of humanity. This must be taken into account."



The American United School of Kuwait Graduates its First Class of 2019



Group Photo of the Class of 2019.



H.E. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Keynote Speaker.



Mr. Larry Memmott, Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy.

The American United School of Kuwait (AUS) celebrated the graduation of its pioneering class of 2019 on May 30th. All 42 graduates have been accepted at renowned local and international universities.

Held under the patronage of the H.E. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, at the AUS auditorium, the graduation ceremony was attended by the Chairwoman of the United Education Company, Shaikha Dana Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah; Vice Chair of the United Education Company, Mr. Meshal Ali; AUS Founding Director, Dr. Jennifer Beckwith; Deputy Chief of Mission for the US Embassy, Mr. Larry Memmott; Director of

Examinations and Equations at Private Education, Dr. Salman Al Lafi; Supervisor of Foreign Schools at Private Education, Mr. Mansour Al Mansour; and Head of the Department of Early childhood and Elementary at Private Education; Mrs. Mariam Dashti.

The keynote speech was delivered by H.E. Sheikh Mohammad Abdullah Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah, Deputy Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, who emphasized the importance of equipping new generations with soft skills as an integral part of modern education. "As parents, we feel an irreplaceable need to prepare you, our children, for this changing world because we want you to be safe and happy. But, how do we prepare you to a future that none of us can

really predict? It is partly about traditional education, learning languages, understanding the scientific world, and being able to program a computer and in that regard I am sure that AUS has given you the best possible start...But it is also about the softer skills, creativity, resilience, respect to diversity, the ability to collaborate with others, humility, and integrity...And here too, I am sure AUS has taught you a great deal," he said.

Graduating Senior Zeina Al-Fulaij delivered the salutatorian address, in which she spoke about the "golden moments" in one's life, referring to the school years all students spend together before they graduate. Al-Fulaij urged her fellow graduates to fully live and cherish the "golden moments" in

their lives as they move on from one milestone to another.

Addressing the guests and his fellow graduates, the school valedictorian, Abdulmuhsen Al-Mishari delivered a bilingual speech in which he commended the school for taking talent and skill development as a pursuit toward establishing the future of Kuwait. Concluding his speech, Al-Mishari called upon his fellow graduates to feel proud and live up to the responsibility of being the first graduating class of AUS.

Established in 2012, The American United School of Kuwait (AUS) is internationally accredited by the Council of International School (CIS) and Middle States Association (MSA).



Dr. Jennifer Beckwith, AUS Founding Director.



Abdulmuhsen Al-Mishari, Valedictorian.



Graduate Zeina Al-Fulaij, Salutarian.



Dr. Craig Ross, High School Principal.

Local

Kuwait's FM chairs Security Council session on peacekeeping, mediation

NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Wednesday presided over a UN Security Council session on maintenance of international peace and security, conflict prevention and mediation. The session, held as part of Kuwait presidency of the Council for June, opened with briefings by UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, former Irish President and Chair of the Elders Mary Robinson, and Deputy Chair of the Elders Ban Ki-moon. The Council was also briefed on a letter, dated May 31, 2019, from the Permanent Representative of Kuwait to the UN Secretary-General, on the basic objectives of the country's foreign policy. In his address to the Council, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled thanked the Secretary-General for his "invaluable report," renewing Kuwait's support to his efforts to enhance the efficacy of the UN working mechanisms, particularly those relating to conflict prevention and mediation. He appreciated the presence of The Elders - a group of independent global leaders founded by Nelson Mandela to promote good governance and ethical leadership, for their long experience in improving the living of millions of people around the globe, and protecting human rights and women rights. He said the group is led by Robinson - a human rights advocate who served as UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and Ban - a former UN secretary-general and Noble Peace laureate who spearheaded lobbying for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris climate agreement.

Dealing with the maintenance of international peace and security - the main topic of the agenda of today's Council meeting, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled reminded the gathering of the purposes and principles of the UN as set in Article 1 of the UN Charter. Citing the text, he said, "To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment

or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace."

"Kuwait's call for convening this session provides us with a chance to assess the role of the Security Council in conflict prevention and mediation, with a view to strengthening this role and addressing the security, political and humanitarian crises at their early stages," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled pointed out. "The escalating trend of crises in our world in the recent years became more complicated than ever. Surely, these crises could be averted if the Security Council uses the tools at its disposal more effectively," he regretted. "The UN Charter, particularly Article VI, provides us with many tools which can prevent or settle disputes peacefully. This article requires the parties to any dispute to, 'first of all, seek a solution by negotiation, enquiry, mediation, conciliation, arbitration, judicial settlement, resort to regional agencies or arrangements, or other peaceful means of their own choice.' It requires that 'the Security Council shall, when it deems necessary, call upon the parties to settle their dispute by such means,'" he went on.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled noted that Article VIII encourages the regional arrangements or agencies to deal with "such matters relating to the maintenance of international peace and security as are appropriate for regional action. In this context, let me applaud the important cooperation between the Security Council and the African Union to settle many issue in African Continent."

Dealing with the important role of the Secretary General in this regard, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said Article 99 of the UN Charter lays a great responsibility on the Secretary General in dispute prevention. "Translating the provisions of this article into action, the Secretary-General prioritized the issue of mediation and used his good offices to appoint special envoys to various conflict-hit areas and high-level board of consultants on preventive diplomacy as a means of conflict prevention," he pointed out. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled highlighted the need of backing the efforts of the Secretary-General to prevent disputes, with a view to avoiding the loss of huge



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah presides over a UN Security Council session on maintenance of international peace and security, conflict prevention and mediation. — KUNA

sums of money which are spent annually on crises settlement and peacekeeping missions as well as the post-conflict recovery. "The challenges facing the mediation efforts, whether local, regional or international, require that such efforts be as inclusive and comprehensive as possible in order to address the root causes of disputes, including the political, security, economic and social aspects of such disputes," he stated.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled underscored the importance of element of time in mediation efforts, which could avert the exacerbation of disputes. He extolled the Secretary-General and his personal envoys for their efforts to settle disputes around the world. "The Security Council has accumulative experience which could help take innovative steps to maintain the international peace and security and mediation. We have set forth, in our paper of concepts that was distributed to the members of the Council, some measures that could contribute to the conflict prevention and mediation efforts. These measures include forming a small team of mediators from the Council members," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled said. The team of mediators could pay field visits to the conflict-hit areas as part of the preventive diplomacy, besides using more effectively the Coun-

cil's traditional tools such as peacekeeping missions, and sanctions on individuals and entities, he went on. "The success of the Council in using the available means remains to be conditional on the unity of, and consensus among, the five permanent members of the Council," he said.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled cited the crises of Palestine and Syria as stark examples of Council failure to shoulder its responsibilities effectively due to some of these members using of their veto powers. He highlighted the importance of multilateralism in addressing the political, security and humanitarian challenges facing the world. He noted that preventive diplomacy is a mainstay in Kuwait's foreign policy, which prioritizes dialogue as a means of dispute settlement based on the rules of the international laws, and the provisions of the UN Charter. He vowed that the State of Kuwait would continue to be a peace-loving country using its preventive diplomacy to contribute to maintenance of international security and peace. The Kuwaiti delegation to the Council session includes Assistant Foreign Minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah, the Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi and Assistant Foreign Minister Nasser Al-Hayyen and other senior diplomats. — KUNA

Kuwait 'carefully watching' efforts to ensure calm: Deputy FM

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah said escalations in the region have "decreased" as a result of continuous diplomatic efforts and communication. Kuwait is carefully watching efforts aimed at ensuring calm in the area, the deputy foreign minister told reporters. He described the regional impact of Iran's intention to increase uranium enrichment as a "worrying matter," urging this be resolved within the framework of the International Atomic Energy Agency. Jarallah went on to reiterate Kuwait's condemnation of the "devastating and aggressive" attack, launched by Houthi militia on Abha Airport in southern Saudi Arabia. The attack was dubbed a "dangerous escalation that

undermines all efforts aimed at reaching a political solution" and a "blatant breach" of international norms.

Kuwait hopes these attacks, it has condemned and rejected, come to a halt, he said, paving the way for political moves made by the international envoy or other parties aimed at reaching a political solution in Yemen. Speaking at a Russian embassy National Day function, he said Kuwait is proud of being the first country in the region to have launched diplomatic relations with Moscow. These bilateral relations are historic and strategic, he added, mentioning that coordination on regional and global matters remains continuous between both. — KUNA



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah and Ambassador of Russia to Kuwait Nikolay Makarov cut the cake during a Russian embassy National Day function. — Photo by Joseph Shagra

Lawmakers propose 'National Committee' to regulate demography

Reducing expats numbers by 10 percent within 10 years

By A Saleh

KUWAIT: A number of lawmakers yesterday proposed forming a special national committee to regulate and administer Kuwait's demography, said informed sources. In their proposal, MPs Mohammad Al-Dallal, Essa Al-Kandari, Osama Al-Shaheen and Khalil Al-Saleh called for setting up the 'National Committee to Regulate and Administer Kuwait's Demography' that would work on preventing Kuwait from having an 'excessive number of expatriates' which according to them would 'threaten the state's identity.' The proposed committee would set special policies and plans to adjust the current demographic structure in view of the developmental plan, said the sources who spoke on the condition of anonymity.

Strategic plans

According to the proposal, the committee would be responsible for studying Kuwait's demography and set strategic plans in accordance to developmental requirements and security, social and economic factors with an ultimate goal of reducing the total number of expats to 60 percent of the population within 10 years effective on passing the bill and publishing the law in the official gazette. Expats currently make up around 70 percent of the population. The committee would also set a new maximum limit for the expatriate population every five years, and set 'reasonable' and 'suitable' ratio per nationality, taking into consideration that none of the residing communities should exceed 40 percent of the population, the sources explained.

Further, the sources noted that according to the proposal, the committee would be headed by the Minister of State for Economic Affairs, a representative of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development as vice chairman, in addition to members representing the Central Statistical Bureau, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Higher Education, the Public Authority for Manpower, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Justice, Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Civil Service Commission, Public Authority of Civil Information, the private sector (to be nominated by Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry) and two academics with at least 10 years of experience.

Parliamentary calls for cutting the number of expatriates living in Kuwait are not new, and have been increasing lately as the National Assembly readies to go on its long summer break in less than three weeks. Earlier this week, MP Safa Al-Hashem called for expelling around two million expatriates from Kuwait over the next five years in order to make Kuwaitis a majority in their home country. "Reforming the imbalance in the demographic structure is an urgent necessity and a national requirement, because it is illogical that citizens are a minority in their home country," Hashem said in a statement.

10 expats laid off

In other news, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel announced laying off 10 expats working for the ministry in the period of 2016-2019 as part of the policy of 'Kuwaitization' of public sector jobs, noting that six were laid off in 2016, two in 2017, one in 2018 and one who



KUWAIT: Pedestrians wait to cross a road in Kuwait City in this archive photo. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

would be laid off by the beginning of July. Further, Aqeel stressed that the ministry is fully committed to implementing the 'Kuwaitization' policy as instructed by the CSC's resolutions numbers 2/1997, 2/2002 and 12/2007, and explained that recent hiring of non-Kuwaiti legal staff members at the manpower authority happened because the authority had been recently established, whereas there is lack of certain specialties in the Kuwaiti staff members nominated to work in it.

Camping season

Separately, Kuwait Municipality Director

Ahmad Al-Manfouhi said that, in collaboration with the Environment Public Authority, strict measures would be taken against violators during this year's camping season. Manfouhi added that a special committee had been formed to follow up the mechanism to be followed in imposing fines up to KD 5,000 against violators. Further, Manfouhi stressed that tents pitched outside houses in residential areas are illegal and unlicensed, adding that they are only tolerated during the camping season provided they cause no disturbance to neighbors nor block the traffic flows.

Kuwait overhauls air travel services



KUWAIT: DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah and other officials pose for a group picture after launching the plan in cooperation with Kuwait Airways. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Directorate General of Civil Aviation (DGCA) announced yesterday a plan to overhaul services for passengers on par with international airports with respect of admission, weighing and handling bags and belongings. DGCA President Sheikh Salman Al-Humoud Al-Sabah said in a statement that the new services are designed to achieve optimum safety and security as well as providing best accommodations for the passengers. It is also aimed

at upgrading the services' level through continuous overhaul programs, boosting manpower and technical resources. He was speaking after launching the plan in cooperation with Kuwait Airways and the National Aviation Services Company. The DGCA had predicted that the number of passengers would reach six million between June and September, higher by eight percent as compared to last year — 5.5 million passengers. — KUNA

Six hospitalized in Saad Al-Abdullah apartment fire

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: A fire recently broke out in a second floor apartment in Saad Al-Abdullah, said security sources, noting that firemen from Tahrir, Jahra industrial area brigades rushed to the scene. The sources added that firemen worked as two teams; one to tackle the blaze and another to rescue and evacuate the tenants to the roof, where six of them were rescued using the fire emergency ladder and then were rushed to hospital for further treatment. The fire was controlled and prevented from spreading to adjacent buildings. Separately, the interior ministry said that police managed to identify the owner of a vehicle which appeared in a video that went viral on social media blocking a disabled parking space. Police issued a ticket to the owner and impounded the vehicle, ministry's relations and security media department said in a statement.



Fire engines are seen outside a Saad Al-Abdullah building where a fire was reported.



Surveillance-savvy Hong Kong protesters going digitally dark

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A picture obtained by AFP from Iranian News Agency ISNA yesterday reportedly shows fire and smoke billowing from Norwegian owned Front Altair tanker said to have been attacked in the waters of the Gulf of Oman. — AFP

A timeline of escalation in the Gulf

PARIS: From US military deployments to alleged “threats” from Iran and attacks on oil tankers and installations, here is a timeline of escalating tensions in the Gulf:

‘Credible threat’

On May 5, the United States says it is sending the USS Abraham Lincoln carrier group and a bomber task force to the Middle East. The deployment is “in response to a number of troubling and escalatory indications and warnings” related to Iran, acting defense secretary Patrick Shanahan says a day later. Since then Washington has announced the dispatch to the region of an amphibious assault ship, a Patriot missile battery and an extra 1,500 troops.

Sanctions against Iran

On May 8, Iran says it is preparing to increase enriched uranium and heavy water production as part of its decision to stop certain commitments made under the 2015 nuclear deal with world powers. A year after Washington unilaterally withdrew from the deal and later re-

posed sanctions on Tehran, US President Donald Trump announces new measures against Iran’s steel and mining sectors. In June, Washington hits Iran’s petrochemical group PGPIC — the country’s largest and most profitable such group, with sanctions.

‘Sabotage’

On May 12, two Saudi oil tankers and two other ships are damaged in mysterious “sabotage attacks” off the coast of Fujairah, part of the United Arab Emirates. Fujairah is the only Emirati terminal located on the Arabian Sea, bypassing the Strait of Hormuz through which most Gulf oil exports pass. Iran, which has repeatedly threatened to close the strait in case of a military confrontation with the United States, calls the incidents “alarming and regrettable”.

Drone attacks near Riyadh

On May 14, Yemen’s pro-Iranian Houthi rebels carry out drone attacks near Riyadh, shutting down a key Saudi oil pipeline. Two days later Saudi-led coalition air strikes hit the rebel-

held Yemeni capital Sanaa. On May 15, the US orders all non-emergency diplomats to leave Iraq, due to an “imminent” threat from Iranian-linked Iraqi militias.

War of words

Trump warns on May 19 that if Iran attacks American interests “that will be the official end of Iran”. Iranian Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif says the “genocidal taunts” of US Trump will not “end Iran”. On May 27 Trump says the US is “not looking for regime change” in Iran.

Arab support for Riyadh

On May 30, Saudi Arabia — which accuses Iran of being behind the acts of sabotage and the drone attack in May — gets the backing of Arab leaders in its standoff with Tehran at summits organised by Riyadh. Iran accuses Riyadh of “sowing division”. On June 6, the UAE says a multinational investigation into the sabotage attacks point to the likelihood a state was behind them, without incriminating Iran.

Shinzo Abe in Tehran

On June 12, Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe arrives in Tehran in a bid to mediate between Washington and Tehran. A day later he meets Iran’s supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei who tells him: “I don’t consider Trump as a person worthy of exchanging messages with. I have no response for him and will not answer him.” A Yemeni rebel missile attack on an airport at Abha, in southwestern Saudi Arabia, wounds 26 civilians of different nationalities on June 12.

New shipping incident

On June 13, two tankers, Norwegian and Japanese, come under “attack” in the Gulf of Oman, according to the Norwegian maritime authority and the Japanese shipowner. The US Fifth Fleet says that it received two separate distress calls from the tankers in a “reported attack”. Iran speaks initially of “accidents” and says it rescued 44 crew. Foreign Minister Zarif says the tanker “attacks” as Abe visits are “suspicious”.—AFP

International

Iran leader rejects Trump talks despite Japan PM Abe's mission

'I don't consider Trump as a person worthy of exchanging messages with'

TEHRAN: Iran's supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei yesterday categorically ruled out talks with US President Donald Trump, despite an unprecedented Japanese mission aimed at defusing tensions between Washington and the Islamic Republic. Iran "has no trust in America and will not in any way repeat the bitter experience of the previous negotiations with America," Khamenei said in comments published by his official website.

They came after he met with Japan's Prime Minister Shinzo Abe making an unprecedented visit to Iran — the first by a Japanese premier since the 1979 Islamic Revolution. "We have no doubt in your good will and seriousness, but regarding what you said the US president told you, I don't consider Trump as a person worthy of exchanging messages with," Khamenei told Abe during their meeting. The visit coincided with a suspected attack on two oil tankers in the Sea of Oman, off the Iranian coast, with one of the ships owned by a Japanese company, which again sent tensions in the Gulf soaring. Iran has been locked in a bitter standoff with the United States since Trump withdrew from a landmark 2015 nuclear deal in May last year.

Washington has since re-imposed crippling unilateral sanctions — which have forced Tokyo to halt its once-substantial purchases of Iranian oil — and launched a military buildup in the Gulf. "President Trump has said he does not wish to see an escalation of tensions," Abe told reporters after his meeting. "I shared candidly with Ayatollah Khamenei my own views about what intention the president has in mind," Abe said, emphasizing he had "exchanged views with President Trump several times". Trump indicated

last week in France that he could consider talking to Tehran, saying: "I understand they want to talk and if they want to talk that's fine." Abe said he believed his meeting with Khamenei was "a significant step forward" for "securing peace and stability of this region." During a news conference with Abe on Wednesday, President Hassan Rouhani said he expected a "very positive change" in the Middle East and the world if the United States stopped what he called its "economic war" on Iran through sanctions.

'More than suspicious'

The reported attacks on the two tankers off the Iranian coast, just as Abe held talks in Tehran, was more than suspicious, Iran's Foreign Minister Mohammed Javad Zarif said. "Reported attacks on Japan-related tankers occurred while PM @AbeShinzo was meeting with Ayatollah @khamenei_ir for extensive and friendly talks. Suspicious doesn't begin to describe what likely transpired this morning," Zarif tweeted.

One of the two tankers — Kokuka Courageous — belongs to the Japanese company Kokuka Sangyo Ltd. The ship's owners confirmed their tanker had been attacked and that all of its 21 crew members had been rescued. Iran's navy rescued 44 sailors in all from the Kokuka Courageous and the Norwegian-owned Front Altair after fires ignited on both vessels.

Front Altair was reportedly still burning by late yesterday, but the situation aboard Kokuka Courageous was under control with the fire extinguished, according to an Iranian official involved in the rescue operation. According to Iranian state media, the Front Altair was carrying ethanol from Qatar to Taiwan, while the Kokuka

rebels. Riyadh has accused the rebels of being Iranian proxies ever since it led its allies in launching a military intervention against them in March 2015. "The Iranian regime is the only party in the region that has been pursuing reckless escalation, through the use of ballistic missiles and UAVs (unmanned aerial vehicles) to directly target civilian installations and innocent civilians," Prince Khaled said.

"For 40 years, the Iranian regime has been spreading chaos, death and destruction, by sponsoring and financing terrorist organizations including the Houthis." There has been a spate of rebel attacks on Saudi targets in recent weeks which have coincided with reports of intensified coalition strikes on rebel strongholds on the other side of the border. The rebels say that missile and drone strikes against Saudi Arabia are one of few ways that they can retaliate against more than four years of bombing by the Saudi-led coalition which has exacted a heavy civilian death toll in Yemen.

Since 2015, 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 Yemenis — more than two-thirds of the population — in need of aid. Concern over the civilian toll from the Saudi-led air war has triggered a fierce battle over US arms sales to the kingdom that has pitted President Donald Trump's administration against both houses of Congress. — AFP

Iran and the Yemeni rebels both follow arms of the Shiite branch of Islam but Tehran has always denied providing more than moral support to the



TEHRAN: A handout picture provided by the Iranian supreme leader office shows, Iranian Supreme Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei during a meeting with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe. — AFP

Courageous was carrying methanol from Saudi Arabia to Singapore.

Defusing tensions

Abe began his visit to Iran on Wednesday with the stated aim of defusing tensions between Tehran and Washington. Japan stopped importing Iranian crude oil in May to comply with US sanctions against the Islamic republic. The Asian powerhouse has an interest in keeping the Mid-

dle East stable in order to ensure the flow of hydrocarbons to fuel its economy.

Rouhani said Wednesday he saw "Japan's interest in continuing to buy oil from Iran and fixing financial issues" as a "guarantee" for the ongoing development of bilateral ties. Spokesman for Japan's foreign ministry, Takeshi Osuga, later said that on the questions of Iranian oil sales to Japan, "our understanding is that this was the wish of the Iranian side." — AFP

Saudi warns Iran over rebel airport attack

RIYADH: Riyadh accused its arch-foe Tehran yesterday of ordering a Yemeni rebel missile strike which wounded 26 people at a Saudi airport and warned of "grave consequences". "The continuation of the Iranian regime's aggression and reckless escalation, whether directly or through its militias, will result in grave consequences," deputy defense minister Prince Khaled bin Salman tweeted.

Yemen's Houthi rebels hit the civilian airport in the popular mountain resort of Abha in the southwest of the kingdom on Wednesday, damaging the arrivals hall and forcing its closure for several hours. "We will confront the Houthi militia's crimes with unwavering resolve," said Prince Khaled, a son of King Salman. "Their targeting of a civilian airport exposes to the world the recklessness of Iran's escalation and the danger it poses to regional security and stability."

Iran and the Yemeni rebels both follow arms of the Shiite branch of Islam but Tehran has always denied providing more than moral support to the

US House seeks to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia

WASHINGTON: US House of Representatives lawmakers introduced a bipartisan measure Wednesday to block President Donald Trump's weapons sales to Saudi Arabia, after his administration announced it was bypassing Congress to transfer arms to the kingdom and other allies. The lower chamber's pushback against the White House comes a week after US senators across the political spectrum also moved to prevent the \$8.1 billion sale.

The Trump administration antagonized lawmakers by announcing last month it would use emergency powers to defy Congress and provide munitions, aircraft, maintenance and other military components to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Jordan. The White House argued that an increasing threat

from Iran was the primary reason for circumventing the required congressional review of the 22 arms transfers, saying a freeze on sales by Congress could affect the Arab allies' operational abilities.

But lawmakers have remained angry with the kingdom eight months after the murder of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi, a US resident who had written critically of Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and was killed in Turkey by agents from Riyadh. Lawmakers including Trump loyalists have expressed concern that US weapons might be used against civilians in Yemen by the Saudi-led coalition engaged in the brutal war there.

House Democrat Ted Lieu introduced the resolution to block the sales, co-sponsored by Republican Justin Amash. "There is no emergency. It's phony, it's made up, and it's an abuse of the law," House Foreign Affairs Committee Eliot Engel told a hearing Wednesday, as he blasted the administration for seeking to "cut Congress out of the picture." Michael McCaul, the panel's top Republican, called use of the emergency powers "unfortunate," noting that some of the arms sales hardly appear urgent because they "will not be ready for delivery for over a year." — AFP

International

Hounded by war planes, Syrians digging Idlib graves in advance

‘We could be digging one for me, my brother, my father, my friend’

MAARET AL-NUMAN: Sitting inside his bulldozer in embattled northwest Syria, civil defense worker Bassel Al-Rihani quietly maneuvers a giant shovel through red earth to dig a grave for whoever is killed next. The Idlib region of some three million people has suffered increased regime and Russian air strikes in recent weeks, with hundreds of civilians killed since late April.

To keep up, civil defense workers known as the White Helmets are digging graves in advance, to ensure funerals are swift and the few who attend are not killed at the cemetery.

“We’re digging graves, preparing them, we don’t even know for who,” said the gravedigger in the town of Maaret Al-Noman, which has been repeatedly hit by bombardment in recent weeks. “We could be digging one for me, my brother, my father, my friend — God only knows,” said the 25-year-old father of five.

Using a bulldozer allows him to finish a grave in less than ten minutes, he explained, instead of toiling away for up to three hours at risk from jets in the sky. “We get them ready so when there are war planes all over, we can bury people as fast as possible, because often cemeteries are targeted,” Rihani said.

Idlib, one of the last regions in war-torn Syria to resist government control, is supposed to be protected by a September buffer zone deal co-signed by regime ally Russia and rebel backer Turkey. But a spike in air raids, shelling, and rocket fire by the regime and Russia has since late April hit the region. Idlib has been dominated since January by an alliance led by Syria’s former Al-Qaeda affiliate.

‘We buried her quickly’

The violence has killed more than 360 civilians, including 80 children, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights says, and caused tens of thousands to flee their homes. On Monday, Mohammad Turman, 21, buried his two-year-old daughter Fatima. The young father was out buying vegetables when a regime air raid hit his family home in the village of Maar Shureen.

He rushed home and extracted Fatima from the rubble, but she died shortly after arriving at the hospital. Turman brought her home to clean her body, and allow the family to say a prayer. “We buried her quickly. We weren’t even able to say goodbye properly,” he said. “There were very few of us. People were too scared of the planes.”

Back in Maaret Al-Noman, Rihani said funerals today are much simpler and smaller than before the eight-year war. Today, there is little money to spend on proper tombs and hardly anyone dares venture out to pay their respects. “Before the war, half the town would turn up if someone was buried, but now it’s just four to five relatives,” the rescue worker said. Victims are sometimes unrecognizable — burnt, or torn to pieces — and often buried en masse, different generations of the same family together.

‘Have they no conscience?’

Rihani said he was once burying a close friend’s nephew after he was killed in an air strike, when someone ran up urging him to stop. The nephew’s father had died of his wounds and



A small group of mourners gather around a cardboard box containing the remains of a child killed in an aerial bombardment in the country’s northern Idlib province before the victim’s burial on June 5, 2019, on the outskirts of the village of Kafr Aweid. — AFP

should be buried with him, he was told. “I’d been digging a single grave, but then I had to make it wider to fit both father and son,” Rihani said.

Outside the village of Kafr Aweid last week, a dozen men gathered to bury their loved ones on the edge of a field of tall dry grass. Residents were supposed to mark the Islamic holiday of Eid Al-Fitr, but instead air strikes and shelling by regime forces had hit the town, killing 10 civilians. By a deep burial pit, one man comforted another, his face contorted with emotion and his long robe streaked with dried blood.

Under a tree, one family cradled a small, blood-stained cardboard box. Inside lay the scant remains of four-year-old Yamen, including the little boy’s dust-covered head. Yamen’s grandfather sat legs sprawled on the ground, stooped over the precious package. “Where is humanity? Have they no conscience?” he cried, gesturing towards the sky. Nearby, men interred bodies wrapped in blankets, each grave sealed off with slim concrete blocks. The large metal blade of a bulldozer then dropped mounds of fresh earth over their tombs, laying them to rest. — AFP

US envoy pushes for ‘peaceful’ Sudan solution

KHARTOUM: A US special envoy was set to meet Sudan’s top military ruler yesterday to push for a “peaceful” solution to the standoff between protesters and generals following a deadly crackdown on demonstrators. The diplomatic push comes after protesters demanding civilian rule called off a nationwide civil disobedience campaign and agreed to resume talks with the generals who ousted veteran leader Omar Al-Bashir in April.

