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Kuwait's envoy to UN urges support for Iraq sovereignty

Iraqi PM calls for international support for reconstruction

BAGHDAD: The United Nations Security Council supports the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi said yesterday. The Kuwaiti diplomat's remarks came amid talks he held with Iraq's President Barham Salih, according to a statement by the presidency. Iraq remains committed to UN Security Council resolutions as it forges a path towards political stability, the statement cited the Kuwaiti envoy as saying.

The Iraqi president spoke of his country's earnest desire to support the UN Security Council's efforts to preserve peace and security all over the globe, which can only happen through continuous dialogue. "Iraq has defeated terrorism but now stability can only be achieved with the help of our friends in the international community," he said. The UN Security Council delegation arrived in Baghdad yesterday as part of efforts to "support the sovereignty and unity of Iraq," said the foreign ministry.

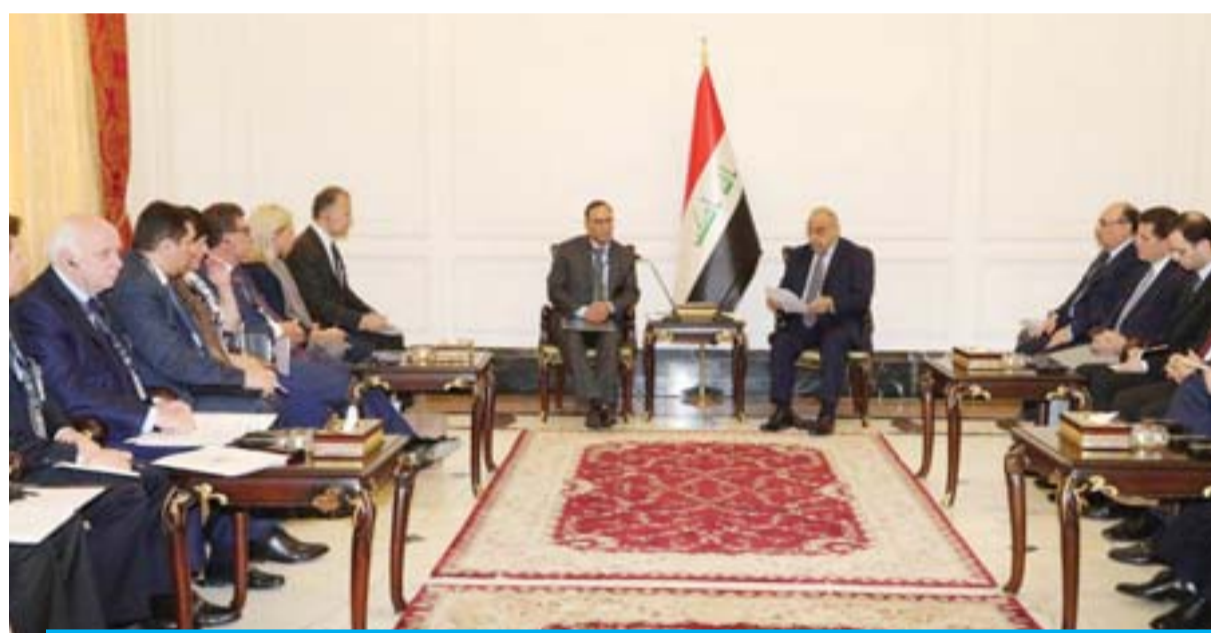
Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel-Mahdi yesterday said Iraq is working in the framework of a policy of openness to the Arab and regional environment and hopes to obtain international support for its projects in the reconstruction of cities affected by terrorism. A government statement quoted Abdel-Mahdi as describ-

ing the UNSC visit as an indication of the Security Council's support for Iraq and the changes it is witnessing in all areas and successfully overcoming the great political, economic and security challenges.

The Iraqi prime minister noted that his country has witnessed external and internal wars and campaigns of persecution and destruction and waves of terrorism and inherited the destruction of infrastructure and communal divisions and the destruction of wealth and human and material resources and large debts. "Despite all this, the Iraqis have been able to endorse the constitution and hold several legislative elections that led to a change and a peaceful transfer of power, a victory over terrorism and the liberation of their cities," he added.

Abdel-Mahdi pointed out that the deep crises and major challenges faced by Iraq deserve great international support for the reconstruction of liberated and affected areas. He also highlighted the efforts of the Iraqi government in the areas of economic reform and sustainable development, investment of natural resources, increasing agricultural production, working on extending the rule of law, achieving justice among the people, equality of opportunity and attention to women's rights and increasing their participation in political life.

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BAGHDAD: Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Mansour Al-Otaibi meets Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdel-Mahdi yesterday. — KUNA

News in brief

US deploys F-22s to Qatar

WASHINGTON: The US has deployed F-22 stealth fighters to Qatar for the first time, its military said Friday, adding to a buildup of US forces in the Gulf amid tensions with Iran. The Air Force F-22 Raptor stealth fighters have been deployed "to defend American forces and interests", the US Air Forces Central Military Command said in a statement that did not specify how many of the hi-tech planes had been sent. A photo handout showed five of the jets flying above the Al Udeid Air Base in Qatar. Tensions spiked last week when Iran shot down a US drone over sensitive Gulf waters following a series of tanker attacks that Washington blamed on Tehran, which has denied involvement. In May, the US Air Force deployed several nuclear-capable B-52 Stratofortress bombers to the Gulf. — AFP

Palestinian businessman arrested

RAMALLAH: Palestinian intelligence agencies yesterday arrested a West Bank businessman for taking part in this week's US-led peace conference in Bahrain, boycotted by the Palestinian leadership, a security source said. The intelligence services detained Salah Abu Mayala, a businessman from the city of Hebron in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, the source told AFP. At least three Palestinians took part in the Manama conference, including Abu Mayala and fellow Hebronite businessman Ashraf Jabari. "The abject failure of the Manama workshop... is a clear message to Mr Trump and his administration that the policy of threats and intimidation no longer work," said Nabil Abu Rudeineh, a spokesman of the Palestinian president. The family of Abu Mayala, who is in his 70s and has health problems, said they had no information on his detention. — AFP

US, Taliban resume talks

DOHA: The United States and the Taliban opened fresh negotiations in Doha yesterday, a Taliban spokesman said, as Washington eyes a breakthrough before Afghanistan's September presidential election. Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid tweeted that the "seventh round of talks between US representatives and the negotiation team of the Islamic Emirate have begun in Doha". The talks mark the seventh round of negotiations aimed at ending America's longest war. The negotiations have centered on four issues: Counter-terrorism, the foreign troop presence, an intra-Afghan dialogue and a permanent ceasefire. They kicked off in the Qatari capital just as news broke that at least 25 pro-government militiamen were killed in a Taliban attack in northern Afghanistan. The talks mark the seventh round of negotiations aimed at ending America's longest war. — AFP

Bursa pleased with promotion

KUWAIT: Chairman of Bursa Kuwait Company Hamad Al-Humaidhi has described Bursa Kuwait's promotion to an emerging market by Morgan Stanley Capital International (MSCI) as an outstanding step in the company's overhaul process. This prominent move will strengthen the state's status on the global investment map, said Humaidhi in a statement posted on the bourse's website yesterday. "We are proud that our expansion plans have resulted in enlisting our country among international

indices," he said, noting that the stock market elevation will boost local financial markets, stimulate inflow of foreign enterprises and enhance liquidity and the local business environment.

Meanwhile, Mohammad Al-Osaimi, the bourse's acting CEO, said in a statement that the promotion of the Kuwaiti market by MSCI was "the fruit of the effective role undertaken by the company to bolster market efficiency and transparency and increase liquidity and investor confidence. "Work will continue to upgrade the market infrastructure, simplify operations and harmonize market criteria with international top standards," he added.

The bourse affirmed that it earned the international elevation due to efforts for full development exerted by Capital Market Authority, Bursa Kuwait and Kuwaiti

Clearance Company over the past years. The bourse's listing as an emerging market will lead to improving market efficiency, diversifying leading investors, encouraging veteran entrepreneurs to partake in general assemblies, luring foreign investment, swelling liquidity and making the financial market much more attractive, Osaimi elaborated.

MSCI had publicized promoting the Kuwaiti market, in the third such development since December 2018 when the Kuwaiti bourse was elevated by Standard and Poor's Dow Jones. The bourse declared that the "phases and weights" had been done with respect of FTSE Russel, with the index weight set at 0.94 percent. The forecast index weight in September 2019 is 0.56 percent. Bursa Kuwait Company was established on April 21, 2014. — KUNA

Turkey hopes to avoid sanctions over S-400s

OSAKA: Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said yesterday he was confident there would be no US sanctions against Turkey over a controversial Russian missile deal, following reassurances from leader Donald Trump at the G20 summit. Ankara's push to buy Moscow's S-400 missile defense system has strained ties between the NATO allies, with the threat of penalties from Washington looming over Turkey. "We heard from him that there won't be anything like this (sanctions)," Erdogan told a press conference, after meeting with

the US president on the sidelines of the summit in Osaka, Japan.

While Erdogan insisted Turkey and the United States were "strategic partners", he said that "no one has the power to intervene in Turkey's sovereignty". His office said Trump wished to resolve the S-400 issue "without damaging bilateral ties". Before the talks, Trump said Turkey "has been a friend of ours... We're a big trading partner. We're going to be much bigger."

Despite heavy pressure from Washington to cancel the purchase, Erdogan has repeatedly said it was a "done deal" and reaffirmed on Saturday that delivery of the system would begin in the first half of July. Experts say sanctions would hit Ankara's already fragile economy hard. Tariffs imposed by Trump last summer over the jailing of a US pastor helped trigger a currency crisis.

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OSAKA: US President Donald Trump (right) and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan hold a bilateral meeting on the sidelines of the G20 Summit yesterday. — AFP

Trump hails Saudi purchase of US arms

OSAKA: President Donald Trump said yesterday he appreciated Saudi Arabia's purchase of US military equipment, calling Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman a "friend of mine" who had worked to open up the country with economic and social reforms. Trump's plan to boost defense sales to the kingdom has hit obstacles in Congress, where Democrats and some fellow Republicans are not happy about human rights abuses, including the murder last year of Saudi journalist Jamal Khashoggi.

"It's an honor to be with the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, a friend of mine - a man who has really done things in the last five years in terms of opening up Saudi Arabia," Trump said ahead of a bilateral meeting with the crown prince. "I think especially what you've done for

women and seeing what's happening - it's like a revolution in a very positive way," he added, speaking on the sidelines of a Group of 20 (G20) summit. "We're trying to do our best for our country, Saudi Arabia, and it's a long journey," the crown prince said.

The Senate this month voted to block the sale of billions of dollars of military equipment to Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and other countries, rejecting Trump's decision to sidestep Congress's review of such deals by declaring an emergency over Iran. Trump has promised to veto the Senate action. But Trump ignored questions from the media about whether he would raise the journalist's murder during his working breakfast with the prince. In a readout provided after the talks, the White House said the pair discussed "the importance of human rights issues", among other subjects, but gave no further details.

The United States has blamed Iran for recent attacks on oil tankers in Gulf shipping lanes, which the United States is working with Saudi Arabia and other allies to protect. — Agencies

India's World Cup 'away' shirt prompts scorn

BIRMINGHAM: Fans mocked Indian cricket bosses after captain Virat Kohli unveiled the orange-and-dark-blue shirt that the team will wear in their World Cup match against England, saying the players would look like petrol pump attendants. Blue has been Indian cricket's dominant color since the advent of colored clothing but Kohli, known for his fashion sense, was impressed by the new kit for today's game at Edgbaston.

"I quite like it. I think it's right up there. For me it will be an eight (out of 10). Honestly, I am not saying that for the sake of it," Kohli said at his pre-match press conference yesterday. "The contrast is good, the fit is great. For one game it's fine. But I don't think permanently we will be heading in that direction because blue is our colour and we are very proud to wear that."

Continued on Page 24



BIRMINGHAM: India's captain Virat Kohli poses with his new team colors during a press conference at Edgbaston yesterday. — AFP

Local

Kuwaiti Defense Minister stresses promoting integration with int'l coalition to combat IS

No need for another war in Gulf region: Iraqi Foreign Minister

BRUSSELS: It is imperative to boost understanding, solidarity and integration among member states of the international coalition to combat the so-called Islamic State (IS), Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah said on Thursday. Sheikh Nasser made the statement while partaking in a meeting of defense ministers of the international coalition member states at the NATO's headquarters in Brussels. The minister, who led a high-profile delegation, underlined the necessity of completing campaigns so as to defeat the IS militants not only militarily, but also ideologically. Kuwait's participating in the meeting is in line with the political leadership's directives and its keenness on the joint action with the international community to counter terrorism, and maintain global stability and security, he noted.

IS militants are clever in exploiting sectarian and ethnic divisions in the world's countries to recruit new members and justifying their acts, he stated. He stressed the necessity of understanding the ideology of IS militants in order to defeat them through developing a clear philosophy and a counter thought. He urged the coalition member states to encourage their politicians and intellectuals to hold workshops aiming to study IS' ideology and philosophy.

Sheikh Nasser highlighted Kuwait's role and efforts to counter this terrorist organization through hosting several international meetings and conferences. He affirmed keenness of His Highness the Amir and Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to continue humanitarian efforts. He pointed to continued aid delivered by the state's governmental and non-governmental bodies and institutions to those who are in dire need of this assistance all over the world.

Iraq's reconstruction

Meanwhile, Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Hakim praised the support of His Highness the Amir of Kuwait for the reconstruction of his country. Hakim said on the sidelines of the meeting that the relationship between the two neighboring countries are going well. "Relations between Iraq and Kuwait are going extremely well due to the visit of our President and

prime minister to Kuwait and as well as the visit of His Highness the Amir to Baghdad which was an excellent visit," he noted. "We have put together multiple MoUs to work on and we are also trying to resolve all outstanding issues between us," he continued.

"His Highness the Amir of Kuwait emphasized on the reconstruction of Iraq and he has stressed on the need that Iraq gets back to normalcy which is very important for us. We thank His Highness the Amir very much on this," stressed the Iraqi minister. His Highness the Amir has completed his visit to Baghdad on June 19, after heading an official delegation that included a number of ministers, to enhance the bilateral relations in all fields. This was His Highness the Amir's second visit to Baghdad after the first visit in March 2012 to participate in an Arab summit.

Gulf tensions

On the situation in the region, Hakim called for finding suitable solutions for issues pertaining to the Gulf region, stressing that there was no need for another regional war. Hakim commented on the current tensions in the Gulf region, saying, "we do not want another war in the region, and we do not know where this war will take us. This area has suffered from multiple wars in the last forty years. We should negotiate and find solutions."

The NATO mission in Iraq is "doing extremely well and they are training our police and security forces," Hakim added. NATO agreed to establish a training and capacity-building mission in Iraq in October 2018. "The international coalition meeting to defeat IS went very well," Hakim noted. "The international coalition meeting to defeat IS went very well, and there is a tremendous support for Iraq and also help (by NATO) for training and developing Iraqi forces to finish IS both in Iraq and Syria," he said.

Tension increased between the US and Iran on the aftermath of Tehran downing of an American spy drone. Iran said that it had the right to shoot down the aircraft due to it violating Iranian airspace; the US denied it was flying over Iranian territory. Prior to that incident, several explosions targeted tankers — traversing the regional waters in the Gulf of Oman and the Strait of Hormuz. Again the US and allies blame Iran for the



BRUSSELS: Kuwait's First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah shakes hands with Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Hakim during a NATO Defense Ministers meeting to defeat Islamic State militants at the NATO headquarters in Brussels on Thursday. —AFP

explosions, Tehran strongly denied involvement. After downing the US drone, President Donald Trump almost took a decision to hit Iran, but rolled back the step. Trump, instead, impose more sanctions on the Iranian leadership and top military brass.

Stock of its achievements

Defense Ministers of nations contributing to the Global Coalition to Defeat IS had met to take stock of continued efforts to ensure IS does not return. In his opening remarks, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg praised the coalition's remarkable achievements, and pointed to the importance of training and advising local security forces in the fight against terrorism. "It no longer controls any territory in Iraq or Syria. And millions of people have been freed from oppres-

sion. But the fight against ISIS is not over. It remains a deadly threat to us all. In the Middle East and around the world," he said. "So we must remain vigilant and root it out wherever it may be," said Stoltenberg. US Acting Defense Secretary Mark Esper, who hosted the meeting on the sidelines of the NATO Defense Ministers meeting, said meanwhile, "it has been a year since we last gathered here."

"Since then this coalition and our partners have achieved tremendous success to ISIS enduring defeat. This group of 35 countries and NATO organized militarily to confront this specific threat," he said. "The threat we face today is significantly different both in the Middle East and globally than that which rose in 2013. We as a coalition must adapt to that reality," he added. —KUNA

In my view

Congratulations to Kuwaiti students, and welcome!



By Lawrence R Silverman
US Ambassador to Kuwait

To all students in Kuwait who have officially received Ministry of Education scholarships to study in the United States, congratulations! All your hard work and dedication during the last four years in high school has paid off. Receiving a scholarship to continue your higher education abroad is a significant accomplishment. It is also the key to a bright future.

Since the 1950s, when Kuwait realized that a world-class education was pivotal to securing the future of the country, five generations of Kuwaiti men and women selected the United States as their destination for university education. Last year, some 12,300 undergraduate and graduate Kuwaiti students were studying on US campuses in almost every state in the country. You will continue that legacy. The top quality and variety of options in the United States are unmatched: private and public colleges and universities, all fields of education, and great cities in which to study throughout the country. America has much to offer you.

As Kuwaitis before you did, you should understand that the American educational experience transcends the classroom. You should take advantage of the freedom and opportunity to travel around the country, exchanging ideas and enhancing cross-cultural understanding with Americans and others. And in your own way, you can be ambassadors of Kuwait to the United States.

These experiences will support your growth as individuals and make you more marketable to employers upon your return to Kuwait. We truly believe in our motto at the US Embassy: "Study in the United States; succeed in Kuwait. The proof is in those who have studied in my country."

We have made the student visa process easy, and our Consular Section will be happy to facilitate your visa. Information about the process and maintaining your student status is available at <http://travel.state.gov>, ustraveldocs.com/kw, and studyinthestates.dhs.gov. Our EducationUSA adviser Carine Nassrallah stands ready to answer questions. You can contact her via email at EducationUSAKuwait@state.gov. Carine can help you find the right academic program for you, undergraduate or graduate.

Please follow us and check our Instagram account (@USEmbassyQ8) for information about our upcoming 'Student Visa Days,' which are specially designated days for students planning to study in the United States. Our Consular and Public Affairs staff are pleased to work together with the National Union of Kuwaiti Students to facilitate the process of applying for visas and the distribution of information about studying in the United States.

As the US Ambassador to Kuwait, I encourage those of you who have received offers of admission to accept this life-changing opportunity and join your peers in experiencing the unique value of an American higher education. For those of you who already have chosen to study in the America, I thank you. We welcome you and wish you success.

Kuwait, Saudi officials discuss enhancing cooperation

JEDDAH: Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef Al-Saud met yesterday with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, discussing with him means to enhance cooperation and bilateral relations. Ambassador Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Sabah affirmed in a press statement that the meeting with the Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz also touched on security cooperation and ways to facilitate procedures for Kuwaitis visiting and residing the Kingdom. Saudi Arabia had provided numerous services for Kuwaiti citizens in the Kingdom and that is due to the keenness of Saudi authorities to



JEDDAH: Saudi Interior Minister Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud bin Nayef Al-Saud meets with Kuwaiti Ambassador to Saudi Arabia Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. —KUNA

support their brethren, affirmed Ambassador Sheikh Ali Khaled Al-Sabah. The Kuwaiti diplomat commended the enhanced borders' cooperation between the two coun-

tries who recently celebrated the opening of Al-Riggi crossing, deemed as a "strategic and attractive destination" for the transport of goods and travelers. —KUNA

Promising opportunity for Kuwaiti investors in India: Minister

NEW DELHI: Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that there were several promising opportunities available for the Kuwaiti investors in India. Sitharaman indicated that India was focusing on becoming a \$5 trillion economy from the current \$3 trillion, securing the third largest economy globally after the US and China by the year 2022. In a statement to the press yesterday, Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassem Al-Najem said that Sitharaman made the statement when he met the minister in New Delhi. "Kuwaiti investors both from private and public sectors should exploit the rapid Indian economic growth especially when it is looking to establish more power plants and other infrastructure including modern road networks, airports and railways and benefit from the

huge Indian market of more than 13 billion people," Ambassador Najem said.