Traffic jams returned to downtown Khartoum and some shops in the capital’s famous gold market began to reopen on Thursday as more residents and office employees ventured out. Fewer troops and members of the feared paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, who protesters and rights groups accuse of leading the June 3 crackdown on demonstrators, were on the streets, according to an AFP correspondent who toured parts of the capital.

Several parts of the city suffered electricity cuts early yesterday, while internet services remained erratic. “Today is my first day to work after the campaign ended but I’m not in the mood to work,” said Suheir Hassan, an employee at a government office. “Because, on my way I passed by the sit-in area and remembered that all those voices who used to chant revolutionary slogans have now disappeared.”

Protesters ended their disobedience campaign late on Tuesday and agreed to hold fresh talks with the ruling generals following mediation led by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed. Demonstrators had launched the strike after men in military fatigues launched a brutal crackdown on a sit-in by thousands of people outside the army headquarters last week, killing dozens of people.

Protesters brief US envoys

In a bid to reach a swift solution to

the crisis, Washington, which has consistently pushed for civilian-led rule following Bashir’s ouster, on Wednesday appointed veteran diplomat Donald Booth as special envoy to Sudan. Booth was due to hold talks with General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, head of the ruling military council, to help craft a “peaceful solution” to the crisis that has rocked the northeast African country, Washington said.

Booth, who previously served as special envoy to Sudan and South Sudan during the administration of former president Barack Obama, arrived in Khartoum on Wednesday along with Assistant Secretary of State for Africa Affairs Tibor Nagy. He and Nagy held a series of meetings with Sudanese officials and protest leaders. The Alliance for Freedom and Change umbrella protest movement said that its leaders briefed the two US officials on the need for a transparent investigation in the June 3 killings.

They also called for the withdrawal of “militias” from the streets in Khartoum and other towns, an end to the internet blockade and establishment of a civilian administration, it said in a



KHARTOUM: African union envoy to Sudan Mohamed Al-Hacen Lebatt (L) gives a press conference. — AFP

statement. Protest leader Madani Abbas Madani told reporters that the US officials told them that Washington “backed the Ethiopian mediation” to arrive at a solution. Booth and Nagy are later expected to travel to Addis Ababa to discuss the Sudan crisis with Ethiopian leaders and the African Union.

Demand for guarantees

Yesterday, the US diplomats are also expected to meet diplomats of

Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt in Khartoum. Experts say the three regional Arab nations appear to back the generals even as Western countries push for a civilian-led administration in Sudan. Days after Bashir’s overthrow, Saudi Arabia and the UAE offered a three-billion-dollar aid package to Khartoum, including a \$500 million cash injection into the central bank to help support the Sudanese pound which has plunged since last year against the dollar.—AFP

Deal or no deal? Britain's PM hopefuls divided over Brexit

LONDON: The seven contenders left in the race to replace Theresa May as Britain's prime minister take different stances on Brexit. Here is a list of the various hopefuls and their declared strategies on whether Britain should leave with Theresa May's negotiated deal or no deal at all.

Open to no-deal in October BORIS JOHNSON

The former foreign secretary, 54, says he would get Britain out of the EU "deal or no deal" when the October 31 deadline set by EU leaders comes around. But he has also said a no-deal Brexit would be "a last resort, not something that anybody desires". He has threatened to withhold the country's Brexit bill if the EU does not offer improved withdrawal terms, and to scrap a controversial provision for the Irish border contained in the current divorce deal — both of which would be unacceptable to Brussels. A figurehead in the 2016 Brexit campaign, he was May's foreign secretary until he resigned over her Brexit strategy. Charismatic and popular with grassroots Conservatives, he is seen as the favorite in the race, scooping up a growing number of pledges of support from cabinet members and MPs. Johnson picked up 114 votes in the first round of voting by Conservative MPs in the leadership race yesterday.

DOMINIC RAAB

An ardent eurosceptic with a black belt in karate, the 45-year-old former Brexit minister resigned in protest at the deal struck with the EU by May. He says Britain should be ready to walk away from the EU without an agreement while still trying to negotiate a better deal than the one May signed. Raab sparked controversy last week by saying he would be willing to suspend parliament to force through a no-deal departure if necessary. Raab won 27 votes yesterday.

SAJID JAVID

A former investment banker and the son of a Pakistani immigrant bus driver, Javid, 49, wants to be the face of a modern, multi-cultural and meritocratic Britain. An economic liberal, Javid voted for Britain to stay in the EU in 2016 but has since become an advocate of Brexit. He wants to leave on October 31, preferably with a deal but would prefer no deal over no Brexit. He has picked up the notable endorsement of Scottish Conservative leader Ruth Davidson. Javid took 23 votes.

No to no-deal in October JEREMY HUNT

The foreign secretary supported remaining in the EU but has



LONDON: Conservative MP's Cheryl Gillan (C), Geoffrey Clifton-Brown (L), Charles Walker (2L) and Bob Blackman (R) read out the results of the first ballot in the Tory leadership ballot at the Houses of Parliament.

switched since then. The former businessman is a resilient politician, having headed the National Health Service for six years during a funding crisis. The 52-year-old says he will push hard for a new deal with Brussels without taking the possibility of a no-deal outcome off the table. Hunt won 43 votes yesterday.

MICHAEL GOVE

The cerebral 51-year-old is among the most ardent eurosceptics left in May's government but is seen as a possible unifying figure between the two wings of the party. Considered the second favorite, his campaign was thrown into turmoil this weekend after he admitted to using cocaine two decades ago. Gove has signaled he could be open to delaying Brexit again rather than leave without a deal on October 31. Gove picked up 37 votes.

Against no-deal at all MATT HANCOCK

The 40-year-old health secretary is one of the party's rising stars, a moderate widely seen as competent at his job and skilful with the media. He opposed Brexit during the 2016 referendum before switching sides. Hancock scraped through with 20 votes yesterday.

RORY STEWART

The international development secretary, 46, is a former Foreign Office official who served in the coalition administration in Iraq following the US-led invasion in 2003. He says a no-deal would be "damaging". Stewart also barely made it yesterday, winning 19 votes. —AFP

Twitter releases new trove of banned state propaganda

BRUSSELS: Social media giant Twitter yesterday released a new archive of state-backed propaganda from accounts it has banned based in Iran, Russia, Spain and Venezuela. The US platform said it had taken the material off its network, but would make it available to researchers and investigators studying online threats.

Tech firms have been accused of allowing political propagandists to use social media to hijack elections, poison online debate and smear their opponents. But Twitter, in a blog post by head of site integrity Yoel Roth, said "transparency is core to our mission" and vowed to fight "misleading, deceptive, and spammy behavior".

Yesterday's release was the firm's third such archive, representing more than 30 million tweets and a terabyte of

media data from just under 5,000 suspected accounts. Twitter has removed 4,779 accounts it believes "are associated with — or directly backed by — the Iranian government." Most of these were found to be spreading news stories angled to support Iranian geopolitical interests or to be fake user profiles designed to manipulate online debate.

A smaller sub-group, originating in Iran, exclusively "engaged with discussions related to Israel". Twitter has previously targeted alleged Russian bots, and this archive contains four more accounts that the firm believes are associated with the Internet Research Agency (IRA). This St Petersburg-based "troll factory" has been accused of working with Russian intelligence to influence Western votes, notably US President Donald Trump's election campaign.

Investigations into the Russian agency also led Twitter's security team to 33 more accounts linked to a previously known group of 764 Venezuelan fake users. "Our further analysis suggests that they were operated by a commercial entity originating in Venezuela," the post said. And in Spain, Twitter has taken down 130 allegedly fake accounts apparently set up to push the views of Catalan separatists. "We believe the public and research community are better informed by transparency," Roth said. On Friday, EU justice commissioner Vera Jourova and security commissioner Julian King are to brief reporters on European efforts to fight political disinformation. — AFP

Belgium to bring home six orphans of jihadists

BRUSSELS: Belgium will bring six orphans home from Kurdish-controlled camps in Syria after the deaths of their jihadist parents, Finance Minister Alexander De Croo said yesterday. "These are children who were born in our country and who today no longer have parents," the minister told VRT public radio after a cabinet decision.

Belgium is one of several European countries wrestling with the dilemma of what to do about citizens trapped in Syria following the defeat of the Islamic State group. Some are reticent to accept captured extremist fighters, but the cases of children and non-combatant wives have proved more complicated for Western authorities. On Wednesday, Foreign Minister Didier Reynders said Belgium has a signed deal to allow returnees to transit through Iraq's autonomous Kurdish region. The bulk of the Islamic State fighters and family members who were captured when its so-called caliphate collapsed are being held in Syria in Kurdish-run camps. De Croo said that four of the six returnees are older than 10, but that none were suspects.

"These are children who were alone in the camps, who have no support. There's no question of taking back parents who chose to join terrorist groups," he said. "These children had no choice," he added. —AFP

International

Trump says he would take foreign info on 2020 presidential opponent

‘I think you might want to listen... there’s nothing wrong with listening’

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump said Wednesday that he would be willing to accept information from a foreign country on his opponent in the 2020 election race, after years of denying Moscow helped him win office. Trump team contacts with Russians during the 2016 presidential race led to special counsel Robert Mueller’s probe into possible collusion and obstruction of justice, as well as several similar and ongoing efforts in Congress.

The Russia issue has consumed the Trump presidency for the past two years, and his new remarks suggested he still sees nothing wrong with a US political candidate accepting help from a foreign power. “I think you might want to listen... there’s nothing wrong with listening,” Trump said when asked by ABC News what he would do if a country such as Russia or China offered him such information. He denied the suggestion that that would amount to foreign meddling in a US election.

“It’s not an interference, they have information — I think I’d take it,” Trump said. “If I thought there was something wrong, I’d go maybe to the FBI — if I thought there was something wrong,” Trump said. Mueller’s report on his investigation stated that while there was insufficient evidence to charge Trump with criminal conspiracy, he was happy enough to benefit from Russian dirty tricks.

Impeachment call

Democratic presidential frontrunner Joe Biden said that Trump was “welcoming” foreign interference in US voting. “This isn’t about politics. It is a threat to our national security. An American President should not seek their aid and abet those who seek to undermine democracy,” Biden said on Twitter. Another Democratic presidential hopeful, Elizabeth Warren, seized on Trump’s comments to repeat her strident calls for him to be impeached.

“The #MuellerReport made it clear: A foreign government attacked our 2016 elections to support Trump, Trump welcomed that help, and Trump obstructed the investigation,” Warren tweeted. “Now, he said he’d do it all over again. It’s time to impeach Donald Trump.” Democrats in Congress continue to seek testimony and information as they press the president with multiple investigations — mostly related to Russia meddling, obstruction and the 2016 election — and are debating among themselves whether there is enough evidence and political space to pursue impeachment.

The president’s remarks came on the same day that his son Donald Jr was grilled by US senators about his contacts with Russians. The younger Trump likely faced questioning about his role in arranging meeting at Trump Tower in June 2016 that included his father’s son-in-law Jared Kush-



WASHINGTON: In this file photo taken on June 29, 2017, US President Donald Trump speaks at the Energy Department. — AFP

ner, then-campaign manager Paul Manafort, and a Russian lawyer offering dirt on Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. “If it’s what you say, I love it,” Trump Jr had written in response to a 2016 email offering the information.

Some Democrats suspect Trump Jr may have lied in previous testimony in 2017 about what he and his father knew about the now-infamous meeting,

as well as other connections between the Trump campaign and Russia. The Trump team had initially tried to cover up the meeting, providing conflicting stories about its purpose and what happened. Mueller’s report detailed how the president’s former lawyer Michael Cohen recalled that Trump Jr may have told his father about the meeting. The president has denied knowing about it ahead of time. — AFP

Mexico frees migrant-rights activists jailed

MEXICO CITY: A Mexican court freed two migrant-rights activists Wednesday who were arrested on human-trafficking charges last week amid Mexico’s negotiations to try to avoid US President Donald Trump’s threatened tariffs over migration. A judge in the southern state of Chiapas dismissed all charges against Irineo Mujica and Cristobal Sanchez, activists with the group People Without Borders (Pueblo Sin Fronteras), which has helped organize caravans of Central American migrants trekking toward the United States.

“We remain very worried by the campaign to criminalize migrants and human-rights activists under political pressure from the United States government,” the group said in a statement. After being freed, Sanchez said at a press conference that he and Mujica are “the first political prisoners of the ‘Fourth Transformation,’” a phrase coined by leftist Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to refer to his plan to radically transform the government. “The sector that has been hit the hardest by this transformation has been the migrants,” said the activist. “Anyone who assumes a leadership role within a migrant caravan passing through Mexico is singled out, persecuted, imprisoned and subsequently deported,” Sanchez added. Mujica added: “If they continue to invent crimes, if they continue with this corruption, then we don’t really have a Fourth Transformation.” — AFP

Trump Jr grilled by US senators, says unconcerned about perjury

WASHINGTON: Donald Trump Jr wrapped up a return interview Wednesday with US lawmakers who questioned him about his contacts with Russians, with the president’s eldest son dismissing concerns he may have perjured himself in his 2017 testimony. The 41-year-old appeared relaxed as he emerged from a three-hour closed-door session with the Senate Intelligence Committee as part of the Republican-led panel’s two-year investigation of Russian interference in the 2016 US presidential election.

Trump Jr, who helms the Trump Organization collection of businesses that his real estate billionaire father ran for decades, earlier told reporters there was “nothing to correct” from his previous comments to the committee. After his interview, he maintained he had been consistent. “I don’t think I changed anything of what I said because there was nothing to change,” Trump Jr said. “I’m glad that this is finally over (and) we’re able to put some final clarity on that.”

Asked if he was worried about perjury, Trump Jr responded: “Not at all.” Trump Jr likely faced questioning about his role in arranging a Trump Tower meeting in June 2016 that included his father’s son-in-law Jared Kushner, then-campaign manager Paul Manafort, and a Russian lawyer offering dirt on Democratic nominee Hillary Clinton. “If it’s what you say, I love it,” Trump Jr had written in response to a 2016 email offering the information in a meeting.

Some Democrats suspect Trump Jr may have lied in previous testimony in 2017 about what he and his father knew about the

now-infamous meeting, as well as other connections between the Trump campaign and Russia. The Trump team had initially tried to cover up the meeting, providing conflicting stories about its purpose and what happened. Robert Mueller’s Russia report, submitted in April, detailed how the president’s former lawyer Michael Cohen recalled that Trump Jr may have told his father about the meeting; the president has denied knowing about it ahead of time.

‘Clarification’

On Wednesday, Trump Jr said he provided “clarification” to the intelligence panel, and pointed out that Cohen himself is currently serving a prison sentence for campaign finance violations and lying to Congress. In an interview with ABC News broadcast Wednesday, Trump said that if a foreign power, say Russia or China, offered him information on his opponent in the 2020 election he would probably accept it.

“It’s not an interference, they have information — I think I’d take it,” Trump said. “If I thought there was something wrong, I’d go maybe to the FBI — if I thought there was something wrong.” The Mueller report stated that while there was insufficient evidence to charge Trump with criminal conspiracy, the Trump campaign in 2016 apparently had no objections to getting help from Russians and hoped to benefit from such assistance.

Trump Jr also likely faced questions about plans to build a Trump Tower in Moscow, a project that continued well into the 2016 presidential campaign despite Trump’s team saying the deal had fallen through. Both issues highlighted questions about whether the Trump campaign colluded with Russians in their interference in the election.

Hope Hicks to testify

Democrats in the House and Senate continue to seek testimony and information as they press the president with multiple investigations, mostly related to Russia meddling, obstruction and the 2016 election. Democrats are debating among themselves whether there is enough evidence and political space to pursue an impeachment motion against Trump. — AFP

International

War, depression, suicide: US vets are finally finding help

‘The compassion and the caring is getting there’

CENTER MORICHES: Roger King was 19 when he enlisted in the US Marine Corps in 2005. He left four years later after two deployments in Iraq, where a sniper's bullet nearly cost him his life. Once home, he faced a new set of problems in his return to civilian life on New York's Long Island, including a suffocating sense of anxiety and difficulty being in group situations.

King was suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and a traumatic brain injury (TBI) — two afflictions sadly common among veterans of the largest army in the world, bogged down in seemingly endless conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan. Increasingly depressed by the challenges of his new life, King began drinking. This solidly built 33-year-old man quietly confides that he attempted suicide — twice.

Russell Keyzer — another New Yorker — joined the National Guard shortly after the September 11, 2001 terror attacks. Now 42, he suffers from flashbacks, insomnia, panic attacks and other PTSD symptoms following two years with NATO's multinational force in Kosovo, where periods of relative stability alternated with violent outbursts.

After returning home in 2008, Keyzer sank into a life of drinking and depression. His marriage came crashing down and he found himself homeless. On no fewer than seven occasions, he says, he attempted to kill himself. Today, King and Keyzer say they are doing much better, thanks in large part to an aid group for veterans, the Joseph P Dwyer Veterans Peer Support Project, a non-profit organization created in 2012 in tribute to an army medic who killed himself in 2008 after returning home from Iraq.

‘More needs to be done’

King and Keyzer spoke about their darker

times at a recent “Wellness Day” organized by the association at a park in the coastal village of Center Moriches. Veterans enjoyed a picnic, a salute to the US flag, yoga, meditation and kayaking — all activities intended to foster a sense of security and camaraderie. Some 20 organizations also set up stands to offer assistance.

“More needs to be done,” King said. Groups like the Dwyer Project “should have been done in World War I, World War II, Vietnam.” He now leads a group of a dozen veterans for the project. They meet weekly. “We thought of AA, NA,” he said, referring to Alcoholics Anonymous and Narcotics Anonymous, but “it’s like you never really thought maybe this might help for veterans.” Now, King added, “the compassion and the caring is getting there.” Keyzer agreed.

“If the proper resources were there when we came home, we would not be in this position... We would not have turned to drugs, we would not have turned to alcoholism,” he said. But he added: “Things are slowly changing for the better every day. There are more and more veterans’ programs out there.”

Peer support

Psychological support groups like the Dwyer Project have indeed been multiplying across the United States, as the world's leading superpower struggles to help its 20 million veterans — nearly 10 percent of the adult population — overcome their challenges and thoughts of suicide. Many recent veterans are at the opposite end of the spectrum from the proud and smiling men and women who assembled in Normandy last week to mark the 75th anniversary of the D-Day invasion during World War II.

More than 6,000 veterans — many of them

“There’s an extradition request from the US that is before the courts tomorrow but yesterday I... certified it. “I want to see justice done at all times and we’ve got a legitimate extradition request, so I’ve signed it, but the... decision is now with the courts.” If basic criteria are met, the home secretary must certify a valid extradition request from the United States before the courts make a decision on whether the person can be extradited. The secretary then decides whether to order an extradition.

Assange, who is being held in the top-security Belmarsh prison in southeast London, is not expected to attend Friday's hearing in person but could take part via video-link, although it will be largely procedural. The “first real confrontation of arguments” in court will not be for several weeks or months, according to WikiLeaks editor Kristinn Hrafnsson. Washington has accused Assange of violating the US Espionage Act by publishing military and diplomatic files in 2010. The 18 charges reject his claim he was simply a publisher receiving leaked material — which would be protected under press freedom legislation. The case has upset some US and other world media, which argue that Assange's activities differ very little from their own. They fear his case could set a precedent for limiting free speech and media rights. — AFP



CANANDAIGUA: A memorial to American soldiers from New York State who were killed in Iraq or Afghanistan. — AFP

gun owners — killed themselves each year from 2008 to 2016, according to a report published late last year by the US Department of Veterans Affairs (VA). By comparison, a total of 6,951 American troops died in major war zones between 2001 and 2018, according to an analysis from Brown University. Faced with those sobering statistics, the VA — which administers some 1,200 hospitals and clinics — has made suicide prevention a priority, establishing a hotline for troubled veterans that is among the most heavily used in the world.

Increasing awareness

The Veterans Crisis Line was launched in 2007 with a staff of 14; it now has more than 900 employees, with three call centers across the country including one in upstate New York, director Matt

Miller told AFP. The number of incoming calls has grown steadily, now totaling some 650,000 a year, he said. “We are all increasing in our awareness” of suicide, he said, not just among veterans but among all civilians, where the rate — while lower than among veterans — has been climbing.

Fifty years after the hell of Vietnam and more than 17 years after US troops first intervened in Afghanistan, “there is a lot more awareness” about veterans’ needs, said Marcelle Leis, who heads the Dwyer Project after 20 years in the Air National Guard. But she quickly adds: “We have a lot of work to do.” Unlike the norm during the Korean and Vietnam wars, she said, troops sent to Iraq or Afghanistan often serve “multiple tours” and struggle while “going back and forth in this constant state of hyper-vigilance.” — AFP

UK minister signs US bid to extradite Assange

LONDON: Britain's interior minister said yesterday he had certified the US request to extradite WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange on espionage grounds in a procedural move that opens the way for a court battle. The US Justice Department confirmed on Tuesday that it had submitted a formal extradition request. British Home Secretary Sajid Javid said he signed it on Wednesday.

The final decision on whether Assange can be extradited will rest with the courts. The next hearing in the Australian former computer hacker's case is on Friday. The 47-year-old had been sheltering in Ecuador's embassy in London for seven years until his arrest on April 11 when Quito finally withdrew his asylum. He is now serving a 50-week sentence in jail for skipping bail when he entered the embassy in 2012. “I'm very pleased that the police were finally able to apprehend him and now he's rightly behind bars because he broke UK law,” Javid told BBC radio.

Putin sacks two senior police over reporter's drugs arrest

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin yesterday sacked two senior police officers over the arrest of investigative reporter Ivan Golunov on trumped up drugs charges. The journalist's arrest last week was widely seen as punishment for his investigative work and sparked an unprecedented campaign of solidarity in Russian society.

On Tuesday, Interior Minister Vladimir Kolokolov said he had requested Putin dismiss the officers after lifting the charges against Golunov on the basis of a lack of evidence. Yesterday, Putin signed a decree to dismiss the police chief for western Moscow, Major General Andrei Puchkov, and the head of the Moscow police department for narcotics control, Major General Yuri Devyatkin. Golunov is a reporter

for Meduza news site, which is based in EU member Latvia. He walked free from a Moscow police building on Tuesday evening after his house arrest was lifted.

Moscow police had charged him with attempted drug dealing, saying that officers found him in possession of drugs including cocaine. But as the details of the case attracted public outrage, they later admitted that they had posted photographs of drugs paraphernalia that were not taken in his flat. Golunov's supporters, including many influential journalists, mounted a public campaign in his defense, holding protests outside Moscow police headquarters.

The case has prompted wide-reaching questions about how Russian police operate, with Golunov's supporters and lawyers saying that police planted drugs on him. Kolokolov said the police who worked on the case have been suspended pending an investigation. On Wednesday, a few thousand protesters took to the streets of Moscow for an unsanctioned march calling for broad reform of the law enforcement and justice systems. Police violently broke up the march and arrested more than 500 people, according to OVD INFO, a monitor that tracks detentions. — AFP

International

Second patient dies of Ebola in Uganda, says health official

The first known cross-border spread since an outbreak began

BWERA: A grandmother in Uganda has died from Ebola, health officials said yesterday, the second fatality in the country since a major outbreak in Democratic Republic of Congo crossed the border. Health Minister Jane Ruth Aceng announced Wednesday that Uganda had recorded three cases of Ebola in the first known cross-border spread since an outbreak began in eastern Congo last August.

The patients were from a family of six, including four children, that travelled to Congo to care for a relative and later attended his burial after he died of Ebola. Upon returning to Uganda two brothers — aged five and three — and the 50-year-old grandmother tested positive for the virus, and the family was quarantined in Bwera, a border town in the country's west. The older boy died Tuesday — the first Ebola fatality in Uganda since the start of the Congo outbreak that has seen more than 2,000 cases recorded, around two-thirds of which have been fatal.

A health ministry official said yesterday the grandmother had also died overnight. "The deceased has been confirmed as the grandmother of the five-year-old boy who died. Both victims had attended the burial of an Ebola patient in Congo, but returned to Uganda," the official said on condition of anonymity. The official said arrangements were being made to bury the woman in Kasese, the western district bordering Congo where her grandson was laid to rest Wednesday.

About 25,000 people cross the district's main border crossing of Mpwonde at a daily basis, according to the DRC health ministry. The World Health Organization also confirmed the woman had succumbed to the hemorrhagic virus. WHO said 27 others in contact with the family had been placed under close monitoring. Uganda's health ministry said frontline health workers were due to be vaccinated Friday with a new drug designed to protect them against the virus.

Porous border

East Africa has been on high alert since the outbreak was declared in the eastern DRC provinces of North Kivu and Ituri. WHO said 12 members of the family that attended the burial in Congo were placed in isolation in the DRC, but six "escaped and crossed over to Uganda" on June 9. But the next day, the five-year-old was checked into hospital in Bwera vomiting blood. Tests confirmed he had Ebola and the family placed in an isolation ward.

Aceng said challenges remained at "unofficial entry points" between Congo and Uganda, which share a porous 875-kilometre border. According to the WHO, Uganda has vaccinated nearly 4,700 health workers in 165 facilities, as it seeks to contain the virus in the country's west. Uganda has experienced several outbreaks in the past, most recently in 2012, while in 2000 more than 200 people died in an outbreak in the north of the country.



MPONDWE: A health worker monitors to ensure that people wash their hands at the Mpwonde Health Screening Facility in the Uganda border town with the Democratic Republic of Congo. — AFP

South Sudan has also declared a state of alert and vaccinated health workers. WHO will hold an emergency meeting Friday to determine whether to declare the outbreak "a public health emergency of international concern," a major shift in mobilization against the disease. The emergency committee had in October and again in April held off doing this, partly because the

virus remained contained in one part of DRC. The DRC has struggled to contain the outbreak, the tenth in the country since the disease was identified in 1976. Efforts have been hampered both by militia attacks on treatment centers and by the hostility of some local people to the medical teams. Five workers have been killed, according to an AFP tally. — AFP

Taiwan's Tsai to seek re-election after defeating challenger

TAIPAI: Taiwan's President Tsai Ing-wen is set to seek a second term after she successfully saw off a primary challenge yesterday from within her own party to stand as their candidate. The island goes to the polls in January to elect a new president, in a contest set to be dominated by relations with China. The Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) — which Beijing loathes — announced that Tsai had comfortably beaten former premier William Lai in a primary decided by opinion polls.

"My most important responsibility now is to unite all forces... to protect Taiwan's democracy, to defend the fruits of reforms and to solidify our national sovereignty," Tsai told reporters. Tsai was elected in 2016 as the island's first female leader, defeating the China-friendly Kuomintang (KMT) party which oversaw an unprecedented thaw in cross-strait ties but began to unnerve many voters with its perceived coziness to the mainland.

Beijing promptly cut communication with her government, ramped up military drills and poached several of Taiwan's dwindling diplomatic allies because Tsai refuses to acknowledge that the self-ruled island is part of "one China". Tsai hails from the more moderate

wing of her party. Her challenger Lai is an open supporter of Taiwanese independence, something that Beijing has always maintained is a red-line.

Taiwan has been ruled separately since the end of a civil war in 1949 but China still views it as its territory and has vowed to take the island, by force if necessary. The KMT has yet to announce their candidate but it is likely to be either Taiwan's richest man Terry Gou — the owner of electronics giant Foxconn — or Han Kuo-yu, a populist mayor and party outsider who has had a meteoric rise in recent months.