The Indian minister hailed the bilateral relations between the two friendly countries and the importance of exchanging high-level visits between officials in both the countries. She also appreciated the success of Kuwaiti projects in the field of global oil refineries, especially the Vietnam refinery in cooperation with the Japanese government at a cost of around \$9 billion and Duqm refinery in Oman at a similar cost. Cooperation between India and Kuwait is highly required in this area to fulfill the growing needs of Indian market for petrochemical products. Meanwhile, the Kuwaiti ambassador underlined the interest of Indian minister in Kuwait Investment Authority's business in India, which stands at \$5 billion currently and is looking to increase the same. This especially relevant as the Indian government is encouraging foreign investors by modernizing laws, speeding up procedures and increasing electronic trading. The minister, who held several portfolios in successive governments such as minister of commerce and industry and minister of defense, is preparing to table the largest budget in Indian Parliament this week. —KUNA



NEW DELHI: Indian Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman meets with Kuwait's Ambassador to India Jassem Al-Najem. —KUNA

Kuwaiti inventor awarded Double Gold prize in UK

LONDON: The Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network (GWIIIN) has awarded Kuwaiti Engineer Jenan Al-Shehab the Double Gold prize in recognition of her invention 'electromagnetic cells for wireless electricity transmission.' The Double Gold is GWIIIN's top-level prize, and part of a global recognition of exceptional inventions, said Shehab, whose invention obtained a patent from the US Patent and Trademark Office. The invention was fully displayed to male/female inventors of various world countries, as well as an international judging panel consisted of nine members specialized in medicine and engineering, in addition to a number of academic professors and international investors, she noted. The Kuwaiti inventor also mentioned that her nomination for GWIIIN awards came after she had won the gold medal at the 22nd Moscow International Inventions and Innovative Technology Salon 'Archimedes,' held in Moscow last March. Shehab said her invention is the fruit of Electrodis Est. for manufacturing electromagnetic cells and smart electronic devices, which she founded in 2016. —KUNA



LONDON: Kuwait's Engineer Jenan Al-Shehab receives her award. —KUNA

Local



KUWAIT: Kuwait's Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah poses for a group photo with visiting representatives of UN Security Council members. — KUNA

Kuwait likes to see new approach to address Iraq's int'l obligations: Foreign Minister

UN Security Council meets in Kuwait for first time

KUWAIT: Kuwait said on Friday that it was looking forward for a new approach to help Iraq meet international obligations towards Kuwait, including missing Kuwaiti and third-country nationals. Kuwait appreciates UN Security Council's (UNSC) keenness on implementing resolutions related to situation between Kuwait and Iraq with regards to compensations, missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, and missing Kuwaiti properties including national archives, Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah said.

"We reaffirm importance and sensitivity of these issues, and their role to improving relations and building confidence between Kuwait and Iraq," Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, addressing a meeting with visiting representatives of UNSC members. "Therefore, we are looking forward for more efforts and to see a new approach to addressing obligations towards State of Kuwait ... specially the humanitarian matters related to missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals," he said. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled welcomed recent endeavors by the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) which contributed to finding remains "which we hope belong to Kuwaiti citizens." Kuwait, he added, was awaiting "important positive developments" that would achieve concrete progress on the ground in order to end over 28 years of suffering of families of the missing.

On June 20, a joint statement by ICRC-affiliated Tripartite Commission announced recovery of human remains in southern Iraq, offering hope for families of missing people from 1990-91 Gulf War. Kuwait and Iraq are the other Commission members. The remains were found at two burial sites, as a result of joint efforts between Iraqi and Kuwaiti authorities, and experts from ICRC, conducted within framework of the Commission. The remains were fully exhumed and transferred to Baghdad's Medico-Legal Directorate for DNA analysis.

Genuine desire

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, who said Kuwait would spare no efforts to know fate of missing citizens to close this humanitarian file, commended "genuine desire" of Iraq to fulfill UN-related obligations towards Kuwait. Kuwait, he added, was ready to provide support for Iraq to speed up execution of obligations. Kuwait has always supported Iraq at different fronts, noted Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled, either bilaterally or via the UN.

He commended UN Assistance Mission in Iraq (UNAMI) for helping Iraq improve security and stability nationwide, as well as contributing to reconstruction. "Kuwait fully supports the Mission and is cooperating with it to fulfill its mandate in line with UNSC resolution 2470, as well as its follow up of the file of missing Kuwaitis and third-country nationals, and Kuwaiti properties including the national archives in line with UNSC resolution 2107," he said.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled asserted Kuwait supported reconstruction of areas liberated from so-called Islamic State (IS) and other terrorist groups. Kuwait hosted the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in February 2018, raising around \$30 billion worth of loans, investment and credit facilities, he noted, of them Kuwait pledged \$2.5 billion. "We are looking forward to establishment of a mechanism to follow up these pledges," added the top diplomat. However, he said, Kuwait was still worried over threats posed by the terrorist groups in Iraq despite IS defeat. Kuwait hopes to see Iraq double efforts to crack down on terrorists, he said. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled spoke further about Kuwait's support of Iraq when His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al-Sabah visited Baghdad last week in a big boost to bilateral relations and cooperation. Kuwait also hosted last month the joint committee with Iraq and the two sides reached understandings and agreements over a host of issues of mutual interest.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled thanked the UNSC representatives for their visit to the region, which would also include Iraq. He hoped the visit to Iraq "sends a message of support for the Iraqi government towards implementing its international obligations, fighting terrorism, as well as reconstruction and improvement of humanitarian situation." The UNSC representatives thanked Kuwait, a current non-permanent member, for supporting peace-making worldwide. Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled then held a dinner banquet for the UNSC representatives, and ambassadors of UNSC members to Kuwait. The meeting was attended by assistant foreign minister

for the minister's office Ambassador Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Mohammad Al-Sabah, assistant foreign minister for protocol Dhari

and assistant foreign minister for international organizations Nasser Al-Hayyen.

tant for Iraq to broaden its economic relations and integration with its Arab neighbors."

He stressed the significance of the UN Security Council members' visit to Kuwait, branding it "extremely important," noting that "among all states, Kuwait is actually the one who understands the importance of stability and prosperity in Iraq, which was evident from His Highness the Amir's recent visit to Baghdad." In addition to the permanent members: UK, US, France, Russia and China, this term's non-permanent members include Belgium, Germany, Poland, Cote d'Ivoire, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Indonesia, Peru, South Africa and Kuwait whose chairmanship ends by end of June. — KUNA

Kuwait commends Iraq's desire to fulfill UN obligations

Al-Ajran, Kuwait's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Mansour Al-Otaibi

UN envoy to Libya lauds Kuwait's constructive role

ROME: Special Representative of UN Secretary-General and Head of the Support Mission in Libya Ghassan Salame commended on Friday Kuwait's positive role at the UN Security Council (UNSC) to support the UN efforts in order to find a peaceful resolution to the Libyan crisis. Speaking in a statement after a meeting with Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero, Salame said the mission is very grateful for the extreme helpful role played by Kuwait at the

UNSC aiming to back the mission's efforts and pay attention to Libyans' concerns. After electing Tunisia for a UNSC membership next year, Salame expressed his hope that Tunisia would continue paying attention to the Libyan crisis. He noted that the mission is in constant contact with Arab League Secretary-General and provides a weekly report to inform the League of what is happening in Libya. He stressed the key role by the League in mediation efforts aiming to solve the crisis. Salame pointed to several initiatives he received from many parties, including Prime Minister of Libya's Government of National Accord Fayez Al-Sarraj and retired Maj Gen Khalifa Haftar, on resolving the country's crisis. Meanwhile, Moavero said that the meeting was important, as it underlined the necessity of dialogue to end the weeks-long battle for Tripoli. — KUNA



ROME: Special Representative of UN Secretary-General and Head of the Support Mission in Libya Ghassan Salame (left) speaks during a press conference with Italian Foreign Minister Enzo Moavero. — KUNA

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KUWAIT: A group of photographers take sunset shots of the Doha Power Plant. — Photo by Saleh Al-Jufairah (KUNA)

UN official lauds Kuwait on workers' rights, prohibiting human trafficking

Nonpayment, physical abuse, food deprivation among maids' complaints

KUWAIT: A UN official praised improving conditions of domestic workers in Kuwait affirming that the government has taken a series of steps at this level, updating relevant legislations and laws and forming the Public Authority for Labor Force. The Kuwaiti government has made much achievements for improving conditions of the workers, namely the housekeepers, in addition to prohibiting human trade, said Dr Tareq Al-Sheikh, the resident representative of the UN Secretary General in the country. He was speaking at the fourth UN seminar on "proper work for housekeepers," organized by the UN representative bureau, in coordination with the International Labor Organization (ILO), the local labor authority and the UN Migration Agency.

The household workers account to 22 percent of work-capable people in Kuwait. In 2017, 678,000 housekeepers were registered — including 51 women,

mostly from India, the Philippines, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka. On recurring complaints by housemaids, Sheikh



**KD 193,000
in dues
returned
to workers**

indicated that the protests are largely related to employers' abstention of paying the wages on time, long

work hours, physical abuse, food deprivation and lack of proper health care. The Kuwaiti Department of Domestic Labor has been quite active in resolving a lot of such problems and alike cases, he said, noting that the department had shut down 250 offices for employment of housekeepers, reclaimed KD 1.5 million (\$4.5 million) illegally taken from citizens and enabling workers to get their dues, estimated at KD 193,000 (\$637,000), he said. Moreover, 4,600 workers had been aided to return home voluntarily, in addition to suspension of scores of employment agencies for irregularities. The department had a role in lifting the rating of Kuwait in terms of applying criteria regarding the housekeepers. Up to 16,000 inspection campaigns had been launched targeting these offices in addition to 1,800 legal cases for non-payments, assaults and non-abidance by contracts. — KUNA

Zain sponsors Drug Abuse Awareness Exhibition

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, sponsored the Drug Abuse Awareness Exhibition organized by the Ministry of Interior (MOI) at the Avenues Mall on the occasion of the International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June of every year. The event came under the patronage of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior Lieutenant General Essam Al-Naham and in collaboration with the MOI's Relations and Security Media Department.

Zain participated in the opening ceremony of the awareness exhibition at the Avenues Mall, which wit-

nessed the presence of Undersecretary of the Ministry of Interior for Criminal Security Affairs Major General Khalid Al-Dieen, General Director of the Criminal Investigations Department Major General Mahmoud Al-Tabbakh, Deputy General Director of MOI's General Department of Public Relations and Media Security Brigadier Tawheed Al-Kandari, Director of MOI's Media Security Department Lieutenant Colonel Nasser Boslaib, Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti, as well as a number of officials and representatives from many ministries and public entities.

Zain sponsored this awareness campaign as part of its Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy that aims at serving the community. The company will always be keen on shouldering initiatives that work towards enhancing the society's welfare in partnership with the various ministries and public authorities, including the Ministry of Interior.

The exhibition held at the Avenues Mall mainly aimed at spreading awareness amongst visitors, especially young people and parents, about the various types of illegal drugs, their dangers, and how to prevent their spread within the community. The exhibition included a number of awareness activities that contribute to delivering a positive message in a creative way.

Zain will continue to find ways to serve the community as to foster a better world and be a productive member of the society, being a leader in the Kuwaiti private sector. The company is proud to be one of the first organizations to partner with the Ministry of Interior to make this event a success and contribute to saving lives.

Zain's solid Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy primarily focuses on the wellbeing of the entire nation. For this reason, the company has maintained its support of numerous initiatives that spread awareness and help make a difference in people's everyday lives, reflecting its brand 'A Wonderful World.'



KUWAIT: Interior Ministry and Zain officials during the opening of the exhibition.

Military solution for Syria not an option: Kuwait

NEW YORK: Kuwait renewed its call for a just diplomatic solution to the Syrian crisis, underlining its position that an armed confrontation was not an option. The remarks were made by Kuwait's permanent UN representative Mansour Al-Otaibi as he chaired Security Council talks on the issue on Thursday. Only through a UN-administered diplomatic solution led by the Syrians themselves according to Security Council resolution 2254 and the Geneva II conference would a solution to the conflict be possible, he told delegates. It is also necessary that any eventual constitutional committee in Syria, formed under UN supervision, be balanced and transparent, consisting of Syrians from all walks of life, including those living overseas, he said. On the latest escalations in the northwest, he said Kuwait condemns the killing of innocent civilians by any party and urges adherence to international humanitarian and human rights laws. Kuwait also condemns attacks carried out by UN-listed terrorist organizations and expresses concern over the negative impacts of ongoing military operations there. — KUNA

local spotlight

Delivery threat



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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Perhaps Kuwait is number one in the field of home delivery in the world, and this includes the large number of food delivery companies that are available through phone applications. There is clear competition between these companies to deliver orders in record time, with an increase in demand by restaurants and customers to enjoy this service to obtain all kinds of items in no time, and with profit as well. Yet, this has turned out to be a new threat to the lives of people in the streets of Kuwait.

It seems that the high temperature in summer, which does not allow people to go out at all times, and the summer vacation, have led to the increase in the number of bikes that do the task quickly. Delivery has become a better and easy option for many, but in Kuwait it is a real challenge and danger to the safety of motorists on the roads, especially during rush hours.

I think the US launched the idea of home delivery of goods and some food items, but in Kuwait this matter has reached the maximum limit and is scary and dangerous now. The number of motorcycles that roam the streets all day long and at all times is in fact a dangerous matter, because the bikers seem to be in a race to deliver orders without respect or fear of the laws and traffic regulations. They rapidly move between lanes and cars without attention to the risk of collision or understanding the nature of the street, disregarding the safety of residents, especially in the late evening, because the goal is to reach customers as soon as possible.

I believe that the worst part here is that restaurants are specifying a certain time to deliver the requests without taking into account that in peak traffic times, it is difficult to deliver anything in record time and not just 40 or 60 minutes from the time of accepting the customer's order. So, naturally, we see bikers jumping on pavements, exceeding the speed limit and moving between cars as if they are in a race. This contempt means the possibility of collisions, causing harm to drivers as well as the bikers themselves.

I really hope and wish that the interior ministry intervenes along with ministry of commerce and the consumer protection department to protect the lives of people by preventing the restaurants from trying to set record times for fulfilling requests by setting an estimated period of time and not a specific time limit, for example, or not specifying a time at all. The deliverymen should be punished for their extreme speed, mandate the use of cars instead and stress the importance of carrying valid driving licenses for all bikers and not leave this issue to whims and wasta.

We have to bear in mind that we are in a country suffering from severe obesity and that there are things that should not be ignored. In 2017, the dean of the faculty of public health at Kuwait University revealed that the rate of obesity in Kuwait has reached frightening levels, as obesity increased by 37 percent between 1980 and 2015, with one in five adults obese, and Kuwait has the highest prevalence of childhood and adult obesity.

Some may see that competition in the large number of restaurants that cater to people and the multitude of bikers as a good thing. But, it is not. We should not believe that excessive home delivery of orders is a good thing. I believe it is the contrary. This is why it is time for government intervention to regulate the matter.

Local

Health Ministry establishes office responsible for disabled citizens' affairs

New clinic for 'high cholesterol' patients at cardiac diseases center

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah issued a ministerial decision establishing an office directly subjected to him to be responsible for disabled citizens' affairs, said informed sources, noting that the new office will be responsible for building a database with information about the disabled. The sources added that the office will also be responsible for contacting disabled patients to check their satisfaction about the services and receive their complaints and proposals. The office will also contact the ministry's engineering sector to make the needed changes at various health facilities and make sure they have priority in various health ministry facilities.

High cholesterol

Head of Sabah Al-Ahmad cardiac diseases center at Amiri Hospital Dr Mohammad Al-Jarallah announced launching a new clinic to follow up patients with high levels of cholesterol. Jarallah explained that the new clinic will be responsible for educating patients vulnerable to high fat levels, prescribing the right medicine for them and creating a database with their information to be able to prevent this chronic disease. Further, Jarallah stressed that cardiac diseases have become the prime cause of death in both Kuwait and worldwide, adding that one of the major reasons leading to cardiac diseases is high fat levels. Dr Ahmad Al-Sarraf explained that high fat levels can be hereditary or caused by other factors such as diabetes, hypothyroidism and liver and kidney diseases.

Syrian refugees

Chairman of the Gulf Catheter Association, Kuwaiti cardiac diseases consultant Dr Mohammad Hamdan Al-Mutairi, announced concluding a voluntary campaign to treat Syrian refugees with cardiac diseases in Jordan, where 47 were examined and 16 catheterization surgery were successfully conducted. Mutairi added that the campaign had been organized in collaboration with Rahma International and Tafaul voluntary team.

Underground bins

Head of the complaints committee at the Municipal Council Meshaal Al-Hamdan urged Chairman Osama Al-Otaibi to ask minister Fahd Al-Sholah whether the municipality has plans to build underground waste containers, adding that the technique is already followed in advanced countries and helps protect the environment, keep garbage out of people sight and prevents stray animals feeding on the garbage.

Bachelors' housing

Kuwait Municipality finalized preparations to launch a campaign to track down landlords letting houses to bachelors in private residential areas pending working on deporting them by the beginning of July. In this regard, the municipality's public relations department announced that the team will resume their inspection tours to warn violators and take the measures needed to evict bachelors.

Students' scholarships

The ministry of higher education said it has a complementary role in solving the problem of shortages or extra graduates in some majors, adding that if a shortage is noticed, for example, in medical specialties, more students would be dispatched on scholarships.

MEW centers

The Ministry of Electricity and Water (MEW) has come a long way in making the designs needed to build six centers to be used as branches in various governorates, said informed sources, noting that the new centers will help put an end to centralization and facilitate services for the public. The sources added that the six designs cost KD 298,920 and that the new centers will cost KD 5 million each to be executed within 24 months.



Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah



Kuwaiti doctors treated Syrian cardiac patients

Police probes source of meds found with suspect

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: Criminal detectives arrested an Asian man who does not work for the Ministry of Health with possession of a bag full of painkillers, anti-histamines, antibiotics, and blood pressure and diabetes medications, a ministry official said yesterday. The drugs confiscated in five medium-sized boxes were of an unknown source, and some of the drugs were labeled for private hospitals. Assistant Undersecretary for Drug and Food Control Affairs Abdullah Al-Bader said in a statement yesterday. Investigations are underway to find the source of the drugs, including questioning suppliers of these medications in Kuwait to find out to whom they sold the drugs.

Fatal accident

Nuwiseeb fire station men responded to a

scene where a vehicle flipped over on King Fahd Road. One passenger died on the scene, while another was injured. Firefighters handed over the deceased's body to the coroner while the injured man was taken to hospital. An investigation was opened into the accident. Meanwhile, Sulaibikhat and Doha firemen dealt with a blaze reported in a makeshift warehouse on top of a Sulaibikhat house where tents were stored. In the meantime, Mubarak Al-Kaber hazardous materials and Qurain fire stations dealt with a house fire in Dhaher. Smoke filled the house as firemen rescued a child. The child and two firemen were taken to hospital for treatment.

Cooperation meeting

A delegation from the National Guard Inspection Directorate visited the Quality Control and Academic Accreditation office at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training to discuss cooperation and improve work procedures. The delegation was met by office director Mohammad Al-Hamdan. Director of National Guard Inspection Department Colonel Faisal Sagheer conveyed greetings of the National Guard leadership.



KUWAIT: Some of the medications found with the suspect.



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HYBRID

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7" Multimedia screen

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Available in 3 engine types



Debate takeaways:
 Biden slips;
 Democrats tilt left

With a smile, Trump tells Putin 'don't meddle in election'



PARIS: Tourists stand near the Trocadero Fountain in Paris during a heatwave. The temperature in France on June 28 surpassed 45 degrees Celsius for the first time as Europe wilted in a major heatwave, state weather forecaster Meteo-France said. —AFP

Europe's deadly heatwave continues

Hot spell sparks large blazes in Spain

PARIS: Europe was bracing itself for a sweltering yesterday as a deadly heatwave across the continent has sparked record-breaking temperatures, large blazes and pollution peaks. The Meteo-France weather service lifted its red warning but forecast a "very hot day" across a large central band of the country, with the mercury expected to rise to 42 degrees Celsius (108 degrees Fahrenheit) in some parts.

With France, Spain, Italy and parts of central Europe hard hit by all-time highest temperatures, officials pleaded with people to take precautions. France's new record temperature of 45.9 degrees C was registered on Friday in Gallargues-le-Montueux, a village in the southern department of Gard near Montpellier, breaking successive records set earlier in the day, Meteo-France told AFP.

This is the same area where the previous high of 44.1 degrees C was set in August 2003 since records began at the turn of the 20th century. The weather service said the new high was comparable to August temperatures in California's Death Valley. Earlier Friday, the mercury rose above 44 degrees C in the southeastern French town of Carpentras. The town was deserted, with cafe owners

contemplating empty terraces which would normally be packed. "We have never seen this!" one exclaimed.

France is just the seventh European country to register a plus 45-degree temperature, along with Bulgaria, Portugal, Italy, Spain, Greece and North Macedonia, Meteo France said. The hot spell has also sparked large blazes including in Spain, where fire fighters yesterday fought fresh wildfires in strong winds and blistering heat just as they had managed to finally contain another inferno after nearly 72 hours. Meteorologists blame a blast of hot air from northern Africa for the scorching early European summer, but the heat is due to die down from today.

'Avoidable deaths'

The heat has already claimed several lives, including a 17-year-old harvest worker in Spain and a 72-year-old homeless man in Italy. Heat-related deaths have also been reported in Germany and France, mainly among the elderly. France remains haunted by the memory of the devastating heatwave of August 2003 which exposed the shortcomings of emergency services at the height of the summer holidays and during which nearly

15,000 people were estimated to have died.

"I want to appeal to the sense of responsibility of citizens - there are avoidable deaths in every heatwave," French Prime Minister Edouard Philippe said. Scientists warn that global warming linked to human fossil fuel use could make such scorchers more frequent. In Germany - where four people have died so far in bathing accidents - the national weather service said temperatures were more than four degrees higher in June than the average.

Public health warnings

In France, where four people have also drowned in bathing accidents, Health Minister Agnes Buzyn lamented that despite a barrage of public health warnings, some parents were still leaving their children in hot cars and joggers were out exercising in the midday heat. A Syrian child was seriously injured north of Paris Thursday after being catapulted into the air by water gushing from an open fire hydrant and then crashing to the ground. The incident occurred in the multi-ethnic Saint-Denis neighbourhood where "uncapping" hydrants has long been used as a way to cool off.

Spanish inferno

In Spain, a fire that started Friday evening in the central town of Almorox has already burnt at least 1,600 hectares, spilling over into the Madrid region and forcing the evacuation of a village, emergency services said. However, a major blaze in the northeastern region of Catalonia had finally been contained and "was in the process of being stabilised," the regional government said in a statement. Catalonia's forest service said the fire likely began when an "improperly managed" pile of manure at a chicken farm spontaneously combusted in the extreme heat.

Hundreds of firefighters backed by troops and aerial water bombers were hampered by roasting 44-degree temperatures and very low humidity. Meanwhile, blazes have also ravaged more than 600 hectares of land and several homes in France. The stifling temperatures have caused air quality to nosedive in some European cities, prompting local authorities to take anti-pollution measures. In Paris, Lyon and Marseille, authorities have banned the most polluting cars from the roads in recent days. —AFP

Nearly 100 dead in Syria fighting

BEIRUT: Nearly 100 combatants were killed on Friday in clashes between fighters loyal to Syria's government, rebels and jihadists in northwestern Syria, a war monitor said. Starting at dawn on Friday morning-and after bombing by the regime-fighting in northern Hama province killed 51 government loyalists and allied militiamen, and 45 among the rebels and jihadists, said the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights.

The clashes continued in the afternoon, the Britain-based Observatory said. Backed by its ally Moscow, Damascus has since late April intensified bombardment of much of Idlib province and the parts of neighbouring Hama, Aleppo and Latakia where Syria's former Al-Qaeda affiliate Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) holds sway. Fighting has meanwhile taken place on the ground in parts of these anti-regime areas, particularly in northern Hama.

Syria's official SANA news agency also reported

bombardment on Friday. "Units of the army today carried out massive bombing at dawn.... on positions of the terrorist Al-Nusra Front in (and) around the villages of Jibine and Tal Maleh," SANA said, referring to positions held by HTS. The bombardment led to "the destruction of the terrorists' fortifications and their lines of defence", it added. They took place in response to attacks against the villages and cities in Hama, the news agency said.

Idlib and parts of neighbouring Hama, Aleppo and Latakia provinces were supposed to be protected by a buffer zone under an September agreement between Russia and Turkey. But the region has come under increased bombardment by the regime and its Russian ally since HTS seized most of Idlib at the start of the year.

The Turkish defence ministry said Friday a Turkish soldier was killed and three others were wounded the day before by fire from Syrian government forces against a Turkish observation post in Idlib province.

Since late April, air strikes have killed 490 civilians, according to the Observatory, while fighting has killed 682 pro-regime forces and 821 rebels and jihadists. The



ATME: An aerial view shows displaced Syrians gathering in a field near a camp for displaced people in the village of Atme, in the jihadist-held northern Idlib province. —AFP

flare-up has also displaced 330,000 others, according to the United Nations, sparking fears of one of the worst humanitarian disasters in Syria's eight-year war. The conflict in Syria has killed more than 370,000 people and displaced millions since it erupted in 2011 with the brutal repression of protests against President Bashar Al-Assad. —AFP

are connected by intranet networks that "at one time or another" must be connected to the internet. "In the past, there was no way to connect to a weapon system," said Guezo. Today, however, he said most computer operating systems are commercial and vulnerable to attacks even if "everything is done to make them impenetrable". "Nothing is impenetrable," said Guezo.

Modern cyber crime units, especially American and Israeli, have massive resources at their disposal and recruit high-level experts. The Cyber Command became a fully-fledged combat unit within the US army in May with a budget running into billions of dollars. In Israel, its renowned 8200 electronic warfare unit attracts the country's best talent. When cyber attackers "have identified an entry point," they "intrude the network with messages carrying hyper-aggressive malware which will at least partially cripple the air defence network", said an anonymous military specialist. —AFP

US cyber attack on Iran: Search to exploit flaw

DUBAI: A cyber attack on Iranian missile systems, claimed by the US last week, would have had to exploit a flaw in the heavily-guarded network, experts say. Citing US official sources, American media last week reported that the Army Cyber Command had crippled the Iranian Revolutionary Guard's air defence units that shot down a sophisticated drone on June 20.

Military computing security is usually "hardened" to defend against attack but highly-skilled computer scientists in cyber units of modern armies are always

working to find a way in. "The simplest way would be for a special forces member to plug in a USB (carrying a virus) to the right place," Loic Guezo of the French Information Security Club said.

This is almost certainly how the well-known US-Israeli Stuxnet virus was introduced in 2010, into the computers of Iran's nuclear complex, according to experts. Iran at the time accused the US and Israel of using the virus to target its centrifuges used for uranium enrichment. The Revolutionary Guards are believed to have since bolstered precautionary measures in a bid to isolate their military computer networks from the internet.

'Nothing is impenetrable'

However, according to a military expert who requested anonymity, an "anti-aircraft defence system requires radars, control and command centres and ground-to-air missile sites to be inter-connected". Those components

535 'phone walkers' killed by Dhaka trains

DHAKA: A total of 535 people have been killed since 2010 after being hit by trains while wearing headphones on tracks in and around the Bangladeshi capital Dhaka, police said. The mostly unfenced railways of the South Asian country of 165 million people are notoriously dangerous, with around 1,000 fatal accidents or suicides every year.

But police said in recent years "headphone walkers" have become a new menace as people walk on tracks listening to music or talking on mobile phones using earphones. "Walking on railway tracks and putting on headphones is banned in the country. Still a lot of people ignore the ban and are killed by trains," Dhaka rail police chief Yeasin Faroque Mozumder told AFP. Fatalities hit a record high in 2014 when 109 people died. Numbers have declined since thanks to an awareness campaign, but police said 54 people were still killed in this way last year.

Morshed Alam, the deputy railway police chief, said they have held awareness rallies and processions, distributing leaflets and warning people with loudhailers. "But people still walk on the tracks as if they were unaware of fatal consequences," he said. Hundreds of thousands of slum dwellers also live on land next to railway tracks in shacks made of tarpaulin and bamboo. Many makeshift food stalls are also dangerously close.

Alam said it is "impossible" to secure the tracks unless people cooperate with them. According to police, nearly 6,000 people died in railway accidents and suicides on the country's 2,800-kilometres (1,730-mile) rail network in the last six and a half years. In neighbouring India, home to one of the world's largest rail networks, some 25,000 people lose lives due to accidents and suicides on railways every year. There are however no specific figures on people killed while using headphones. —AFP

International

Iran says progress at last-ditch nuclear deal talks 'not enough'

Europeans warn Tehran against breaching nuclear terms

VIENNA: European countries offered too little at last-ditch talks to persuade Iran to back off from its plans to breach limits imposed by its nuclear agreement with world powers, Iran's envoy said. A week after Washington abruptly called off air strikes on Iran, diplomats say Tehran is days away from exceeding the maximum amount of enriched uranium allowed under its 2015 nuclear deal with world powers, which Washington quit last year. The countries that are still parties to the agreement - European powers Britain, Germany and France plus Russia and China - held urgent talks with Iranian officials on Friday in Vienna in hopes of persuading Tehran to hold off. The Europeans say breach of the agreement by Iran would escalate confrontation at a time when Tehran and Washington are at risk of a miscalculation that could trigger a war. Iran's envoy, Deputy Foreign Minister Abbas Araqchi, said the talks were "a step forward, but it is still not enough and not meeting Iran's expectations".

He said it was ultimately up to his superiors in Tehran to decide whether to call off plans to exceed limits in the nuclear deal, but he did not believe the talks' outcome was likely to change their minds. "The decision to reduce our commitments has already been made and we will continue unless our expectations are met," he said. "I don't think the progress made today will be enough to stop our process but the decision will be made in Tehran."

The likelihood that Iran could exceed the deal's limits as soon as the next few days is the next looming worry for European leaders trying to keep confrontation between Washington and Tehran from spiralling out of control. Despite abandoning the deal, Washington has demanded European countries ensure Iran comply with it. Iran says it cannot do so unless the Europeans provide it with some way to receive the deal's promised economic benefits. In particular, it wants its oil exports restored to the level of April 2018, before Trump abandoned the

deal and reimposed sanctions.

French President Emmanuel Macron said this week that he would ask US President Donald Trump to ease sanctions to allow negotiations to begin. But the plea seemed to have fallen on deaf ears, with Trump's Iran envoy saying on Friday sanctions would remain in place to end Iranian oil exports altogether. China, long a big importer of Iranian oil, said it rejected US sanctions, but Fu Cong, director general of the Department of Arms Control of the Chinese Foreign Ministry, would not be drawn on whether Beijing planned to keep buying.

Barter mechanism launches

So far, European proposals to protect Iran from the impact of US sanctions have failed, with Iran largely shunned in international oil markets and all major companies cancelling plans to invest there for fear of falling afoul of US rules. After Friday's talks, Araqchi said he had been informed that INSTEX, a new barter mechanism set up by the Europeans to facilitate some trade with Iran, was now operational.

Britain, France and Germany have informed the EU that INSTEX "had been made operational ... and that the first transactions are being processed," the EU said in a statement. However, a European diplomat said that while the system was working on the European side and transactions had been identified, work on the Iranian end had yet to be completed. Araqchi said the new mechanism would help only if it enables Iran to sell its oil. The Europeans say it is likely to be able to handle only small transactions for items such as medicine, already permitted under sanctions.

Iran has said it is ramping up its nuclear programme and has announced dates when this would push it past limits in the deal. The first big deadline passed on Thursday, the day Tehran said it would accumulate more enriched uranium than the deal allows.

Iran demands more effort to revive oil sales



VIENNA: Abbas Araqchi (2nd right), political deputy at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Iran, and Helga Schmid (2nd left), Secretary General of the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS), take part in a meeting of the Joint Commission of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) attended by the E3+2 (China, France, Germany, Russia, United Kingdom) and Iran on June 28, 2019 at the Palais Coburg in Vienna. —AFP

Diplomats who follow the work of UN inspectors told Reuters that their data suggested Iran had not breached the limit on Thursday, but was on course to do so over the weekend.

Another deadline falls on July 7 when Iran says it will have enriched some uranium to a purity forbidden under the deal. Tehran says it still aims to keep the deal alive and any breaches could be reversed. The crisis between Iran and the United States that began with Trump's withdrawal from the pact has escalated in recent weeks after Washington sharply tightened its sanctions

from the start of May to halt all Iranian oil exports.

The Trump administration argues that the 2015 agreement reached under his predecessor Barack Obama was too weak because many terms are temporary and it excludes non-nuclear issues such as missiles and Iran's regional behaviour. Washington says the aim of sanctions is to force Tehran to renegotiate. Tehran says there can be no talks as long as sanctions are in place and Washington is ignoring the deal it already struck. —Reuters

Ethiopia on edge in ethnic heartland of accused coup leader

BAHIR DAR: As gunmen assassinated top officials in Ethiopia's Amhara region during what the government has described as a coup attempt, alleged mastermind Asaminew Tsige holed up in a state-run guesthouse where he had been staying for more than a year. Down on the ground floor, his fighters detained rattled employees, confiscating their cell phones and refusing to tell them what was happening, eyewitnesses told AFP on Friday. "They said, 'Don't move, stay where you are,'" recalled guesthouse manager Moges Ayalew, who at first believed the gunmen were ordinary soldiers.

In addition to opening fire at the regional president's office, killing him and at least two other officials, Asaminew's supporters tried to storm the police headquarters and a

regional media house during the violence that began last Saturday afternoon, residents of Bahir Dar said. Several hours later, Ethiopia's army chief and a retired general were shot dead in a separate attack in the capital Addis Ababa that authorities say was linked to the "coup" plot. All the while, Asaminew himself said nothing, according to those at the guesthouse, who claim they were oblivious to the chaos unfolding outside the property.

A police officer stationed at the guesthouse, who refused to give his name for safety reasons, said Asaminew's fighters wore uniforms he had never seen before, and that they pointed their weapons at a security guard but didn't shoot anyone. Finally at around 10pm, Asaminew and a half dozen fighters drove off in three vehicles, the eyewitnesses said. Two nights later, officials announced that Asaminew - who had been serving as the regional security chief - had been shot dead by security forces outside Bahir Dar, the Amhara regional capital.

The attacks amounted to a major challenge to the leadership and reformist agenda of Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed, who came to power last year. Analysts say many details about the violence, as well as Tsige's motivations, remain murky but it is clear Ethiopia is facing a major political crisis.



ADDIS ABABA: People sit on the corner of a street in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. —AFP

Democratic reforms pursued by the 42-year-old leader have unleashed ethnic violence and turmoil as different groups jockey for resources and power.

Ethnic divisions

In Bahir Dar, residents remained on

edge Friday, expressing concern about the heightened security presence in the lakeside city even as local officials maintained that calm had been restored. Members of Asaminew's Amhara ethnic group, the country's second largest, appeared divided. —AFP

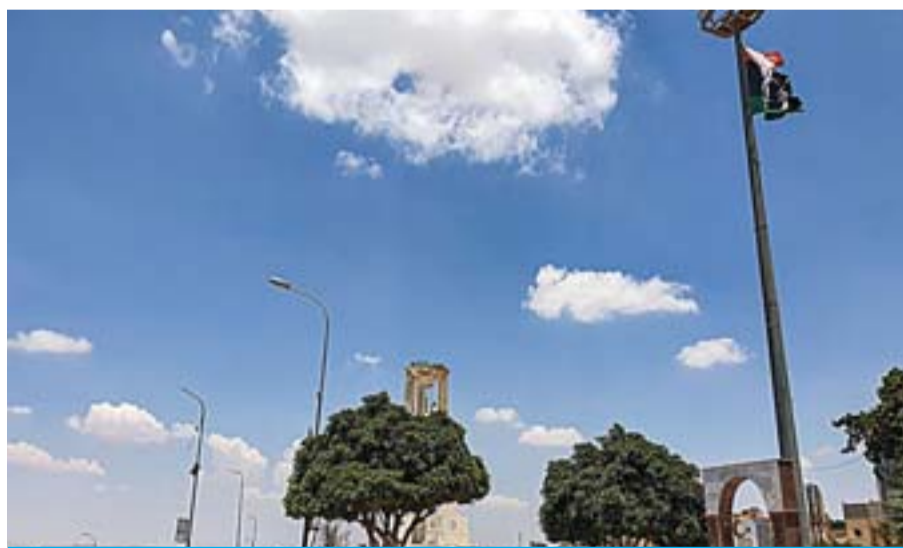
Libya's strongman orders forces to hit Turkey's interests

BENGHAZI: Libyan strongman Khalifa Haftar has ordered his forces to attack Turkish ships and interests in the country, his spokesman said on Friday, accusing Turkey of backing his rivals in Libya's conflict. "Orders have been given to the air force to target Turkish ships and boats in Libyan territorial waters," said General Ahmad al-Mesmari, adding that "Turkish strategic sites, companies and projects belonging to the Turkish state (in Libya) are considered legitimate targets by the armed forces". Haftar's self-styled Libyan National Army, which holds eastern Libya and much of the country's south, launched an offensive to

take the capital in early April.

Libya has been mired in chaos since a NATO-backed uprising that toppled and killed dictator Moamer Kadhafi in 2011, with a multitude of militias vying for control of the oil-rich country. Haftar, a retired general who had taken part in the revolt against Kadhafi, unleashed an offensive in May 2014 to purge Libya of Islamists he branded "terrorists". Mesmari added "all Turkish nationals on Libyan territory will be arrested" and "all flights to and from Turkey will be banned". He did not explain how the flight ban could apply to areas not under Haftar's control.

The spokesman accused Turkey of helping Haftar's rivals - the internationally recognised Government of National Accord (GNA) - seize the town of Gharyan, around 100 kilometres southwest of Tripoli. Haftar on Wednesday lost control of the city he had seized on April 2 and made his centre of operations. Both sides accuse each other of using foreign mercenaries and receiving military support from



GHARYAN, Libya: Photo shows a view of a street with the Libyan national flag flying from a lamp post in Gharyan after it was retaken by forces loyal to the Tripoli-based Government of National Accord. —AFP

foreign powers. Haftar has the backing of the United Arab Emirates and Egypt and accuses Turkey and Qatar of supporting the GNA. —AFP

'Prison for free men': A shackled life in Syria's Idlib

BEIRUT: Its south is a volatile frontline, its northern border an open-air encampment for the displaced and its centre a teeming urban jungle. Syria's jihadist-controlled region of Idlib is home to some three million people who have been variously affected by a surge in regime attacks since April.

Ghost town

When the evening call to prayer rings out in the embattled town of Kafranbel, streets are empty, and

house curtains are drawn. "It looks like a desert lit only by moonlight," said Mohammad al-Sheikh, a 28-year-old activist. "No one dares to go out." Located in Idlib's southern countryside, Kafranbel was not always a "ghost town", the activist told AFP from Kafranbel. Only five months ago, its largest football field was flanked with hundreds of bustling fans during a local tournament, their loud cheers rising above the pitch.

But it's residents have largely avoided open skies since the latest flare-up hit markets, hospitals, water wells, schools and bakeries over the past two months. The violence has forced most of Kafranbel's 20,000 inhabitants to flee, while trapping those who remain in bunkers and homes, he added. The activist said he no longer goes to the mosque, fearing regime air strikes during prayers. Like most residents, he also avoids shopping at open-air markets because he believes they are especially vulnerable to attacks. —AFP

Taleban militants kill 26 militiamen

KABUL: Taleban militants killed at least 26 members of a pro-government militia in north Afghanistan yesterday, officials said, as the Islamists and US negotiators were set to begin a seventh round of peace talks in Qatar. One US official said the meeting was a "make-or-break moment" in efforts to end the 18-year-old war. The talks will be led by Zalmay Khalilzad, the US peace envoy for Afghanistan, who has held six rounds of talks with the Taleban in Doha since October.

The efforts to find peace have so far not lessened the fighting between the Taleban and government forces. In the early hours of yesterday, insurgents stormed security posts in the

northerly province of Baghlan. A provincial police spokesman said 26 militiamen had been killed. A senior Defence Ministry official in Kabul said the attack indicated that the Taleban wanted to negotiate from a position of strength.

Taleban officials said their fighters had killed 28 militiamen and wounded 12. Spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said there was no connection between military action and peace talks: "We will continue to fight against the foreign and Afghan forces until a peace deal is signed." About 20,000 foreign troops, most of them American, are in Afghanistan as part of a US-led NATO mission to train and assist Afghan forces. Some US forces carry out counter-terrorism operations.

The focus of the peace talks has been a Taleban demand that foreign forces leave and a US demand for a guarantee that Afghanistan will not be used as a base for attacks elsewhere. Two other main issues are a ceasefire and talks between the insurgents and the Western-backed government, which the Taleban denounce as a "puppet". —Reuters

Robot babies tackling teenage pregnancies in Colombia

CALDAS: "Anthony" cried so hard at night that Susana Ortegón couldn't sleep. The weekend felt like an eternity for the 13-year-old. So when she handed back her "robot baby" it was with great relief. She had taken part in a program launched by the Caldas municipality in Colombia to try to tackle the problem of teenage pregnancies. "This experience was pretty tough, it's not easy being a mommy or a daddy," Ortegón said. The baby's cries were so loud that they even bothered her parents. "It's awful! Awful! On top of that, the baby never stops crying and you've got to look after it all the time," she added.

The baby - a rubber doll with built-in software - cries when it wants to be fed, have its diaper changed or simply needs a cuddle. It's a voluntary program launched in schools by the Caldas municipality, just outside Medellín, in a bid to reduce the high level of teenage pregnancies in the town of 78,000. The initiative has been used in at least 89 other countries and is being included in the local authority's social project that includes workshops and sex education classes.

"With this strategy we managed to reduce the number of teenage pregnancies by a huge amount," said Juan Carlos Sanchez, the local authority's health secretary. When the program began in 2017, the municipality registered 168 pregnancies of girls aged 13-19, which was down to 141 last year, Sanchez said. More than 1,200 teenagers have taken classes in Caldas, where almost 15 percent of the population is aged 10-19. In Colombia as a whole, a fifth of babies born in 2018 were to mothers aged 10-19, the national statistics bureau said.