Both favor much warmer ties with China, a stance that often appeals to older conservative voters but rattles many younger people who have increasingly embraced a distinctly Taiwanese identity and mistrust the authoritarian mainland. "Both potential KMT candidates are seen as China-friendly. It could be a fight between either of them and the DPP's candidate who vows to defend sovereignty. And it remains to be seen which side the public will support," Wang Yeh-lih, a political analyst at National Taiwan University. — AFP

Ecuador approves LGBT marriage

QUITO: Ecuador's highest court on Wednesday approved same-sex marriage in a landmark ruling in the traditionally Catholic and conservative South American country. LGBT and human rights activists erupted in celebration in Quito and the port city of Guayaquil, waving the rainbow flags that symbolize the gay rights movement.

The Constitutional Court said same-sex marriage had been approved in a five-to-four vote of its nine judges in a closed door hearing. Ecuador, where the church is very influential, thus joins Argentina, Brazil and Colombia in recognizing same-sex marriage. "It means that Ecuador is more egalitarian," said lawyer Christian Paula of the Patka Foundation, which provides legal advice for around 10 same-sex couples seeking to marry in the country. "It recognizes that human rights must be for all people without discrimination."

The four dissenting judges argued that in order to recognize same-sex marriage, constitutional reform would have to be debated in the National Assembly. Gustavo Medina, a former Supreme Court president, told AFP that Ecuadoran authorities were obliged to abide by decisions of the Constitutional Court, which

were "binding and mandatory." Ecuador has recognized de facto civil unions for same-sex couples since 2015.

The Constitutional Court approved same-sex marriage as it ruled on lawsuits by two pairs of men who wanted to wed. The men in one of those couples are named Efrain Soria and Javier Benalcazar. "I want to say hello to Javier, who is in Guayaquil. Honey, I love you," Soria told reporters in the capital Quito. He urged other gays to stop hiding and "enjoy the happiness that comes from being equal, like anyone else."

Ecuador's current constitution defines marriage as the union between a man and a woman. The charter, ratified in 2008, also bars same-sex couples from adopting children. But the judges that approved same-sex marriage said they based their decision on the idea that all people are equal. They also said they sought to counter any kind of discrimination. In Foch Plaza in downtown Quito, two women who have been fighting since 2013 for the right to marry staged a symbolic wedding right after the court decision was announced. Pamela Troya and Gabriela Correa sat formally in chairs for the ceremony and when Troya was asked the big question, she said: "Today, I say yes. A big yes. A giant yes. I want to be your wife."

Others in the crowd shouted in approval, hugged and kissed. Troya later told reporters the fight for same sex marriage in Ecuador had been long and hard, and at times she thought it was a lost cause. "Finally, today is an historic day for Ecuador because it is a little more fair and egalitarian," she said. — AFP

International

Winds, rain batter western India as cyclone veers away

Forecasters had been bracing for the system to hit Gujarat

AHMEDABAD: High winds and heavy rains pounded western India yesterday as a major cyclone expected to hit the coast veered away instead into the Arabian Sea. Vayu, classified as a very severe cyclonic storm, moved north-north-westwards in the night over the Arabian Sea, and was around 110 kilometers from the coast of Gujarat state. It was “very likely” to keep moving in the same direction, but still skirt the coast, packing winds of 135-145 kilometers per hour and gusts of 160 kilometers per hour, the India Meteorological Department (IMD) said.

“The threat of surge in wind, dust storm and rainfall remains very much. The centre of the storm — known as the eye — has slightly moved away from the Gujarat coast, but its diameter is well over 900 kilometers,” an IMD official told local media. Heavy rains are likely to continue until Saturday, Gujarat IMD chief Jayanta Sarkar said. On Wednesday, forecasters had been bracing for the system to hit Gujarat with full force winds equivalent to a category one or two hurricane.

Authorities in Gujarat evacuated more than 285,000 people as a precaution. Schools have been closed, with officials fearing major damage to houses, crops, power lines and communications. Five people have been killed by lightning in Gujarat, mostly farmers and laborers working in fields, authorities said. The Air Force, Coast-guard and Navy were all on high alert, with 36

teams from the National Disaster Response Force (NDRF) deployed in coastal areas.

Praying for safety

Yesterday, the eye of the cyclone was some 110 kilometers from Veraval, a major hub of India’s fisheries industry, exporting to Japan, South East Asia, Europe, the Gulf and the United States. The state also houses major ports as well as the Jamnagar oil refinery, the world’s largest. All ports in Gujarat halted the berthing of vessels from Wednesday, while Indian Railways cancelled 77 trains. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who comes from Gujarat, said Wednesday that the central government was closely monitoring the situation. “Praying for the safety and well-being of all those affected by Cyclone Vayu,” he tweeted.

Cyclones are relatively rare in Gujarat, but they can be destructive and dangerous. The worst was in 1998 when more than 4,000 people died. Vayu is India’s second major storm this year. In May, Cyclone Fani — with winds up to 200 kilometers per hour — killed around 80 people in eastern India and Bangladesh, damaging half a million houses and knocking out power, water and communications. But Odisha authorities won praise from the United Nations and others for evacuating more than a million people and averting what could have been a much higher death toll.

Improved forecasting models, public aware-



Indian fishermen try to save a boat from being washed out to sea on the outskirts of Veraval, some 400km from Ahmedabad. — AFP

ness campaigns and well-drilled evacuation plans — backed up by an army of responders and volunteers — helped the eastern state prepare well. The latest weather system was also drawing moisture away from much-needed annual monsoon rains, with almost half of India hit by drought and many areas experiencing a

heatwave. With temperatures exceeding 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in the northern states of Rajasthan, water shortages have left huge numbers of people reliant on water trucks. The monsoon arrived in the south-western state of Kerala late last week but was several days behind schedule. — AFP

India questions men after raids on IS supporters

NEW DELHI: Indian anti-terrorism police questioned six men yesterday, after conducting raids against alleged Islamic State group supporters in the country’s south. India has been concerned about Islamist extremists on its soil for some time, and the Sri Lanka bombings in April left authorities alarmed that the Hindu-majority country might be at risk of an attack by jihadists.

The raids on Wednesday in Coimbatore, Tamil Nadu state, came after the arrest in April of an Indian national who allegedly followed Zahran Hashim, the ringleader of the Sri Lanka Easter suicide attacks that killed 258 people. India’s National Investigation Agency (NIA) said in a statement that the “prime accused” in the Coimbatore case, Mohammed Azarudeen, 32, “has been a Facebook friend” of Hashim. “During initial questioning, Azarudeen told us that he had plans to carry out a big attack in Tamil Nadu and Kerala (another southern state) but first wanted to hire more youths who will be ready to take up jihad,” the Economic Times daily quoted an unnamed official as saying.

The NIA named five others aside from Azarudeen who, it alleged, were also spreading Islamic State propaganda on social media with the aim of attracting new recruits willing to carry out terrorist attacks in South India — “especially in Kerala and Tamil Nadu”. The NIA said Azarudeen maintained a Facebook page through which he propagated IS ideology, while other members of his group “have also been sharing radical contents attributed to Hashim.” — AFP

Police drop case that triggered India’s #MeToo movement

MUMBAI: Indian police said yesterday they had no evidence to support the allegations of sexual harassment made by an actress against a Bollywood star last year that sparked the country’s #MeToo movement. The case against multiple-award-winning actor Nana Patekar — one of the few #MeToo cases in India to have been investigated by police — was now closed, they said. “There was no evidence that we could find against the accused,” Mumbai police senior inspector Shailesh Pasalwar told AFP.

Former Miss Universe contestant Tanushree Dutta first alleged in 2008 that Patekar had touched her inappropriately during the making of a romantic comedy the same year. She made no formal complaint at the time and no action was taken against Patekar, who has repeatedly denied the accusations. But, emboldened by the global #MeToo campaign, Dutta repeated the allegations in an interview last summer and in October went to police in Mumbai to report the claim.

It triggered a belated #MeToo movement in India, which saw women share accounts of alleged harassment by several powerful men in the worlds of Bollywood, business, journalism, politics, comedy and even cricket. Dozens of men lost their jobs — including India’s former junior minister MJ Akbar after at least 20 women accused him of sexual harassment during his time as a newspaper editor. Very few cases ended up being probed by police, however, and several accused tried to turn the tables on their accusers by suing them for defamation.

Akbar — who denies the allegations against him — has taken one of the complainants, Priya Ramani, to court. Dutta said last year that she received legal notices from Patekar after repeating her claims against him. — AFP

No survivors in Indian military plane crash

NEW DELHI: India yesterday said there were no survivors from a military plane crash last week in a remote mountainous region close to China. The Soviet-built AN-32 plane, carrying eight crew and five passengers, disappeared from radars on June 3 in the northeastern state of Arunachal Pradesh, prompting a week-long search by the Indian Air Force (IAF).

“Eight members of the rescue team have reached the crash site today (Thursday) morning,” the IAF said on Twitter. “IAF is sad to inform that there are no survivors.” Helicopters and planes scoured hundreds of square miles of the mountainous region before emergency workers Tuesday spotted the wreckage on a mountainside at an elevation of some 12,000 feet (3,650 meters).

A mountaineering team trekked to the crash spot after being air dropped at a nearby location after two failed attempts. Authorities had earlier urged locals to organize search in the rugged mountains and announced a cash reward of 550,000 rupees (\$8,000) for any information. The twin-engine plane lost contact with ground control 35 minutes after taking off. In 2016, another AN-32 — flying from Chennai to the Andaman and Nicobar Islands — went missing above the Bay of Bengal. It had 29 people aboard and was never found. — AFP

International

Surveillance-savvy Hong Kong protesters going digitally dark

Aware of the dangers of surveillance and leaving online footprints

HONG KONG: Hong Kong's tech-savvy protesters are going digitally dark as they try to avoid surveillance and potential future prosecutions, disabling location tracking on their phones, buying train tickets with cash and purging their social media conversations. Police used rubber bullets and tear gas to break up crowds opposed to a China extradition law on Wednesday, in the worst unrest the city has witnessed in decades.

Many of those on the streets are predominantly young and have grown up in a digital world, but they are all too aware of the dangers of surveillance and leaving online footprints. Ben, a masked office worker at the protests, said he feared the extradition law would have a devastating impact on freedoms. "Even if we're not doing anything drastic — as simple as saying something online about China — because of such surveillance they might catch us," the 25-year-old said.

This week groups of demonstrators donned masks, goggles, helmets and caps — both to protect themselves against tear gas, pepper spray and rubber bullets, and also to make it harder for them to be identified. Many said they turned off their location tracking on their phones and beefed up their digital privacy settings before joining protests, or deleted conversations and photos on social media and messaging apps after they left the demonstrations.

There were unusually long lines at ticket ma-

chines in the city underground metro stations as protesters used cash to buy tickets rather than tap-in with the city's ubiquitous Octopus cards — whose movements can be more easily tracked. In a city where WhatsApp is usually king, protesters have embraced the encrypted messaging app Telegram in recent days, believing it offers better cyber protection and also because it allows larger groups to co-ordinate.

Yesterday Telegram announced it had been the target of a major cyber attack, with most junk requests coming from China. The company's CEO linked the attack to the city's ongoing political unrest. Anxieties have been symbolised in a profile picture that was being used by many opponents of the bill: a wilting depiction of Hong Kong's black-and-white bauhinia flower. But protesters have become increasingly nervous that using the picture online could attract attention from authorities, and have taken it down. "This reflects the terror Hong Kong citizens feel towards this government," said a woman surnamed Yau, 29, who works in education. A protester surnamed Heung told AFP that many people immediately deleted "evidence showing you were present". The demonstrators who spoke with AFP only provided their first or last names due to the subject's sensitivity, and all wore at least masks.

Heung, 27, had returned to the area where the protests had taken place to join the clean-up, and she put a post on Facebook calling for helpers. But she was afraid even a call for vol-



HONG KONG: Protesters hug after clashes with police during a rally against a controversial extradition law proposal outside the government headquarters. — AFP

unteers would link her to the protests. "Maybe I'll delete the post tonight," she said. "I don't want to become one of their suspects."

'It would become like Xinjiang'

While Hong Kongers have free speech and do not encounter the surveillance saturation on the mainland, sliding freedoms and a resurgent Beijing is fuelling anxieties and fears. Recent prosecutions of protest leaders have also used video and digital data to help win convictions.

Bruce Lui, a senior journalism lecturer at Hong Kong Baptist University, said awareness around security has increased, particularly with China's "all-pervasive" surveillance technology and wide use of facial recognition and other tracking methods.

"In recent years national security has become an urgent issue for Hong Kong relating to China. Hong Kong laws may have limitations, but China only needs to use national security to surpass (them)," he said. —AFP

Carrie Lam: Hong Kong's divisive, pro-Beijing leader

HONG KONG: Carrie Lam vowed to heal divisions and listen to the city's youth when she became Hong Kong's leader, promises that lie in tatters after tear gas and pepper spray sent them running for cover when they dared raise their voice. The 62-year-old devout Catholic took over in March 2017 when a committee stacked with Beijing loyalists voted her into office — the first time a woman had been elevated to the international finance hub's top job.

In her acceptance speech she vowed to be more responsive to the city's youngsters, a restless demographic at the forefront of recent calls for greater democratic freedoms and measures to combat rising inequality. "Hong Kong, our home, is suffering from quite a serious divisiveness and has accumulated a lot of frustrations," she said in her acceptance speech. "My priority will be to heal the divide." Two years on and Hong Kong has been convulsed by its largest mass rally followed by the worst political violence in decades.

The spark that lit these flames was a push by Lam's government to fast track a bill allowing extraditions to mainland China. But the protests are also the latest explosion of an anger building for years over how the city is run by its pro-Beijing administrators. When she took office, Lam was already loathed by the city's

pro-democracy camp because she had been deputy to her deeply unpopular predecessor, CY Leung, during the failed 2014 Umbrella Movement protests. She was widely tipped as Beijing's preferred candidate to replace him and easily saw off her rivals.

Low ratings

The rhetoric of Hong Kong's political scene is often unflattering and Lam has long faced unflattering — and often misogynistic — insults. One of her nicknames — a pun on her family name — was "lai-ma" or wet nurse, a jibe over what her opponents said was a fawning loyalty towards her former boss Leung. After her appointment, she was quickly dubbed "777" by detractors. That nickname is a reference to the number of votes she secured in the 1,194 strong committee that chooses Hong Kong's leader — but in Cantonese, the word for seven also sounds very close to a slang term for male genitalia. But Lam has struggled with low approval ratings for much of her term. The latest poll by the University of Hong Kong — taken before both this week's violence and Sunday's record anti-extradition march — showed her with an approval rating of 32 percent and a disapproval rate 57 percent. None of her three post-handover predecessors had ratings that low two years into their tenures — although Leung had hit a lower point at 17 months.

'Personal sacrifices'

Born into a low-income family, Lam stood out at her Catholic school and later attended the Cambridge University on government funding. She began her career in the colonial civil service and rose up the ranks in the post-handover period, earning herself a reputation for being a fighter and a committed Beijing loyalist. —AFP

Captain of Rohingya boat charged with smuggling

BANGKOK: A Thai boat captain has been charged with smuggling 65 Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar, police said yesterday, after their vessel was shipwrecked off Thailand's southern coast. The same area was the hub of multi-million-dollar trafficking route, which unraveled in 2015 after the discovery of mass graves of Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants along the border with Malaysia.

Police said the boat, which was carrying the stateless Rohingya minority and was found on Tuesday on an island off the coast of Satun province, was captained by Sangkhom Paphan, a Thai from nearby Ranong province. Police said he was hired to transport the Rohingya to Malaysia and has been "charged with smuggling in illegal immigrants", according to police general Suchart Theerasawat of the National Police Office. "He was paid 100,000 baht (about US\$3,200) by a Myanmar man," Suchart told AFP, adding that authorities were still interrogating him.

Junta chief-turned-prime minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha has instructed agencies "to speed up" investigation on whether the Rohingya found were refugees or illegal laborers, said government spokesman Werachon Sukhondhapatipak. The 65 people, including women and children, are currently being detained in a police camp in Satun province. The persecuted Rohingya minority is denied citizenship in Myanmar and face severe restrictions on movement as well as a lack of access to work, healthcare and schools. —AFP

Lifestyle

Friday Times

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019

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A picture shows a replica of four-face Makkah clock at the Clock Tower Museum in the Saudi holy city of Makkah. — AFP

Makkah Clock turns into tourist draw

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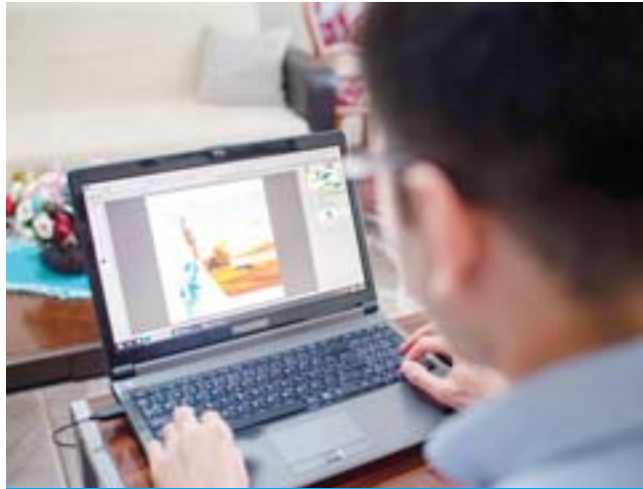
Turkish artist goes viral with stark misery/comfort images

A Starbucks cup merging with a crowd around a dried-up well, or a yacht spliced with a boat full of refugees: powerful collages by a Turkish artist have taken the internet by storm. With over half a million followers on Instagram and thousands more on Facebook and Twitter, 29-year-old Ugur Gallenkus has stirred a huge reaction by juxtaposing photos of misery in war-torn countries with the comforts of the West. His digital collages bring together photos he finds in the media that have similar compositions but tell entirely different stories.

One features a little girl dressed in a Wonder Woman costume spliced together with a girl covered in blood and bandages—the sort of jarring contrast which Gallenkus hopes will raise awareness of a “parallel world”. “I would like to tell the world that people in developing countries live in war, hunger and pain. If we want to live in peace and harmony we must have knowledge about each others’ lives,” he told AFP. Gallenkus first started the project in 2016 in reaction to the photo of Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian refugee who was found drowned on a Turkish beach the year before, which sent shock waves around the world and became one of the most searing images of Europe’s migrant crisis. “One morning while watching the news, I saw the fear and despair in the eyes of a group of immigrant families trying to cross the sea for a better life. “That shocked me and I decided to tell the world of their situation,” said the Istanbul-based artist.

‘War took everything’

Gallenkus says his work covers subjects from all over the world, including war, famine, violence against women, income inequality and climate change. “But the war and instability in Iraq, Syria and Afghanistan are an important part of my work,”



Turkish artist Ugur Gallenkus works with his laptop at his home in Istanbul. — AFP photos



he stressed. In another piece, one side of the image shows a father bathing his children in the remnants of a bathroom destroyed by war, while the other side shows a clean, lavish bathroom with a fancy chandelier. “I only interpret the images in a different way. I try to find the value and meaning of the photos that I see in the news and add the message I want to give to the world,” he said.

Thousands have commented on Gallenkus’ social media feeds, expressing their anger, sorrow and shock. “Art is powerful be-

cause it can express that which is beyond words. Praying for the healing of our world,” Subra, a Facebook user, wrote under one image. “I am from Syria. Every time I see your pictures and the destruction of my country compared to the comfortable life in the West, I cry. We used to have the same life, but war took everything from us,” Haroun, another user, wrote. With all the messages of support from across the globe, Gallenkus says he is determined to continue his work in the hope of making the world a “happy and beautiful place for all”. —AFP

High spirits: Study finds cannabis first used in C Asian funerals

A t a burial site high in the Pamir Mountains, music from an ancient harp and the smell of burning cannabis and juniper incense fill the air, part of an elaborate ceremony to commune with the divine—and the dead. These rituals took place 2,500 years ago and represent the oldest known use of marijuana for its psychoactive properties, according to scientists who analyzed archeological remains in China’s western Xinjiang province using forensic technology.

Their findings were published in the journal *Science Advances* on Wednesday and place cannabis among the growing number of crops,



In this photo received by AFP from the Institute of Archaeology, Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, a wooden brazier (burner) and stones used to burn cannabis that was excavated from the Jirzankal cemetery, located northeast of Qushiman Village in the Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County of Xinjiang province, is displayed. — AFP photos

from apples to walnuts, that researchers believe developed into their modern form along the Silk Road, said Robert Spengler, the study’s lead archaeobotanist. “The exchange routes of the early Silk Road functioned more like the spokes of a wagon wheel than a long-distance road, placing Central Asia at the heart of the ancient world,” said Spengler, of the Max Planck Institute for the Science of Human History in Jena, Germany.

“Our study implies that knowledge of cannabis smoking and specific high-chemical-producing varieties of the cannabis plant were among the cultural traditions that spread along these exchange routes.” This contrasts with the earlier domestication of less psychologically potent forms of cannabis in eastern China where hemp was grown for its oily seeds and durable fibers for clothing and cordage—a practice that began more than 6,000 years ago. The present study examined the Jirzankal Cemetery which lies close to China’s border with Tajikistan and where excavation work began in 2013.

Researchers discovered ten wooden braziers (or burners) containing stones with obvious burning traces from eight exhumed tombs at the site. The ancient cemetery is located more than 3,000 meters above sea level and has several notable characteristics.

Its surface is covered with black and white stones arranged into long strips, and dotted with numerous circular burial mounds with rings of stones underneath. The mounds find parallels in contemporaneous burial sites throughout Cen-



An excavated tomb, located northeast of Qushiman Village in the Tashkurgan Tajik Autonomous County of Xinjiang province, is displayed.

tral Asia, suggesting shared culture and beliefs, but the purpose of the burners was not immediately clear.

Human sacrifice

The scientists analyzed the wooden burners and the burnt stones using gas chromatography - mass spectrometry (GCMS), a technique that is often applied in forensic analyses but has only recently been used to investigate ancient remains. It works by separating chemical mixtures and then identifying the components at the molecular level.

“To our excitement, we identified the biomarkers of cannabis notably the chemicals related to the psychoactive properties,” said Professor Yimin Yang, the lead analyst for the study at the University of the Chinese Academy of Sciences. The cannabinoids detected on the

wooden burners were mainly cannabinal (CBN), which is what the main psychoactive component of cannabis, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), decomposes into when exposed to air.

This evidence—along with the recovery of other artifacts such as angular harps, an important musical instrument in ancient funerals, and burners made from juniper wood which release a potent turpentine fragrance—point to elaborate rituals carried out in a thick cloud of hallucinogenic smoke guiding people into an altered state of mind. Intriguingly, Yang told AFP one of the tombs contained the body of an individual who appeared to have died a natural death, along with others who had cut marks on their bones and skulls, which the excavators interpreted as signs of human sacrifice. DNA analysis is now being attempted to try to determine whether they were related, he added. — AFP



Pictures of the four-face Makkah clock at the Clock Tower Museum in the Saudi holy city of Makkah. — AFP photos

Images of astronauts on the moon exhibited inside the Clock Tower Museum in the Saudi holy city of Makkah.

Makkah Clock turns into tourist draw

Like millions of other Muslims, Cory Ireza from Indonesia travelled to Makkah to pray in the Grand Mosque. But she also found a new attraction just a stone's throw away from Islam's holiest shrine. After performing the pilgrimage, Ireza, her husband Dodi and their two children were among the first visitors to a museum built inside the world's largest clock at the top of the globe's third tallest building. Overlooking the Kaaba, a black structure inside the Grand Mosque towards which Muslims around the world turn to pray, the four-storey Clock Tower Museum opened a month ago.

It is filled with models and structures on astronomy and galaxies, as Saudi authorities aim to lure more Muslim tourists to the country. "This museum allows us to bring the family not only for prayers but also for some extra activity... and recreation," Ireza said. Looking down from a height of around 600 meters (almost 2,000 feet) as thousands of worshippers walked around the Kaaba, Dodi said he felt "very emotional". Dozens of other visitors also took in the panoramic views of the mosque, the sprawling holy city and surrounding black mountains.

Clock hands

The four-faced Makkah Clock, as the museum is also known, with each face measuring 43 by 43 meters (47 yards), is the largest in the world and weighs some 36,000 tons. It is 35 times the size of the clock at Westminster in London, known colloquially as Big Ben. Equipped with protection against rain, sandstorms and winds, the clock is covered by a 100-million-piece glass mosaic adorned with 24-carat gold leaf. The Clock Tower is the main high-rise building in a complex of seven towers, comprising 3,000 hotel rooms and apartments.

The Abraj Al-Bait hotel complex is a multi-billion-dollar project built after the demolition of the historical Ottoman Ajyad

fortress in 2002 that sparked a diplomatic rift with Turkey. The clock has a 128-metre-tall (420-foot) spire with a 23-metre golden crescent on top. By night over two million LEDs illuminate the clock, making it legible from distances of eight kilometers (five miles).

Among dozens of visitors to the museum, Amro Mohammed Masadi from southern Saudi Arabia, was busy reading information printed on glass boards. "Initially, I thought it was just a clock with normal minute hands, but I found a massive project... I've learnt new information about the age of the universe, the galaxies and other things," said Masadi, a Yemeni. In the first floor of the museum, visitors are introduced to the universe, the sky and galaxies with audio illustrations. The second floor is devoted to the sun and how the moon and the earth revolve around it.

Visitors to the third floor learn of instruments and methods used to determine time, and the balcony overlooking the Grand Mosque is on the top floor. When the call for prayers sounded, Masadi and others stood in line behind the fence for the mid-day prayers.

New vision

The museum is run by MISK, a non-profit organization headed by Saudi Arabia's powerful crown prince, Mohammed bin Salman. Museum supervisor Yaseen Al-Mleaky said the Makkah Clock has received 1,200 visitors a day, with entrance costing \$40, since it opened in the second week of May.

It will also be used to observe crescent moons and for lunar research, he said. In Prince Mohammed's Vision 2030 reform program to diversify the kingdom's economy away from oil, the kingdom aims to attract 30 million visitors to Makkah in 2030, up from the current 20 million. — AFP



Muslims pray atop the four-storey Clock Tower Museum in Saudi holy city of Makkah.



A model on display among structures on astronomy and galaxies inside the Clock Tower Museum in the Saudi holy city of Makkah.



Models and structures on astronomy and galaxies inside the Clock Tower Museum in the Saudi holy city of Makkah.



Images of the sunrise and moon exhibited inside the Clock Tower Museum in the Saudi holy city of Makkah.



Brides and grooms pose for a photo outside the Lisbon's cathedral following their wedding ceremony in Lisbon. — AFP photos

LISBON FETES 'SAINT OF LOVE' WITH FREE DELUXE WEDDINGS



Brides hold their wedding bouquets following a multiple wedding ceremony at Lisbon's cathedral.

It is Lisbon's wedding of the year. Crowds gather at the cathedral, hoping to catch a glimpse of the newlyweds as cameras lie in wait. Suddenly, the organ music grows louder and photographers get into position in front of the imposing entrance. Then not one, but 11 couples walk out, fresh from tying the knot Wednesday in an all-expenses-paid ceremony, the beneficiaries of a decades-long annual tradition that fetes the Portuguese capital's beloved patron Saint Anthony, matchmaker extraordinaire. Financed by sponsors and TV rights, broadcast live on television, couples who would not otherwise have the means are gifted a deluxe wedding worth 400,000 euros (\$450,000).

Couples like fishmongers Tania Silva and Orlando Antunes, who are getting a one-off taste of mega fame on the eve of Saint Anthony day on June 13, the high point of days-long street-dancing, sardine-grilling festivities in Lisbon. "We've been together for nearly 15 years," said Tania, 30. "We always joked that we would one day get married for Saint Anthony. It's a sumptuous ceremony which we could never afford."

Interviews, selfies

For Tania and her sister brides, the day begins early at city hall. For hours, they sit in front of identical mirrors in a room normally used for town hall meetings, Lisbon's trademark trams passing in the street outside. Hairdressers and makeup artists who competed nationwide for the honor of styling them busy themselves around the brides, a television presenter diving in for the odd interview, an anxious parent taking a quick selfie. Tania's slightly nervous. "I'm trying to keep calm but it's difficult," she says, laughing, as her hairdresser fixes her blond locks into an updo. In the room next door hang the white wedding dresses, all donated by different designers.