'I got so desperate'

The robot babies are programmed to behave according to a specific age. Ortegón's was designed to mimic the behavior of a two-month-old, which meant it needed care on average once an hour. "It's like having a real baby," said Ortegón. "Last night I got so desperate I started crying." At first she called her baby "Tony Stark" after the lead character in "Iron Man" but she later realized the exercise was serious and changed his name. It's not just teenage girls taking part in the project. —AFP

International

Debate takeaways: Biden slips, Harris soars as Dems tilt left

Biden scrambles after slipping in Democrats' debate

WASHINGTON: The first TV debates of the 2020 White House primaries have underlined Joe Biden's vulnerability to a younger generation in a Democratic Party that is leaning increasingly to the left. The two-night event - sometimes tense, often compelling - that concluded Thursday in Miami introduced American voters to the top 20 Democrats aiming to challenge Republican incumbent Donald Trump next year. Here are five takeaways from the opening debates:

It's an open race

The most experienced, best-known candidate in the campaign came under repeated assault Thursday, notably from Senator Kamala Harris on race. Biden, 76, exited the stage appearing out of step with new luminaries in the party - and with a more fragile hold on the top spot. His sudden vulnerability means the race is now wide open, and his comfortable lead in national polling (32 percent support for Biden compared to 17 percent for nearest competitor Senator Bernie Sanders) might be a mirage. He did little to set himself apart from other heavyweights at his side, and sometimes stumbled as he defended his lengthy legislative record, suggesting he was surprised by the intensity of the critiques.

Women ascend

Two nights of debates confirmed two rising stars, Harris of California and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts. The progressive Warren dominated much of Wednesday night's showdown. She held her fire against Trump, instead choosing to make a disciplined case for her electability with the most comprehensive set of policy positions put forward for 2020.

Harris, who has struggled for a breakout moment in recent months of campaigning, earned the spotlight Thursday. She offered concise policy specifics on immigration, taxes and health care, and her steely confrontation with Biden showed a candidate on her A game.

When rivals, mostly male, talked over one another for several heated seconds, Harris stepped forward as the adult in the room. "America does not want to witness a food fight," she reminded her rivals. "They want to know how we're going to put food on their table."

Generational divide

A fierce generational tug-of-war is taking place within the Democratic Party - whose three top 2020 candidates are all in their 70s - and it played out on stage. The younger candidates challenged their elders on everything from tackling climate change and immigration to reducing gun violence. Congressman Eric Swalwell, 38, made the point most bluntly Thursday by calling on Biden to pass the torch to a new generation.

"I'm still holding onto that torch," Biden grinned. Pete Buttigieg, the 37-year-old mayor of South Bend, Indiana, stood next to Biden on stage as he stressed the importance of turning to young leaders who are more adept at digital technology and have borne greater burdens on post-9/11 battlefields. Senator Bernie Sanders, the oldest candidate at 77, pushed back, insisting that how Americans address issues like education and climate change "is not generational." Younger rivals argued otherwise.

Race a delicate issue

Democrats have warned that Trump is fueling racial divisions with his rhetoric. Harris and Senator Cory Booker, the two prominent candidates of color in the contest, have made clear that the issue can be broached in moving terms. Harris won plaudits by boldly confronting Biden on race and identity. Biden had been on the defensive over how he described working closely in the Senate with segregationists with whom he disagreed. Harris, 54, said she did not believe Biden was racist, but called his comments "hurtful." The former California attorney general went on to pin down Biden on his past opposition to 1970s busing programs that forced inte-



CHICAGO: Democratic presidential candidate, former Vice President Joe Biden attends the Rainbow PUSH Coalition Annual International Convention on June 28, 2019 in Illinois. —AFP

gration of segregated schools - eloquently invoking her memory of being bused to school as a little girl.

Democrats run left

Democrats are united in their anger with Trump, but on policy they are fractured, and that leaves the president licking his lips at the chance to exploit their divisions - and increasing leftward shift. Despite pushback from centrists like Biden, the progressive positions

championed by Sanders and Warren, including increasing government intervention in the economy, were on full display. Among the proposals: eliminate private health insurance in favor of government-run care; decriminalize unauthorized immigration; and provide free education at public colleges, paid for through a Wall Street tax. The policies may inspire the party's most liberal supporters, but they will invite endless attack lines from Trump. —AFP

News in brief

15 killed as wall collapses

NEW DELHI: At least 15 people, including four children, were killed when a wall collapsed on shacks outside an apartment complex in western India, police said. Most of those who died were sleeping when the 3 metre high brick wall came crashing down on several tin cabins built for a group of labourers who had work at a nearby construction site, according to police. Two people were also injured in the accident and are "undergoing treatment at a hospital," a local police official said. He said a search was on to find any survivors. The shacks, located in the city of Pune in Maharashtra state, were mostly occupied by migrant workers from India's north. Authorities have ordered an inquiry into the incident and announced a cash compensation to the families of those killed. The city has seen two days of heavy rains. —AFP

IS-claimed bombing kills 5

INDANAN: Five people including three soldiers were killed yesterday in a bombing targeting an elite army unit in the Philippines's restive south, which the Islamic State claimed was a suicide attack, authorities and experts said. The military said the kidnap-for-ransom group and IS-affiliate Abu Sayyaf was likely behind the midday blast on the island of Jolo, which also left nine other soldiers wounded. IS claimed the bombing was the work of two suicide attackers, according to tweets from Rita Katz, the director of SITE Intelligence Group which monitors jihadist activities worldwide. The Philippines has renewed its campaign against the militants on Jolo this year after a suspected suicide bomber struck the island's Roman Catholic cathedral in January, killing 21 people. —AFP

Man breaks into cop station

LOS ANGELES: There have been many ingenious prison escapes over the years, but a would-be convict has contrived to get himself into jail - by breaking into a police station near Seattle with a box of donuts. According to the King County Sheriff's Office, the 26-year-old man took advantage of the cover of darkness last week to smash the Fairwood Police Station's window and clamber inside to wait for the sheriff's men. He was discovered with his feet up on a chair, watching television and finishing a cigar. When questioned about his actions, he said he would "rather go to jail" for breaking into the building than "kill his roommate." It was not clear what issue with his roommate would have led him to that course of action. —AFP

Woman charged over fetus death

WASHINGTON: An American woman who miscarried after being shot five times has been charged by Alabama authorities in the death of her fetus, a move abortion rights groups condemned on Thursday. The arrest of Marsha Jones came amid heightened tensions around abortion after more than a dozen states in the southern and midwestern United States, including Alabama, passed restrictive abortion laws that are currently being challenged in court. "Marsha Jones was indicted for manslaughter for losing a pregnancy after being shot in the abdomen five times. Her shooter remains free. We're going to get Marsha out of jail," tweeted The Yellowhammer Fund, an Alabama-based group that gives financial help to people seeking abortions. Jones, 27, was shot in December during a fight with another woman. While the shooter was initially charged by a grand jury, prosecutors dropped that case and instead brought charges against Jones, who was arrested on Wednesday. —AFP

Victory for Trump: Democrats back down on border aid bill demands

WASHINGTON: Democratic leaders in the US House of Representatives backed down to President Donald Trump and passed a \$4.6 billion aid package to address a migrant surge at the US-Mexico border without the additional protections for migrant children that liberals had sought. Trump, the Republican-controlled Senate and moderate Democrats insisted on finishing the emergency aid bill as soon as possible, without further haggling over demands for greater migrant safeguards and reduced immigration enforcement spending.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, the top Democrat in Congress, said shortly before the vote that her colleagues were giving up their fight for now over changes to the measure, which had already passed the Senate. "At the end of the day, we have to make sure that the resources needed to protect the

children are available," she said in a statement. "In order to get resources to the children fastest, we will reluctantly pass the Senate bill."

The House vote was 305 to 102, with 95 out of 235 House Democrats voting against the Senate bill. The measure was then sent to Republican Trump for signing into law. Trump welcomed House passage of the "Bipartisan Humanitarian Aid Bill for the Southern Border," saying, "A great job done by all!" He also credited the Mexican government with doing more to curtail the flow of Central American migrants to the US border. Trump has made cracking down on illegal immigration a centerpiece of his administration, but officials are saying a renewed crush of migrants at the border has strained resources.

Tragic photo spurs action

A photo of two drowned migrants and reports of horrendous conditions for detained children have spurred efforts to craft compromise legislation to send to Trump before Congress adjourns this week for the Fourth of July US holiday. Pelosi and liberal Democrats had earlier planned to amend the Senate bill to set health

The crisis on the US-Mexico border in three snapshots

MEXICO CITY: A father and daughter drowned in a tragic embrace. A mother begging hysterically for her son's release. Soldiers forcefully detaining a woman and her daughter at the border. These three photographs left their mark this week on the migration debate on both sides of the US-Mexico border, where spiralling numbers of asylum seekers are chasing the increasingly impossible dream of reaching the United States.

Threatened with tariffs by US President Donald Trump, Mexico agreed this month to crack down on undocumented migration, deploying tens of thousands of National Guardsmen to tighten its borders against a surge of Central Americans fleeing poverty and violence to request asylum in the United States. Amid a mounting crisis, these three pictures emerged as symbols of the human stories behind the politically charged debate.

So close

The photo of the drowned Salvadoran migrants drew instant comparisons to that of

Aylan Kurdi, the three-year-old Syrian refugee whose body washed up on a Turkish beach in 2015. It shows Valeria Martinez Avalos, three weeks shy of her second birthday, face-down in the water of the Rio Grande alongside her father, Oscar. His dark t-shirt is wrapped around her - his vain attempt to protect her as they crossed the river toward the United States - and her right arm is wrapped around his neck.

"It's the hardest thing I've had to cover in years," said photojournalist Abraham Pineda, one of those who shot the tragic scene in the border city of Matamoros, across from Brownsville, Texas. "Seeing them there at the edge of the river, the way she had her arm around his neck, like an embrace.... It left me speechless." Trump's opponents immediately blamed him for the tragedy. Across the border, leftist President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador - who came to office vowing to protect migrants' rights - faced similar accusations for his recent headline turn.

Trump fired back that he "hated" the photo, blaming Democrats in Congress for failing to pass migration reform. Lopez Obrador meanwhile said his "conscience is clear." As both governments make it harder for people to cross the border to request asylum - a right protected under international law - "people get more desperate," said the head of Human Rights Watch, Kenneth Roth. "They go through



TAPACHULA: Migrants are pictured in front of the Mexican National Institute of Migration in Tapachula, Chiapas State near the Guatemalan border. —AFP

standards for facilities holding migrants, establish a three-month limit for any child to spend at intake shelters and reduce spending for the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agency.

But with Congress headed for a recess, moderate Democrats joined the

White House and Senate Republicans in urging Pelosi to accept the bill that had cleared the Senate with an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote, as good enough. Additional pressure came from administration officials who said the money was running out and Congress had to act now. —Reuters



SUNLAND PARK: An aerial view shows a US Border Patrol vehicle positioned next to the US-Mexico border barrier in Sunland Park, New Mexico. —AFP

the desert, they try to wade across the Rio Grande, and this kind of punitive approach almost predictably leads to these kinds of deaths," he told AFP.

Two days earlier, Mexico's migrant crackdown was vividly captured by AFP photojournalist Herika Martinez Prado, who shot

the moment a National Guardsman dragged a Nicaraguan woman and her daughter back from the Rio Grande in Ciudad Juarez, across from El Paso, Texas. In the picture, another guardsman, carrying an assault rifle, moves to intercept a second woman trailing close behind them. —AFP

Coal dust and smog plague lives in South Africa's Highveld

EMALAHLENI: Tumelo has again lost several days at school because of sickness. "My eyes are burning. Sometimes I can't breathe," she coughs. "The doc said there is nothing we can do," says her mother Nono Ledwaba. "We need to take her out of eMalahleni. When she goes to her grandma in Mafikeng, the

symptoms disappear." The 14-year-old lives in house number 3094 of eMpumelweni township in eMalahleni, part of the Highveld region turned over to mines and power plants that, according to activists, are killing local people.

Her neighbour in 3095, Lifa Pelican, has similar symptoms, which badly set back his schooling. At 25, he never moves without his inhaler, even inside his chilly home with rough-hewn walls. "If I don't have it with me, sometimes I can't breathe. Sometimes I feel I am going to die," he says. "These mines get a lot of money and we suffer. There's solar power. We don't need to use these coal plants."

Green energy such as solar and wind power account for less than two percent of electricity production in South Africa, while coal still provides 86 percent. Lifa's breathing troubles began

after he moved to eMalahleni, at the mercy of gritty coal dust and thick whitish smoke of electricity power stations burning fuel day and night. Relief comes when he visits his father in Nelspruit, about 200 kilometres (125 miles) away, trips that feel like a new lease on life. "I don't use the inhaler."

Tumelo's own troubles began when the family moved to eMalahleni in 2007, when she was a toddler. The trips to Mafikeng are literally a breath of fresh air - her grandmother's home is 400 kms from the mines. "The only solution is to close down the plants, but will this happen?" Ledwaba asks. eMalahleni, which means "the place of coal", is among the worst places in the world for pollution by nitrogen dioxide and sulphur dioxide, according to Greenpeace. —AFP

International

Indian mother and her daughter's heads shaved for 'resisting' rape

Mother and daughter hacked to death over allegations of witchcraft

PATNA: An Indian mother and her daughter had their heads shaved and were paraded through their village after resisting an attempted rape by men including a local official, police said Friday. The world's largest democracy has an abysmal record on sexual crime against women, particularly in rural areas where the majority of the 1.3-billion population lives. Ward councillor Mohammad Khurshid forcibly entered the women's home in the eastern state of Bihar on Wednesday with other men and allegedly attempted to rape the newly married 19-year-old daughter, police told AFP.

When she and her mother - whose husband tries to make ends meet by begging - resisted, they were both

physically assaulted and Khurshid brought in the local barber to shave their heads, the elder woman told police. "Until now only six accused in the case have been arrested. Police have been conducting raids to arrest others as they are absconding after the incident," local policeman Sanjay Kumar said. The councillor and the barber were among those being held, with the case attracting national media coverage and opposition lawmakers hitting out at the state government.

Mother-daughter killed

In another development, an Indian mother and daughter were hacked to death by three men over allegations of witchcraft in the country's remote tribal-

dominated east, police said yesterday. The 50-year-old woman and her young daughter were beaten by their neighbours before being attacked with knives on Wednesday night in West Singhbhum district in Jharkhand state. Police said the victims' family was embroiled in a land dispute with one of the accused, who used black magic allegations as a cover-up to commit the crime.

"One of the accused told the villagers that the women were witches and responsible for deaths and diseases in the village. They attacked the women and killed them brutally," district police chief Indrajit Mahatha said. The woman's husband filed a complaint against the accused who are on the run, he

said. More than 2,000 people-many of them women-were killed in India on suspicion of witchcraft between 2000 and 2012, according to the National Crime Records Bureau.

Some states, including Jharkhand, have introduced special laws to try to curb crimes against people accused of witchcraft and superstition. Experts say belief in witchcraft and the occult remains widespread in impoverished rural communities across India. There are also occasional reports of human sacrifices. Earlier this month police in northeastern Assam state said they suspected a case of human sacrifice after finding the headless body of a woman near a Hindu temple. —Agencies

Who needs the G20? Question gets louder in Osaka

OSAKA: Donald Trump's go-it-alone approach and widening global differences on issues from trade to climate change are overwhelming the G20, analysts say, raising questions about whether the grouping still has a role to play in the world. The bloc, which expanded out of the original G7 rich-country club, has faced criticism over the years for lacking a charter, a clear mandate, or enforcement power, and holding hugely expensive yet inconclusive summits while excluding most of the developing world.

But while pressure on the bloc previously came from anti-globalisation protesters, this weekend's summit in Osaka showed that the greatest challenges to its legitimacy may come from within. Trump flew into Osaka after hurling new trade threats at G20 partners China and India. Japan failed to achieve a top priority of the summit's host, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe: forging a stronger, unanimous commitment to the Paris climate accords — due to US resistance.

Russia's Vladimir Putin said in the summit run-up that the liberalism long championed by G20 heavyweights Europe and the US was "obsolete". And the bloc looked powerless on the biggest issue faced in Osaka - the US-China trade war, which was hashed out in a bilateral meeting on the sidelines. "The G20 was created as a forum for cooperation and the question may well be: have we reached the point where it can no longer serve that purpose?" said Thomas A Bernes, a fellow with Canada's Center for International Governance Innovation.

Bystanders

The G20's baseline goal is preservation of world economic stability, but Trump has taken a sledgehammer to that with his "America First" trade war against China, and tariffs imposed on longtime trading partners he now derides as trade cheats. As with last year's summit in Buenos Aires, the Osaka gathering was essentially hijacked by the trade fight between the world's two biggest economies, consigning the other 18 members to the role of hapless bystanders. After a meeting Saturday with Chinese President Xi Jinping, Trump declared the two sides would restart trade negotiations broken off weeks ago after the US accused Beijing of backsliding on earlier pledges.

While that will likely calm financial markets for now, deep differences remain and the trade war is expected to simmer on. And the truce was worked out independent of the G20, overshadowing the summit's closing declaration, essentially a mere summary of the bloc's longtime talking points. Unfortunately for the G20, said Bernes, there is no substitute for US leadership.

Britain is bogged down in Brexit, and China is yet to prove its global leadership bona fides. German leader Angela Merkel's career is in its twilight, and Osaka's outcomes will likely underline doubts over Japan's effectiveness. "The question is where is the leadership? People may complain about US leadership in the past, (but) the US did at least provide some, which then others could react to," Bernes said. "If you look around: who else can play that role?"

Dark clouds

The G20's decline couldn't come at a worse time. Oxford Economics said in a research briefing that global trade growth has likely dropped to zero, compared to around six percent year-on-year growth in early 2018 — the worst reading since mid-2009 during the global financial crisis.

Leading indicators suggest trade will shrink further, it said, noting that summits like the G20 "often disappoint in terms of generating concrete action". "What's more, the problems go beyond pure growth, with bilateral disputes, particularly between the US and China, threatening to significantly erode the global rules-based trade system built up in the last several decades," it said. The G20 has been criticised in part for taking on an overly broad agenda, leading to disagreements and muddled outcomes.

Abe had staked his chairmanship largely on moving the ball forward on climate change, but Osaka's outcome seems only to have underlined the bloc's ineffectiveness, with the final declaration merely repeating language used last year. "The regrettable results on climate change underscored the G20's limitations. They are all on the same boat but with different interests," said Takehiko Yamamoto, an international politics expert at Japan's Waseda University. —AFP

'Say hello': Trump invites Kim to DMZ

OSAKA: US President Donald Trump yesterday invited North Korean leader Kim Jong Un to meet for a historic handshake at the demilitarised zone that divides the Korean peninsula, and said he would have "no problem" stepping over the border. The invitation issued on Twitter caught observers by surprise. If Kim accepts, it would be the third meeting between the leaders of the two former enemies amid efforts to contain North Korea's nuclear ambitions.

The North's official KCNA news agency quoted Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui as saying the offer was "a very interesting suggestion" but that no official request had been received. Trump lobbed the shock invitation on Twitter from the G20 summit in Osaka, saying: "if Chairman Kim of North Korea sees this, I would meet him at the Border/DMZ just to shake his hand and say Hello(!)"

He later said he would have "no problem" stepping into the North with Kim - in what would be a dramatic gesture re-enacting an extraordinary 2018 scene when the young leader invited South Korean President Moon Jae-in to walk across. "Sure I would, I would. I'd feel very comfortable doing that. I'd have no problem," Trump told reporters. The US leader said the invitation was spontaneous, but it comes amid a recent flurry of diplo-

macy over North Korea's nuclear programme after a Trump-Kim summit in Hanoi collapsed without an agreement.

Speculation grew that something was afoot when US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo skipped a G20 dinner Friday without giving a reason. "We'll see. If he is there, we will see each other for two minutes," said Trump, adding: "I just put out a feeler because I don't know where he is right now, he may not be in North Korea." "We seem to get along... That's a good thing, not a bad thing," added the president.

North Korea's Choe said if a meeting took place it would be "another meaningful occasion in further deepening the personal relations between the two leaders and advancing the bilateral relations." The North's speedy response to Trump's offer, and from such a senior figure, was seen by analysts as an indication that Kim would agree to the meeting as soon as Washington followed up with an official proposal. Trump told reporters that Kim "follows" his Twitter and they had received a "quick" reply.

Freeze and thaw

However, there was scepticism that a fleeting photo opportunity on the border, no matter how symbolic, would bridge the two nations' differences over the denuclearisation issue. "For talks to have real legs, either Kim must credibly commit to denuclearisation or Trump must credibly agree to allow Kim to keep some of his nuclear weapons," said Scott Seaman, director of Eurasia Group Asia.