"Breathe," jokes one bride as a helper tightens her lacy corset. All in all, 16 couples are getting married, five of them in a civil ceremony. They go first, appearing on the balcony of city hall after the event, waving down to a cheering crowd as a band from Lisbon University plays a serenade and a television drone films the moment. The 11 other couples are destined for the cathedral, some 650

Lifestyle | Feature



Brides and grooms kiss after celebrating multiple wedding ceremonies at the city hall and the cathedral during Saint Anthony's day.



Brides and grooms parade along the streets of downtown Lisbon following their wedding ceremony at Lisbon's cathedral.

meters (2,100 feet) away up a steep hill at the entrance of Lisbon's famed Alfama old quarter. The brides are driven up the cobble street in convertible vintage cars, getting out one by one and forming an orderly line as they wait to enter. Two hours later, the couples walk out, married, smiling. There is still more to come. Group photos, the first dance, interviews, and another public appearance in a giant parade in the evening.

Single people too

The wedding tradition was created in 1958 by the now defunct *Diario Popular* newspaper. Dropped after the 1974 Carnation Revolution that overthrew the dictatorship, it was re-introduced by authorities in Lisbon in 1997. Its origins, though, are far older. Saint Anthony of Padua was a Portuguese Catholic priest born in the 12th century and widely believed to have potent matchmaking skills. To this day, single people are gifted statuettes representing him. At home, they are supposed to turn his face to the wall as a form of punishment until they find their soul mate. Only then can Saint An-

thony face the room again.

Over the years, the wedding tradition has evolved, with civil ceremonies now included, says artistic director Luis Moreira, while numbers have dwindled from a peak of around 60 to Wednesday's 16 couples. "It's no longer called 'Saint Anthony's brides' like in the old regime when it was focused more on women and was used to help young women find a husband," he adds. "With the equality of men and women's rights, it's become 'the Weddings of Saint Anthony'." One of the requirements for the 40 to 60 couples who apply every year is that at least one of the pair lives in Lisbon. "Lisbon's population is getting older. The idea is to rejuvenate the city, to attract young couples and give them a hand at the start of their life together," says chief organizer Maria do Carmo Rosa. It is mostly about gifting "a dream wedding to people who would never have been able to afford it." — AFP



Brides and grooms kiss as they pose for a photo outside the Lisbon's Cathedral following their wedding ceremony in Lisbon.



Brides and grooms pose for a photo following their civil ceremony at the Lisbon's city hall.



Brides get ready for their marriages before celebrating a multiple wedding ceremony in Lisbon.



Brides get ready for their marriages before celebrating a multiple wedding ceremony in Lisbon.

For the Twelfth Year in a Row

NBK Sponsors Ceremony Honoring Outstanding High School Graduates



The National Bank of Kuwait sponsored for the twelfth year in a row the annual ceremony held by the Ministry of Education to honor high school graduates that have demonstrated an outstanding performance in the academic year 2018/2019 in the fields of sciences, arts and religious studies, as well as the best performing high school students from the private schools.

The ceremony was attended by the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education (MOE), Dr. Saud Al-Harbi.

Speaking of the occasion, the Group Chief Executive Officer of the National Bank of Kuwait, Mr. Isam Al-Sager congratulated students that have graduated with leading results and expressed pride of their achievements and endeavors in achieving such exceptional results.

Al-Sager said: "NBK is sponsoring this event for the 12th consecutive year as part of its commitment to supporting the youth and their achievements, encouraging them and reminding them that they have a role to play in the future of our country, Kuwait."

Al-Sager added that the Bank ensures it invests in education as part of its social responsibility framework that aims to support development in the country. He said: "NBK has become associated its name to with social responsibility and is committed towards its community and the country. Our support of such events reaffirms that commitment towards outstanding students and their ambitions and aspirations."

He added the NBK believes in the capabilities of students and has initiated programs to offer them

opportunities to be part of the advancement of Kuwait through professional development programs that aim to enhance their knowledge and skills.

Al-Sager: "NBK welcomes each year Kuwaiti talents that it guides and trains. The Bank also holds on-site visits for students from various schools and universities to familiarize them with the work processes and give them insights on how banks work and support the overall economy."

Al-Sager called on students to continue working hard and plan for





their future by enrolling in fields that the country needs and invest their talents in supporting the achievement of Kuwait 2035 Vision.

On his part, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, Dr. Saud Al-Harbi addresses the students and attendees at the ceremony and said the Ministry has invested all its resources to provide the tools for students to succeed and excel.

He reaffirmed that the Ministry is focused on nurturing positive values to help them be part of the development of their country.

Dr. Saud Al-Harbi said: "Every part of the society plays an important role in creating an environment that fosters

excellence and advancement, starting from the family, which plants in its children the love of learning, to schools where children are enlightened and learn in collaborative environments thanks to teachers whom ensure their students reach the level of excellence we see today."

He pointed out the private sector and the civil organizations have a role in building respectable and responsible citizens, and this is what the National Bank of Kuwait is doing annually by sponsoring this event.

During the ceremony, Dr. Saud Al-Harbi and Mr. Isam Al-Sager honored around 150 top performing students (Kuwaitis and non-Kuwaitis)



in the disciplines of sciences, arts and religion as well as high school graduates from private schools. The ceremony also recognized students who have won in the scientific excellence competitions in which the Ministry of Education has participated at the level of Kuwait and the Gulf.

Dr. Saud Al-Harbi also recognized the National Bank of Kuwait for its contributions to education and its support to students at different educational levels, and presented Mr. Isam Al-Sager with an honorary plaque.

NBK is committed to supporting the Kuwaiti youth and educational programs that aim at developing their skill sets and equipping them with

the knowledge they need for the future.

The Bank provides various forms of support to students through educational and training initiatives, including specialized training courses specifically designed for graduates.

NBK also provides training courses for school students during the summer that aim at familiarizing them with the banking sector and the workforce.

Other programs have also been developed to cater to university graduates such as the NBK Academy, the Youth Program, the Human Resources Programs and others.





How to make a traditional **tandoori chicken** - at home

Traditional tandoori chicken is marinated in yogurt and spices and roasted in a superhot tandoor oven to produce tender, flavorful meat and a beautiful char. To make it at home, we built a fragrant paste, blooming ginger and garlic in oil before adding garam masala, cumin and chili powder.

We used this paste twice, applying some directly to the meat, which we slashed so the flavors penetrated, and stirring the rest into yogurt for our marinade. Arranged on a wire rack set in a baking sheet, our chicken roasted gently and evenly in a moderate oven; a few minutes under the broiler delivered char. A quick raita cooled things down. If you are using large chicken breasts (about 1 pound each), cut each breast into three pieces. We prefer to use our homemade Garam Masala (recipe follows) and Everyday Chili Powder (recipe follows), but you can substitute store-bought spices. Serve with rice.

TANDOORI CHICKEN WITH RAITA

Ingredients

Servings: 4
Start to finish: 1 hour, 30 minutes
Raita:
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
2 tablespoons minced fresh cilantro

1 garlic clove, minced
Salt
Cayenne pepper
Chicken:
2 tablespoons vegetable oil
6 garlic cloves, minced
2 tablespoons grated fresh ginger
1 tablespoon garam masala
2 teaspoons ground cumin
2 teaspoons chili powder
1 cup plain whole-milk yogurt
1/4 cup lime juice (2 limes), plus lime wedges for serving
2 teaspoons salt
3 pounds bone-in chicken pieces (split breasts cut in half, drumsticks, and/or thighs), skin removed, trimmed

Preparation

For the raita: Combine yogurt, cilantro, and garlic in bowl and season with salt and cayenne to taste. Refrigerate until ready to serve. (Raita can be refrigerated for up to 24 hours).
For the chicken: Heat oil in 10 inch skillet over medium heat until shimmering. Add garlic and ginger and cook until fragrant, about 30

seconds. Stir in garam masala, cumin, and chili powder and cook until fragrant, about 30 seconds. Transfer half of garlic mixture to bowl and stir in yogurt and 2 tablespoons lime juice; set marinade aside. Combine remaining garlic mixture, remaining 2 tablespoons lime juice, and salt in large bowl. Using sharp knife, make 2 or 3 short slashes in each piece of chicken. Transfer chicken to large bowl and gently rub with garlic-lime juice mixture until all pieces are evenly coated. Let sit at room temperature for 30 minutes.

Adjust oven rack to upper-middle position and heat oven to 325 F. Set wire rack in aluminum foil-lined rimmed baking sheet. Pour yogurt marinade over chicken and toss until chicken is evenly and thickly coated. Arrange chicken pieces, scored sides down, on prepared rack; discard excess marinade. Roast chicken until breasts register 125 F and drumsticks/thighs register 130 F, 15 to 25 minutes. (Smaller pieces may cook faster than larger pieces. Remove pieces from oven as they reach correct temperature.)

Adjust oven rack 6 inches from broiler element and heat broiler. Return chicken to wire rack in pan, scored sides up, and broil until chicken is lightly charred in spots and breasts register 160 F and drumsticks/thighs register 175 F, 8 to 15 minutes. Transfer chicken to serving platter, tent with foil, and let rest for 5 minutes. Serve with raita and lime wedges.

COOKING ON DEADLINE:

Instant Pot Mediterranean Lamb Stew

Beef usually hogs the spotlight when it comes to stews, but there are plenty of other meats that can star in this quintessential, cold-weather comfort food. This rich meat also takes well to many flavor combos, and in this recipe, some accessible, Mediterranean-inspired supporting ingredients turn the lamb into a truly delicious stew. If you are a chickpea lover, feel free to add a second can.

These instructions use an Instant Pot, the appliance of the decade. The Instant Pot is a plug-in pot that performs as a slow cooker, pressure cooker, rice cooker, yogurt maker and a few other impressive cooking tools. In this case, you will first be using the saute function and then the pressure cooker function to cook a tender stew in much less time than it would take otherwise.

Don't have an Instant Pot? You can also make this stew in a slow cooker. Just brown the meat in the slow cooker if it has a saute function, or if not, brown it and saute the vegetables in a pot on the stove, and then transfer everything to the slow cooker with the rest

of the ingredients, and cook on low for 8 hours.

If you don't have an Instant Pot or a slow cooker, no worries! You can do all of the sauteing in a pot on the stove, and then add the other ingredients as directed and cook the stew, covered, over low heat for about 3 hours until the meat is tender. Give it an occasional stir to make sure the stew doesn't stick to the bottom. If you prefer to put it into a 300 degrees F oven after all of the ingredients have been combined, that works, too - this should also take about 3 hours. Give that a stir if you think of it every once in a while.

INSTANT POT MEDITERRANEAN LAMB STEW

Ingredients

Servings: 6

Start to finish: 2 hours in the Instant Pot, 9 hours in a slow cooker, or 4 hours on the stovetop or in the oven

1/4 cup flour

1 teaspoon salt

1/2 teaspoon freshly ground pepper

2 pounds 1-inch cubes lamb shoulder or lamb stew meat
2 tablespoons olive oil, or as needed, divided
1/2 cup sliced leeks
1/2 cup chopped carrots
1/2 cup chopped celery
1/2 cup diced fennel
1 teaspoon crushed dried rosemary
1 (28-ounce) can diced or crushed tomatoes
1 (15-ounce) can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
2 cups beef broth
1 bay leaf
Chopped fresh parsley to serve

Preparation

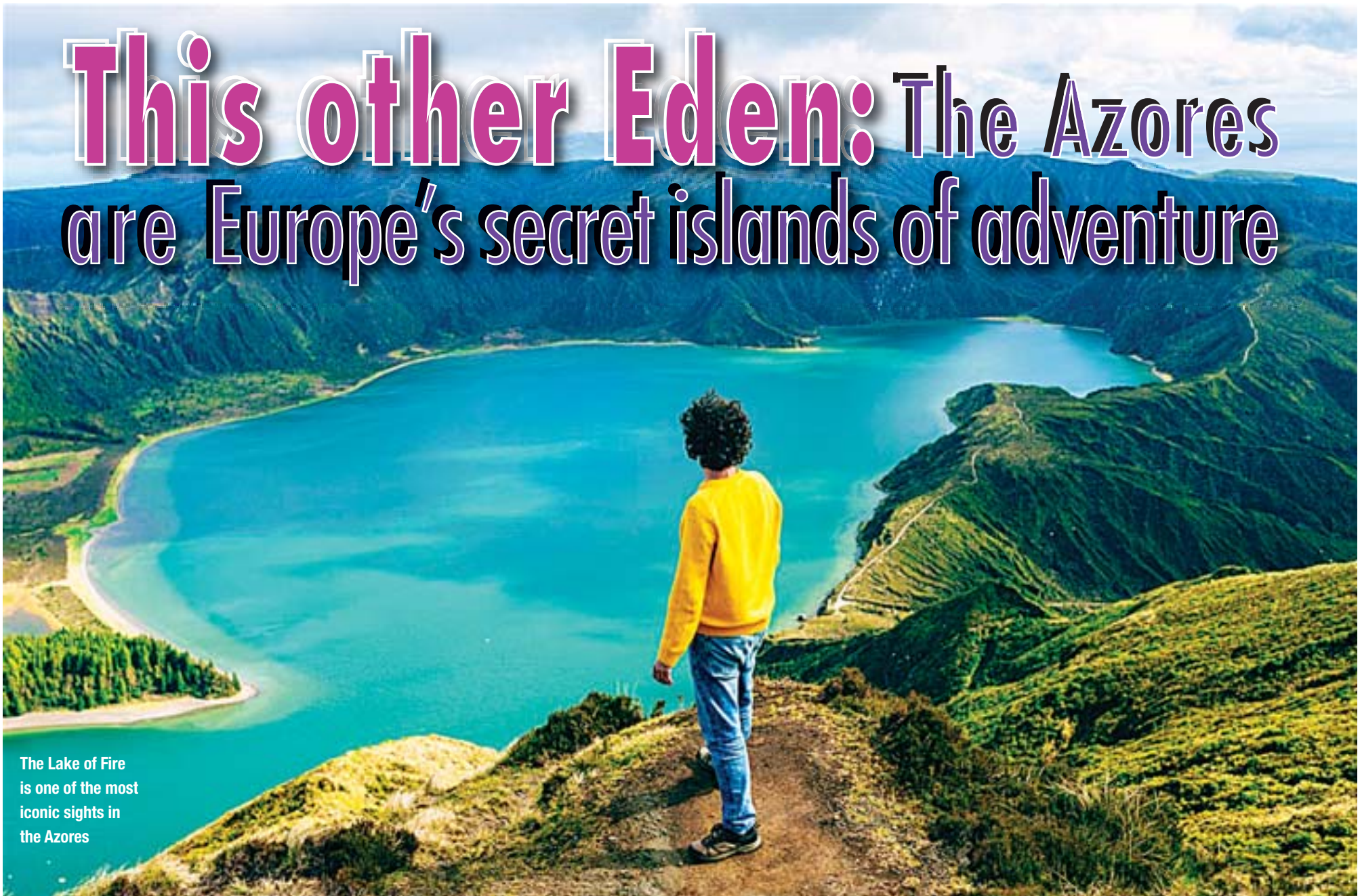
In a large shallow bowl combine the flour, salt and pepper. Add the lamb meat and toss to coat it. Place the inner pot into your Instant Pot. Press the Saute button, and then use the Saute or Adjust buttons (depending on your model) to select the "Normal" or middle temperature. Add 1 tablespoon of the olive oil to the pot, and let it heat for 1 minute. Add the lamb in two batches and brown on at least a few sides of the

cubes, about 2 minutes per side (if you want to brown all of the sides, go ahead, but it's not necessary, and often the pieces of meat aren't really six-sided "cubes"). Remove the meat with a slotted spoon to a plate, add the remaining tablespoon olive oil if there is not oil in the pan, and repeat with the other half of the lamb.

Add the leeks, carrots, celery and fennel to the pot and saute without the lid on for 5 minutes, until everything is slightly tender. Stir in the rosemary for 1 minute. Add the tomatoes, chickpeas, broth, bay leaf and lamb, and stir to combine. Close and lock the lid. Set the valve to Sealing. Press Cancel, then press Manual or Pressure Cook and use the Pressure Level Button to select high pressure. Set the timer for 45 minutes. Note that the timer will not start to count down until the correct pressure has been achieved. When the Instant Pot beeps, press Cancel. Let the pressure come down slowly for 30 minutes. Release the sealing valve, remove the lid and serve hot in bowls, with parsley sprinkled over the stew.



This other Eden: The Azores are Europe's secret islands of adventure



The Lake of Fire is one of the most iconic sights in the Azores



The two-and-a-half-hour hike around the rim of Faial's caldera is one of many spectacular routes for walkers

For in-the-know travelers, the Azores have long represented a beckoning blip on the radar of possible destinations. Recognition from UNESCO and other organizations has helped that blip to pulse more brightly over the years.

But most people still know little, if anything, about this far-flung archipelago in the middle of the Atlantic. And yet it is hard to imagine a place better suited to nature lovers, fans of adventure sports, or anyone looking for a beacon of sustainability. As if that wasn't tantalizing enough, there is a new reason to visit this autonomous region of Portugal: for the past few years there have steadily been more carriers, more choice and cheaper fares for travelers trying to reach this other Eden.

About the Azores

The exposed tips of vast underwater mountains, the Azores lie on the nexus of the European, American and African tectonic plates, and they bear witness to the forces forever shaping our planet. This is a world of fumaroles, mudpots and scalding springs; of caverns, columns and grottoes formed from once molten rock; of blue lakes ringed by forests of laurel and cedar, and green pastures patterning the slopes of calderas.

UNESCO designated three of them (Graciosa, Flores and Corvo) as biospheres, and the archipelago also contains 13 Ramsar sites (important wetlands) and over 30 Blue Flag beaches. Combine mineral-laden soil with a subtropical climate surrounded by Gulf Stream-warmed waters, and the result is a crucible for life.

Thankfully, Azoreans seem intent on preserving their treasures - the developed environment covers just five per



Up to a third of the world's cetaceans can be found in the waters around the Azores, including bottlenose dolphins



Blue sharks and many other large pelagic species of fish are regular visitors in the mid-Atlantic



The eruption of Capelinhos off the coast of Faial in 1957 gave geologists a ringside seat to observe the development of a submerged volcano

cent of the land; the rest is a patchwork of protected areas and marine reserves. The regional government aims to produce 75 percent of the islands' energy from renewables by 2018. Little wonder, then, the Azores were once named the world's top destination for sustainable tourism by Quality Coast, a European Commission-supported certification program. In fact, it is the only place in the world to receive a Platinum Award, the organization's highest accolade.

ADVENTURES AT SEA

Whale watching

The Azores are best known for whale and dolphin watching; the archipelago is a pit stop or home for about a third of the world's species of cetacean. Year-round residents include sperm whales, common dolphins and bottlenose dolphins. Many other species (including blue whales - the largest animal in the history of the planet) pass through on migration routes.

Well-organized tours run from the larger islands and go to great lengths to whale-watch responsibly. A code of conduct governs how many boats can congregate near a whale, the direction from which they must approach the animals, and how long they're allowed to shadow them.

Not so long ago, of course, people came armed with harpoons rather than cameras. Whale hunting - introduced by Americans in the 18th century - played a part in the Azorean economy until as recently as 1987. In one of many ironies, the vigia (watchtowers) once used for hunting these leviathans now help to steer tourist boats to their quarry. The Whalers' Museum on Pico and the Whaling Station at Porto Pim on Faial tell the story of the industry and its demise.

Diving

Nutrient-rich water welling up from the deep - or rather the life it supports - is what attracts the whales; this is also what makes the Azores one of, if not the, best diving locations in the Atlantic. Warmed to between 17 degrees Celsius and 24 degrees Celsius, the seas truly teem, and visibility reaches 30 metres between May and October.

The kaleidoscope of species - from yellowmouth barracuda to devil rays, loggerhead turtles to slipper lobsters - arises from the extraordinary range of habitats. Wrasse, damsel fish and moray eels dwell in the coast's jade-green bays; marlin, tuna and shark swirl around the peaks of barely submerged volcanoes; jacks, bonitos and grouper patrol the walls of underwater cliffs; more delicate life forms shelter in caves formed from lava tubes; and countless other species take up residence in the shipwrecks cluttering the seafloor. All the islands apart from Sao Jorge and Corvo have accredited dive centres offering excursions and equipment hire.

Watersports

The mild weather, warm water and variety of the coastline also make the Azores a year-round destination for watersports. The attractions for sailors are obvious and Azorean harbours host a calendar of regattas and events. Horta, the main town of Faial, is the cosmopolitan centre of this transatlantic traffic, and its marina has become an open-air gallery of murals painted by superstitious crews before they depart on their voyages.

Over the last decade, word of the Azores' consistent, crowd-free surf has spread; Santa Maria and Sao Miguel have reliable beach and point breaks; aficionados, meanwhile, head to the fajás (flat land at the foot of cliffs) of Sao Jorge, where the Atlantic crashes upon reefs to create longer, tube-shaped waves. The conditions also make for great windsurfing, kayaking, stand up paddle boarding, and other water-based activities, while those seeking something more restful can always take a dip in one of the swimming holes formed by lava as it cooled flowing into the sea.

ADVENTURES ON LAND

Geotourism

Anyone remotely interested in geology will be in their element. The islands' topography speaks of their volcanic origin in dramatic fashion, but there is more to see than just craters and cones; cave systems, rock formations, hot



Waterfalls on the Azorean island of Flores, which is particularly good for adventure activities

springs, and further 'misterios' (mysteries, the name given to lava-covered patches of land) await investigation.

The Capelinhos volcano that surged up from the seabed off Faial in 1957 is one of the best documented sites in the world; the interpretation centre beneath its now abandoned lighthouse does a superb job of explaining the Earth's occasional convulsions.

On Pico, you can descend into one of the world's longest lava tubes, the Gruta das Torres, to inspect rare stalagmites of lava, as well as bizarre forms resembling benches, balls and lengths of rope. Aside from a beautiful lake, the parish of Furnas on Sao Miguel has crowd-pleasing volcanic activity, including fumaroles and mudpots; Azoreans use the thermal heat to slow-cook their traditional cozido, a stew of meat and vegetables, under the ground. Try it, pig's ear and all, at the art deco Terra Nostra Hotel, then slip into the thermal pool in the adjacent botanical gardens.

Hiking

At 7,713ft, Mt Pico is Portugal's highest mountain. If conditions are right, the three-hour climb to catch sunrise or sunset is the Azores' premier hiking experience; however, it faces stiff competition with about 60 marked trails crisscrossing the islands. A brochure shot par excellence, the twin crater lakes of Sao Miguel's Setes Cidades are the focus of several routes. The two-hour trip

from the Vista da Rei viewpoint to the caldera's floor is a good primer to Azorean walking, but a hike down to the shore of mist-obscured Lagoa do Fogo has the edge.

Composed of a sheer-sided ridge, Sao Jorge is a hiker's daydream, but those whose eyes are forever drawn to the edges of a map should probably look to far-flung Flores, the westernmost point of Europe, a real-life Jurassic Park praised for its beauty even among Azoreans. And they should know.

Other adventure sports

Fans of adventure sports might find themselves paralyzed by indecision, such is the choice on offer. The many waterfalls cascading into ravines make for world-class canyoning. Between them, Sao Miguel, Santa Maria, Sao Jorge and Flores have more than 50 equipped routes, from small drops for beginners to hair-raising descents for pros.

Horse riders and mountain bikers are well catered for, and both forms of transport fit the islands' eco-friendly ethos. Sao Miguel, Terceira and Faial have stables, and you can hire bikes on Sao Miguel, Santa Maria, Terceira, Sao Jorge, Pico and Faial, with trails ranging from ultra-technical tracks to gentle lakeside circuits. The Azores have also hosted a paragliding festival for the past 20 years. The rims of Sao Miguel's craters make for ideal take-off points, and there can be no better way of appreciating this fantastical landscape than from above.



The crews of visiting yachts paint murals on the concrete of Horta's marina before they depart

Comic

Word Search

Sci-Fi Movies 1 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|--------------|------------|--------------|
| ALIEN | DUNE | STAR WARS |
| AVATAR | GATTACA | STARGATE |
| BLADE RUNNER | INCEPTION | SUPERMAN |
| BRAZIL | METROPOLIS | PREDATOR |
| COCOON | MOON | THE MATRIX |
| CONTACT | ROBOCOP | TRANSFORMERS |
| CUBE | SERENITY | TRON |
| DARK CITY | SOLARIS | |

Yesterday's Solution

School - Solution

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

- | | | |
|------------|-----------|------------|
| BATHROOM | HALLWAY | SCHOOLYARD |
| BELL | INTERCOM | SECRETARY |
| CLASSROOM | JANITOR | STUDENT |
| CLOCK | LIBRARY | TEACHER |
| DESK | LOCKER | TEXTBOOKS |
| DETENTION | LUNCHROOM | |
| DOORS | NURSE | |
| FIRE DRILL | PRINCIPAL | |

Crossword 2231



ACROSS

- European cave-dwelling aquatic salamander with permanent external gills.
- Decreasing in amount or intensity.
- A pointed instrument used to prod into motion.
- A unit of length of thread or yarn.
- Coextensive with the order Pholidota.
- Relating to the Urdu language.
- Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
- (often used in combination) Having hair as specified.
- A formal expression of praise.
- Jordan's port.
- A Nilotic language.
- A language unit by which a person or thing is known.
- A native of ancient Troy.
- No longer having or seeming to have or expecting to have life.
- Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
- (prefix) Indicating difference or variation.
- A Tibetan or Mongolian priest of Lamaism.
- A person who breeds and trains hawks and who follows the sport of falconry.
- A heavy brittle metallic element of the platinum group.
- Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
- Either extremity of something that has length.
- An official prosecutor for a judicial district.
- Using speech rather than writing.
- A gene that causes normal cells to change into cancerous tumor cells.
- Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
- United States writer (born in Poland) who wrote in Yiddish (1880-1957).
- Any of various spectacular plants of the genus *Laelia* having showy flowers in many colors.
- Corrupt morally or by intemperance or sensuality.
- A member of the Algonquian people of Maine and southern Quebec.
- Used of a single unit or thing.
- A rare chronic progressive encephalitis caused by the measles virus and occurring primarily in children and young adults.
- A complex of concurrent things.
- Fabric made with yarn made from the silky hair of the Angora goat.
- (of a young animal) Abandoned by its mother and raised by hand.
- (usually in the plural) A garment extending from the waist to the knee or ankle, covering each leg separately.
- A telegram sent abroad.
- Small buffalo of the Celebes having small straight horns.
- The azimuth of a celestial body is the angle between the vertical plane containing it and the plane of the meridian.
- A former agency (from 1946 to 1974)

DOWN

- Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
- An accidental hole that allows something (fluid or light etc.) to enter or escape.
- Covered with paving material.
- A member of the Semitic speaking people of northern Ethiopia.
- The cry made by sheep.
- (Jungian psychology) The inner self (not the external persona) that is in touch with the unconscious.
- The capital and largest city of Albania in the center of the country.
- In the Roman calendar.
- A quantity of no importance.
- A brittle gray crystalline element that is a semiconducting metalloid (resembling silicon) used in transistors.
- Wild llama.
- (Greek mythology) One of the mountain nymphs.
- (Old Testament) In Judeo-Christian mythology.
- A ridge of sand created by the wind.
- The capital of Mali.
- A material effigy that is worshipped as a god.
- An outbuilding (or part of a building) for housing automobiles.
- 30 to 300 kilohertz.
- Acquire or gain knowledge or skills.
- 100 penni equal 1 markka.
- Type genus of the Ardeidae.
- Lower in esteem.
- A fine grained mineral having a soft soapy feel and consisting of hydrated magnesium silicate.
- Anything that covers or conceals.
- French physicist noted for research on magnetism (born in 1904).
- An implement used to erase something.
- An assertion of a right (as to money or property).
- A Japanese woman trained to entertain men with conversation and singing and dancing.
- The trait of lacking restraint or control.
- Genus of herbs of Eurasia and the Americas.
- Relating to the Andes and their inhabitants.
- A soft silvery metallic element of the alkali earth group.
- Affect with wonder.
- A region of Malaysia in northeastern Borneo.
- Low-growing tropical perennials grown for their stingsless foliage.
- Upright in position or posture.
- A member of an extinct North American Indian people who lived in the Pit river valley in northern California.
- Large elliptical brightly colored deep-sea fish of Atlantic and Pacific and Mediterranean.
- United States newspaper publisher (1858-1935).
- The widely studied plant virus that causes tobacco mosaic.
- French writer whose novels described the sordid side of city life (1804-1857).
- A state in east central United States.