"Without a shared end goal, creating a viable roadmap to reaching it will remain impossible." After several months of public

With a smile, Trump tells Russian leader 'don't meddle'

OSAKA: Much of Donald Trump's time in office has been overshadowed by allegations Moscow helped get him elected, but when it came to confronting Vladimir Putin on the issue, the US president did it in a joke. "Don't meddle in the election, president, don't meddle," Trump said with a smile, wagging his finger playfully at the Russian leader as the pair held talks in Osaka on Friday, on the sidelines of the G20.

Putin said nothing, but grinned in response to the comment, which came only after a reporter shouted a question, asking whether Trump would warn his Russian counterpart about influencing the presidential vote next year. And the casual banter appeared to have started early on in the meeting,

with footage that emerged later showing Trump calling journalists in the room "fake news" to smiles and nods from Putin.

"Fake. Fake news. You don't have the problem in Russia," Trump can be heard saying to Putin, in video of the start of their meeting, aired by CNN. "Yes. Yes. Yes. We have the problem," Putin responded in English. "The same," he added, laughing, prompting Trump to laugh as well. The meeting was the first time the two leaders have held face-to-face talks since a controversial meeting last year in Helsinki.

Trump has been dogged throughout his presidency by allegations of suspicious ties to Russia. A major probe led by special prosecutor Robert Mueller found there was an organised Russian campaign to influence the 2016 election won by Trump. It found contacts between Russian operatives and Trump's election campaign, but no evidence of a joint plot, and the US leader has characterised the findings as exonerating him.

Ahead of his meeting with Putin, Trump brushed aside questions from reporters

Keep the faith: Religion on the front lines of Hong Kong protests

HONG KONG: Held aloft above a sea of protesters marching through the heart of Hong Kong, the hand-written cardboard sign made an unusual demand: "Stop using baton or we sing Hallelujah to the Lord". The humorous threat, which was aimed at police and quickly went viral, referenced a hymn and notorious earworm that has become the anthem for recent massive demonstrations rocking the semi-autonomous city.

But it also illustrated the prominent role Christians are playing in the movement against a proposed bill to allow extraditions to mainland China. Most churches in Hong Kong tend to shy away from political involvement. But the now-postponed extradition bill struck a nerve with local ministries, many of which support underground churches in China.

"Everyone is worried about crossing the red line," Elton Lo, one of a group of pastors who initiated a week of fasting and prayers in sup-

port of the movement said. Unlike in mainland China - where faiths are strictly monitored by the state - Hong Kong still has religious freedom. From the influential colonial-era Catholic and Anglican communities to evangelical mega churches, Jehovah's Witnesses handing out leaflets and Hare Krishnas parading through parks, the city is a riot of faiths. But how long that remains the case is a source of intense nervousness.

Sliding freedoms

Under the handover deal signed with the British, China agreed to maintain Hong Kong's unique freedoms and judicial system until 2047. Yet many fear Beijing has already started renegeing on that deal in recent years. The plan to allow extraditions only heightened those concerns within faith communities, who feared the long arm of China's opaque and politicised law might start crossing the border. This was especially true for Hong Kongers helping underground faith groups on the mainland where a recent clampdown has seen churches shuttered, crosses removed and Bible sales restricted. "The Chinese Government could say that these ministries are illegal activities sponsored by the churches of Hong Kong. (Church leaders) could be arrested," said Chan Shun-hing, an expert on religion at Hong Kong Baptist University. Father Stephen Chan has



PAJU: In a file photo, a South Korean soldier aims a K-2 assault rifle from an observation point, on the southern side of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ), in Paju. —AFP

silence, an exchange of letters between the leaders appears to have thawed the deep-freeze and raised hopes for a third summit after a historic first tete-a-tete in Singapore on June 12, 2018 and the second in Hanoi in February.

Trump will head to Seoul immediately after the summit in Osaka, where yesterday he held a highly anticipated meeting with Chinese President Xi Jinping that produced a truce in trade tensions between the world's top two economies. Last week, Xi visited Pyongyang for a highly symbolic summit with Kim. Analysts say that diplomatic breakthroughs often

follow on from such meetings.

The Trump-Kim Hanoi summit foundered amid disagreements on what the North would be willing to give up in exchange for relief from sanctions that have crippled its economy. The two sides blamed each other for the breakdown but Washington has said they are prepared to meet the North Koreans at any time without preconditions to keep diplomacy alive. According to South Korea's Unification minister, Kim and Trump have exchanged a total of 12 letters since the beginning of last year, with Kim the more assiduous suitor in their nuclear bromance, penning eight of those. —AFP



OSAKA: Russian President Vladimir Putin and US President Donald Trump hold a meeting on the sidelines of the G20 summit on Friday. —AFP

about what they would discuss. "What I say to him is none of your business," he said at the White House. But on Friday Trump said the pair would be discussing "trade... some disarmament, a little protec-

tionism perhaps." "A lot of very positive things are going to come out of the relationship," he predicted, to smiles from Putin. "I cannot but agree with Mr President," the Russian leader said. —AFP



HONG KONG: A British Union Jack flag is displayed as protesters gather along a fenced-off Victoria Harbour pier in Hong Kong. —AFP

hosted an outdoor mass near the city's parliament each Sunday since the 2014 pro-democracy Umbrella Movement protests failed to win any concessions from Beijing.

"They (Catholics) know that if Hong Kong becomes Communist China, then there will be no more (religious freedom)," he told AFP after

a service last weekend. Lo and Chan both said more church leaders and congregations were now participating in the anti-government demonstrations compared with 2014. Even though many of the Umbrella Movement's older leaders are devout Christians, it never had an openly religious feel. —AFP

Analysis

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Washington Watch

What if Palestinians 'take the money run?'

By Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

I wasn't at the "Peace to Prosperity" Summit, but I listened to some of the speeches and read the documents the White House produced for the event. Nothing that I saw or read changed my belief that the entire affair was long on fantasy, short on reality. Even with that, however, a heretical thought came to mind - but more on that later.

Let me make it clear at the outset that I am a fan of imagining the future. During the Clinton Administration my mantra with regard to the Israeli-Palestinian process was that what was needed was "a vision of the future that was so compelling people would be drawn to it." Back then, there was still the hope that a political solution could be found leading to an independent Palestinian state in the territories that Israel had occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital.

It was such a vision that led Yasser Arafat to imagine, that with independence, Gaza could become like Singapore. With peace and freedom, Palestinians could connect the West Bank to Gaza. They could build a seaport and airport, attract investment, start businesses and become a commercial hub and a tourist destination. There were other grand ideas. In fact, despite Jared Kushner's patronizing presumptuousness, nothing in his vision was new, since Palestinians had already imagined such a future.

But all came crashing down to earth when Israel implemented a closure of the borders after the an Israeli massacred Muslim worshippers in Hebron: erected hundreds of purely punitive checkpoints throughout the West Bank; cut East Jerusalem off from the rest of the occupied lands; built a wall inside of '67 line and established a network of military outposts and settlements in the Jordan Valley, which denied Palestinians full access to almost 25 percent of their most fertile fields; intensified policies of collective punishment, repression, humiliation, and degradation of millions of innocent civilians; denied Palestinians access to over 80 percent of their land and natural resources; blockaded and strangled Gaza; and began a massive settlement expansion program that has seen the number Israelis in the West Bank almost quadruple to over 620,000 settlers.

OK, I know that Kushner warned in his speech that there would be someone like me who would be Mr Negativity - bringing up the old arguments of the past and blaming Israel for everything. But it's important to point out that Kushner, while completely absolving the Israelis, did his own share of blaming. Except, in his case, all the blame was placed squarely on the Palestinians' shoulders - as if all of the Palestinian's problems were of their own making. I've been too close to this situation for too long and while I can find fault in the ossified and struggling Palestinian Authority and the brutally stupid, self-defeating tactics employed by Hamas, the flaws of the Palestinians are a function of the impossible situation created by deformities resulting from Israel's brutal and oppressive policies. Blaming the Palestinians is nothing more than blaming the victim while letting the victimizer go free.

The reality is that there is a reason why the Palestinian economy never "took off" - Palestinians were denied the opportunity to grow by the relentless occupation that refused to cede control. Compounding Kushner's detachment from reality was his lack of self-awareness regarding the impact of the policies pursued by his own administration and the laughable absurdity of his claim that he and President Trump "haven't given up on the Palestinians" and still care for them! The Trump team has turned a blind eye to Israel's land seizures, settlement expansion, "legalization" of outposts, and home demolitions.

In addition to moving the US Embassy to East Jerusalem, they have acquiesced to Israeli policies that have consolidated control and expanded settler compounds in East Jerusalem and are even now suggesting that they would look favorably on further annexations in other parts of the West Bank. And they have cut all aid to Palestinian institutions, including hospitals and schools. To now suggest that they want to "empower Palestinians" through education and health care is disingenuous, at best.

With this in mind, as I listened to Kushner's speech and read through the plans, offended by their lack of reality, patronizing tone, naivete, and refusal to acknowledge how we got to where we are, a heretical idea came to mind: imagine what might happen if Palestinians were to take the money and run?

From its beginning, Israel mastered the art of dissembling. They have repeatedly agreed to terms that they had no intention of honoring. Instead, they pocketed their gains and moved on. In the beginning, they agreed to a partition and then plotted how to ethnically cleanse the area to make their new state, in Ben Gurion's words, "larger and more Jewish".

NOTE: Dr James J Zogby is the President of the Arab American Institute

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This picture taken on May 17, 2019 shows a worker inspecting a restored part of the Great Wall in Xiangshulhu in Hualou district on the outskirts of Beijing. — AFP

Mules, tools, old bricks: Rebuilding the Great Wall

Nature, time, neglect and millions of footsteps have taken their toll on the Great Wall of China leaving much of it crumbling, but repairing it can be painstaking - and controversial - work. After public outcry when a 700-year-old section of the monument was 'fixed' by covering it with cement - authorities insisted on more authentic restoration using traditional methods: so now laborers, aided by mules, use reclaimed stones and mortar.

"They are all the bricks that collapsed from the original wall. The bricks are used to mend these places," said Li Jingdong, one of the workers restoring the Jiankou section. Around him, laborers use an electric hoist to put a large stone that had fallen from the wall back in place, while mules traverse the steep mountainside bringing water and lime mortar for workers to mix and bind the stones with.

It is physically demanding work - placing one rock can take around 45 minutes and for their efforts, they are paid 150 yuan (\$22) per day. The plan to use traditional methods was implemented earlier this year in a bid to preserve the original look of China's famous landmark, which is split into sections that altogether stretch for thousands of kilometres from China's east coast to the edge of the Gobi

desert. Engineer Cheng Yongmao, who has led operations in Jiankou for 15 years, said the latest restoration plan is meant to make "people feel that it has not been repaired".

Construction of the Great Wall first began in the third century BC and continued for centuries. Nearly 6,300 km, including the Jiankou section, were built in the Ming Dynasty of 1368-1644. Today it attracts around 10 million tourists per year - but the swell of visitors, combined with age and weathering, has left swathes of it in ruins. In places it is so dilapidated that estimates of its total length vary from 9,000 to 21,000 km, depending on whether missing sections are included. To protect the relic, authorities in the heavily-visited Badaling section of the wall decided to cap visits to 65,000 people per day from June 1.

'It will break'

In 2016, a section of the Great Wall in northeast Liaoning province was covered in cement, turning the uneven path - originally built in 1381 - into a flat surface which some compared to an ordinary pavement. Images of the restoration work went viral, causing a social media uproar, with people leaving comments such as "it's heartbreaking" and "poor

Great Wall". In response to that and other less high-profile cases, the Ministry of Culture and Tourism released a new conservation plan earlier this year based on the principle of minimum intervention to restore the wall.

Song Xinchao, deputy director of the National Cultural Heritage Administration said some of those tasked with preserving the wall have "stereotyped ideas" that every portion should look like Beijing's Badaling section, a heavily visited site that includes cable cars. "They confuse restoration of the wall with the development of a tourist attraction," Xinchao was quoted as saying the state-run China Daily earlier this year.

But on the ground, some workers view the new method with skepticism. "In the past, we repaired the entire ground. Now the idea is to repair less and keep more of the original things intact," said Li Jingdong. While the new regulation will accomplish the goal of keeping the aesthetic of the old wall, Li fears that such repairs will not last and the structure will keep falling apart. He explained: "The idea is right, but I personally think that it still looks tattered after being repaired. Especially in the slopes, it will break in less a year under the feet (of tourists)." — AFP



Donkey cheese is seen on a plate on June 19, 2019 in a nature reserve in northern Serbia called Zasavica. — AFP

'Wonder of nature': Serbia's expensive donkey cheese

White, dense and rich in flavor, Serbia's one-of-a-kind donkey cheese is not only tasty but good for your health, says maker Slobodan Simic. There's only one catch - at €1,000 (\$1,130) a kilo, it may well be the most expensive cheese in the world. Since 2012, Simic and his team of farmers have been milking a herd of more than 200 donkeys who live on a nature reserve northern Serbia called Zasavica. Their milk has similar properties to breastmilk and is touted by Simic as a cure for a range of ailments, including asthma and bronchitis. "A human baby can take this milk from the first day, without having it diluted," he says, calling it a "wonder of nature".

While a lack of scientific studies make it difficult to assess its health properties, the milk is high in protein and has been recognized by the UN as a good alterna-

tive for those with allergies to cow's milk. But "what no one in the world does, and could never make, is the donkey cheese," Simic says of his flagship product. Donkey milk has low levels of casein - a type of protein that acts as a binding agent in cheese-making.

But a staff member at Zasavica discovered that portions of donkey milk could be mixed with some from goats in order to craft the crumbly mounds of cheese. The mixture also helps make up for the fact that donkeys produce less than a litre of milk a day - a fraction of the 40 litres a cow can provide. The farm sells between six and 15 kilos of cheese a year, mainly to foreigners and tourists who visit, says Simic. They also produce donkey milk soap and liquor.

For Simic, the business is also a way to protect the Balkan donkey, an animal that has become less prevalent as machines take their place in agriculture. "We are maintaining the need for this animal and now there are more and more donkey farms, the demand for donkeys is higher... which is a very good thing for us and the region," he says. The unique product made headlines in 2012 after false rumors spread that Serbia's tennis star Novak Djokovic had bought up an annual supply - which he denied. — AFP

Benin leaps into 21st century with new national map

The last time that cartographers mapped Benin, Elvis Presley had just released "Jailhouse Rock", the Soviets had launched Sputnik - and the country was still a colony named French Dahomey. Things in the West African state have sure changed since 1957, and the old maps were left in the dust as the population nearly quadrupled and cities and towns expanded relentlessly. Today, though, map-makers are proud to unveil a 21st-century digital chart that they hope will serve Benin for many years, helping to guide development and preserve its environment.

"It's the first complete map of (post-colonial) Benin, from the (Atlantic) ocean in the south to the Niger river in the north," says Roch Bah, director of the National Geographical Institute (IGN) of Benin. "And we are the first country in French-speaking Africa to have one on the scale of 1:50,000," Bah adds, proudly. For more than two years, two aircraft crisscrossed the skies to take high-resolution aerial photographs. With these, some 30 Beninese cartographers used digital technology to map every waterway, road and building.

But that was just the first step. Once an area was digitalized, teams on the ground had to trek through thousands of towns and villages to check on names, boundaries and the state of roads. "We had the old maps," said Cyril Romieu, of Paris-based IGN FI, a geographic information company awarded the tender in 2014 to carry out the mapping. "But names change when they're not written down. So we asked local elected representatives and the population. 'As for boundaries - between the villages - we drew those on the basis of what people told us,'" he said.

'Obsolete, unusable'

The project arose from work to safeguard trees around streams in Benin where deforestation can lead to flooding, pollution and greater poverty for local communities, according to the United Nations. The study was subsequently extended to the whole country at a cost of 8.3 million euros (\$9.3 million), financed by the European Union and the United Nations Development Program (UNDP).

A comparison with French colonial maps of the 1950s shows the extent to which urbanization has taken hold in Benin, a nation of about 11 million. The capital, Porto Novo, has grown from a

settlement along the Oueme river into a widely spread city. The map-making process also revealed that there are approximately 1,550 health centres, 8,500 schools, 9,025 water sources and 9,400 places of worship dotted across the country. In mid-April, the new National Map was presented to the Beninese authorities, who started to work with it at once. "The old one was obsolete and unusable," said Minister of the Living Environment and Sustainable Development Jose Tonato. "We are already basing ourselves on the new one, notably to pick the sites for the implantation of future markets."

Working with 'a jewel'

The website of IGN-FI, which operates globally, says the new map will provide crucial data for sustainable development. Any urban planning project - from infrastructure, transport, tourism and power supply to the impact on agriculture - depends on accurate cartography and precise geographic statistics, says IGN FI's technical and quality director Aurelie Milledogues. "Once you know your territory well, you can properly think through changes and control them," she told AFP.

The map will likely prove to be a precious tool in the struggles against deforestation and the coastal erosion that threatens Cotonou, the economic capital, port and biggest city in Benin. "We're going to get to know better our national spaces and to better plan our projects," said Aristide Adjademe, director general of Water, Forests and Hunting, for whom the map is "a jewel".

Freely accessible?

Some of the collated data has been put on the Internet in French and English. "Will we be able to have access to the full map for free?" asked Sam Agbadonou, president of the Open Street Map Benin association. Several technology startups have asked the same question, in the hope of building the likes of tourism apps, which would require access to all the data. For now, the whole National Map is only available on paper. Geographer Vincent Orekan, a GPS expert and associate professor at Benin's University of Abomey-Calavi who took part in the mapping project, points out a new social need born of the work. "In Benin, we're not used to reading maps," he said. "We need to raise awareness in the public." — AFP

Business

SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2019

Trump hints at softer stance on Huawei

OSAKA: President Donald Trump said yesterday that US companies could sell equipment to Chinese telecom giant Huawei, indicating a potentially softer position on a key sticking point in the US-China trade war. "US companies can sell their equipment to Huawei," Trump told reporters in Osaka hours after sealing a tariff truce with Chinese President Xi Jinping.


"We're talking about equipment where there's no great national security problem with it." It was not immediately clear whether Trump's comment marked a material change in the stance toward Huawei, which has essentially been barred on

national security grounds from accessing crucial American technology or operating in the US market. The US fears that systems built by Huawei—the world leader in telecom network equipment and number two smartphone supplier—could be used by China's government for espionage via built-in secret security "back doors".

Huawei vigorously denies that and says the US has never provided proof to substantiate it. Last month the US government added Huawei to an "entity list" of companies barred from receiving US-made components without permission from Washington. Trump's comment on its face does not mark

a change from current practice. But it could be read by financial markets as a positive signal that his administration may be open to negotiating on Huawei when bilateral trade talks resume.

However, any softening on Huawei could meet resistance from a bipartisan US congressional movement that is calling for a hardline on the firm. A Huawei spokesperson told AFP the company had no initial comment. Trump has imposed tariffs on \$200 billion of Chinese imports in an effort to force Beijing into intellectual property protection and other reforms of a trading system that Washington says gives China huge unfair advantages. — AFP


Miras Legal Advises TAQA on the Acquisition of Schlumberger's Drilling Business for USD 415 Million


Partners Khaled Al Jallal and Abdullah Al Khurafi

Founding Partner of Miras Legal, Mr. Abdullah Yaqoub Al Khurafi, stated, "Miras Legal acted as a legal advisor to the Industrialization and Energy Services Company (TAQA) in the acquisition of Schlumberger's oil drilling rigs in the State of Kuwait through its subsidiary Arab Drilling Company. The acquisition was part of a greater, multi-jurisdictional transaction which also included the acquisition of Schlumberger's drilling business in Oman, Pakistan and Iraq for a combined total value of USD 415 million (SAR 1.56 billion)."

Elaborating further, Founding Partner Mr. Khaled Yousef Al Jallal said, "Miras Legal team has provided advice and consultancy services in accordance with internationally recognized standards. The firm carried out the legal research and due diligence in relation to the Kuwaiti-jurisdiction part of the transaction and provided relevant legal advice in such regard."

TAQA is a Saudi Arabian Joint Stock Company with the Saudi Arabian Public Investment Fund owning 45.70% of the shares, with the remaining being owned collectively by government agencies, joint stock companies and several private and industrial investors representing a cross section of the Saudi industrial community.

Miras Legal establishes itself as a law firm with corporate and transactional expertise on both a local and international basis.



NEW YORK: A monitor displays numbers ahead of the closing bell on the floor of the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. Wall Street stocks advanced on Friday, concluding a banner first half of the year even as a prolonged US-China trade war led to losses on the week. — AFP

Trump and Xi seal trade war truce

Washington vows to hold off on further tariffs, talks 'back on track'

OSAKA: US President Donald Trump and his Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping struck a trade war truce yesterday, as Washington vowed to hold off on further tariffs and declared negotiations with China "back on track". The ceasefire that halts damaging trade frictions came in a hotly anticipated meeting between the leaders of the world's top two economies on the sidelines of the G20 summit. Trump hailed the meeting in the Japanese city of Osaka as "excellent".

"We are right back on track," he added. There was little in the way of concrete details on what was agreed, but Trump confirmed Washington had committed not to impose any new tariffs on Beijing's exports and that the two sides would continue talks.

"We won't be adding an additional tremendous amount of \$350 billion left which could be taxed or could be tariffed. We're not doing that, we are going to work with China on where we left off to see if we can make a deal," Trump said at a press conference.

"We will be continuing to negotiate." The outcome was likely to be seen as a win for avoiding any new tariffs. "The base case scenario was met at G20 and while we are no worse for wear, let's see what the G20 hang-over brings," said Stephen Innes, market analyst at Vanguard Markets.

'Down the tubes'

Trump struck a conciliatory tone from his arrival in Japan for the summit, despite saying China's economy was going "down the tubes" before he set out for Osaka. He said he was ready for a "historic" deal with China as the leaders kicked off their meeting, and Xi told him that dialogue was better than confrontation.

In their final statement, the G20 leaders admitted that "most importantly, trade and geopolitical tensions have intensified," echoing hard-won language from their finance ministers at a meeting earlier this month. There were few more concrete details about the closed-door discussions but Trump suggested a potentially softer

position on the Chinese telecoms firm Huawei, which has been a sticking point in the trade war. He said US companies could sell equipment in cases "where there's no great national security problem" to the firm, which Washington fears poses security risks. But it was not immediately clear whether the comments marked a material change on Huawei, which has essentially been barred from accessing crucial US technology. The tete-a-tete between the US and Chinese leaders—the first since the last G20 in December—cast a long shadow over this year's gathering in Osaka.

Protectionism and tariffs wars have proved a major headwind for a world economy already buffeted by geopolitical tensions and Brexit. On Friday, the European Union and the South American trade bloc Mercosur offered a ray of trade hope by sealing a blockbuster deal after 20 years of talks, with European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker hailing it as a "strong message" in support of "rules-based trade".

'Go much further'

Trade has proved far from the only contentious issue on the summit table, with climate change another major sticking point. Negotiations ran into the night, with US opposition proving difficult to overcome. In the end, a deal of sorts was reached, with 19 members—minus the United States—agreeing Saturday to the "irreversibility" of the Paris climate deal and pledging its full implementation. The language in the final statement after the Osaka summit mirrored that agreed during last year's G20 but this did not satisfy French President Emmanuel Macron who urged leaders to go "much further" on climate change. Trump has dominated the headlines from the summit, and once again caught observers by surprise by tweeting early yesterday that he was open to meeting North Korea's Kim Jong Un while in South Korea this weekend.

"If Chairman Kim of North Korea sees this, I would meet him at the Border/DMZ just to shake his hand and



WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump said Friday that China wants a trade deal with the United States because its economy is weakening. — AFP

say Hello(!)", he wrote. He later said he would be happy to step over the border into North Korea, which would represent an extraordinary move for a US leader after decades of enmity between Washington and Pyongyang.

Apple will shift production of its Mac Pro computers to China, The Wall Street Journal reported Friday. That desktop is the only major Apple device produced in the US, in Texas to be exact. Apple has chosen a Taiwanese contractor, Quanta Computer Inc, to manufacture the \$6,000 desktop computer near Shanghai, the Journal said, quoting people familiar with Apple's plans. Apple did not respond to an AFP request for comment. Mac Pro is a niche product for Apple and not a high volume seller. But the shift could still anger President Donald Trump, who has been pressing US companies in general and Apple specifically to make things in America. — AFP

Russia, Saudi agree to extend OPEC output cut agreement

OSAKA: Russia and Saudi Arabia have agreed to extend a deal to keep oil production low owing to abundant world supplies. President Vladimir Putin said yesterday.

"We will extend this deal, Russia and Saudi Arabia. For how long? We will think about that. For six or nine months. It is possible that it could be up to nine months," Putin told reporters after a G20 summit in Osaka. The OPEC cartel and its oil-producer nation allies opted in December to trim daily crude output by 1.2 million barrels.

The Organization of the Petroleum Exporting Countries, a cartel of 14 countries pumping one third of the world's oil, is holding a high-stakes meeting in Vienna on Tuesday.

The meeting comes against a background of ample global crude supplies, according to both the cartel and the International Energy Agency (IEA). The Paris-based IEA watchdog has cut its forecast for 2019 oil demand-growth for a second straight month and has also trimmed its second-quarter forecast.

Russia's deal with Saudi Arabia on crude production cuts shows their commitment to stabilizing the oil market, Russian Energy Minister Alexander Novak said in a statement yesterday. Russia has agreed with Saudi Arabia to extend by six to nine months a deal with OPEC on reducing oil production. — Agencies

Business

EU, S America bloc reach trade deal after two decades of talks

Agreement presents potential challengers to European farmers

BRUSSELS: The European Union and South American trade bloc Mercosur sealed a blockbuster trade deal Friday, ending 20 years of talks over one of the world's largest regional commercial accords, negotiators said. The agreement came after two decades of often tough negotiations between the EU and the countries of Mercosur—Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay—which had repeatedly stalled because of European farmer sensitivities over the beef market.

The deal was announced as the US administration of President Donald Trump faced several bilateral disputes, including trade tensions with China and disagreements with EU countries. "I measure my words carefully when I say that this is a historical moment," European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker told reporters on the sidelines of the G20 in Osaka.

"In the midst of international trade tensions, we are sending today a strong signal with our Mercosur partners that we stand for rules-based trade." In a strong show of unity, all the European and Mercosur leaders also members of the G20 gathered for a joint photo, with Argentine President Mauricio Macri also hailing a "historic day."

European farmers concerned

The trade pact is the largest ever concluded

by the EU. Juncker said in a statement released in Brussels, and would save European companies more than four billion euros (\$4.5 billion) worth of trade duties every year. It covers markets that total approximately 780 million consumers, an EU statement said.

Brazil welcomed a "historic" agreement with the EU, while Argentina called the deal "unprecedented". The announcement of the deal, details of which were not revealed and which must be approved by the 28 EU member states, comes as leaders of the world's most powerful economies gather in Osaka, Japan, for a G20 summit.

Once implemented, it is tipped to eliminate 99 percent of agricultural and industrial tariffs on both sides and facilitate exchanges in services and government procurement, reduce technical barriers, and effect sanitary and phytosanitary measures and intellectual property. The agreement has nonetheless raised concerns of European farmers who fear unfair competition, as well as NGOs concerned about consequences for the climate.

Challenges to EU farmers

"Today's agreement also presents some challenges to European farmers and the European Commission will be available to help farmers meet these challenges," the EU's

agriculture commissioner Phil Hogan said in a statement. "For this agreement to be a win-win... carefully managed quotas will ensure that there is no risk that any product will flood the EU market and thereby threaten the livelihood of EU farmers."

The 28-member EU currently accounts for about one-quarter of global gross domestic product (GDP) at 18 trillion euros (\$20 trillion). Finalization of the talks had been complicated by French President Emmanuel Macron, who threatened to scrub the deal if Brazil withdrew from the Paris climate accord that commits signatories to reducing greenhouse gas emissions and which Brazil's President Jair Bolsonaro has threatened to leave.

"If Brazil leaves the Paris accord, we could not sign trade deals with them," Macron said Thursday night in Japan en route to Osaka for the G20 summit. "The reason is simple, we are requiring our farmers to stop using pesticides... our businesses to reduce emissions. That has a competitive cost," Macron added.

Cognac and Manchego cheese
Activists had urged the EU to halt the Mercosur trade talks over Brazil's alleged harm to its rainforests and indigenous peoples in order to benefit influential agribusinesses. For Europe, the deal would mean greater access to large South American automobile



markets and respect for so-called protected geographical indications such as Cognac or Manchego cheese.

The EU is also counting on the agreement to improve access to the South American market for telecommunications, transport or financial services. Mercosur countries in

return hope to export up to 99,000 tons of beef to Europe a year before they have to pay tariffs, alongside stronger exports of ethanol, sugar and poultry. The EU and Mercosur exchange 88 billion euros in goods annually, with a balance very slightly in favor of the Europeans (+2.5 billion euros). — AFP

Landais appointed CEO of Action Hotels Company

KUWAIT: Christophe Landais has been appointed as Chief Executive Officer of Dubai-based, Action Hotels Company (AHC), the leading owner, developer and asset manager of branded three- and four-star hotels in prime locations throughout the Middle East and Australia.

Landais, former Managing Director and Chief Operating Officer of Accor in the Middle East, brings more than 30 years' experience in executive hospitality management to AHC. He will steer the group's executive strategy for its 13-strong property portfolio, as well as the development pipeline, soon to offer a total of 2,256 rooms.

In this regard, AHC's Founder and Chairman, Sheikh Mubarak A M Al-Sabah describes Landais as "a perfect fit" citing his extensive executive hotelier experience at Accor, a preferred 'Action Hotels' partner. "Christophe has spent many years in the hospitality sector holding executive positions, including at Accor in the region. This gives



Christophe Landais

him a deep understanding of AHC's philosophy, anchored in satisfying the underserved growing demand for economy and midscale hotels.

"Indeed, as Action Hotels owns hospitality real estate, Christophe's remit will draw on his deep knowledge of designing, developing and operating high-quality, affordable, branded accommodation for today's discerning, budget-savvy business and leisure travelers." Fast on the heels of his appointment, Landais will steer the opening of the group's next property, the prime-positioned 220-room Novotel Bur Dubai, a four-star, Accor-operated hotel in Dubai Medical City within a few months.

"The up-coming Novotel Bur Dubai is a perfect example of Action Hotels Company's ability to secure prime land to complement its already-strong network of high-quality assets in locations across the Middle East and Australia, each showing its ability for significant capital appreciation", said Landais.



Warba Bank announces 5 winners of Al-Sunbula weekly draw

KUWAIT: Warba Bank, "the Best investment Bank" and "Best Corporate Bank" in Kuwait, held its weekly Sunbula draw number 25. The draw announced the 5 lucky winners in the presence of representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and bank officials.

The bank proudly announced the lucky 5 winners of the KD 1000 prize: Mohammad Ahmad Mohammad Al-Bannay, Mohammad Awadh Rashed Al-Ajmi, Falah Obaid Mohammad Al-Ajmi, Aryam Talal Medad Al-Dahoum Al-Azmi and Salah Abdulmohsen Mohammad Al-Mousa.

Al-Sunbula both account and fixed deposits are the perfect choices for customers who wish to save money and achieve steady returns while at the same time have the opportunity to win cash prizes throughout the year. In line with the bank's mission to develop and differentiate its offerings, Warba Bank has enhanced its Sunbula campaign for 2019 with more cash and prizes reaching more than KD 1 million.

Warba Bank will continue its weekly draws for 5 winners of KD 1,000 each. What's new in 2019 are the "mega draws" which will be held every quarter to reveal five winners, the 1st winner will get KD 100,000! The four winners thereafter will each get the latest Land Cruiser VXR. Furthermore, the final Mega draw held in January 2020 will feature 2 more Land Cruiser VXRs!

As for the chances for winning, each customer is eligible to enter the draw against each KD 10 in the Sunbula Account. Nevertheless, Sunbula Fixed Deposit investors also get chances in the Sunbula draws along with high expected returns that reach up to 3.5 percent distributed either monthly or at maturity upon the customer's preference.

Furthermore, Warba Bank is leveraging on its Customer Onboarding solution, in line with its ambitious five-year strategy that enables non-Warba Bank customers to request the opening of Al-Sunbula account in a simple electronic manner without having to visit the branch, through 5 simple steps in 5 minutes. New customers will be able to request opening the account at anytime, anywhere, through the new and unique electronic system used to implement this service. Representatives will then contact the customer to determine the appropriate time to visit the branch to get required signatures, verify the customer's identity, deliver his/her debit card, and activate the account.

Saudi's hometown ambitions could clip wealth fund's wings

RIYADH: Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund (PIF) risks being pulled deeper into Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's domestic projects, curbing its international ambitions and tying its fortunes closer to its home market, four sources familiar with its strategy said.

Unusually for a sovereign wealth fund, which typically is solely focused on generating wealth for future generations, PIF has a two-pronged mandate - it is also expected to develop domestic projects that will reduce Saudi Arabia's reliance on oil. That means PIF acting as a cornerstone investor on some major hometown ventures with foreign investors expected to join in.

The projects include a high-tech economic zone dubbed NEOM planned for an area close to the size of Belgium, an entertainment park outside Riyadh called Qiddiya being built on a site 2-1/2 times larger than Disney World, and a luxury tourist resort off the Red Sea coast that will span more than 90 islands. With the exception of Six Flags, a US theme park group, which signed a deal to operate at Qiddiya, no other foreign partners or investors have been publicly announced for the ventures. Six Flags did not respond to a request for comment.

Now, two years after the projects were announced, there is a risk they could be delayed or scaled back if foreign funding does not materialize because PIF won't be able to put up all the money required in the current time-frame, according to two of the sources. PIF's domestic responsibilities also make it more challenging for the \$300 billion fund to resume its previous frenetic pace of overseas investment. It has not made any foreign investments so far this year, according to Refinitiv data.

PIF declined to comment on the involvement of foreign capital and the impact the domestic projects could have on its plans. It said it was still aiming to have a quarter of its assets invested abroad by next year, and half by 2030 compared to 15 percent currently. PIF also said significant progress had been made in financing plans for the domestic projects.

"Each Giga-Project is developing tailored partnership and financing models, through discussions and coordination between PIF, the respective management teams and lending institutions," the fund said.

It declined to say how much it has invested so far or the amount of financing being discussed. PIF does not release information about its financial performance. The fund lost out on an estimated \$100 billion windfall when the initial public offering of oil giant Saudi Aramco was shelved last year. It has partially filled the gap by raising debt and selling a stake in a petrochemicals company.

As the world's largest oil exporter, Saudi Arabia has the means to step in if private funding doesn't materialise for the projects. The state could inject fresh capital into PIF or finance the ventures from the central government budget

but analysts said it would likely want to avoid that.

"The government has not stated any intention to inject fresh funding into the PIF and we think it will try to limit its on-budget exposure, conscious of still-high fiscal deficits and wanting to try to preserve its balance sheet strengths," said Krisjanis Krustins, a director of sovereigns at Fitch Rating agency. The government's communications office did not respond to a Reuters request for comment.

Diversification

Saudi authorities have said NEOM, tucked away in the desert kingdom's northwest corner, will cost \$500 billion. Estimates have not been released for Qiddiya or the Red Sea Project, but a source familiar with the latter said its initial phase would cost \$2.5 billion. Local media have reported the cost of the infrastructure alone for Qiddiya would reach up to 30 billion riyals (\$8 billion) and the project would eventually be worth tens of billions of riyals.

Reuters could not independently verify these figures.

Reuters spoke to more than a dozen people for this story, including bankers, lawyers and corporate advisers. Most of them declined to be named because of sensitivities around PIF, which is chaired by the 33-year-old crown prince, who also controls the kingdom's economic, energy and security policies.

Cyrille Urfer, who used to lead PIF's investments in global public markets, said it was inevitable the fund would play a major role in the crown prince's plans to diversify the economy away from crude.

"At the end of the day, the owner and the one who takes the decision is the Saudi government, and PIF is the tool that is supervising the execution of these projects," said Urfer, who now works at Geneva-based asset manager Unigestion. The Red Sea Development Company, set up to develop the tourism scheme, said it was talking to banks for financing but declined to provide details. — Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

ASIAN COUNTRIES	
US Dollar Transfer	304.100
Euro	349.110
Sterling Pound	389.700
Canadian dollar	234.280
Turkish lira	53.820
Swiss Franc	314.970
US Dollar Buying	296.750
ASIAN COUNTRIES	
Japanese Yen	2.819
Indian Rupees	4.417
Pakistani Rupees	1.945
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.719
Nepali Rupees	2.753
Singapore Dollar	226.600
Hongkong Dollar	38.922
Bangladesh Taka	3.587
Philippine Peso	5.944
Thai Baht	9.933
Malaysian ringgit	77.775
GCC COUNTRIES	
Saudi Riyal	81.147
Qatari Riyal	83.578
Omani Riyal	790.383
Bahraini Dinar	808.020
UAE Dirham	82.850
ARAB COUNTRIES	
Egyptian Pound - Cash	21.750
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	18.175
Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1.221
Tunisian Dinar	109.000
Jordanian Dinar	429.670
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	0.203
Syrian Lira	0.000
Morocco Dirham	32.524

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfr	Selling Rate
US Dollar	303.640
Canadian Dollar	231.025
Sterling Pound	386.455
Euro	346.375
Swiss Franc	298.070
Bahraini Dinar	807.490
UAE Dirhams	83.070
Qatari Riyals	84.310
Saudi Riyals	81.865
Jordanian Dinar	429.550
Egyptian Pound	18.210
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.719
Indian Rupees	4.379
Pakistani Rupees	1.933
Bangladesh Taka	3.596
Philippines Peso	5.904
Cyprus pound	18.065
Japanese Yen	3.825
Syrian Pound	1.590
Nepalese Rupees	2.739
Malaysian Ringgit	74.225
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	44.515
Thai Bhat	10.825
Turkish Lira	52.785
Singapore dollars	222.971

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
British Pound	0.380274	0.394174
Czech Korune	0.005599	0.014899
Danish Krone	0.042320	0.047320
Euro	0.339483	0.353163
Georgian Lari	0.131913	0.131913
Hungarian	0.001146	0.001336
Norwegian Krone	0.031684	0.036884
Romanian Leu	0.065150	0.082000
Russian ruble	0.004851	0.004851
Slovakia	0.009085	0.019085
Swedish Krona	0.028793	0.033793

Swiss Franc	0.305819	0.316819
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.205897	0.217897
New Zealand Dollar	0.036997	0.039747
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.227401	0.236401
US Dollars	0.300000	0.305300
US Dollars Mint	0.300500	0.306300
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003003	0.003804
Chinese Yuan	0.042727	0.046227
Hong Kong Dollar	0.036997	0.039747
Indian Rupee	0.003784	0.004556
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002741	0.002921
Korean Won	0.000253	0.000258
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070090	0.076090
Nepalese Rupee	0.002675	0.003015
Pakistan Rupee	0.001399	0.002169
Philippine Peso	0.005822	0.006122
Singapore Dollar	0.219441	0.229441
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001350	0.001930
Taiwan	0.009980	0.010160
Thai Baht	0.009574	0.010124
Vietnamese Dong	0.00013	0.00013
Arab		
Bahraini Dinar	0.792061	0.808561
Egyptian Pound	0.018616	0.021976
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000085
Iraqi Dinar	0.000209	0.000269
Jordanian Dinar	0.424008	0.433008
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000156	0.000256
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021341	0.045341
Omani Riyal	0.783552	0.789232
Qatar Riyal	0.079262	0.084202
Saudi Riyal	0.080007	0.081307
Syrian Pound	0.001289	0.001509
Tunisian Dinar	0.102972	0.110972
Turkish Lira	0.046228	0.056073
UAE Dirhams	0.081370	0.083070
Yemeni Riyal	0.000988	0.001068

Kuwait Finance House wins 'Best Bank in Kuwait' Award 2019

Euromoney Awards for Excellence

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH), the world leading Islamic financial institution, won the Euromoney Awards for Excellence Country 2019 - Best Bank in Kuwait. KFH Group CEO- Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh received the award in the Euromoney Awards for Excellence ceremony held in Dubai in the presence of senior bankers, businessmen and media representatives.

Euromoney award for excellence is based on several criteria including bank's achievements, innovations, performance, banking services, size, profitability, ability to demonstrate growth, relative outperformance compared with peers and the ability to adapt to changing market conditions and client needs. A team of editors, journalists and researchers analyze the above criteria in conjunction with Euromoney market knowledge and research before decisions are made by its editorial committee.

Al-Nahedh expressed his pride in choosing KFH as the best bank in Kuwait for 2019, saying that winning this prestigious award confirms KFH's success, solid performance and its global leadership as an Islamic financial institution and reflects their customer confi-

dence in the bank.

He added that the "Best Bank in Kuwait" Award recognizes KFH's efforts in offering the highest standards in Islamic financial services, especially after the significant success achieved by KFH which contributed to the development of the banking industry. In recognition of their dedicated efforts and confidence, Al-Nahedh thanked employees and customers of KFH. He also thanked the shareholders and regulatory authorities who played an important role in developing and strengthening the Kuwaiti banking sector.