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily SuDoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

TV Listings

MOVIES ACTION

00:25 Scorched Earth 2018
02:10 Around The World In 80 Days
04:20 Boone: The Bounty Hunter
06:00 Mine
07:55 Around The World In 80 Days
10:05 Boone: The Bounty Hunter
11:45 A Knight's Tale
14:05 Chasing Gold
15:40 Overdrive
17:25 Captain America: The First Avenger
19:35 Bad Boys II
22:00 Transformers: The Last Knight

ANIMAL PLANET HD

00:45 Adrift: 47 Days With Sharks
01:40 Alaska Monsters
02:35 Saba And The Rhino's Secret
03:25 Lone Star Law
04:15 Adrift: 47 Days With Sharks
05:02 Wild Appalachia
05:49 Pit Bulls & Parolees
06:36 Meet The Penguins
07:00 Meet The Penguins
07:25 Wildest Islands Of Indonesia
11:55 Wild Appalachia
12:50 Saba And The Rhino's Secret
13:45 Dr. Dee: Alaska Vet
14:40 Fish Or Die
15:35 Alaska Monsters
16:30 Everest: Beyond The Limit
17:25 Animal Cops Houston
18:20 Growing Up...
19:15 Evan Goes Wild
20:10 Missouri Mountain Family
21:05 Wild Hawaii
22:00 Alaska Monsters
22:55 Pit Bulls & Parolees
23:50 Evan Goes Wild

BBC FIRST

00:20 EastEnders
00:50 The Last Post
01:40 Holly City
02:35 Bad Move
03:00 Hold The Sunset
03:30 Death In Paradise
04:25 Doctors
06:30 EastEnders
07:00 Call The Midwife
07:55 Holly City
08:50 Casualty
09:40 Bad Move
10:05 Hold The Sunset
10:35 Death In Paradise
11:30 Father Brown
12:15 EastEnders
12:45 Casualty
13:35 Holly City
14:30 Bad Move
14:55 Hold The Sunset
15:25 EastEnders
15:55 Doctors
18:30 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
19:20 Shakespeare & Hathaway: Private Investigators
20:10 Press
21:05 Bancroft
21:55 Agatha Raisin
23:35 Doctors

crime & investigation network

00:00 Homicide Hunter
01:00 Britain's Darkest Taboos
01:55 Homicide Hunter
02:50 It Takes A Killer
03:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
04:30 The First 48
05:15 Homicide Hunter
06:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
07:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
07:20 The First 48
08:50 Homicide Hunter
10:30 Homicide: Hours To Kill
11:25 Homicide Hunter
12:20 Crimes That Shook Britain
13:15 Live PD: Police Patrol

13:45 Live PD: Police Patrol
14:10 It Takes A Killer
14:40 It Takes A Killer
15:05 Homicide Hunter
16:00 The First 48
17:00 Homicide: Hours To Kill
18:00 Crimes That Shook Britain
19:00 The First 48
20:00 Homicide Hunter
21:00 Live PD: Police Patrol
22:00 PD Cam
23:00 Live PD: Police Patrol

COMEDY CENTRAL

00:10 Ridiculousness Arabia
00:35 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
01:35 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
02:05 Friends
02:30 Are We There Yet?
02:55 House Of Food
03:45 Impractical Jokers
04:10 Police Interceptors
05:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
05:30 House Of Food
06:20 Catch A Contractor
07:10 Friends
07:35 Police Interceptors
08:30 House Of Food
09:20 Catch A Contractor
10:10 Takeshis Castle Thailand
11:00 Ridiculousness Arabia
11:50 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
12:50 Friends
13:15 Police Interceptors
14:10 Impractical Jokers
14:35 Friends
15:00 Takeshis Castle Thailand
15:50 Ridiculousness Arabia
16:40 Comedy Central Presents Comedy 3alwagef
17:40 Are We There Yet?
18:00 Friends
18:30 Are We There Yet?
19:00 Police Interceptors
20:00 Catch A Contractor
21:00 Friends
22:00 The Daily Show With Trevor Noah
22:30 Impractical Jokers
22:55 Takeshis Castle Thailand
23:45 Ridiculousness Arabia

Discovery Family

00:30 Storm Chasers
01:20 My Cat From Hell
02:10 Bad Dog
03:00 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
03:50 How It's Made
04:40 Weather Gone Viral
05:30 Storm Chasers
06:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
07:00 Mysteries At The Museum
07:50 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
08:40 How It's Made
09:30 Kids Do The Craziest Things
10:20 My Cat From Hell
11:10 Bad Dog
12:00 Mysteries At The Museum
12:50 Weather Gone Viral
13:40 Storm Chasers
14:30 How It's Made
15:20 Kids Do The Craziest Things
16:10 Xtreme Waterparks
17:00 My Cat From Hell
17:50 Bad Dog
18:40 Breaking Magic
19:30 The Next Great Magician
20:20 The Carbonaro Effect
21:10 Bear Grylls: Born Survivor
22:00 How It's Made
22:50 Xtreme Waterparks
23:40 The Next Great Magician

ID

01:00 To Catch A Killer
02:00 True Conviction
03:00 The Madeleine Mccann Mystery
04:30 To Catch A Killer
06:10 I'd Kill For You
07:00 Killer Unknown
07:55 Blood Relatives

08:50 Scott Peterson: Pregnant Wife Missing
10:40 I'd Kill For You
11:35 Your Worst Nightmare
13:25 American Monster
14:20 To Catch A Killer
15:15 Betrayed
16:10 I'd Kill For You
17:05 Love Kills
18:00 Natalie Wood: An American Murder Mystery
19:00 Shadow Of Doubt
20:00 To Catch A Killer
21:00 Steven Avery: Innocent Or Guilty?
22:00 Dead On Arrival
23:00 Bill Cosby: An American Scandal

Disney Channel

00:00 Alex & Co.
00:50 Evermoor Chronicles
01:40 Alex & Co.
02:05 Binny And The Ghost
02:55 Hank Zipzer
03:45 Alex & Co.
04:35 Violetta
05:25 Binny And The Ghost
05:45 Rolling With The Ronks
06:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
06:25 Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure
06:50 Tsum Tsum Shorts
06:55 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp
07:20 Penny On M.A.R.S.
07:45 K.C. Undercover
08:10 Bizaardvark
08:35 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
09:25 Tangled: The Series
10:15 Bizaardvark
11:05 Liv And Maddie
11:55 K.C. Undercover
12:45 Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure
13:10 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
14:00 101 Dalmatian Street
14:15 Shake It Up
14:40 K.C. Undercover
15:05 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:10 A.N.T. Farm
15:35 Penny On M.A.R.S.
16:00 101 Dalmatian Street
16:15 Hotel Transylvania: The Series
16:25 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
16:50 Raven's Home
17:15 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp
17:40 Bizaardvark
18:05 K.C. Undercover
18:30 Bunk'd
18:55 Descendants Wicked World
19:00 Raven's Home
19:25 Liv And Maddie
19:50 K.C. Undercover
20:15 Disney Mickey Mouse
20:20 A.N.T. Farm
20:45 Bizaardvark
21:10 Rapunzel's Tangled Adventure
21:35 Bug Juice: My Adventures At Camp
22:00 Miraculous Tales Of Ladybug & Cat Noir
22:50 Lolirock
23:10 Evermoor Chronicles
23:35 Binny And The Ghost

Disney Junior

00:00 The Lion Guard
00:25 PJ Masks Shorts
00:30 Trulli Tales
01:00 PJ Masks
01:50 The Hive
02:00 Zou
02:30 Henry Hugglemonster
03:20 The Hive
03:40 Zou
04:25 The Hive
04:45 Henry Hugglemonster
05:35 The Hive
05:45 PJ Masks
06:55 Minnie's Bow-Toons
07:00 Disney Muppet Babies
07:20 Paprika

07:30 Paprika
07:40 PJ Masks
08:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
08:15 Puppy Dog Pals
08:30 Vampirina
08:45 Fancy Nancy Splits
09:00 Sofia The First
09:30 Elena Of Avalor
10:00 Doc McStuffins
10:55 Cars Toons
11:00 PJ Masks
12:00 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
13:00 Fancy Nancy Splits
14:00 Vampirina
15:00 Gigantosaurus
16:00 The Lion Guard
16:30 Elena Of Avalor
17:00 Gigantosaurus
17:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
18:00 Fancy Nancy
18:30 Vampirina
19:00 PJ Masks
19:30 Puppy Dog Pals
20:00 The Lion Guard
20:25 Vampirina Ghoul Girls Rock!
20:30 Elena Of Avalor
21:00 Gigantosaurus
21:30 Mickey And The Roadster Racers
22:00 Fancy Nancy
22:30 Vampirina
23:00 PJ Masks
23:30 Puppy Dog Pals

Discovery Channel

00:15 Dual Survival
01:05 Incredible Engineering Blunders: Fixed
01:50 How Do They Do It?
02:35 What On Earth?
03:20 Diesel Brothers
04:50 How Do They Do It?
05:35 Container Wars
06:00 Shed And Buried
06:20 Container Wars
06:45 Dual Survival
07:35 Deadliest Catch
08:20 Gold Rush
09:10 Alaska: The Last Frontier
09:55 Outback Truckers
10:45 How Do They Do It?
11:30 Diesel Brothers
13:05 Shed And Buried
13:30 Container Wars
13:55 Outback Truckers
14:40 Railroad Alaska
15:30 Wild Australia
16:15 Diesel Brothers
17:05 Alaska: The Last Frontier
17:50 Gold Rush
18:40 How Do They Do It?
19:25 Diesel Brothers
21:00 Wheeler Dealers
21:50 Diesel Brothers
22:40 Shifting Gears With Aaron Kaufman
23:30 Deadliest Catch

XD

00:15 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
00:35 Boyster
01:25 Counterfeit Cat
02:10 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
03:00 Boyster
03:50 Dude That's My Ghost
04:40 Counterfeit Cat
05:00 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja
06:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
06:35 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
07:00 Phineas And Ferb
08:00 Mech-X4: Let's Call It Mech-X4!
08:50 Milo Murphy's Law
09:40 Big City Greens
10:25 Kick Buttowski
10:50 Phineas And Ferb
11:00 Gravity Falls
11:25 Gravity Falls
11:50 Milo Murphy's Law
12:05 Space Chickens In Space
12:30 DuckTales
12:55 Big Hero 6 The Series

13:20 Lab Rats
14:10 Phineas And Ferb
15:00 Marvel's Spider-Man
15:25 Disney Mickey Mouse
15:30 Space Chickens In Space
15:55 Big City Greens
16:20 Big Hero 6 The Series
16:45 Star vs The Forces Of Evil
17:00 Milo Murphy's Law
17:31 DuckTales
17:55 Phineas And Ferb
19:00 Milo Murphy's Law: The Phineas & Ferb Effect
19:50 Marvel's Avengers: Black Panther's Quest
20:15 Lab Rats
21:05 Kick Buttowski
21:30 Big City Greens
21:55 Disney Mickey Mouse
22:00 Milo Murphy's Law
23:00 Dude That's My Ghost
23:50 Randy Cunningham: 9th Grade Ninja

E! HD

00:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
02:00 E! News
03:00 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
04:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
08:00 E! News: Daily Pop
08:55 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
11:40 E! News
12:35 Very Cavallari
15:20 E! News: Daily Pop
16:15 Hollywood Medium With Tyler Henry
19:00 E! News
20:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
21:00 Keeping Up With The Kardashians
22:00 Botched

itv CHOICE

00:10 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
01:00 Emmerdale
01:30 Coronation Street
02:00 Coronation Street
02:30 Inside Windsor Castle
03:25 Royal Babies Of Windsor
04:20 This Time Next Year
05:15 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
06:15 Couples Come Dine With Me
07:10 Inside Windsor Castle
08:05 Royal Babies Of Windsor
09:00 This Time Next Year
09:55 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
10:55 Couples Come Dine With Me
11:50 Inside Windsor Castle
12:45 Emmerdale
13:45 Coronation Street
14:15 Couples Come Dine With Me
15:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
16:00 Queen Victoria's Letters: A Monarch Unveiled
17:00 Cannonball
17:55 Masterpiece With Alan Titchmarsh
18:50 Emmerdale
19:45 Coronation Street
20:10 The Chase: Celebrity Specials
21:00 Queen Victoria's Letters: A Monarch Unveiled
22:00 Cannonball
22:50 Emmerdale
23:40 Coronation Street

HD

00:15 Dogfights
01:00 In Search Of Aliens
01:45 Engineering Disasters
02:30 Modern Marvels
03:15 Ancient Aliens
04:45 Battles BC
05:30 Dogfights
06:15 The Human Calculator
07:00 In Search Of Aliens
07:45 Engineering Disasters

08:30 Modern Marvels
09:15 Ancient Aliens
10:45 The Greeks
11:30 Dogfights
12:15 The Human Calculator
13:00 In Search Of Aliens
13:45 Engineering Disasters
14:30 Modern Marvels
15:15 Ancient Aliens
16:45 The Greeks
17:30 Dogfights
18:15 In Search Of Aliens
19:00 Engineering Disasters
19:45 How 2 Win
20:30 Ancient Aliens
22:00 Search For The Lost Giants
22:45 The Human Calculator
23:30 Stan Lee's Superhumans

HISTORY

00:20 Mountain Men
01:05 Pawn Stars
01:50 American Pickers
02:35 Storage Wars: Barry's Best Buys
03:25 Ax Men
04:15 Duck Dynasty
05:05 Forged In Fire
06:00 Fifth Gear
06:45 Mountain Men
07:30 Pawn Stars
08:15 American Pickers
09:00 Storage Wars: Barry's Best Buys
09:45 Ax Men
10:30 Duck Dynasty
11:15 Forged In Fire
12:00 Fifth Gear
12:45 Ax Men
15:00 Detroit Steel
15:45 Truck Night In America
18:00 The Lost Evidence
18:45 Counting Cars
19:05 Counting Cars
19:30 Navy Seals: America's Secret Warriors
21:00 The Rise And Fall Of El Chapo
22:40 Football Godfathers
23:30 Truck Night In America

NAT GEO people HD

00:45 What's For Sale?
01:00 Nat Geo People HD
01:10 What's For Sale?
01:40 The Wine Show
02:35 Island Hunter
03:00 Nat Geo People HD
03:30 Fish Tank Kings
04:25 Confucius Was A Foodie
05:00 Nat Geo People HD
05:20 Eat: The Story Of Food
06:15 Eat Street
07:00 Nat Geo People HD
07:10 The Wine Show
08:05 Island Hunter
09:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:00 Nat Geo People HD
09:00 Fish Tank Kings
09:55 Confucius Was A Foodie
10:50 Eat: The Story Of Food
11:00 Nat Geo People HD
11:45 Eat Street
12:40 The Wine Show
13:00 Nat Geo People HD
13:35 Island Hunter
14:30 Fish Tank Kings
15:00 Nat Geo People HD
15:25 Confucius Was A Foodie
16:20 Eat: The Story Of Food
17:00 Nat Geo People HD
17:15 Eat Street
18:10 48 Hrs Destination
19:00 Nat Geo People HD
19:05 Island Hunter
20:00 Fish Tank Kings
21:00 Confucius Was A Foodie
21:00 Nat Geo People HD
21:00 Confucius Was A Foodie
22:00 The Game Chef
22:25 Peter Kuruvita Coastal Kitchen
22:55 Eat Street
23:00 Nat Geo People HD
23:20 Eat Street
23:50 48 Hrs Destination

Stars



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Wisdom rather than knowledge is what counts most in your life to you now. You have been down troubled roads and turned each stumbling block into a stepping stone. You have lived and learned and may have an opportunity to share this wisdom with a troubled friend. Don't get discouraged if your advice is overlooked. Remember, no one could have changed your mind about some of the mistakes you made. Realize others too, may have to experience trouble to learn the lessons that are to be learned in their lives. You are a good friend and a good person. You may find today you are shown appreciation and gratitude for who you are to others.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

You may encounter an unusual amount of stress today. Counter it by taking time for yourself to do what you enjoy most. Paint, write, or escape with a good book. Yoga or meditation may even be something you should consider making a part of your daily routine. Be careful not to shut yourself off from those who care about you. Their support is important. Do not try to conquer every problem on your own.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Teamwork is strongly indicated, but those you work with aren't fond of your day dreamy mood today. Your required tasks pull you into a most productive cycle and you overcome any obstacles you may encounter. You could have a secret you're having trouble keeping; consider the consequences of sharing this. Someone - a younger person - could demand that you decide today when you're just not ready; this could lead to some difficulties. You have an understanding heart when it comes to a friend in need. Sticking to your guns in a sticky situation could prove to be your best bet.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Are you getting mixed signals? That's not unusual. Feelings are complicated, and what one wants from you may change daily, or even hourly. Don't hesitate to ask for clarification. Feelings are abstract. Actions are concrete. Find out what you need to do. Take action and do not look back. Keep your eyes on the prize.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Today is a day you have been longing for. You need an escape. Let your hair down and head for wide open spaces. Take a ride in a convertible. Just get outside and breathe in the fresh air. You crave a sense of freedom. Decide exactly what you want out of life and make it happen. This is a great time to make clear decisions about your future.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You will make a new acquaintance today. Don't assume the person is insignificant. There may be connections or influence here that will lead to opportunities for you. Or, it may be that this is the very person you need in your life right now. Be accessible. Make it clear that you are open to what the person has to offer. You may find sharing your feelings openly with others, helps them open up to you.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You have a great desire for change. Your career or something concerning your profession seem to be preventing it. You have a deep desire for self-growth and change now. It seems if you continue on the same career path this will be a huge interference for you. You may find that your sensitivity is stifled by your job requirements. Too much work and no play is never a good thing. Find your balance.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Wisdom rather than knowledge is what counts most in your life to you now. You have been down troubled roads and turned each stumbling block into a stepping stone. You have lived and learned and may have an opportunity to share this wisdom with a troubled friend. Don't get discouraged if your advice is overlooked. Remember, no one could have changed your mind about some of the mistakes you made. Realize others too, may have to experience trouble to learn the lessons that are to be learned in their lives. You are a good friend and a good person. You may find today you are shown appreciation and gratitude for who you are to others.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Today is a great day to just go with the flow. Go ahead and take advantage of opportunities that present themselves to you. Don't be surprised if taking a chance brings great reward. You may feel extra close to a loved one today. Aris, this may be the day you learn to truly learn to love and appreciate yourself for who you have become and where you are in life. You have been feeling a that need to be needed and appreciated and today may just the day you receive that reward you have been longing for.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Let your hair down and take a drive. A horseback ride would be even better. Turn the music up loud and throw your cares out of the window. Find an escape and route to peace. Enjoy this day and all it brings. Spoil yourself. You may find you are more materialistic than usual. A shopping trip is in order to satisfy this need. Head to the mall and go for it! You work hard and deserve to be free from want.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Close relationships take on more emotional depth, power and importance in your world now. You feel as if you are needed and cared for. When these two feelings are missing you automatically have a feeling of uneasiness come over you. You were not made to be alone. Expressing your desires and vulnerability, helps draw your special someone closer to you. You may find the more you allow yourself to open up the closer you two become.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

You are being noticed in the workplace. It may become very obvious to your superiors at work that you are talented beyond the title you hold. You may find that you are in line for a promotion or you will be assigned a special project due to your leadership abilities. Everyone has their eye on you. From your personal life to your career, you are beginning to outshine those around you. You may find your analytical skills are in top shape and you are not only able to solve every problem you come across but may be finding satisfaction in spending your spare time solving puzzles or playing word games. You are in the mood to exercise your mind.

Country Codes

Afghanistan	0093	Jordan	00962
Albania	00355	Kazakhstan	007
Algeria	00213	Kenya	00254
Andorra	00376	Kiribati	00686
Angola	00244	Kuwait	00965
Anguilla	001264	Kyrgyzstan	00996
Antigua	001268	Laos	00856
Argentina	0054	Latvia	00371
Armenia	00374	Lebanon	00961
Australia	0061	Liberia	00231
Austria	0043	Libya	00218
Bahamas	001242	Lithuania	00370
Bahrain	00973	Luxembourg	00352
Bangladesh	00880	Macau	00853
Barbados	001246	Macedonia	00389
Belarus	00375	Madagascar	00261
Belgium	0032	Majorca	0034
Belize	00501	Malawi	00265
Benin	00229	Malaysia	0060
Bermuda	001441	Maldives	00960
Bhutan	00975	Mali	00223
Bolivia	00591	Malta	00356
Bosnia	00387	Marshall Islands	00692
Botswana	00267	Martinique	00596
Brazil	0055	Mauritania	00222
Brunei	00673	Mauritius	00230
Bulgaria	00359	Mayotte	00269
Burkina	00226	Mexico	0052
Burundi	00257	Micronesia	00691
Cambodia	00855	Moldova	00373
Cameroon	00237	Monaco	00377
Canada	001	Mongolia	00976
Cape Verde	00238	Montserrat	001664
Cayman Islands	001345	Morocco	00212
Central African Republic	00236	Mozambique	00258
Chad	00235	Myanmar (Burma)	0095
Chile	0056	Namibia	00264
China	0086	Nepal	00977
Colombia	0057	Netherlands (Holland)	0031
Comoros	00269	Netherlands Antilles	00599
Congo	00242	New Caledonia	00687
Cook Islands	00682	New Zealand	0064
Costa Rica	00506	Nicaragua	00505
Croatia	00385	Nigar	00227
Cuba	0053	Nigeria	00234
Cyprus	00357	Niue	00683
Cyprus (Northern)	0090392	Norfolk Island	00672
Czech Republic	00420	Northern Ireland (UK)	0044
Denmark	0045	North Korea	00850
Diego Garcia	00246	Norway	0047
Djibouti	00253	Oman	00968
Dominica	001767	Pakistan	0092
Dominican Republic	001809	Palau	00680
Ecuador	00593	Panama	00507
Egypt	0020	Papua New Guinea	00675
El Salvador	00503	Paraguay	00595
England (UK)	0044	Peru	0051
Equatorial Guinea	00240	Philippines	0063
Eritrea	00291	Poland	0048
Estonia	00372	Portugal	00351
Ethiopia	00251	Puerto Rico	001787
Falkland Islands	00500	Qatar	00974
Faroe Islands	00298	Romania	0040
Fiji	00679	Russian Federation	007
Finland	00358	Rwanda	00250
France	0033	Saint Helena	00290
French Guiana	00594	Saint Kitts	001869
French Polynesia	00689	Saint Lucia	001758
Gabon	00241	Saint Pierre	00508
Gambia	00220	Saint Vincent	001784
Georgia	00995	Samoa US	00684
Germany	0049	Samoa West	00685
Ghana	00233	San Marino	00378
Gibraltar	00350	Sao Tome	00239
Greece	0030	Saudi Arabia	00966
Greenland	00299	Scotland (UK)	0044
Grenada	001473	Senegal	00221
Guadeloupe	00590	Seychelles	00284
Guam	001671	Sierra Leone	00232
Guatemala	00502	Singapore	0065
Guinea	00224	Slovakia	00421
Guyana	00592	Slovenia	00386
Haiti	00509	Solomon Islands	00677
Holland (Netherlands)	0031	Somalia	00252
Honduras	00504	South Africa	0027
Hong Kong	00852	South Korea	0082
Hungary	0036	Spain	0034
Ibiza (Spain)	0034	Sri Lanka	0094
Iceland	00354	Sudan	00249
India	0091	Suriname	00597
Indian Ocean	00873	Swaziland	00268
Indonesia	0062	Sweden	0046
Iran	0098	Switzerland	0041
Iraq	00964	Syria	00963
Ireland	00353	Taiwan	00886
Italy	0039	Tanzania	00255
Ivory Coast	00225	Thailand	0066
Jamaica	001876	Toga	00228
Japan	0081	Tonga	00676

CLINIC PAGE



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248 33 199

Friday, June 14, 2019

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

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

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ACADAMIC CERTIFICATES:

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

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

Telephone: 1830003 Ext: 2400
alsalam.int.hospital

Specialized in:

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

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

Telephone: 1830003
alsalam.int.hospital

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

Specialized in:

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

Scope of Clinical Practice:

- ◆ General & Laparoscopic Surgery
- ◆ Single Port Surgery
- ◆ Treatment of Colo-Rectal Diseases, Including Colorectal Cancer
- ◆ Surgical Treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Abscess
- ◆ Treatment of Perianal Fistula & Complex Perianal Fistula (complications)
- ◆ YAAT Procedure (Treatment of Fistula through Fistuloscope)
- ◆ Treatment of Irritable Bowel Symptoms
- ◆ Colonoscopy & Gastroscopy
- ◆ Stomach Balloon Insertion & removal
- ◆ Bariatric Surgery - Lap Sleeve Gastrectomy
- ◆ Gallstones & Abdominal Hernias Surgery

◆ Colonic Hydrotherapy & Fecal Incontinence Treatment
◆ Laparoscopic mini bypass
◆ Transanal minimally Invasive surgery

Academic Certificates, Trainings & Fellowships:

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

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

daralshifa
Email: aalhaddad@daralshifa.com

Tele: 1802 555

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

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

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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
Laprosopic 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

Dr. Husain Alenezi

-Board Certified Urologist.
-Endourology Society-Approved Fellowship In Endourology And Robotic Surgery At Western University, Ontario, Canada.