In a statement to the press during the ceremony, Al-Nahedh said: "We see this award not just as an outstanding achievement and recognition but also as an indicator of more future successes as well as confirming KFH's ability to innovate and meet the needs of our customers, raise the banking sector and boost the Kuwaiti economy." Al-Nahedh explained that the award was well-deserved in view of the bank's contribution to the growth of the Islamic finance industry in the markets it operated in, its success in meeting the customers' needs of Sharia-compliant products and establishing sustainable future growth with high effi-



DUBAI: KFH Group CEO- Mazin Saad Al-Nahedh receives the award at the Euromoney Awards for Excellence ceremony in Dubai

- Al- Nahedh: The award reflects the solid performance of KFH and its global position as a leader
- The award is well-deserved due to KFH's contribution to the growth of the Islamic finance industry
- The Award for Excellence is based on professional criteria
- The award is a culmination of KFH's efforts in providing the highest level of Islamic financial services
- In recognition of their efforts and confidence KFH appreciates the role of regulators, shareholders, clients, employees and the banking sector

ciency for the Islamic finance industry and keeping up with the latest financing and banking technology.

He stressed the important development role of KFH in the Kuwaiti economy in line with the national development plan and the 'Kuwait Vision 2035' to transform Kuwait into a leading international financial and commercial hub. On the local level, he praised KFH's great capabilities which underpinned its excellence in all fields and its ability to address the rising competitiveness in the Islamic banking sector, enabling it to lead by increasing its market share in vital areas.

"The leading role of KFH in the Islamic finance sector allowed it to be a major participant in the country's mega development projects and to provide needed financing to institutions and individuals through many products especially with the growing local and global

demand for Islamic finance instruments," Al-Nahedh added. He stressed KFH's expertise in the Islamic banking business and in arranging major financing deals for mega infrastructure projects covering many vital sectors and boosting the economy. He cited as examples the financing of mega projects in the oil and gas sectors and other vital sectors and large facilities in addition to offering credit to major corporations in retail, construction and other sectors.

One of the safest banks in the Middle East, KFH is the second largest Islamic bank in the world as well as being the only Islamic bank providing financial services in Malaysia and the GCC countries, as well as Turkey and Germany. Euromoney is one of the most respected title in global financial publishing while its awards are highly recognized by the banking sector.

بيت التمويل الكويتي
Kuwait Finance House



EUROMONEY
AWARDS FOR EXCELLENCE
2019

Kuwait's
Best
Bank

Based on Euromoney magazine's
mechanism and standard

Business



Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed opens one of world's largest offshore oil platforms

Platform made in UAE by NPCC for ADNOC

ABU DHABI: Sheikh Hazza bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Deputy Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Council, inaugurated one of the world's largest offshore oil platforms - the Umm Lulu Gas Treatment Plant (ULGTP), in the presence of Sheikh Mansour bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Presidential Affairs; and Sheikh Hamed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Chief of the Abu Dhabi Crown Prince's Court. The platform was made in the UAE by the National Petroleum Construction Company (NPCC), a part of Senaat, for ADNOC.

Sheikh Hazza Bin Zayed Al-Nahyan expressed his pride in the new national milestone achievement in the manufacturing and energy sectors and described it as a model for the national industry. HH stressed that the wise direction of Sheikh Khalifa bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, President of the UAE and Sheikh Mohammed bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Crown Prince of Abu Dhabi and Deputy Supreme Commander of the UAE Armed Forces, and the committed efforts of national talents are the driving force of this extraordinary achievement and emphasized the determination of Emiratis.

The ceremony was attended by Ahmed Juma Al-Za'abi, Deputy Minister for Presidential Affairs; Suhail bin Mohammed Faraj Faris Al-Mazrouei, Minister of Energy and Industry; Dr Sultan Al-Jaber, Minister of State and ADNOC Group CEO; Dr Ahmed Mubarak Al-Mazrouei, Chairman of Abu Dhabi Executive Office; Dr Mohamed Rashed Al-Hameli, Chairman of NPCC; Ahmed Al-Dhaheri, CEO of NPCC; and other senior officials of NPCC, Senaat, ADNOC and other entities.

The Umm Lulu Gas Treatment Platform (ULGTP), weighing 32,000 metric tons (MT), is one of five platforms fully manufactured by the NPCC at its fabrication yard in Musaffah, Abu Dhabi. This is part of an Engineering, Procurement & Construction (EPC) con-

tract awarded by Abu Dhabi National Oil Company (ADNOC) to NPCC, in consortium with TechnipFMC, for the Umm Lulu Package 2 Full Field Development (Process Facilities).

The ULGTP will mainly handle gas including compression, dehydration and sweetening, and forms a key part of ADNOC's Umm Lulu Field infrastructure. The field will have an oil production capacity of more than 100,000 barrels per day in 2020, supporting ADNOC's strategy of increasing its production capacity from 3 to 5 million bpd by 2030.

Dr Sultan Al-Jaber said: "The completion of this key infrastructure asset marks another significant milestone for ADNOC as we drive oil production capacity towards four million barrels per day by end of 2020, delivering on our smart growth strategy and meeting increasing global demand for energy. In line with the guidance of the UAE's wise Leadership, this achievement also underpins ADNOC's critical role in enabling in-country value creation and economic diversification."

Dr Mohamed Rashed Al-Hameli, Chairman of NPCC, said: "The ULGTP project is the largest to date undertaken by NPCC and was led by a team of passionate Emirati nationals committed to achieving the nation's vision to be one of the best countries in the world in exporting energy solutions. Building on our legacy of 46 years of operations in Abu Dhabi, and through our global engineering centers, we are pioneers in meeting the various requirements of the oil and gas sector in the UAE and the region. Our technological developments and digital transformation have brought a qualitative leap in the manufacturing sector. This achievement will further establish us as a partner of choice for energy majors globally."

Eng. Ahmed Al-Dhaheri, CEO of NPCC, said: "The success of the project is inspired by the vision of our



leadership to promote local manufacturing capabilities. It also reflects our continuous efforts to strengthen our operational assets, and to remain agile, flexible and efficient in meeting the requirements of our clients. NPCC is a pioneer in our sector and we continue to maintain our market leadership through innovation and operational excellence. Today, Abu Dhabi is a leading exporter of EPC services and we are proud to be the ambassadors of this transformational change. We have a robust outlook for the future and are confident that with our team of qualified and skilled Emirati engineers

and professionals we will drive a new era of growth."

As consortium leader for the major Umm Lulu Field, NPCC is responsible for the detailed engineering, procurement, fabrication, offshore installation, commissioning and start-up of a large offshore super complex. The super complex includes an Accommodation Platform (ULAP), Utilities Platform (ULUP), Water Disposal Platform (UMWDP), Separation Platform (ULSP), Riser Platform (ULRP) and the Gas Treatment Platform (ULGTP) - all made in the UAE by NPCC. The total weight of the super complex is over 102,648 metric tons (MT).

Turkish Airlines adds Nigeria's Port Harcourt to its flight network

KUWAIT: Flying to more countries than any other airline, Turkish Airlines added Port Harcourt, an important city in Nigeria, to its flight network as the global carrier's 56th destination in Africa. Flag carrier will operate four weekly reciprocal flights between Istanbul and Port Harcourt.

Already flying to Lagos, Kano and Abuja in Nigeria, Turkish Airlines added Port Harcourt to the list, increasing its flight network to 311 destinations. With this launch, the global carrier continues to be the leader as the airline that flies to more destinations than any other airline in Africa. During the press conference in International Port Harcourt Airport held for the inaugural flight, Turkish Airlines Senior Vice President of Sales (2nd Region), Kerem



Sarp said: "By starting our Port Harcourt flights, we added a new milestone to Turkish Airlines' mission of growth in Africa. With Port Harcourt as our fourth destination in Nigeria, Turkish Airlines continues to

be the bridge between cultures. We are happy to add Port Harcourt to our flight network, and enable our passengers in here to experience a seamless flight journey with Turkish Airlines privilege."

Huawei releases white paper on intellectual property

KUWAIT: Huawei yesterday released a white paper on innovation and intellectual property (IP), and warned against the issue being politicized. Speaking at a press conference at the company's headquarters, Song Liuping, Huawei's chief legal officer, said that IP is the cornerstone of innovation and its politicization threaten progress across the world.

"If politicians use IP as a political tool, they will destroy confidence in the patent protection system. If some governments selectively strip companies of their IP, it will break the foundation of global innovation," said Song. The paper, titled "Respecting and Protecting Intellectual Property: The Foundation of Innovation," elaborates on Huawei's practices in and contributions to innovation and the protection of IPR.

It notes that innovation and intellectual property protection lie at the heart of Huawei's success over more than 30 years. As of the end of 2018, Huawei has been granted 87,805 patents, of which 11,152 are US patents. Since 2015, Huawei has received over \$1.4 billion dollars in licensing revenue.

Aside from accumulating patents of its own, Huawei has also paid more than \$6 billion in royalties to legally implement the IP of other companies, with nearly 80 percent of that paid to American companies, according to the document.

Intellectual property is private property, protected by the law, and disputes should be resolved through legal proceedings, said Song, adding that in the past 30 years, no court has ever concluded that Huawei engaged in malicious IP theft, and Huawei has never been required by the court to pay damages for this. Huawei's collaborative and respectful approach to IP is demonstrated by the simple fact that many of its technology breakthroughs are incorporated into the open standards that govern 3G, 4G and 5G. As a result, even though some countries do not buy products directly from Huawei, they still use the essential patents of Huawei, and share in the benefits of the technology Huawei creates, said Song.

Song also addressed Huawei's stance on its use of patents, saying the company will not weaponize its portfolio of patents. Rather, he said, Huawei will adopt an open and cooperative attitude and follow the FRAND principle, or "fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory," when engaging with relevant parties in the industry on patents licensing.

"As always, Huawei is ready and willing to share our technology with the world. That includes 5G. It includes US companies and US consumers. Together, we can drive our industry forward and advance technology for all mankind," said Song. The document also elaborates on how sustained innovation has helped Huawei's success: how Huawei's innovation brings huge social value; and Huawei's stance on the use of third parties' IPR and its own.



Dr Song Liuping, Chief Legal Officer of Huawei

Today is the last day to deposit and enter Gulf Bank's Al-Danah draw for KD500,000

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced that today, 30 June 2019 is the last date for customers to open an Al-Danah account and deposit more to enter the third quarterly draw and increase their winning chances. The third quarterly draw of the year will be held on September 25, 2019 with a prize of KD 500,000. The fourth and final draw will take place on January 16, 2020 and will culminate in the announcement of the 2019 Al-Danah millionaire, who will receive a grand prize of KD 1 million.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to both Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. A minimum of KD 200 is required to open an account and the same amount must be maintained for customers to be eligible for the upcoming Al-Danah draws. If the customer's account balance falls below KD 200 at any given time, a KD 2 fee will be charged to the account monthly until the minimum balance is met. Customers who open an account and/or deposit more will enter the weekly draw within two days. To take part in the upcoming Al-Danah quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw. Al-Danah chances are added on a daily basis,



meaning the more customers save and the longer they save for, the higher their chances are of winning. Furthermore, loyal customers are rewarded with loyalty chances. Loyalty chances are the total chances accumulated from the previous year which are added to the customer's chances the following year. Terms and conditions apply.

The Al-Danah draws are all approved by and held in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce. Furthermore, Gulf Bank has partnered with Ernst and Young Kuwait (EY) with reference to the "Al-Danah Prize Draw" system in order to assist in assessing processes, technical controls considering relevant parameters, and provide recommendations in

line with leading industry practices. The study was conducted in line with industry standards and control requirements relevant to similar prize draw schemes wherein a detailed review of prize draw management systems including: draw scheme parameters, data extraction for draw, filtration of customers as per defined business criteria, and necessary system interactions, was conducted to advise on any potential areas of improvements. To participate in this year's quarterly and annual draws, customers must keep the balance required by the Al-Danah account. To deposit into their Al-Danah account, customers can visit one of Gulf Bank's 58 branches, or opt to directly transfer through the online banking service.

What's On



NBK participates in NUKS UK eighth orientation meeting

National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) participated in the eighth orientation meeting recently held for newly admitted students in UK universities who are about to embark on their learning journeys overseas. This initiative is in line with NBK's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), especially towards supporting the youth segment of the society.

The meeting covered various issues, most importantly the education system and the various programs offered to support students' success and transition to study in the UK. Students were also familiarized with key laws and regulations in the UK and were enlightened with the most important information they needed to know as they start their residency over there.

"We strive at NBK to support students' activities overseas, in every way possible, as we strongly believe in their role in leading our beloved country towards a brighter future", said Mr Mohamed Al-Othman, General Manager, Consumer Banking Group at National Bank of Kuwait. Al-Othman added that NBK has tailored a number of its services to meet youth's banking needs and facilitate their financial transactions both in Kuwait and overseas through NBK's widely

spread network of branches in 15 countries, in addition to providing toll free numbers to provide the required assistance and respond to their inquiries in key locations across the world.

The meeting also included the discussion of various topics related to international students banking needs and the convenient and secure services that NBK may offer young people to facilitate their bank related financial services. NBK customers may get in touch with the bank in an instant, anytime from anywhere. NBK toll free call centre is available 24/7 to receive calls in 9 countries including: UAE, USA, UK, Canada, France, Germany, Turkey, Italy and Spain.

Moreover, the bank offers a number of new online services through NBK Mobile Banking service, including e-payment. Customers may shop and electronically pay through NBK Mobile Banking to a wide array of local and international companies including telecom companies, retail facilities, entertainment and more. NBK also recently launched its latest service "NBK Quick Pay" for a fast and easy method to receive money, pay bills and transfer money to friends, anytime and anywhere, even on weekends and official holidays.



With the attendance of Ministry of Health's Dr Basel Al-Sabah and dean of the faculty of medicine Dr Adel al-Khodor, The National Bank of Kuwait sponsored the graduation ceremony of medicine students at Kuwait University which was recently organized at the Courtyard Marriott Hotel. Speaking at the ceremony, Minister Al-Sabah expressed his trust in the capability of the faculty graduates to perform their job responsibly and provide integrated health care. He also urged graduates to work hard and continue gaining knowledge and training. On his part, NBK's personal banking services manager, Mohammed Al-Othman congratulated the graduates noting that national manpower is Kuwait's real asset.



Try a classic French soup celebrating seasonal vegetables

Highlighting the fresh flavors of Provençal cuisine, soupe au pistou is a classic French soup composed of seasonal vegetables, creamy white beans and fragrant herbs. Celebrating colorful, early-summer produce, this soup needed to be chock-full of vegetables and simple to prepare. Leeks, green beans, and zucchini all made the cut; we liked their summery flavors and varying shades of green. Traditional recipes use water for the base, but supplementing the water with vegetable broth promised a more rounded, flavorful base; we cooked orecchiette directly in the broth so that the starch from the pasta would give it more body.

Canned white beans tasted great and were far more convenient than long-soaking dried beans. This soup is always served with a dollop of pistou. France's answer to pesto, and to make ours we simply whirled basil, Parmesan, olive oil, and garlic in a food processor. If you cannot find haricots verts (thin green beans), substitute regular green

beans and cook them for an extra minute or two. You can substitute small shells or ditalini for the orecchiette (the cooking times may vary slightly). Serve with crusty bread.

PROVENÇAL VEGETABLE SOUP

Ingredients

Servings: 6

Start to finish: 45 minutes

Pistou:

1/2 cup fresh basil leaves

1 ounce Parmesan cheese, grated (1/2 cup)

1/3 cup extra-virgin olive oil

1 garlic clove, minced

Soup:

1 tablespoon extra-virgin olive oil

1 leek, white and light green parts only, halved lengthwise, sliced 1/2 inch thick, and washed thoroughly

1 celery rib, cut into 1/2-inch pieces

1 carrot, peeled and sliced 1/4 inch thick

Salt and pepper

2 garlic cloves, minced
3 cups vegetable broth
3 cups water
1/2 cup orecchiette
8 ounces haricots verts, trimmed and cut into 1/2-inch lengths
1 (15-ounce) can cannellini or navy beans, rinsed
1 small zucchini, halved lengthwise, seeded, and cut into 1/4-inch pieces
1 large tomato, cored, seeded, and chopped

Preparation

For the pistou: Process all ingredients in food processor until smooth, about 15 seconds, scraping down sides of bowl as needed. (Pistou can be refrigerated for up to 4 hours.)

For the soup: Heat oil in Dutch oven over medium heat until shimmering. Add leek, celery, carrot, and 1/2 teaspoon salt and cook until vegetables are softened, 8 to 10 minutes. Stir in garlic and cook until fragrant,



about 30 seconds. Stir in broth and water and bring to simmer.

Stir in pasta and simmer until slightly softened, about 5 minutes. Stir in haricots verts and simmer until bright green but still crunchy, about 3 minutes. Stir in cannellini

beans, zucchini, and tomato and simmer until pasta and vegetables are tender, about 3 minutes. Season with salt and pepper to taste. Serve, topping individual portions with pistou.

Health

Guardians of Apollo: The curators preserving Moon mission's legacy

CHANTILLY: Lying on a workshop counter that is closed to the public at the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum's annex near Washington Dulles airport, Neil Armstrong's gloves look almost as good as new. You can hardly tell they made a trip to the Moon and back 50 years ago. To their side is the slightly yellowed "Snoopy Cap" (formally known as a "communications carrier") worn by crewmate Buzz Aldrin.

The space suit worn by Michael Collins, Apollo 11's third astronaut, is in near mint condition. But the blue silicon fingertips of Armstrong's gloves have begun to degrade — a process that for now remains invisible to the naked eye — as has Collins' suit. "After 50 years, we do know that the rubber is breaking down, and becoming a little bit stiff and brittle," says Lisa Young, an objects conservator for the museum. "It is inevitable. These were made for one time use, get to the moon and back," added Young, who was only a child when Armstrong and Aldrin touched down on lunar soil on July 20, 1969.

"We know the rubber bladders were only supposed to last six months, and they've lasted now 50 years." When AFP visited this workshop on Friday, Young and her colleagues explained

their work to delay the degradation of these objects, venerated by generations of space enthusiasts. Young is intimately familiar with Armstrong's spacesuit. After touring the United States in the wake of the mission, it remained on display at the main branch of this museum, in Washington proper, until 2006, but has been undergoing restoration work since then.

It will be back on display from July 16 onward, the anniversary of Apollo 11's departure from Earth. "I'm sad, but I'm kind of relieved," admitted Young. "It's been a long time and a lot of projects and I'm happy for the public to see it again." The suits are made from 21 distinct layers and it's not possible to cut or separate them. The outer layer is made from Teflon-coated fiberglass known as "beta cloth" that was built to protect its wearer from micrometeorites and radiation, though it yellows over time with exposure to light. Nevertheless, Young is confident of being able to keep it in near pristine condition.

Aggressive lunar dust

The adhesive materials between layers are trickier. Using X-rays and CT-scans, the team realized they were degrading. There is also a chemical reaction between the copper

alloy of the zipper and the rubber lining, catalyzing the decomposition process. The restorers use solvents to clean the metal parts, lay down stitches to stabilize the outer fabric (but not if the damage dates to the mission). And they vacuum up the dust that has settled from the museum.

Armstrong's suit will be housed in a display case that is kept at a low temperature and humidity and protected from harmful light. Finally, tailor-made mannequins support the fibers from within. NASA engineers at the time believed they had chosen the best materials possible for the mission, though they did not really know the composition of the lunar soil.

"Lunar dirt is much more aggressive than we had anticipated," said Cathleen Lewis, the museum's curator of space suits. She points out a pair of lunar boots covered in stainless steel fibers and with blue silicon rubber soles that were worn by Gene Cernan, the last man on the Moon, to show the black layer of dirt that still cakes it from his three-day stay. Seen under a microscope, "you will find granules of lunar dust embedded in and eroding through the stainless steel fibers," she said. "That's one of those lessons learned" from the era of Apollo, she added. — AFP

Court rejects Ontario dispute to carbon tax

OTTAWA: Ontario's highest court on Friday rejected the Canadian province's challenge of a federal carbon levy, in a victory for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over critics of his climate policies. Ontario Court of Appeal Chief Justice George Strathy said in the split decision that the measure was "constitutional."

"Parliament has determined that atmospheric accumulation of greenhouse gases causes climate changes that pose an existential threat to human civilization and the global ecosystem," he said. "The need for a collective approach to a matter of national concern, and the risk of non-participation by one or more provinces, permits Canada to adopt minimum national

standards to reduce GHG emissions." The levy was imposed in April on four provinces that haven't fallen in line with Trudeau's emissions reduction strategy, starting at Can\$20 (US\$15), and rising incrementally to Can\$50 per ton of emissions. Six others were initially exempt because each had come up with their own carbon tax or cap-and-trade system to help Canada meet its Paris Agreement target of reducing CO2 emissions by 30 percent from 2005 levels by 2030.