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Classifieds

CHANGE OF NAME

I, **Melissa Jessica**, Mangaf, Block 4, Street 25, Flat 13, Floor 5, Kuwait, holder of Indian Passport No. J5549911, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare, the name change as Surname Rodrigues and given name Melissa Jessica. (C 5550) 14-6-2019

Hussain Shabbir Gubbuji H. 9 Sacrea heart town, Wanwadi Pune, 411040, India. Holder of Indian Passport No. M8390452, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare, the name change as surname Gabbuji and given name Hussain Shabbir. (C 5549) 13-6-2019

I, **Abdul Khadar Sheeja Beegum**, Vilakampurayidom, near T.B, Pathanamthitta P.O, Pathanamthitta, Pin-689645, Kerala, India, holder of Indian Passport No. T4012709, residing in Kuwait at present, hereby declare, the name changes as, given

name **Sheeja Beegum** and Surname **Abdul Khadar**. (C 5547)

I, **Pakkir Mohamed Anver Ali**, holder of Indian Passport No. R5458898 wish to correct my name as given name **Pakkir Mohamed Surname Anver Ali**, hereinafter in all my documents my name will appear as **Anver Ali Pakkir Mohamed**. (C 5546)

I, **CHADERVATI**, holder of Indian Passport No. S3691440, 967 Street 31 Pushpa Bhawan, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi, 110062, would like to change my name to **CHANDERVATI**, Passport No. A6554388, 967 Street 31 Pushpa Bhawan, Dr. Ambedkar Nagar, New Delhi, 110062. (C 5548) 11-6-2019

Automated enquiry
about the Civil ID card is

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STATE OF KUWAIT DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind to northerly wind, with speed of 15 - 50 km/h causing rising dust over open areas.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 35 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 13/06/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	46 °C	33 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	47 °C	34 °C		
ABDALY	47 °C	31 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	47 °C	33 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	45 °C	31 °C		
SALMIYAH	43 °C	32 °C		
AHMADI	42 °C	34 °C		
NUWAISIB	43 °C	33 °C		
WAFRA	47 °C	31 °C		
SALMY	45 °C	28 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Friday	06/14	Very hot	48 °C	34 °C	NW-VRB	08 - 30 km/h
Saturday	06/15	Very hot	49 °C	33 °C	VRB	06 - 20 km/h
Sunday	06/16	Very hot and Relatively humid over coastal areas	49 °C	33 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 26 km/h
Monday	06/17	Very hot	50 °C	35 °C	NW-W	12 - 38 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:13
Sunrise	04:48
Zuhr	11:48
Asr	15:22
Sunset	18:48
Isha	20:20

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	48 °C
MIN. Temp.	36 °C
MAX. RH	26 %
MIN. RH	07 %
MAX. Wind	N 50 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Airlines

Kuwait Airways	171
Jazeera Airways	177
Wataniya Airways	22 066 536
Turkish Airlines	1884918
American Airlines	22087425
	22087426
Jet Airways	22924455
FlyDubai	22414400
Qatar Airways	22423888
KLM	22425747
Royal Jordanian	22418064/5/6
British Airways	22425635
Air France	22430224
Emirates	22921555
Air India	22438184
Sri Lanka Airlines	22424444
Egypt Air	22421578
Swiss Air	22421516
Saudia	22426306
Middle East Airlines`	22423073
Lufthansa	22422493
PIA	22421044
Bangladesh Airlines	22452977/8
Indian Airlines	22456700
Oman Air	22958787
Turkish Airlines	22453820/1
Aeroflot	22404838/9

Business

FRIDAY, JUNE 14, 2019

38 Trade tensions boosted euro's global role in 2018



39 Netflix gets its game on at E3 with 'Stranger Things'



40 Uber unveils next-gen Volvo self-driving car



AT SEA: This undated and non located handout picture released by Frontline Management AS yesterday shows the Norwegian tanker Front Altair which was 'attacked' in the Gulf of Oman. —AFP

Oil surges after Gulf tanker attacks, stocks claw higher

Hong Kong shares drop after street protests

LONDON: Suspected attacks on two tankers off the coast of Iran saw oil markets erupt out of their recent slump yesterday and kept traders gobbling up ultra-safe government bonds, gold and the Japanese yen. Brent surged as much 4 percent after reports of the attacks added to the already-heightened tensions between Iran and the United States.

The area is near the Strait of Hormuz through which a fifth of global oil consumption passes from Middle East producers. Europe's oil producers moved higher in the region's stock markets. Shares were also lifted by some stellar gains in the telecoms sector as Germany dished out licenses for its new 5G mobile network to some new entrants. "Whenever you have an incident in the Arabian Gulf a little bit

of nervousness always starts to kick in about that particular artery getting clogged up," CMC Markets senior analyst Michael Hewson said.

Given that oil was at 5-month lows yesterday, people are taking precautions that it might escalate into something further. "But personally I think it will be much like in the past where you get a spike higher but ultimately it doesn't change the underlying supply and demand dynamics," Hewson said. Asia had been a different story. Hong Kong's Hang Seng had dropped sharply for a second day as public tensions continued there about a bill which would allow extradition to China.

Doubts were growing too about any improvement in what U.S. President Donald Trump called 'testy' trade relations with China before this month's

G20 summit and some market anxiety emerged that Federal Reserve rate cut speculation may have been overdone. Investors will be looking to what Fed policymakers will say after their next policy meeting on June 18-19, with Fed Funds rate futures pricing in a 25-basis-point rate cut for the subsequent policy review on July 30-31.

Rate expectations

That is completely at odds with the Fed's projection three months ago, when policy makers saw gradual rate hikes in coming years. "The US real economy has not worsened that much. But given market expectations, the Fed will have no choice but to cut rates," said Kozo Koide, chief economist at Asset Management One.

The 10-year US Treasuries yield

dipped to 2.103 percent, near Friday's 2.053 percent, its lowest level since September 2017, while Germany borrowing costs sank back towards all-time lows in Europe. Bond yields also fell in Asia. Long-dated Japanese government bond yields hit their lowest levels since August 2016, with 20-year yield down 2.5 basis points at 0.220 percent, before they rose back on a weak 30-year bond auction.

In Australia, long known for its high-yield currency, rates fell to record lows, with three-year yield now slipping below 1 percent after jobs data pointed to another interest rate cut in July to follow one last week. In the currency market, the yen gained 0.2% to 108.32 to the dollar as risk sentiment soured while the Australian dollar dropped 0.25% to \$0.6910.

The euro stood little changed at \$1.1293, having taken a hit on Wednesday after Trump said he was considering sanctions over Russia's Nord Stream 2 natural gas pipeline project and warned Germany against being dependent on Russia for energy. The pound stayed subdued after British lawmakers defeated an attempt led by the opposition Labor Party to try to block a no-deal Brexit by seizing control of the parliamentary agenda from the government. Sterling fetched \$1.2670, not far from this week's low of \$1.2653. "The risk aversion and falling stock markets are supporting the yen as usual," said Bart Wakabayashi, Tokyo branch manager for State Street Bank and Trust. "The Australian dollar's underperformance is also a booster for the yen." —Reuters

Business

Trade tensions boosted euro's global role in 2018

Reforms to deepen economic union between members

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Fear of trade conflicts, sanctions and challenges to the multi-lateral order contributed to a rebound in worldwide use of the euro in 2018 from historic lows, the European Central Bank said yesterday. "It's primarily the diversification out of the dollar which benefits the euro, because it is the second-most used currency and second-most liquid for investors," ECB board member Benoit Coeure told reporters in Frankfurt.

Aside from commercial tensions, internal reforms within the eurozone to deepen the economic and monetary union between the members also helped, the ECB found in its annual report on the euro's global role. Euros made up some 20.7 percent of global foreign currency reserves in 2018, measured at constant exchange rates-up 1.2 percentage points year-on-year. Meanwhile, the dollar remained top dog, but fell to its lowest share since the euro's launch 20 years ago, at 61.7 percent.

"Some central banks might have started to consider reducing their positions in financial

assets exposed to the risks of unilateral actions," the ECB said. Russia-one of the world's biggest holders of reserves-sold \$100 billion in 2018 after a new round of American sanctions, instead buying up \$90 billion worth of euros and Chinese yuan. The central bank also found that the proportion of new euro-denominated debt from non-eurozone issuers grew 2.5 percentage points last year, to 22.7 percent, while the dollar's share shrank by eight points to below 61 percent.

And the proportion of international payments for goods and services in euros held steady. Looking ahead, "the international role of the euro should be decided by market forces," Coeure said, although the ECB is able to support it "in the technical field". "For instance by supporting the integration of European payments, that can make it easier, faster and cheaper for international investors to use euro denominated assets."

Meanwhile, strengthening the economic and monetary union between euro member countries should also provide the foundation for use of the currency to grow internation-

ally. The European Commission prodded member states Wednesday to complete reforms to the single currency bloc, including an embryonic joint budget for the 19 member states-on the agenda at a "Eurogroup" finance ministers' meeting yesterday.—AFP

from Renault and its investors, Fiat's president John Elkann said trying to push ahead with the deal would be "unreasonable". The deal's sudden collapse was a stunning blow to Senard, who was brought in just months ago to help get the carmaker back on track after the shock arrest of former Renault and Nissan boss Carlos Ghosn last November in Tokyo. Renault officials later had to deny claims he was considering resigning over the matter.

'Didn't veto'

But Le Maire said Thursday that the French state, which owns 15 percent of Renault's stock, "didn't veto the project." "We simply asked, after seeing that Nissan was not going to give its backing, for five more days to study the operation," he said. Le Maire defended his request for more time as "reasonable," saying the scope of the merger "required that the Japanese partner be associated with it and in the end in favor of it."

"Our strategy has always been... the reinforcement of the Renault-Nissan alliance. It's at the heart of Renault's as well as Nissan's profitability. We're not going to change our strategy every five minutes," he said. He later met with Senard at the finance ministry to discuss the automaker's strategy going forward. "They had an excellent discussion regarding the future of both Renault and the alliance" with Nissan and Mitsubishi, an official in Le Maire's cabinet told AFP.

"Le Maire renewed his confidence in Senard and reiterated that the goal is to consolidate the alliance with Nissan," he said. Renault declined to comment on the meeting, acknowledging only that the two men had spoken regularly, including before Wednesday's AGM.



FRANKFURT AM MAIN: This file photograph shows a general view of the headquarters of the European Central Bank (ECB), in Frankfurt am Main, western Germany.—AFP

Renault, French govt trade blame over failed Fiat deal

PARIS: French officials rejected yesterday any blame for the abandoned tie-up of Renault and the US-Italian automaker Fiat Chrysler, a day after Renault's chairman said the government had blocked a vote on a deal that would have upended the global automotive industry. "We did not derail the wedding between Renault and Fiat," French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire told France Info radio ahead of a meeting with Renault chairman Jean-Dominique Senard.

Senard told shareholders at Renault's AGM on Wednesday that board directors representing the French state, which owns 15 percent of the carmaker, had demanded more time to study the tie-up. In particular the government wanted to clarify the future role of Renault's Japanese partners Nissan and Mitsubishi, which had been informed only at the last minute of the potential mega-merger with Fiat.

"Rarely have I seen a merger project able to produce such significant synergies, and without having negative consequences in terms of jobs and livelihoods," Senard told shareholders. He also revealed that it was Le Maire himself who suggested he reach out to Fiat executives on a possible deal. But just over a week after proposing a merger that got a warm welcome



PARIS: This file photo shows the headquarters of the French car manufacturer Renault in Boulogne Billancourt, near Paris.—AFP

Try again?

Senard did not rule out trying again to reach a deal with Fiat Chrysler, telling shareholders that "to my mind, this project remains a remarkable and exceptional proposal". "As to what the future holds, I can't say," he added. The merger would have created the world's third-largest automaker, surpassing both Volkswagen and Toyota in annual vehicle sales. But including Renault's alliance partners Nissan and Mitsubishi, it would have been an industry behemoth selling some 15 million cars and trucks a year.

A combination would also have allowed them to pool investments into costly electric motor and autonomous driving technologies, an area where Renault has spent aggressively while Fiat has lagged behind. It's a key challenge for the industry as governments worldwide tackle carbon emissions and the mobility challenges stemming from rapid urbanization. A merger would also have bulked up their positions in Europe, while giving Renault access to the crucial North American market and Fiat a foothold in Latin America, Russia and Asia.—AFP

Business

Netflix gets its game on at E3 with 'Stranger Things'

LOS ANGELES: Netflix on Wednesday made its first formal appearance at the annual Electronic Entertainment Expo, showcasing plans for video games based on hit original shows such as "Stranger Things." The streaming television powerhouse is looking to expand its original shows into other media, and the idea for a Stranger Things video game sprang up after its successful first season, Netflix director of interactive gaming Chris Lee said during a panel discussion at the premier industry gathering known as E3.

"It was like music to my ears," Lee said. "We are actually hoping to bring people into our franchises through games." A free Stranger Things mobile game was released in late 2017 before the second season of the supernatural thriller series. A "Stranger Things 3" video game tailored for play on PlayStation, Switch, and Xbox consoles as well as personal computers is set for release on July 4 as a download priced at \$19.99.

Netflix this year will also release an eponymous turn-based strategy game spinning off an original "The Dark Crystal: Age of Resistance" television series based on a dark puppet animated film from 1982 directed by Jim Henson and Frank Oz. Netflix partnered with video game developer BonusXP and the Henson Company on the project. "The Dark Crystal is one of my favorite fantasy films of all time, so it was a

bucket-list item for me to be part of this game," said BonusXP president Dave Pottinger.

"The challenge with Dark Crystal is living up to 30 years of fandom and the expectation that comes with that." Stranger Things writers are gamers, as are the show's characters and many of its fans, so a full-blown title building on adventures in the series was a natural fit, according to show writer Paul Dichter. The game aims to stay true to the original horror fiction series while adding extra content to the storyline.

"One of the fun parts of taking something so serious as Stranger Things and turning it into a game is we get to latch onto levity and make the most of those moments," Pottinger said, noting that one of the game character's fighting skills features hair spray. Lee revealed that a new Stranger Things role-playing puzzle game for mobile devices will be released next year, and that Netflix is working with Ubisoft, Roblox and Behavior Interactive on games extending characters and worlds from original shows.

He joked that as much as Netflix loves its popular "Black Mirror" series portraying disturbingly dark outcomes of technology, it has no plans in the works for anything based on the new episode "Striking Vipers"—the story of which revolves around two friends who have sexual encounters in a virtual game world. Lee did reveal, though, that "Stranger Things" will be popping up in "Fortnite" on the heels of an "easter egg"



LOS ANGELES: From left to right, Netflix director of interactive gaming Chris Lee, BonusXP game studio president Dave Pottinger, 'Stranger Things' writer Paul Dichter and Henson Company director of digital and interactive media Stephanie Wise discuss Netflix's plans to make video games based on its original shows at the Electronic Entertainment Expo, also known as E3, in Los Angeles.—AFP

recently spotted in the battle royale video game sensation.

Netflix has been interested in making videos more interactive for some time, and recently released a Black Mirror episode called "Bandersnatch" that lets viewers make choices that

influence the story. Executives promised there will be more interactive shows at the service. "This one has storytellers salivating," Netflix chief content officer Ted Sarandos said of the interactive Black Mirror episode during an earnings presentation.—AFP

EU ministers collide over mini eurozone budget

LUXEMBOURG: EU finance ministers will consider a set of watered-down eurozone reforms yesterday but may yet struggle to sign off on them, in a setback to France, which championed an ambitious overhaul to the single currency. Almost a decade after the debt crisis, French President Emmanuel Macron wants his partners to implement the changes in order to make the eurozone more resilient to shocks and to the global dominance of the United States and China.

But resistance to overhauling the eurozone has deepened, amid a budget row with populist-led Italy, and as richer northern countries grow reluctant to indulge the budget-busters to the south. This distrust and hesitance has plagued the eurozone since being launched in 2002, a disunity that economists say limits growth and invites crisis. France's flagship reform was a eurozone budget, but the idea met a team of opponents led by the Netherlands that feared a transfer of wealth to Italy, Greece or Spain.

Macron had also wanted the creation of a eurozone finance minister, an idea that was fast cast aside under pressure from Germany, which prefers that power over the economy remains national. Instead of a budget, the EU ministers meeting in Luxembourg are discussing something called the Budgetary Instrument for Competitiveness and Convergence, a fund with limited firepower to be used to back reforms. The cumbersome renaming comes at the demand of the Dutch, who

fought to ensure that the instrument remained an extremely modest affair to placate the French.

The skeleton of Macron's original plan comes after months of negotiating the broad elements of the budget, including its spending priorities, source of revenues, and who should ultimately wield control over its decisions. A European source said it was the last element that would keep ministers talking into the night in Luxembourg, with the Netherlands and others insisting the budget remains under the auspices of the EU budget.

As such, the budget's firepower would remain at a modest 17 billion euros over seven years with no chance of expansion and under the authority of the EU's 27 member states (after the exit of Britain). But France's vision is far more ambitious: Paris contends that the today's modest budget will grow over time and sows the seeds for a more unified eurozone in the future.

Long night

"It's true that the night will be long. These budget questions take time," said a French finance ministry source, with ministers expected to clear the way for formal decisions at an EU summit on June 21 in Brussels. Ignored for now is a Europe-wide deposit insurance scheme, which is supposed to be the last pillar of an EU banking union set up after a series of bank failures during the worst of the crisis. "Regrettably, the impasse on this project is still there. No tangible progress has been made," said EU commission vice president Valdis Dombrovskis on Wednesday.

The deposit scheme is resisted by Germany, Finland and other northern European countries that fear being put on the hook for deposits in fragile countries such as Italy or Greece. Ministers will also discuss Italy with Rome in infraction of EU budget rules and in danger of major fines inflicted by its currency zone partners.—AFP

Peripheral bonds sell at record levels

LONDON: A firesale of peripheral debt from Italy, Spain and Portugal has drawn strong investor demand despite the record low yields on offer, and some expectation that the EU will discipline Italy over its excessive debt. With euro zone bond yields offering ultra-low or negative returns, the carry trade is on, analysts say, meaning that each of the three peripheral bond issuers were met with strong demand in Wednesday's sales.

The term "carry" refers to a trade where investors take advantage of low short-dated borrowing costs to pick up some yield by buying longer-dated debt. Worries about economic growth as well as trade disputes are seeing core euro zone bond yields hit multi-year or all-time lows, but spreads are also tightening, suggesting there is a hunt for yield which is benefiting the periphery.

"Usually you would expect spreads to widen but carry is so low in the core... which is why the periphery is doing so well," said Daniel Lenz, rates strategist at DZ Bank. Italy is expected to be a key focus at this month's Eurogroup meeting on Thursday, analysts said, amid concerns over its heavy public debt load. European Economics Commissioner Pierre Moscovici said on Wednesday Italy should present a credible fiscal path for this year and next if it still wants to avoid European Union disciplinary action over its debt.

Also on Wednesday, Italy's Economy Minister Giovanni Tria said the country must reduce its "enormous" public debt to shore up market confidence. However, investors were undeterred by such concerns, placing orders of more than 23.5 billion euros for a 20-year syndicated bond. A further test will come later yesterday as the sovereign looks to sell up to 6.5 billion euros of government bonds or BTPs at auction.

Spain raised 6 billion euros of 10-year debt via syndication at a yield of 0.629%, or 33 basis points over mid-swaps. Portugal sold 1.25 billion euros of 10- and 15-year bonds in an auction on Wednesday at a record low yield. State debt agency IGCP said the allotment yield on the benchmark June 2029 maturity fell to 0.639%, way below 1.059% at the previous auction in May, and the first time Portugal has sold 10 year debt below 1%.—Reuters

Business

Uber unveils next-gen Volvo self-driving car

WASHINGTON: Uber Technologies Inc unveiled its newest Volvo self-driving car in Washington on Wednesday as it works to eventually deploy vehicles without drivers under some limited conditions. Uber said the new production XC90 will be assembled by Volvo Cars in Sweden and have human controls like steering wheels and brake pedals, but also with factory-installed steering and braking systems designed for computer rather than human control.

Uber Advanced Technologies Group chief scientist Raquel Urtasun showed off the company's artificial intelligence technology that allows it to drive autonomously for long distances on highways without maps and "on the fly" to plot its course and navigate construction zones. "Our goal is get each one of you to where you want to go much better, much safer, cheaper," Urtasun said. As the race to push out autonomous cars across the globe heats up, other companies are also working to deploy self-driving vehicles in limited areas.

Ford Motor Co's majority-owned autonomous vehicle unit, Argo AI, launched its new fleet of self-driving test vehicles - Ford Fusion Hybrid - in Detroit on Wednesday, expanding to five US cities. The No. 2 US automaker also opened a research center in Tel Aviv, joining a growing number of major automakers and suppliers setting up shop in Israel's tech hub. General Motors Co in January 2018 sought permission from US regulators to deploy a ride-sharing fleet of driverless cars without steering wheels or other human controls before the end of 2019, but is still struggling to win regulatory approval. Alphabet Inc's Waymo unit is operating a robotaxi

service in Arizona and said last month it is partnering with Lyft Inc to serve more riders. South Korea's Hyundai Motor Co and Kia Motors Corp both said they would invest in the self-driving car software startup Aurora and speed up development of their respective autonomous vehicle technologies. Carmakers have struggled to maintain profit margins faced with the rising costs of making electric, connected and autonomous cars. As a result, they are setting up alliances and lining up outside investors to combat spiraling development costs.

Previously, Uber had purchased about 250 Volvo XC90 SUVs and retrofitted them for self-driving use. The new vehicles - known by the internal code number 519G and under development for several years - are safer, more reliable and will replace the older vehicles in Uber's fleet "soon," according to Eric Meyhofer, the head of Uber's Advanced Technologies Group. "This is about going to production," Meyhofer said in an interview at an Uber conference in Washington on Tuesday. The new vehicle also has several backup systems for both steering and braking functions as well as backup battery power and new cybersecurity systems.

Human controls

Uber is not ready to deploy vehicles without human controls, Meyhofer said. "We're still in a real hybrid state," he said. "We have to get there and we're not going to get to thousands of cars in a city overnight. It's going to be a slower introduction." The new XC90 vehicles have an interior fish-eye camera to scan for lost items, Uber said. They also do not have sunroofs since



WASHINGTON: Uber's Volvo XC90 self driving car is shown during a demonstration of self-driving automotive technology in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, US.—Reuters

the self-driving vehicles have large sensors on the roof and are equipped with auto-close doors to prevent an unsafe departure.

Uber, which has taken delivery of about a dozen prototypes of the new vehicle, but has not yet deployed them on public roads, said the car's "self-driving system will one day allow for safe, reliable autonomous ridesharing without the need" for a safety driver. Asked if Uber will deploy self-driving cars without safety drivers in limited areas in the next few years, Meyhofer said: "Yes - way before that."

But he added that Uber wants to be in "the good graces of public trust and regulatory trust"

before making the business decision to deploy. In December, Uber resumed limited self-driving car testing on public roads in Pittsburgh, nine months after it suspended the program following a deadly accident in Arizona. In March 2018, authorities in Arizona suspended Uber's ability to test its self-driving cars after one of its XC90 cars hit and killed a woman crossing the street at night in the Phoenix suburb of Tempe, then Uber's largest testing hub. The crash was the first death attributed to a self-driving vehicle.

In March 2019, prosecutors in Arizona said the company was not criminally liable in the crash and would not pursue charges.—Reuters

US weekly jobless claims rise; imported inflation weak

WASHINGTON: The number of Americans filing applications for unemployment benefits unexpectedly rose last week, which could add to concerns that the labor market was losing steam after job growth slowed sharply in May. Other data yesterday showed import prices fell by the most in five months in May amid a broad decline in the cost of goods, the latest indication of muted inflation pressures. Signs of a slowing labor market and tepid inflation strengthen the case for the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates this year.

US central bank policymakers are scheduled to meet on June 18-19 against the backdrop of rising trade tensions. Financial markets have priced in at least two rate cuts by the end of 2019. A rate cut is not expected next Wednesday. Initial claims for state unemployment benefits rose 3,000 to a seasonally adjusted 222,000 for the week ended June 8, the Labor Department said on Thursday. Economists polled by Reuters

had forecast claims decreasing to 216,000 in the latest week.

While layoffs remain relatively low, the third straight weekly increase in claims suggests some softening in labor market conditions. The four-week moving average of claims, considered a better measure of labor market trends as it irons out week-to-week volatility, rose 2,500 to 217,750 last week. The economy created only 75,000 jobs in May, with annual wages increasing at their slowest pace in eight months, the government reported last week. US financial markets were little moved by the claims data.

The slowdown in hiring, which occurred before a recent escalation in trade tensions between the United States and China, raised fears of a sharp deceleration in economic growth. The claims data is being closely monitored for signs of any fallout from the trade war. President Donald Trump in early May imposed additional tariffs of up to 25 percent on \$200 billion of Chinese

goods, prompting retaliation by Beijing. Trump on Monday threatened more duties on Chinese imports if no deal was reached when he meets Chinese President Xi Jinping at a G20 summit later this month in Japan.

A tariff on all goods from Mexico to force authorities in that country to stop immigrants from Central America from crossing the border into the United States was narrowly averted after the two nations struck an agreement late on Friday.

Economy slowing

Data so far have suggested a sharp slowdown in US economic growth in the second quarter after a temporary boost from exports and an accumulation of inventory early in the year. In addition to the sharp moderation in hiring last month, manufacturing production, exports and home sales dropped in April, while consumer spending cooled. The Atlanta Fed is forecasting gross domestic product increasing at a 1.4 percent annualized rate in the April-June quarter. The economy grew at a 3.1% pace in the first quarter.

In another report yesterday, the Labor Department said import prices dropped 0.3 percent last month, the



LOS ANGELES: People wait in line to attend TechFair LA, a technology job fair, in Los Angeles, California.—Reuters

biggest decline since last December, after edging up 0.1 percent in April. Economists had forecast import prices slipping 0.2 percent in May. In the 12 months through May, import prices fell 1.5 percent after decreasing 0.3 percent in April. The report came on the heels of data on Wednesday showing consumer prices remained tame in May.

Import prices exclude duties. In May, prices for imported fuels and lubricants declined 1.0 percent after rising 1.7 percent in the prior

month. Imported food prices dropped 0.8% last month after surging 2.7 percent in April.

Excluding fuels and food, import prices slipped 0.2 percent in May after falling 0.3 percent in the prior month. So-called core import prices decreased 1.5 percent in the 12 months through May. Though the dollar has weakened a bit this year, its gains last year against the currencies of the United States' main trading partners continue to depress core import prices.—Reuters

Business

Regulated futures boom as investors seek a safer ride

LONDON: When bitcoin was born it was a symbol of counterculture, a rebel currency with near-anonymity and a lack of regulation. A decade later, there are growing signs it's entering the establishment its creators sought to subvert. As the cryptocurrency has surged in value bigger investors, from trading firms to hedge funds, have increasingly turned to exchanges regulated in traditional financial centers. They are buying bitcoin futures to gain exposure to the asset while avoiding the hacks and heists that plague the industry.

The crypto market, associated by many with the dark web, money laundering and the Wild West, is beginning to be discussed by financiers in the same breath as derivatives, hedging instruments and compliance. Investors ploughed record levels of money into bitcoin futures at regulated exchanges in the United States and Britain last month, hungry for a piece of the action but seeking the kind of protection that will satisfy their compliance officers.

Between March and May, bitcoin more than doubled in price, an ascent peppered by double-digit price swings reminiscent of its 2017 bubble, which was driven by smaller retail investors. During that period, Chicago-based CME Group Inc's average daily volumes of futures contracts climbed over seven-fold to a record \$508 million in May. The number of open interest contracts - those that haven't been settled - also hit a record.

CME said bitcoin's price gains, and the subsequent increase in volatility, attracted new investors seeking to hedge risk. Crypto Facilities, a London-registered platform bought this year for over \$100 million by major US cryptocurrency exchange Kraken, said bitcoin futures daily trading volumes jumped over three-fold from March to a record \$84 million in May.

In a sign of the growing mainstream market, the owner of the New York Stock Exchange, Intercontinental Exchange Inc (ICE), plans to offer bitcoin futures in the coming months through a

new crypto-trading platform, Bakkt. "It's logical they (institutional investors) would want to be moving in this direction, especially considering their size and how much more there is at stake," said Joel Kruger, currency strategist at LMAX Exchange Group.

Hedging instrument

Futures - financial contracts that lock buyers and sellers into trading an asset at a set date and price - are seen as key components of any mature market, as they boost market liquidity and allow investors to bet on the direction of prices. "It's a useful hedging instrument," said Daniel Matuszewski, head of trading at Goldman Sachs-backed crypto firm Circle. "Futures are much easier to trade, much easier to use for hedging, much easier to get leverage on." Playing out in the spiking demand is the emergence of a twin-track global bitcoin futures market - on "onshore" exchanges like CME and "offshore" exchanges, which are more lightly regulated and still command the bulk of the multi-billion-dollar daily market.

Onshore exchanges - those regulated in established financial centers - are usually subject to strict checks on governance, technology and client vetting. They demand a high degree of transparency. Offshore platforms, in contrast, are typically registered in jurisdictions with less onerous rules. They tend to accept business from investors who can sign up with few checks on their identity or the provenance of their funds.

Larger investors, bound by strict compliance rules, are heading to regulated platforms in financial hubs like CME, according to industry players. Traders with more tolerance for risk - including retail investors from north Asia and companies earning money in cryptocurrency, from miners to gaming firms - use of offshore exchanges. "Offshore exchanges aren't really exchanges - they are more like private markets," said Vladimir



SEOUL: An electric board showing exchange rate between South Korean Won and Bitcoin at a cryptocurrencies exchange in Seoul.—Reuters

Jelisavcic of trading firm Cherokee Acquisition in New York.

Stars have aligned

Offshore exchanges have offered bitcoin futures since as early as 2011. One of the biggest, Seychelles-registered BitMEX, said it now accounts for over 65% of global cryptocurrency derivatives trading. Trading volumes were \$4.3 billion in May, it said. BitMEX CEO Arthur Hayes said, however, that larger investors were being increasingly drawn to onshore exchanges like CME. "It's the perfect product (for bigger investors) - it's US-dollar based, they never have to touch actual bitcoin, it's financially settled," he said. The launch by CME and rival Cboe Global Markets in December 2017 marked the first time mainstream exchanges offered cryptocurrency derivatives. They initially faced tepid

demand. Cboe said in March, when bitcoin languished below \$4,000, that it planned to discontinue its futures, with the final contracts expiring this month. For their part, CME's futures have typically seen thin liquidity and high barriers to entry for smaller investors, said Ricky Li of crypto trader Altonomy in New York.

The growing gap in the market for futures from onshore exchanges is stimulating growing competition and attracting new entrants, such as ICE. Sui Chung, head of cryptocurrency pricing products at Crypto Facilities, said compliance-wary institutional investors had been assessing the various futures products offered by regulated exchanges for some time, as they awaited a spike in prices to allow them to enter the market. "This is the first time those stars have aligned," he said.—Reuters

VW says cooperation talks with Ford 'close to completion'

FRANKFURT AM MAIN: Car giant Volkswagen's talks on co-operation with US-based Ford concerning electric vehicles and automated driving are "close to completion", the German company's chief executive Herbert Diess said yesterday. The two manufacturers said in January that they would collaborate on vans and pickup trucks, without ruling out building up their alliance in other areas.

"Talks on cooperation with Ford on (electric vehicle platform) MEB and automated driving are going well and are close to completion," Diess told a meeting of almost 500 Volkswagen managers in Wolfsburg. In March, Diess said Ford could be granted a license to use VW's Modular Electric Toolkit "MEB" platform—the technical underpinnings of all the future electric cars planned by the German giant.

In exchange, Ford could offer its Argo AI au-

tomated driving technology to VW, which this week announced the end of its partnership with American self-driving tech startup Aurora. According to press reports, Ford and Volkswagen could announce that the German company is taking a stake in Argo AI in the coming weeks. "The Ford partnership is of paramount geostrategic importance for the company," Diess said yesterday.

"Without a strong engagement in the USA, we risk finding ourselves cornered in global trade conflicts" as "today we are a company very strongly linked to China," he added. Manufacturers are increasingly banding together to foot the massive investments required to develop next-generation cars. Mercedes-Benz maker Daimler and BMW—who have been fierce rivals for years—are working together on automated driving, while BMW is developing electric motors with Jaguar Land Rover.—AFP

Trump-bashing exhibit gets booted from China tech show

SHANGHAI: A Shanghai tech fair exhibit that allowed visitors to clobber a bobble-head likeness of Donald Trump has been shut down for encouraging the "violent disrespect" of a public figure, organizers said yesterday. The kiosk at this week's Consumer Electronics Show Asia (CES Asia) was set up by Japanese tech firm Soliton Systems as a "stress-relief" station. Visitors were given a hammer to smash a life-sized likeness of the US president, who has angered many Chinese by launching a tariff war with China.

The US Consumer Technology Association (CTA) — which stages the show each year—told AFP it issued a "warning" to Soliton Systems on Tuesday. A curtain was seen drawn across the display site on Thursday, and the Trump likenesses had been removed. The as-

sociation told AFP that exhibitors sign contracts making clear that displays cannot be "offensive". "We will not tolerate violent disrespect of any public figure." Soliton Systems officials could not immediately be reached for comment.

The three-day trade show opened on Tuesday under the shadow of the escalating trade war. China and the United States have hit each other with steep tariffs on more than \$360 billion in bilateral trade, rattling financial markets and business confidence. Technology is a key battleground, with the United States pressing governments across the world to drop Chinese telecom giant Huawei from their 5G network development plans, saying it could be used by Beijing for espionage. Huawei denies the charge.—AFP

Sports

Chris Froome's surgery successful, back racing in six months: Surgeon

Froome was airlifted to hospital in Saint Etienne for emergency surgery

SAINT-ETIENNE: Four-time Tour de France winner Chris Froome has undergone a successful four-hour operation following a devastating crash and could be back racing in six months, his surgeon said yesterday.

Froome was airlifted to hospital in Saint Etienne for emergency surgery after slamming into a wall at high speed during practice on Wednesday ahead of the fourth stage of the Criterium du Dauphine race in central France.

The force of the impact fractured his pelvis, right femur, and left him with broken ribs and a broken right elbow. "The operation was long, almost four hours, but it went very, very well," said Remi Philippot, chief surgeon for sports trauma at Saint-Etienne hospital. He said the good news was that the high-impact crash had caused no neurological or head trauma and he expected Froome would be back in the saddle in six months. "The impact was at around 50 km/h, with very little body protection, causing a high-energy impact," said Philippot, who spoke to Froome yesterday morning for one hour. "Chris Froome has the morale of a winner and is very rapidly bouncing back.

"He started asking immediately when he could get back on his bike. He should be back racing in about six months," said Philippot. He personally operated on the compound fracture to the femur while Giorgio Gesta, an orthopaedic surgeon and former Italian hockey international, worked on fractures to the right elbow.

Philippot said the 34-year-old Briton would remain in intensive care for 48 hours before being authorised to move to a unit specialising in reha-

bilitation. Froome's Ineos team principal Dave Brailsford said his star rider had the mental force needed in the battle for recovery that lay ahead. "One of the things which sets Chris apart is his mental strength and resilience - and we will support him totally in his recovery, help him to recalibrate and assist him in pursuing his future goals and ambitions." The team will nevertheless be without their key rider for the Tour de France next month after the horror crash which happened on a downhill stretch of road in the Loire region.

Froome was riding with Dutch teammate Wout Poels when he lost control of his bike and slammed into the wall of a house at full speed. "We have had a look at his data, he went from 54km/h to a dead stop," Brailsford said.

The accident happened in the village of Saint-Andre d'Apchon. Froome had taken his hands off the handlebars in order to blow his nose "and the wind's taken his front wheel and he's hit a wall," Brailsford added.

Following treatment at the scene Froome was airlifted to intensive care at Saint-Etienne hospital. Froome's wife Michelle Cound tweeted that she was on her way to join him there and asked fans to keep the rider "in your thoughts." Brailsford said Froome had worked "incredibly hard to get in fantastic shape and had been on track for the Tour" which starts on July 6 from Brussels. The Criterium du Dauphine represents a full dress rehearsal and Froome was doing well, in eighth spot before the crash.

Tour de France director Christian Prudhomme said Froome's absence was a blow to the 2019 edition of cycling's biggest stage race. "The



SAINT-ETIENNE: Team Ineos rider Great Britain's Christopher Froome (R) rides during the second stage of the 71st edition of the Criterium du Dauphine cycling race, 180 km between Mauriac and Craponne-sur-Arzon on June 10, 2019. — AFP

Tour de France won't be the same without him. Chris Froome has been the central character at the Tour since 2013," he said.

Froome had started the year in low-key form. He trailed in 91st in the Tour of Colombia, 94th at the Tour of Catalonia, 11th in the Tour of the Alps and 13th at the Tour de Yorkshire.

The Kenyan-born Froome, who at his

best combines top level time-trialling skills with a fearsome prowess for climbing, first won the Tour in 2013 with Team Sky. He went on to win the Tour de France again in 2015, 2016 and 2017. He also won the 2017 Vuelta a Espana and the 2018 Giro d'Italia, making him the greatest Grand Tour rider of his generation. — AFP

Tonga offer sacked Folau WCup lifeline

SYDNEY: Tonga coach Toutai Kefu wants sacked Wallaby Israel Folau to play for the Pacific island nation at the 2023 World Cup and has been in touch about switching allegiances, a report said yesterday. The devoutly Christian fullback was fired by Rugby Australia last month for posting homophobic comments on social media in a case that sparked debate about religious expression.

Folau, who is of Tongan heritage, has launched legal action through Australia's employment watchdog the Fair Work Commission. The 30-year-old had been due to play a key role for the Wallabies at this year's World Cup in Japan, but that dream is now over.

Given he has already represented Australia, Folau cannot switch immediately and play for another country. But under a loophole in World Rugby regulations, he could apply to play for Tonga's national side if he sits out three years of international rugby and then represents Tonga at Sevens in an Olympic qualifying event.

Kefu, a former Wallabies No.8, is keen to have Folau on board and while yet to speak personally



Israel Folau

with the 30-year-old, suggested contact had been made with his team. "We'd love to have him... the next World Cup he'd be available for us hopefully," he told the newspaper.

"It's a long time away, so we'll let the dust settle

a bit after his most recent issues. We don't even know if he's going to play again. "He hasn't indicated where he is going, so we'll wait until the dust settles and then look at those options." Another enticement is that Folau's brother John, who was on the books of Super Rugby club NSW Waratahs but quit in solidarity with his sibling, is expected to be named in the Tonga squad for the upcoming Pacific Nations Cup (PNC).

This could open the door to him playing for the Pacific nation at the Japan World Cup and beyond. "We're going to look at him and even may take him to the PNC because we've got some holes in our squad, especially out wide in the backs. There's a good chance he will be part of that squad," Kefu said. He added that "then we can see whether he is good enough to be part of that Rugby World Cup squad". — AFP

Tanak looking to keep pressure on Ogier in Sardinia

ALGHERO: Estonia's Ott Tanak returns to the scene of his first podium and world championship win at the Rally of Italy on Sardinia this weekend with the Toyota driver looking to notch up a third straight win this season to keep the pressure on world champion Sebastien Ogier.

The 31-year-old Tanak claimed his first podium on the Mediterranean island back in 2012 and his first world rally championship win in Sardinia five years later. After a complicated start to the season Tanak, third overall in the past two seasons, has gotten "back in the fight" with wins in the last two rallies in Chile and Portugal.

Three wins from seven races have made up for his disappointing sixth place in Corsica after a puncture and eighth in Argentina following mechanical problems. But the Estonian has now moved to within two points of six-time world champion Ogier.

At mid-season, it's a tight battle between the top three with Citroen's Ogier leading with 142 points, two ahead of Tanak with Belgian Thierry Neuville third ten points adrift of the leader.

Tanak wants to keep the momentum going but knows that both he and his Finnish teammate Jari-Matti Latvala suffered setbacks on the island last year.

Ogier, 35, will open the road on Friday, in a race he won three consecutive times from 2013-2015 while driving for Volkswagen. "To start first in Sardinia is almost like putting a cross from the outset on victory," lamented the Frenchman.

"So I'm expecting a difficult weekend," continued Ogier who nevertheless believes his Citroen has "progressed recently" and he "had good feelings in Portugal" in early June.

Last year's Sardinia winner Neuville remains optimistic, after wins in Corsica and Argentina, and second place in Portugal. "Sardinia is one of my favourite events," said the Belgian, "and my driving style and note-taking system are perfect". "Nicolas (Gilsoul, his co-driver) and I have always felt comfortable and we have had great success in the past," added the two-time winner. The 19 special stages-of which 310.52km are timed-will be raced in the north around the Alghero national park.

On the menu, narrow dirt roads lined with stones and shrubs that severely punish mistakes. Ruts that get deeper with each passage and the searing temperatures will further complicate the task for competitors. After a short special on an old motocross track Thursday night, driver will get down to business on Friday with two passages on four special stages. — AFP

Sports

England's Wood a doubt for West Indies World Cup clash

SOUTHAMPTON: England fast bowler Mark Wood could miss the World Cup match against the West Indies in Southampton today following a recurrence of his longstanding ankle problems. Wood suffered discomfort in his left ankle after England's win over Bangladesh in Cardiff on Saturday, when the Durham quick recorded the fastest delivery of the tournament so far at 95.6 mph (153.9 kmh).

The 29-year-old, who revived his England career with some fiery spells during this year's tour of the West Indies, has undergone three major operations on his ankle. He experienced further problems on the eve of the World Cup, pulling out of a warm-up game against Australia.

England captain Eoin Morgan said Wood's latest injury problem did not mean he was facing the end of his World Cup.

"It's nothing too serious, he just pulled up a little bit sore from the game in Cardiff—he's the only concern at the moment," Morgan said yesterday. "Mark is going to have a fitness test in

the morning. If it is still sore, we probably won't take a risk."

Morgan said all teams at the World Cup would need to look after their quicks in particular. "It's part of the plan, because they are fast bowlers. It will happen to other bowlers throughout the tournament," he said.

"We're well aware of that. We will have to manage them as we would normally, as we do with Chris Woakes if there's back-to-back games," Morgan added. "It's not a problem, it's just what happens."

Wood's place could go to Moeen Ali, who did not play against Bangladesh, should England again decide to play a second specialist spinner alongside leg-break bowler Adil Rashid. Moeen's wife gave birth to a daughter on Wednesday but the off-spinner was back with the England squad yesterday.

Morgan confirmed that the big-hitting Jos Buttler had been cleared to play, and keep wicket, after sitting out the Bangladesh innings with a right hip problem. — AFP



SOUTHAMPTON: England's Chris Woakes (R) throws a ball as a support staff member looks on during a training session at the Rose Bowl in Southampton, southern England yesterday, ahead of their 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match against West Indies. — AFP

Australia 'need to learn lessons' from Pakistan World Cup fightback

TAUNTON: Australia fast bowler Pat Cummins said Pakistan's late rally with the bat was a timely warning for the defending champions even though his side returned to winning ways at the World Cup. Aaron Finch's side won by 41 runs at Taunton on Wednesday as they recorded their third win of the campaign in England and Wales following their defeat to India. Australia reduced Pakistan to 200-7 chasing a target of 308, with Cummins taking an economical 3-33 from his 10 overs.

But an eighth-wicket stand of 64 between Pakistan captain Sarfaraz Ahmed and Wahab Riaz, who hit a rapid 45, provided Australia with some worrying moments before a late collapse saw the final three wickets fall for just two runs.

"It goes to show that everyone can bat these days," said Cummins. "It was a bit closer than we would have liked, so it was good to get those couple of wickets and finish it off."

"We gave them a bit too much width and suddenly they were back in the game," the 26-year-old added. "It's a good lesson to learn." New South Wales quick Cummins struck early against Pakistan, removing Fakhar Zaman, and then made another important breakthrough when he had Imam-ul-Haq caught behind for 53.

But what pleases the fast bowler most about his current form in one-day internationals is the increasing number of dot ball deliveries off which no runs are scored—that he is sending down.

"That's the big improvement in my game in the last couple of years, the ability to hold a length and make it difficult to get runs," Cummins explained.

"If you give away easy singles then 300 becomes quite an achievable score. Cutting out the singles is huge, it means if you give away a boundary it might not be that big over of 10 or 11, it may just be a five or a six."

David Warner had earlier scored his first international century since completing a year-long ban for his part in a ball-tampering scandal. Warner had been uncharacteristically sluggish in scoring 56 off 84 balls against India at the Oval but he was back to his fluent best against Pakistan, facing just 111 balls in total. — AFP

Cricket chiefs deny WCup TV 'gagging' order

NOTTINGHAM: International cricket chiefs say they do not want to gag commentators after West Indies great Michael Holding hit out at "censorship" following on-air comments that were critical of the standard of umpiring at the World Cup.

The former pace bowler, a high-profile TV analyst, labelled the officiating in the match between West Indies and Australia at Trent Bridge on June 6, as "atrocious". Holding criticised umpires Ruchira Palliyaguruge and Chris Gaffaney in the group game in Nottingham for caving in to pressure created by constant appealing by the Australians, who won the match by 15 runs.

Chris Gayle was out to what should technically have been a free hit after Mitchell Starc overstepped the crease on the previous ball, which was not spotted by the umpire. West Indies skipper Jason Holder was also at the receiving end of an umpiring blunder after being adjudged lbw off Adam Zampa but replays suggested the ball had pitched outside leg stump. The decision was overturned on review.

According to the Times of India, Huw Bevan, the production head for the International Cricket Council's (ICC's) rights partner Sunset and Vine, wrote an email to Holding on June 7. "Inherently in live television, there are occasions when on-field decisions cause reason for discussion or debate, but as ICC TV host broadcasters, our (Sunset & Vine) duty is not to judge or highlight mistakes," he said.

Bevan added: "It's critical for us that we should never amplify umpires' mistakes by giving airtime to those incidents nor show the umpires in bad light. We should also be very careful not to look to create controversy around an event or match at any time."

But Holding wrote a strong reply to the ICC, the Times of India reported. "Commentators are being more and more compromised by controlling organisations to the point of censorship," he said.

"If those umpires yesterday were FIFA officials, they would have been told to pack their bags and head home," he added. "They would not have been given another World Cup game to officiate. "As a former cricketer, I think cricket should be held to a higher standard. Is the objective to protect the umpires even when they do a bad job?"

"I am sorry, but I am not going to be part of that," he said. "Please let me know if I should be heading back to my home in Newmarket instead of heading to Cardiff because I don't agree with what is being suggested here and happy not being part of it." — AFP

Rain washes out India-New Zealand World Cup match

NOTTINGHAM: India and New Zealand were awarded a point each after persistent rain in Nottingham forced the abandonment of their match on Thursday—the fourth no result of this World Cup so far.

After several inspections the umpires finally called the game at Trent Bridge off at 3:00 pm (1400 GMT). The tournament in England and Wales started in dry conditions but three of the past four matches have been no results.

New Zealand top the table with seven points after three wins and a no result while India are third on five points, with two wins and one point from Thursday's washout.

"Obviously you turn up hoping to compete for two points but we've been here for four days and not seen any sun so it's no surprise," said New Zealand captain Kane Williamson.

"They will get some sun at some point but not on our trip here. With training indoors you just try and get what you need out of it. It's not ideal but having a bit of time off is also important in these competitions."

He added: "We have a break now, which is interesting at this point in the tournament but it's a good chance for guys to freshen up and look forward to our next challenge."

Meanwhile India captain Virat Kohli said: "The outfield was not suitable for play, especially as it's so early in the tournament you don't want an injury at this stage. "It's unfortunate, you cannot control the weather but a point isn't bad at this stage given we already have two wins," the star batsman insisted.

The International Cricket Council has faced criticism over the lack of reserve days in the group stage but said having them for every match would be "extremely complex". — AFP

Sports

Brewers whiff 24 times, still beat Astros in 14th

Marlins slam Cardinals, end six-game skid

HOUSTON: Mike Moustakas slugged the Brewers' fourth home run of the night with one out in the 14th inning, a two-run shot that led Milwaukee to a 6-3 win over the host Houston Astros on Wednesday. Milwaukee earned a split of the two-game interleague series by overcoming a dominant effort from the Astros' pitchers, who recorded a club-record 24 strikeouts.

The Brewers' Christian Yelich singled to right to lead off the 14th, and Moustakas went deep off Cionel Perez (1-1) for his 21st homer to snap a 3-3 tie. Yasmani Grandal then doubled and scored on Jesus Aguilar's single. Before Jake Marisnick stroked a one-out single in the bottom of the 13th, the Astros went eight innings without recording a hit. Adrian Houser (2-1), the Brewers' sixth pitcher, earned the win with two shutout innings.

BRAVES 8, PIRATES 7 (11 INNINGS)

Ozzie Albies drove in the winning run on an 11th-inning double, giving host Atlanta a victory over Pittsburgh. Austin Riley, who was hit by a pitch to lead off the inning, came all the way around to score from first base on Albies' double. Michael Feliz (2-3) took the loss, giving up the one run in one-plus inning. Jacob Webb (4-0) pitched two innings of scoreless relief to earn the win. The victory was the sixth straight for Atlanta. Pittsburgh has lost six in a row.

MARINERS 9, TWINS 6 (10 INNINGS)

Daniel Vogelbach went 4-for-5 with a homer, and Seattle took advantage of three 10th-inning Minnesota errors to score three unearned runs and pull out a victory in Minneapolis. Seattle's Shed Long hit his first major league home run, a three-run drive to cap a five-run eighth inning. Mallex Smith had three hits, including two doubles, for the Mariners, who won for just the ninth time in their past 32 games. Anthony Bass (1-1) picked up the win in relief despite squandering a ninth-inning lead by serving up a two-run homer by Byron Buxton. Roenis Elias notched his sixth save with a scoreless 10th inning.

MARLINS 9, CARDINALS 0

Garrett Cooper hit a grand slam and fell a double short of the cycle, and Jordan Yamamoto pitched seven scoreless innings to win his major league debut as host Miami defeated St. Louis. The Marlins won the finale of a three-game series, snapping a six-game losing streak in which they totaled just 10 runs. Cooper went 3-for-5 with four RBIs and two runs. It was the second career grand slam for Cooper, who hit one May 23 against the Detroit Tigers.

DIAMONDBACKS 2, PHILLIES 0

Merrill Kelly threw 7 2/3 scoreless innings to lift visiting Arizona past Philadelphia to earn the series win. Kelly (7-6) allowed three hits and no runs, struck out five and walked none while throwing 93 pitches, 67 for strikes. Greg Holland earned his 10th save in 11 opportunities and the 199th of his career with a scoreless ninth.

TIGERS 3, ROYALS 2

Brandon Dixon's eighth-inning sacrifice fly

scored the go-ahead run, and Detroit emerged with a victory over host Kansas City. Jorge Soler, who drove in both of the Royals' runs, flied out to center to end the game with the tying run on base. Nick Ramirez (3-0) pitched two scoreless innings to pick up the victory. Shane Greene handled the ninth for his 20th save in 21 chances.

RED SOX 4, RANGERS 3

Mookie Betts worked a walk-off base-on-balls to carry Boston to a win over visiting Texas. Christian Vazquez opened the ninth with a ground-rule double, and Jackie Bradley Jr.'s single to shallow right moved pinch runner Marco Hernandez to third. After a four-pitch walk to Michael Chavis, Betts coaxed a five-pitch walk off reliever Jesse Chavez (2-2), breaking the reliever's 22 2/3-inning scoreless streak. Andrew Benintendi finished 3-for-4 with two doubles, a triple and two RBIs to help the Red Sox snap their three-game losing streak and win for just the second time in seven games on the current homestand.

BLUE JAYS 8, ORIOLES 6

Rowdy Tellez hit a grand slam during a six-run fifth inning as visiting Toronto defeated Baltimore. Derek Law opened for the Blue Jays and threw a scoreless inning before Edwin Jackson (1-4) earned the victory with five solid innings. Jackson gave up two runs on four hits, striking out two and walking two. Vladimir Guerrero Jr. had three hits for Toronto, and four of his teammates had two hits apiece. Trey Mancini homered among his two hits for the Orioles.

CUBS 10, ROCKIES 1

Kyle Schwarber and Javier Baez homered, Cole Hamels pitched seven shutout innings, and Chicago beat Colorado in Denver. Rockies third baseman Nolan Arenado left the game with a left forearm contusion after being hit by a pitch from Hamels in the third inning. Hamels (6-2), who fanned nine, also singled twice and drove in two runs, and Carlos Gonzalez had two hits against his former team. The Cubs had lost five straight road games.

REDS 7, INDIANS 2

Rookie Nick Senzel and Joey Votto homered to open the game as visiting Cincinnati posted a victory over Cleveland to salvage a split of their two-game interleague series. The back-to-back homers to start the game marked the first time Cincinnati accomplished the feat since Alex Ochoa and Barry Larkin went deep at St. Louis on June 26, 2001.

Eugenio Suarez and Curt Casali homered to lead off the sixth and seventh innings, respectively, and Jose Iglesias ripped a two-run double in the eighth for the Reds, who saw eight of their nine hits go for extra bases (four homers, four doubles).

ATHLETICS 6, RAYS 2

Ramon Laureano broke an eighth-inning tie with his first career grand slam, giving Oakland a victory over Tampa Bay in the finale of a three-game series in St. Petersburg, Fla. Brett



HOUSTON: Michael Brantley #23 of the Houston Astros singles in the first inning against the Milwaukee Brewers at Minute Maid Park in Houston, Texas. — AFP

Anderson pitched into the seventh inning, and three A's relievers combined for 2 2/3 scoreless innings, allowing Oakland to take two games in the series despite dropping the opener 6-2 on Monday. Liam Hendriks (3-0), who stranded the bases loaded after Tampa Bay scored twice in the seventh, was credited with the win after recording two outs.

GIANTS 4, PADRES 2

San Francisco took advantage of three errors

to score three runs, and Kevin Pillar added a home run in a victory over visiting San Diego that completed a two-game sweep. Shaun Anderson (2-1) won for the second time in his past three starts, limiting the Padres to two runs and four hits in six innings.

Anderson got the better of Joey Lucchesi (5-4), who pitched well in the second San Francisco Bay Area homecoming of his career but was victimized by a shaky defense. He gave up three runs (two earned) in six innings. — Reuters

Fury, Schwarz all smiles ahead of Vegas showdown

LAS VEGAS: Tyson Fury joked his way through a light-hearted showdown with Germany's Tom Schwarz on Wednesday as the two heavyweights prepare to face off in Las Vegas this weekend.

British star Fury, who thrust himself back into the heavyweight reckoning with a thrilling draw against WBC champion Deontay Wilder last December, was all smiles as he wisecracked and laughed with heavy underdog Schwarz.

"We're here to fight. Tom's trained hard, I've trained hard," said Fury. "I'm really looking forward to getting in there and kicking some ass," added Fury, who faces Schwarz at the MGM Grand on Saturday.

Fury (27-0-1, 19 KOs) is fighting for the first time since inking a lucrative deal with US broadcaster ESPN, worth a reported \$103 million for five bouts.

The deal is expected to encompass a rematch with Wilder, who has already stated he plans to face Fury again in early 2020. Fury meanwhile, barechested under a flamboyant suit, told reporters Wednesday he was reveling in the spotlight ahead of his Las Vegas debut. "I'm very chilled," Fury said. "The crowd has warmed to me, it's been welcoming, and all different types of people from all over the world are in Vegas. I've been surprised really and it's been humbling."

"It's a great experience to be in the MGM Grand, Las Vegas, where all the big fights happen, seeing your face up on all the movie screens and posters. "It's what I was born to do. I believe the fight with Wilder only helped with my profile in the US."

Schwarz meanwhile took a back seat, happy to joke along as Fury, the self-styled "Gypsy King", held court. — AFP

Sports

Blues dump Bruins to win Stanley Cup after agonizing 52-year wait

BOSTON: The St. Louis Blues completed a most improbable journey and wiped out decades of misery by beating the Boston Bruins on Wednesday to capture their first Stanley Cup and set off a celebration that was 52 years in the making.

The Blues defeated host Bruins 4-1 to clinch the best-of-seven series 4-3 and end the longest wait in National Hockey League history for a team to win their first championship. The victory capped a remarkable turnaround for the Blues considering they were sitting dead last in early January.

"What an unbelievable year," said Blues captain Alex Pietrangolo. "I don't even know what to say. Where we were to where we are now... I tell you what, I've never been more proud to wear this jersey with this group of guys. It's unbelievable." The championship was a long-awaited one for the Blues franchise, which reached the Stanley Cup Final in each of their first three years of existence from 1968-70 but were swept each time, including by the Bruins in 1970.

The 1970 loss tortured the Blues franchise for decades as it produced one of the most iconic photos in hockey history - that of Bobby Orr flying through the air with his arms raised in victory after scoring the Cup-clinching goal in overtime.

Since that defeat, the Blues have made the playoffs in all but nine seasons and despite having had some solid teams during that stretch had, until this year, never been able to return to the Stanley Cup Final. But they made the most of their latest chance and in the winner-take-all

Game Seven got all the scoring they would need in a late three-minute span of the first period while rookie goalie Jordan Binnington was sensational in the win.

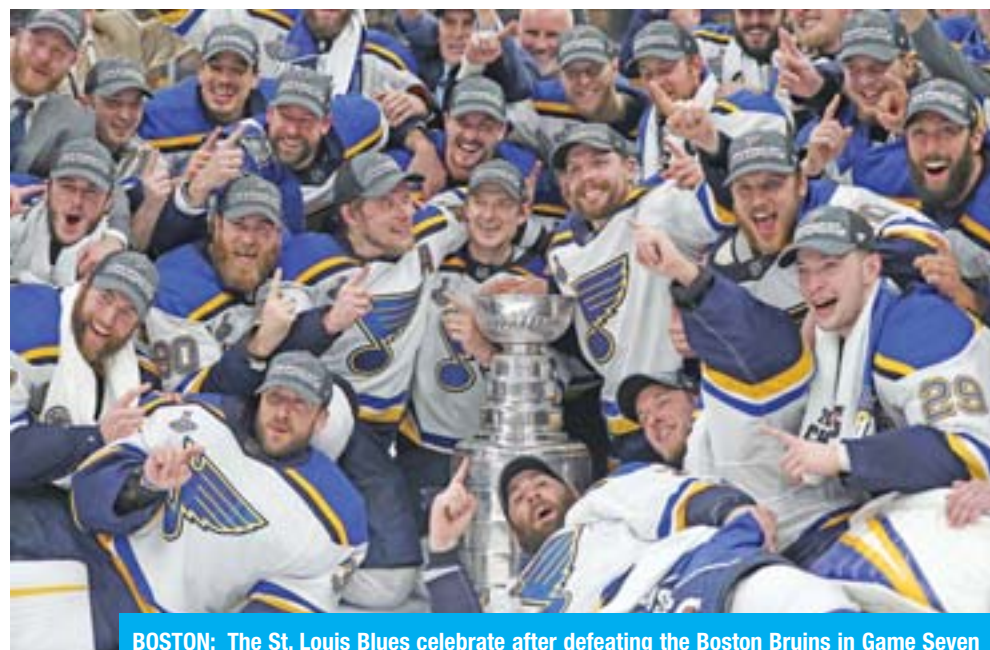
Blues forward Ryan O'Reilly, who set a franchise record with the most points in one playoff year with 23, was awarded the Conn Smythe Trophy as the most valuable player of the playoffs. "I stopped trying to worry about the outcome and just give it everything I had," said O'Reilly, who scored his team's opening goal in the last four games of the Stanley Cup Final.

"I was getting bounces. It was amazing, my linemates played great, I thought we created every night. It was just amazing."

The Bruins, who had never before hosted a Game Seven of a Stanley Cup Final, made a solid start and created all sorts of pressure but it was the Blues who jumped out to an early 2-0 lead despite being outshot 12-4 in the opening frame.

O'Reilly opened the scoring with about three minutes left in the period when he cleverly re-directed a shot from the point that went right through Boston goalie Tuukka Rask's legs. Pietrangolo added another with eight seconds left in the period when he skated in and used a nifty backhand deke to beat Rask and silence the stunned home crowd. St. Louis nearly added a third midway through the second period but Zdeno Chara managed to swat the puck away from the goal line after a shot from Brayden Schenn went off the crossbar and Rask's shoulder before dropping in the crease.

Schenn did find the net in the third period



BOSTON: The St. Louis Blues celebrate after defeating the Boston Bruins in Game Seven to win the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Final at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

when he fired a puck off the post and past Rask with under nine minutes to play before Zach Sanford put the game out of reach with his first of the playoffs with under five minutes to play. Boston broke Binnington's shutout bid when Matt Grzelecyk found the net with just over two minutes to play but it was too little, too late as

the Blues goalie went on to set a rookie record with his 16th playoff win. "It's an empty feeling," said Bruins head coach Bruce Cassidy. "It's a long year. Someone had to win and someone had to lose and we came out on the wrong side of it. "It's not the way you picture it, it's as simple as that." — Reuters

Warriors set for emotional NBA Finals showdown with Raptors

OAKLAND: Playing for injured star Kevin Durant in a farewell to the arena when they became a dynasty, the Golden State Warriors are set for an emotional NBA Finals showdown against Toronto. The Raptors own a 3-2 lead in the best-of-seven championship series despite a 106-105 loss Monday in which Durant ruptured his right Achilles tendon in his first game back after missing a month with a right calf injury.

The Warriors, seeking their third consecutive NBA crown and fourth in five seasons, take inspiration from Durant into their final game at Oakland's Oracle Arena before moving to a new \$1 billion home next season in San Francisco.

"To protect our home court, feed off our crowd's energy, play for K and try to keep our season alive, there are a lot of things that you can tap into for energy," Warriors guard Stephen Curry said. "We'll be ready." Fellow 3-point sharpshooter Klay Thompson says Golden State's expects historic support from fans.

"We're just thinking about enjoying this last show at Oracle," Thompson said. "I expect our fans to be the loudest they've ever been, especially in the name of Kevin and bringing his type of spirit to the fight and the competitiveness." "We deserve it, but more importantly Kevin does for what he gave this team, this or-

ganization. There wouldn't be (championship) banners if it wasn't for his presence. So we expect our crowd to be loud for him."

Durant, Most Valuable Player of the past two NBA Finals, underwent surgery Wednesday before the Warriors conducted their final arena practice.

"It's going to be an epic night for sure," Warriors center DeMarcus Cousins said. "Going to be a lot of emotions and a lot of passion in the building."

"We just got to find a way to grind through it and make something happen. No matter what type of adversity hits this team we find a way to fight through."

The Warriors would force a seventh game in Toronto on Sunday if they can win one for Durant.

"That definitely comes into play," Warriors forward Draymond Green said. "We've all seen his love for the game. Those 11 minutes he played were enough to give us the spark we needed. So now we want to continue to try to build on that."

History still favors the Raptors as only once in 34 attempts has a team rallied from 3-1 down to win the NBA Finals, that coming in 2016 when LeBron James led Cleveland back to a title against the Warriors.

And road teams are 4-1 so far in the series, the Raptors having taken two earlier at Golden State.

The Warriors must shut down Kawhi Leonard but contain a balanced attack that produced six double-digit scorers in game five.

"Our guys competed like crazy. That's the main thing," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said. "Toronto is tough to guard because they have got a lot of passers and a lot of shooters and they put you in some difficult spots. "But everybody who came in was prepared to play and they were flying around and rotating. We were able to pull it out. So we know that's what it's going to take here as well." — AFP

Tears as badminton star Lee quits after cancer battle

PUTRAJAYA: Cancer-hit badminton star Lee Chong Wei announced his retirement yesterday, ending a brilliant career in which he collected a swathe of honours but never won a world or Olympic title. Lee, who spent a total of 348 weeks as world number one but lost six world and Olympic finals, wept as he called it quits months after fighting off nose cancer.

"My decision to retire is a heavy one. I really love this sport. But it is a demanding sport. I thank all Malaysians for the past 19 years," Lee, 36, told a news conference. Lee, a father of two, was diagnosed with early-stage nose cancer last year and after intensive treatment in Taiwan he said he was keen to play again.

But he hasn't trained since April and after missing a series of self-imposed deadlines to return to competition, his hopes of being eligible for next year's Tokyo Olympics were remote. The three-time Olympic silver medallist said he now wanted to rest and spend time with his family, and even take his wife on a "honeymoon", a trip that has been delayed since their marriage in 2012. He finishes his career with 705 wins and 69 titles, including five Commonwealth Games gold medals,

four All England victories and a record 47 Superseries triumphs. Lee's unsuccessful attempts to capture Malaysia's first ever Olympic gold medal, reaching three consecutive finals, were followed avidly by his fans, as was his long-running rivalry with Chinese superstar Lin Dan. His last shot at the Olympic title at Rio 2016 ended in crushing disappointment when the Malaysian lost out to China's Chen Long in a nail-biting final. Lin posted to his four million followers on China's Twitter-like Weibo: "I will be alone on the (badminton) court and no one will accompany me."

He also posted a link to a Chinese ballad called "Friends Don't Cry". "Lin Dan and myself are rivals in the court but outside the court, we are close friends," Lee said when asked about their rivalry. "I hope Lin Dan will play in the Tokyo Olympics. But he faces challenges from younger players." Cancer proved the career-ending blow but it wasn't the only low for Lee, who was banned after testing positive for a banned anti-inflammatory at the 2014 world championships. The long-time former world number one returned to the sport in 2015, after authorities accepted he took the drug inadvertently. — AFP

Sports

Hosts Egypt favoured to win Africa Cup of Nations

JOHANNESBURG: Hosts Egypt are favoured not only to win Group A at the 2019 Africa Cup of Nations this June, but to go on and lift the trophy a record-extending eighth time.

They possess in serial Liverpool scorer Mohamed Salah an African superstar and can expect passionate support as they seek a first title since edging Ghana in the 2010 final.

Egypt have faced all their group rivals, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Uganda and Zimbabwe, before at the Cup of Nations, winning seven matches and losing only one.

While the hosts are poised to top the standings, there is little to choose between the other three teams with the top two finishers guaranteed round-of-16 places. Here, AFP Sport assesses the prospects of the Group A sides ahead of the June 21 tournament opener between Egypt and Zimbabwe in Cairo.

DR CONGO

The two-time champions struggled to qualify with a nervous 1-0 last-match win over modest Liberia in Kinshasa squeezing them through as runners-up beneath Zimbabwe.

An experienced squad, the Congolese are extremely unpredictable when it comes to the Cup of Nations as their last two appearances demonstrated. Outsiders in 2015, they finished third behind the Ivory Coast and Ghana in Equatorial Guinea, then made a timid last-eight exit two years ago in Gabon when more was expected of them.

Cedric Bakambu brings stealth and Yannick Bolasie and Elia Meschak pace to the attack while the defence is likely to include Arthur Masuaku from Premier League club West Ham

United. Verdict: Could be heading home after first round, or reach the quarter-finals

EGYPT

As Egypt prepare to stage the Cup of Nations a record fifth time, they can draw confidence from an outstanding record when they play host to the best African national teams.

They won in 1959, 1986 and 2006 and finished third in 1974 after coming up short in a five-goal semi-final thriller against World Cup-bound Zaire (now DR Congo). Fanatical support has always been a key factor with numerous visiting coaches complaining that the endless noise from the stands prevents their touchline instructions being heard. While Salah is the talisman, he will be surrounded by vastly experienced internationals like Tarek Hamed, a tireless midfield enforcer and often an unsung hero. Verdict: Salah, home advantage and history makes them favourites

UGANDA

After going 39 years without qualifying since finishing 1978 runners-up to hosts Ghana, Uganda will make back-to-back appearances in the Cup of Nations. They had a comfortable qualifying passage under French coach Sebastien Desabre, not losing nor conceding in five matches before a dead-rubber defeat in Tanzania. Winless in Gabon two years ago, the Cranes are banking on veteran South Africa-based goalkeeper Denis Onyango to inspire a better showing this time. "Denis is utterly dependable and his experience will hopefully rub off on the other players," says Desabre. "Our target is decent results, especially in our opener against DR Congo." Verdict: Will do well to reach knockout phase

"Goulart, Fernando and others are rumoured to be naturalised, but their procedures are relatively lagging behind and it will be difficult for them to make the (initial) qualifiers." The Italian World Cup winner Lippi returned as China coach last month, just four months after leaving following his side's exit in the quarter-finals of the Asian Cup.

The 71-year-old has long complained that, aside from Espanyol forward Wu Lei, he has few attackers at his disposal. Bringing in overseas-born players to quickly plug the gap was central to conditions laid out by Lippi for his return, the Beijing News and other Chinese media say.

"In the future it is likely that more naturalised players will appear in the national football team," said the Beijing News. The 26-year-old Yennaris, a former Arsenal reserve, was given a warm welcome by Chinese fans when he made his landmark debut in Friday's 2-0 home friendly win over the Philippines.

Unlike the trio of Brazilians, he gained citizenship through his mother, who is Chinese.

Elkeson, Goulart (of Guangzhou Evergrande) and Fernando (Chongqing Lifan) have no Chinese ancestry and would attempt to qualify under FIFA rules saying they must reside in their adopted country for five years. None of the three has represented Brazil in a competitive match, leaving them free to play for China. However, many fans have expressed deep reservations about having non-Chinese origin players representing the national team. — AFP



MADRID: File photo shows Liverpool's Egyptian forward Mohamed Salah raises the European Champion Clubs' Cup after winning the UEFA Champions League final football match between Liverpool and Tottenham Hotspur at the Wanda Metropolitano Stadium in Madrid on June 1, 2019. — AFP

ZIMBABWE

The lowest ranked of the four teams will rely heavily on stars based in South Africa as they aim to progress beyond the group stage for the first time in four attempts.

But the reliance of coach and former national team captain Sunday Chidzambwa on those operating in their neighbouring country has drawn criticism from a former star. "The coach should

have cast his net wider and found places for the best local talent," said ex-national team defender David Kutyauro of a squad lacking any home-based stars. Coaches emphasise the importance of not losing their first match in a tournament, but it is the probable back luck of Zimbabwe that they must face Egypt and Salah on opening night. Verdict: Capable of making second round for first time. — AFP

Lippi eyes Brazilian strikeforce as China pursue quick fix

SHANGHAI: Marcello Lippi's China side could soon boast an all-Brazilian attack as the ambitious country ramps up efforts to reach the World Cup for just a second time. Lippi last week gave a debut to former England youth international Nico Yennaris, the London-born midfielder making a piece of history as China's first naturalised footballer.

But China, who under football-fan President Xi Jinping have grand designs of hosting and even winning the World Cup, are not done with drafting in players from other countries. Shanghai SIPG's Brazilian striker Elkeson is expected to gain Chinese citizenship in time to play in the autumn qualifiers for the Qatar 2022 World Cup, the Beijing News said yesterday.

He could later be joined in a new-look attack by his fellow China-based Brazilians Ricardo Goulart, also a striker, and the winger Fernando, the state media publication said. "It is understood that Elkeson's naturalisation procedures are being processed and it is expected that he will be able to join the qualifiers that begin in September," Beijing News said.

Neymar rape accusations overshadow Copa America

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil should have been gearing up for another major home sporting spectacle with renewed optimism that star forward Neymar would help bring to an end a 12-year trophy drought.

But instead, the Selecao's golden boy is dominating the build-up to a tournament he will miss due to an ankle injury for all the wrong reasons. Neymar is embroiled in a rape scandal in which he has been accused of forcing himself on a model he met through social media in a hotel room in the French capital, where he plys his club trade for Paris Saint-Germain.

It's tarnished the festive atmosphere of South America's footballing showpiece with an ugly affair that shows no sign of going away, despite Najila Trindade Mendes de Souza's rapidly unraveling case. It all blew up on June 2 when Neymar published a seven-minute video on Instagram, where he had first been in contact with Trindade, revealing that he had been accused of rape. The scandal quickly snowballed

and three days later, after a senior Brazilian federation official had said he would "bet" that Neymar would pull out of the Copa, the PSG forward injured ankle ligaments in a 2-0 friendly victory over tournament invitees Qatar.

Even so, Brazil's ability to concentrate on the task at hand has been hampered by the Neymar rape soap opera. After the debacle of Brazil's 7-1 semi-final humbling at the hands of Germany in their home World Cup five years ago, and the fall out from the huge amount of money wasted on hosting both the global football showpiece and the Olympics in the space of two years, the country could have done without such a sordid affair. Coach Tite insists that Brazil are still in fine fettle ahead of the tournament, which they haven't won since 2007 when a team inspired by former Real Madrid and AC Milan forward Robinho outclassed Lionel Messi's Argentina 3-0 in the final.

Tite admitted Neymar would be missed, saying "it's a shame to not have one of the three best players in the world." "After Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo, he's comparable only to (Eden) Hazard, with one advantage: he's quicker. That's the player we're missing," said Tite last week. But he said that rather than reflect on what they're missing, "inside the squad we're much more focussed on working hard, training well, preparing for matches, which has been our main focus." The Selecao's last warm-up match was a 7-0 thrashing of 10-man Honduras in which Neymar's absence certainly wasn't felt, with his substitute David Neres scoring in the rout. — AFP

Sports

Big hitters France and Germany grind towards WCup knockouts

VALENCIENNES: Eugenie Le Sommer fired Women's World Cup hosts France to the top of Group A after scoring the winning penalty to see off determined Norway on Wednesday, while Germany virtually assured themselves of missing the rampant United States in the last 16 after squeezing past Spain and taking control of Group B. Lyon star Le Sommer fired home from the spot with 18 minutes left after referee Bibiana Steinhaus decided after a VAR review that Norway defender Ingrid Syrstad Engen had kicked Marion Torrent on the knee after making a hash of a clearance.

The 30-year-old's second goal of the tournament put France on a perfect six points after two games and saved the blushes of her club teammate Wendie Renard, who had cancelled out Valerie Gauvin's 46th-minute opener for 'Les Bleues' with a barely-believable own goal.

Renard, whose height and power had led to Norway using a similarly tall press officer to simulate her presence in the area for set-pieces in training, was visibly distraught after tapping Isabell Herlovsen's cross into her own net under no pressure.

"I made a big mistake, scoring a goal against my own team, unfortunately for me and unfortunately for my team," said Renard to French broadcaster Canal+. "We didn't let our heads drop ... and we were rewarded with the penalty."

Le Sommer stepped up to save the points and put them to within a point of topping the group ahead of Monday's final match against Nigeria, who saw off South Korea 2-0 in Wednesday's early match thanks to a comical own goal from Kim Do-yeon and a superb burst and finish from Asisat Oshola.

France are three points ahead of both Nigeria

and Norway, who now need to hold off South Korea to be sure of arriving at the knockout stage. Thomas Dennerby's Nigeria meanwhile are eyeing a first qualification to the knockout stage for 20 years after just their second World Cup win in that time. The three points they have could well be enough to see the Super Falcons through as one of the four best third place finishers, but Dennerby is targeting a result against France in Rennes on Monday to remove all doubt. "France are a very good team, if we come out of that with one point we'll all be very happy," Dennerby added.

GERMANY DOWN SPAIN

Earlier Germany brushed off the absence of injured star player Dzsennifer Marozsan as Sara Daebritz downed Spain to move her side top of their group. Marozsan will miss at least the German's final group stage match against bottom side South Africa after breaking her toe in her side's opening 1-0 win over China, but Wednesday's hard-fought win means her lay-off should be less of a problem in the short-term. Paris Saint-Germain midfielder Daebritz made Germany strong favourites to top the group by pouncing three minutes before the break ahead of dithering Spain defender Marta Torrejon, who only had to clear the ball after her goalkeeper Sandra Panos did well to save Alexandra Popp's header.

They are three points clear of Spain and are one better on goal difference, meaning they need a point against bottom side South Africa on Monday to be completely sure of coming out on top. That would leave whoever finished second below them to face the Americans, who were in ominous form on Tuesday as they racked up a record 13-0 win over Thailand, while the Ger-



VALENCIENNES: Spain's midfielder Alexia Putellas (2R) vies for the ball with Germany's defender Kathrin Hendrich (R) and Germany's defender Sara Doorsoun (2L) during the France 2019 Women's World Cup Group B football match between Germany and Spain, at the Hainaut Stadium in Valenciennes, northern France. — AFP

mans would take on one of the four best third-placed finishers who will make the last 16.

"Our goal was always to win the group, and now we are on the way to doing so. We want to win our third game too," Daebritz told German broadcaster ZDF.

Asked by reporters if watching the USA dismantle Thailand was "extra motivation" for her side to win the group, a smiling Voss-Tecklenburg said "both teams knew they didn't want

play the winners of Group F". Second-placed Spain, who were wasteful despite dominating possession and will rue Nahikari Garcia somehow slicing wide when clean through in the 14th minute, should still qualify but face a trickier test against China on Monday.

They risk being caught by the Chinese or South Africa, who aim to boost their own qualification hopes today in Paris after losing their opening games. — AFP

City begin title defence at West Ham

LONDON: Champions Manchester City begin the defence of their Premier League title away at West Ham, while Manchester United will host Chelsea in a blockbuster meeting to start the campaign after next season's fixtures were revealed yesterday.

City will be confident of a fruitful start after scoring four times in each of their last three visits to the London Stadium, but face a tougher clash when Champions League finalists Tottenham Hotspur visit the Etihad on the second weekend of the season.

Runners-up and Champions League winners Liverpool begin with a home game to newly-promoted Norwich. Last season's top two meet at Anfield on November 9 with the return at the Etihad scheduled for April 4, subject to TV con-

firmation. Chelsea will begin life without the influential Eden Hazard at Old Trafford with United in need of a fast start after a dismal end to last season under Ole Gunnar Solskjaer. On their return to the top-flight Aston Villa host Spurs, whilst Sheffield United are away at Bournemouth.

City only edged Liverpool by a point in last season's thrilling duel but would appear to have the easier run-in this time round should the title go down to the wire once more. Pep Guardiola's men do not face any teams who finished in the top half last season in their final six matches, following the visit of Liverpool.

In contrast, the European champions travel to Arsenal and host Chelsea before a visit to Newcastle in their final three games of the campaign. For the first time in Premier League history, the clubs will get a short mid-season break in February.

Over a two-week period, there will be only five matches on one weekend, with the other five games taking place the following weekend, ensuring that each team gets one week off. — AFP

Koepka, Woods chase history at Pebble Beach

PEBBLE BEACH: Brooks Koepka launches his bid for an historic US Open treble at Pebble Beach, where Tiger Woods once separated himself from all rivals and now returns chasing a 16th major. Pebble Beach, where Woods won the first of his three US Opens in 2000 with a breathtaking 12-under par total and a crushing 15-stroke margin, is a vastly different player now at 43 and with spinal fusion surgery behind him.

But he cemented his return to golf's elite with his 15th major win at the the US Masters in April.

He has risen to fifth in the world rankings led by Koepka, who has won four majors in less than two years: back-to-back US Opens in 2017 and 2018 and back-to-back PGA Championships in 2018 and last month at Bethpage Black.

With his win at Shinnecock Hills last year Koepka became the first player since Curtis Strange in 1988-89 to win consecutive US Opens. Willie Anderson, from 1903-05, is the only player to have won three straight. "I'm not thinking about it," Koepka said of his treble chance. "I know the odds are stacked up probably even more against me now. It's hard to win the same event three times in a row."

But he likes the idea of pursuing history at Pebble, where prior editions have produced champions such as Jack Nicklaus, Tom Watson and, of course, Woods. The beauty of Peb-

ble Beach's coastal views can distract from the challenge it presents, especially with the pinched fairways and deep rough of a US Open.

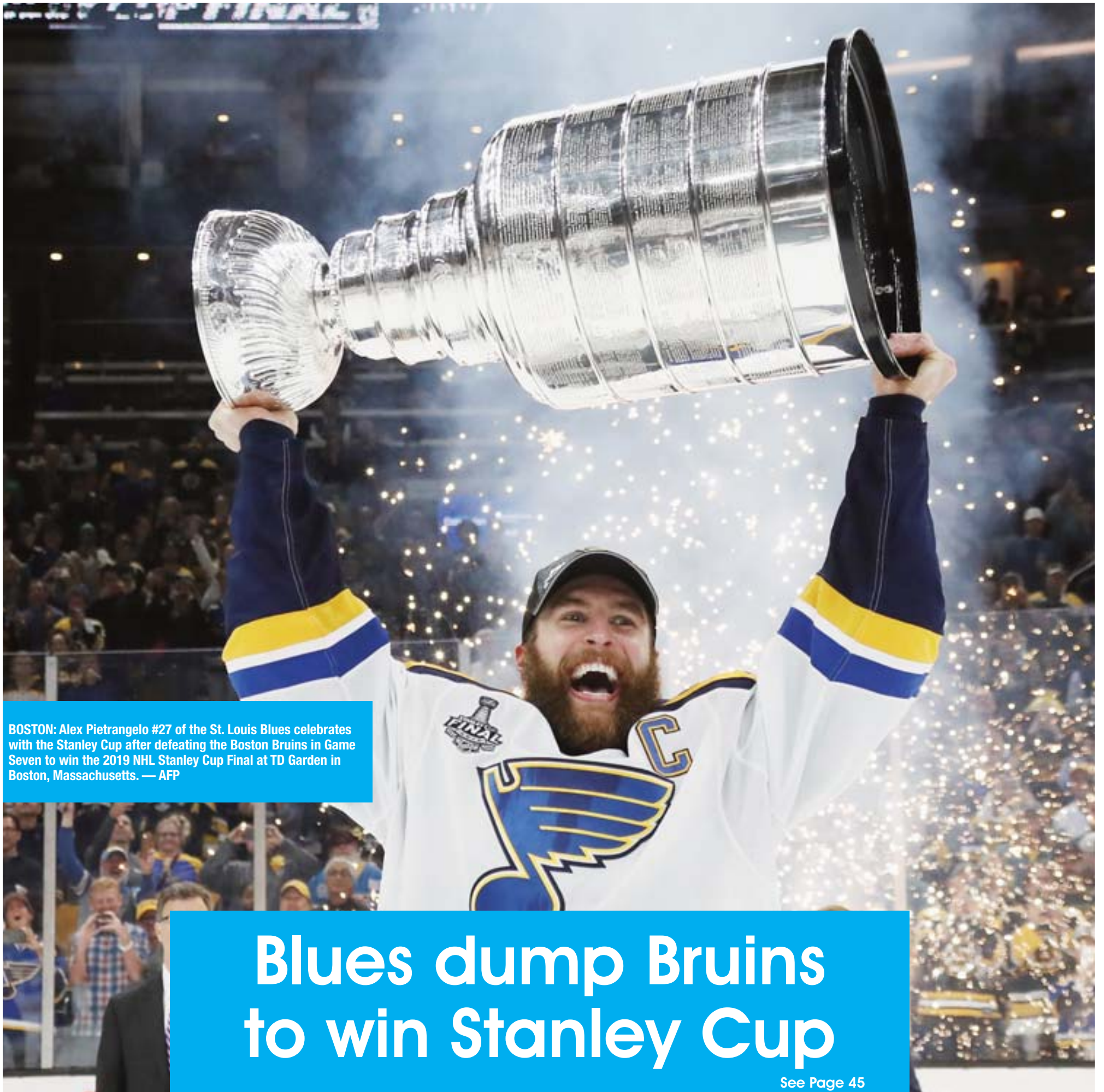
"The rough is definitely going to be a factor this week," Koepka said. "Very juicy. You need to put the ball in the fairways. "These greens are so small, you can almost put it in the center of every green and have 20 feet, no matter where the flag stick is. It really comes down to who's going to make putts." Woods said the 7,075-yard, par-71 course is playing similarly to the last time it hosted the US Open in 2010, when Northern Ireland's Graeme McDowell won. "We're all going to be playing from virtually the same spots, and especially if it dries out," Woods said.

"How you put the ball in the correct position is key... We don't have greens like this, this small and steep, so it puts a premium on iron play." Koepka is scheduled to tee off at 1:47 pm (2047 GMT) alongside British Open champion Francesco Molinari of Italy and US Amateur champion Viktor Hovland of Norway. Woods tees off at 2:09 pm alongside former US Open winners Jordan Spieth and Justin Rose. Early starters include Rory McIlroy, Dustin Johnson, and Phil Mickelson. McIlroy, who goes off the 10th tee with Spain's Jon Rahm and Australian Marc Leishman at 7:51 am, is seeking to add to his tally of four majors for the first time since 2014.

The Northern Ireland star is riding high after a seven-shot victory romp at the Canadian Open on Sunday, his second win of the season after the Players Championship. Johnson, who was leading at Pebble in 2010 when he ballooned to a final-round 82, tees it up alongside that year's winner McDowell and Mickelson—a five-time major winner still seeking to complete the career grand slam with a first US Open title. — AFP

Sport Times

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BOSTON: Alex Pietrangelo #27 of the St. Louis Blues celebrates with the Stanley Cup after defeating the Boston Bruins in Game Seven to win the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Final at TD Garden in Boston, Massachusetts. — AFP

Blues dump Bruins to win Stanley Cup

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