In court, lawyers for Ontario argued that the federal measure intruded on provincial jurisdiction — the environment — and would lead to federal intrusion on all aspects of peoples' lives, including where they lived or their choice of transportation. Federal lawyers said the act was a legitimate response to potentially catastrophic global warming. Alberta will soon join Manitoba, New Brunswick, Ontario and Saskatchewan on the list of recusers, after its new government this month scrapped its own provincial carbon tax and vowed to fight the federal backstop. — AFP

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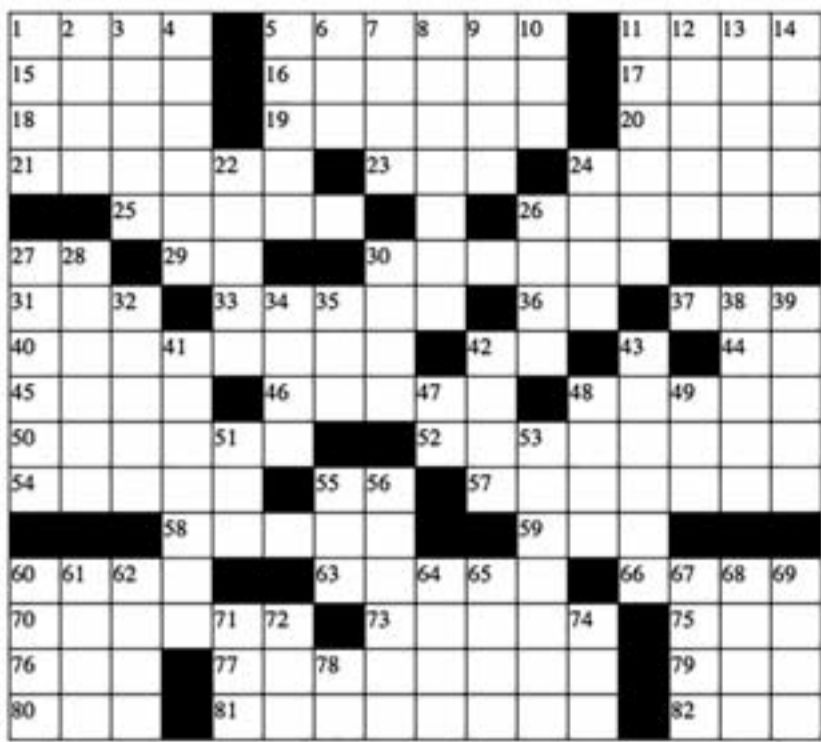
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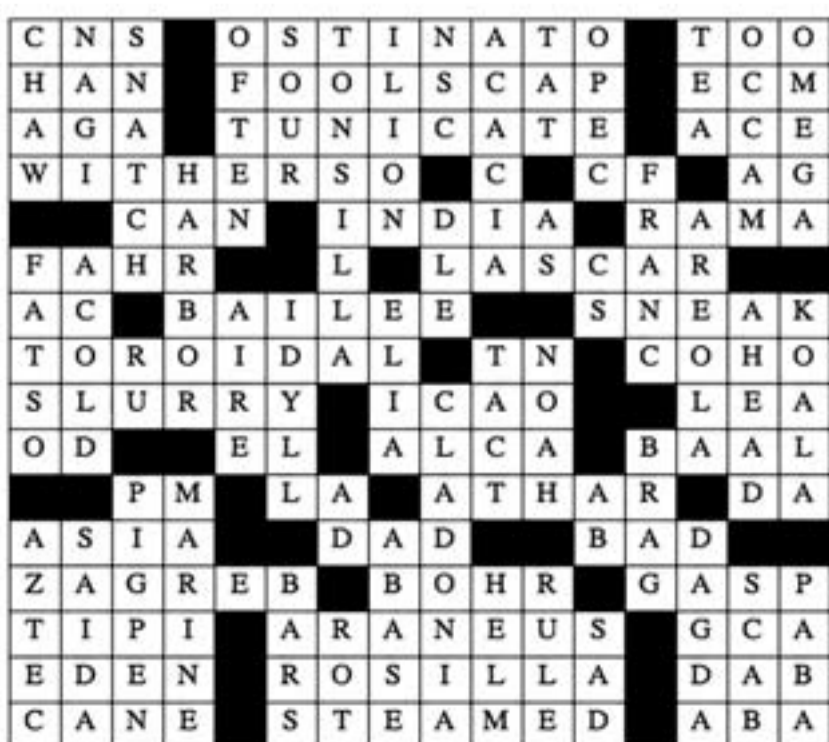
ACROSS

1. A constellation in the polar region of the southern hemisphere near Octans.
5. A motley assortment of things.
11. An explosive device fused to denote under specific conditions.
15. Similar to the striped mullet and takes its place in the Caribbean region.
16. On a ship, train, plane or other vehicle.
17. Report or maintain.
18. An important seaport on the Island of Cebu in the Philippines.
19. A mass of ice and snow that permanently covers a large area of land (e.g., the polar regions or a mountain peak).
20. Having finished or arrived at completion.
21. The mountain peak that Noah's ark landed on as the waters of the great flood receded.
23. Support resembling the rib of an animal.
25. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. A metric unit of length equal to one thousandth of a meter.
29. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
31. A plant hormone promoting elongation of stems and roots.
33. The female or generative principle.
36. A state in midwestern United States.
37. A protocol developed for the internet to get data from one network device to another.
40. Goddess of love and beauty and daughter of Zeus in ancient mythology.
44. A trivalent metallic element of the rare earth group.
45. A member of the Siouan people formerly living in the Missouri river valley in NE Nebraska.
46. A unit of weight for precious stones = 200 mg.
50. The French-speaking part of the Canadian Maritime Provinces.
52. The exterior body of a motor vehicle.
54. A game played with playing cards.
57. A state of abnormal softening of tissue.
58. The ending of a series or sequence.
59. Noisy talk.
60. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
63. A wall hanging of heavy handwoven fabric with pictorial designs.
66. A particular geographical region of indefinite boundary (usually serving some special purpose or distinguished by its people or culture or geography).
70. Of or denoting or relating to the Balkan countries or their inhabitants or the Balkan peninsula or the Balkan Mountains.
73. Protective outer layer of seeds of flowering plants.
75. A white linen liturgical vestment with sleeves.
76. The bureau of the Treasury Department responsible for tax collections.
77. Impressive in appearance.
79. A sharp hand gesture (resembling a blow).
80. The starting place for each hole on a golf course.
81. A mining town in southern Wales.
82. Used of a single unit or thing.

DOWN

1. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
2. A platform built out from the shore into the water and supported by piles.
3. A member of a Turkic people of Uzbekistan and neighboring areas.
4. Large elongated compressed food fish of European Atlantic waters.
5. An Indian side dish of yogurt and chopped cucumbers and spices.
6. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
7. Someone who leaves.
8. Aerobic rod-shaped spore-producing bacterium.
9. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
10. Measure of the US economy adopted in 1991.
11. A member of an agricultural people of southern India.
12. Rounded like an egg.
13. A faint constellation in the polar region of the southern hemisphere and containing part of the Large Magellanic Cloud.
14. Food made from dough of flour or meal and usually raised with yeast or baking powder and then baked.
22. Lower in esteem.
24. Large burrowing rodent of South and Central America.
26. The Tibeto-Burman language spoken in the Dali region of Yunnan.
28. Small genus of delicate mossy bog plants having white or violet flowers.
30. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
32. Essential oil or perfume obtained from flowers.
34. Type genus of the family Arcidae.
35. Large brownish-green New Zealand parrot.
38. An African river that flows northwest into Lake Chad.
39. Music performed for dancing the polka.
41. Lean white flesh of fish similar to but smaller than cod.
42. (physics and chemistry) The smallest component of an element having the chemical properties of the element.
43. New Zealand timber tree resembling the cypress.
47. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
48. Type genus of the Hyllidae.
49. A licensed medical practitioner.
51. A belief (or system of beliefs) accepted as authoritative by some group or school.
53. A planet (usually Venus) seen just before sunrise in the eastern sky.
55. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
56. A person whose occupation is making and altering garments.
61. Decrease gradually or bit by bit.
62. Other than what is under consideration or implied.
64. Tear or be torn violently.
65. The largest continent with 60% of the earth's population.
67. A Hindu prince or king in India.
68. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
69. A French abbot.
71. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
72. Tag the base runner to get him out.
74. Fermented alcoholic beverage similar to but heavier than beer.
78. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

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



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

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



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

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



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

You have an appreciation for your responsibilities. What is right is right, and what is wrong is wrong. This is a motto for you. This way of thinking has brought you a long way on your path towards success. You are focused and driven and most of all...honest. By not cutting corners nor taking the easy way out, you have developed a good reputation for having an excellent work ethic. You have a lot to proud of and you may find many opportunities beginning to come your way.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

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



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

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



Libra (September 23-October 22)

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



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

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



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

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



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

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



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

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



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

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

Wordsearch Puzzle

World Currencies 2 - Word Search



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|-----------|-----------|----------|
| ARIAYRY | KWACHA | RIYAL |
| BOLIVIANO | KYAT | RUBLE |
| COLON | LILANGENI | RUPEE |
| DIRHAM | LOTI | SHILLING |
| ESCUDO | NAKFA | VATU |
| GOURDE | NEW CEDI | |
| GUILDER | NEW KIP | |
| KRONA | NGULTRUM | |

Friday's Solution

World Currencies 1 - Solution



- | | | |
|---------|------------|---------|
| BAHT | KRONE | RAND |
| BALBOA | KWANZA | RUFUYAA |
| BIRR | LITAS | TALA |
| BOLIVAR | METICAL | TENGE |
| DINAR | NAIRA | TOLAR |
| DOLLAR | NEW SHEKEL | |
| DRAM | OUGUIYA | |
| FRANC | POUND | |

Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, JUNE 30, 2019



Russian dancers perform 'The Sleeping Beauty,' a ballet based on the musical composition by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, during a cultural festival held at Al-Dasma theatre in Kuwait City. — Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

Lady Gaga crashes Stonewall rally in New York

Lady Gaga delighted crowds in New York Friday with a surprise appearance at a rally marking the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots, as the city gears up to welcome millions to its Gay Pride event that will feature concerts from Madonna and Grace Jones. Stonewall Day commemorates the June 1969 riots sparked by repeated police raids on the Stonewall Inn—a well-known gay bar in New York's Greenwich Village—that proved to be a turning point in the LGBTQ community's struggle for civil rights.



In this photo taken Lady Gaga speaks onstage during Pride Live's 2019 Stonewall Day in New York City. — AFP

"I really, really hope you celebrate every inch of who you are today," said the pop superstar, long beloved by the LGBTQ community at the bash in Manhattan's Greenwich Village that featured rainbow flags, drag queens and performances from stars including Alicia Keys. "You were born this way and you are superstars," she shouted to applause, referencing the title of her 2011 hit "Born This Way" that has become a gay rights anthem.

Up to four million people are expected to attend the city's Gay Pride for this year's milestone anniversary, which comes as critics say Donald Trump's Republican administration has opened the door once again to overt discrimination. "I look at the older generation and how you have fought to create a safe, more tolerant space for our youth," said Gaga, sporting thigh-high glittering rainbow platform boots, denim shorts with rainbow fringe and a rainbow jacket over a black bandeau bra.

"It used to be unheard of to even come out of the closet," the 33-year-old continued, saying that today many children "are aware of their ability to discover and name their own sexual identities; their own gender identities. They are finding themselves and they are not as afraid." "You did that! You created that space," she said. Later, politicians—some of them presidential hopefuls vying for the chance to take on President Donald Trump—took to the podium to urge the LGBTQ community to mobilize ahead of the 2020 election.

"Are you ready to keep the flame of revolution burning bright? Because the movement needs to stay alive," New York Mayor Bill de Blasio told the crowd of several thousand. "I am the mayor of the largest LGBTQ community on the face of the earth and I am proud of that," de Blasio said, after taking part in the first Democratic debate. Senator Kirsten Gillibrand, also running for the White House, said, "We are in a moment in our nation's history when your voices are needed like never before."

"If we don't fight today," she said, we will lose the progress of the last 50 years." "Attacks on the trans community are on an increasing rise each day," she said. "I will not tolerate this—I know neither will you." Admonishing Trump's White House as an "extremely oppressive administration", the artist encouraged her audience to "love each other, raise your voice, and, my gosh, vote. Don't forget to vote!" "If we keep injecting the world with this message of unity and passion, imagine where we'll be in another 50 years from today." — AFP

'Star Wars' creators lift lid on special effects challenges

Remember the scene when Luke Skywalker failed his first attempt to blow up the Death Star? Or when C3PO chased him up the stairs of his Tatooine desert home? Of course you don't—both were among countless improvised changes made to the original "Star Wars" due to budget, time and technological restraints, its creators explained at the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences in Beverly Hills on Thursday.

At an event celebrating visual effects innovation in the classic sci-films, luminaries who created George Lucas's 1977 blockbuster contrasted their world of filming—and sometimes blowing up—wooden Star Destroyer models with today's digital masterpieces. "The technology and techniques of the 70s put considerable constraints on the way shots had to be staged," said John Knoll, chief creative officer of Lucasfilm effects company Industrial Light and Magic (ILM).

"By that I don't mean just whether it looked good or not but whether you could actually put the thing together at all!" He pointed to the suit worn by C3PO actor Anthony Daniels, which severely restricted his vision and range of motion in the original films. On two occasions where the robotic character is supposed to follow humans up or down stairs, editors had to cut or pan away just in time to obscure the impossibility of Daniels tackling the steps in his clunky suit.

By contrast, the human-shaped droid in 2016's Star Wars film Rogue One was entirely CGI. While the first



President of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences John Bailey is flanked by Storm Troopers at The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Hosts Galactic Innovations: Star Wars and Rogue One event at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills. — AFP photos

film was put together in a stuffy Los Angeles warehouse with no air-conditioning for \$11 million, Rogue One cost \$200 million to produce. Marcia Lucas, who won an Oscar for editing "Star Wars," explained how she cobbled together an early impression of the film's climactic fight scene from World War Two footage, to assist the visual effects artists—and realized a drastic change was required.

"In the script when Luke goes down and makes his trench run he uses the computer and he misses the shot," she said. "So he goes back up to a dogfight, he has to go down again and make a second run." Viewing her footage, the team agreed to cut out the first run entirely. "ILM was very pleased that they didn't have to do half of the special effects shots that happened when he made two runs," said Lucas, ex-wife of George, adding: "We saved some money!" — AFP



Visual effects artists and producers attend The Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Hosts Galactic Innovations: Star Wars and Rogue One event at the Samuel Goldwyn Theater in Beverly Hills, California.

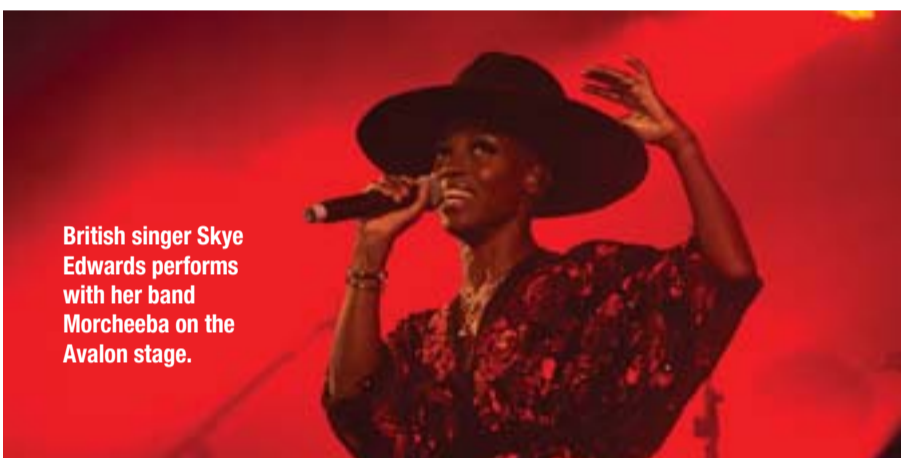


Revelers attend the Glastonbury Festival of Music and Performing Arts on Worthy Farm near the village of Pilton in Somerset, South West England. — AFP photos



Protesters from Climate change group Extinction rebellion walk through Glastonbury Festival of Music and Performing Arts.

Sun-drenched Glastonbury revelers not stuck in the mud



British singer Skye Edwards performs with her band Morcheeba on the Avalon stage.



British rapper Stormzy performs on the Pyramid Stage.

The stages are up, tents are pitched and thousands are arriving, but one traditional element is happily missing so far at the 2019 Glastonbury music festival: mud. Since 1970, revelers flocking to the five-day event, held on a farm in Somerset, southwest England, have become experts in navigating the often waterlogged 350-hectare site. Some years have seen the heavens open-with 60.1 millimeters of rain falling on a single day in 2007, the most in nearly a century-leaving festival-goers sodden and squelching through mud.

But the 49th edition of one of the world's biggest musical celebrations, which British grime artist Stormzy will kick start Friday night with a headline performance, is taking place as most of Europe swelters in record-breaking heat. Although the temperatures in Britain are more modest, it has been sharing in the unusually dry conditions, meaning many of the 130,000 festival-goers already at Glastonbury early Friday had left their "wellies"-knee-high rubber boots-at home this year. That was a first for 17-time Glastonbury veteran Rory Davidson, a 48-year-old banker who has seen tents engulfed in mud on previous occasions.

John Nobel, 36, another long-time attendee going boot-less in 2019, recalled being an "ignorant youth" on his first visit in 2004 and making the costly mistake of not bringing a pair. "I had to get plastic bags over my shoes," he told AFP, basking in sunshine in a flowery shirt as the memories flooded back. "It takes twice as long to go from A to B, because the



Ms Lauryn Hill performs on the Pyramid Stage.

mud is very thick, so it's very difficult to move. "You can't sit down anywhere. If you can't get dry, it does get a bit wearying by the end."

Glastonbury chic

Temperatures were tipped to reach 30 degrees Celsius in Glastonbury on Friday, significantly higher than the June average of 19C for the region. The parched conditions emanating from a heat wave crippling central and southern Europe are almost certainly linked to

climate change, according to Nicky Maxey of the Met Office, Britain's national weather service. For Roman McNern, a spokesman for the Extinction Rebellion environmental activist group, the lack of rain and mud shows "the rhythm of the season is going out of whack".

Even though it makes the festival more enjoyable, it is "definitely worrying", he said. Despite the absence of the Glastonbury's infamous mud, some are sticking with their trusted wellies. "What else would you wear?" said actress Leona Vaughan, 24. "Wellies are not just for the weather, but also they are Glastonbury." Making her fifth pilgrimage to the festival, she bought her first pair of the rubber boots for her first "Glasto"-as some nickname the event-and is still wearing them. "It's trendy-just like the glitter," added Vaughan, referencing her colorfully made-up face.

Anna Price, 25, agreed: "it's Glastonbury chic". Her 15-strong group of friends from Oxford and London had all turned out in wellies, so they were prepared for anything. "I kind of wish I was wearing sandals, but you just don't know what you (might) encounter at a festival," Shalini Rawley said. The 32-year-old London charity worker had opted for a pair of pink patterned boots, to match her bright and sparkling outfit boasting mermaids and unicorns. "If not at a festival, then where?" she said of her colorful attire.—AFP

Weinstein hires two new lawyers, including a woman

Disgraced movie mogul Harvey Weinstein has hired two new lawyers, including a woman, making his third change of legal representation barely two months before his trial on sexual assault charges. Weinstein's new lawyers are Chicago-based Damon Cheronis and Donna Rotunno, a former prosecutor who specializes in defending men accused of sexual assault. Their firm confirmed Friday they would be taking on the case.

Weinstein faces charges involving two different women who alleges he raped her in 2013, the other that he forced her to perform oral sex in 2006. Their cases were among a cascade of accusations against Weinstein that catalyzed the #MeToo movement. In an interview with Chicago Magazine in 2018, Rotunno questioned the #MeToo movement's insistence on "believing the women." "We are in an era of conviction by allegation in this country right now," she said, "which flies in the face of the entire principle of innocent until proven guilty."

As a woman, she said, she could cross-examine alleged female victims more aggressively than a male lawyer. "He may be an excellent lawyer, but if he goes at that woman with the same venom that I do, he looks like a bully. If I do it, nobody even bats an eyelash. And it's been very effective." Weinstein has changed lawyers three times since he was first charged in New York in May 2018. His first lawyer, star New York defense attorney Ben Brafman, withdrew from the case in January. Brafman's replacement-high-flying lawyers Ronald Sullivan and Jose Baez-pulled out one after another six months later. Sullivan, a Harvard law professor, withdrew from the case in May after coming under intense pressure on campus for defending the man seen as having given rise to the #MeToo movement. Baez backed out earlier this month, citing "fundamental disagreements" with Weinstein and telling the judge that his client's behavior had made representing him "unreasonably difficult."

The change in lawyers should be confirmed during a Manhattan court hearing scheduled for July 11, the office of the prosecution said Friday. The trial schedule remains unchanged, with jury selection to begin September 9. The new lawyers have agreed to the date in court filings, US media reported. Once one of the most powerful men in Hollywood, Weinstein has been accused of harassment and assault by more than 80 women, including stars such as Angelina Jolie and Ashley Judd.—AFP

'Mona Lisa' is on the move in great Louvre makeover

The world's most famous painting, the "Mona Lisa", is to be moved so her room in the Louvre can be spruced up, the Paris museum said on Friday. Leonardo da Vinci's masterpiece will be carried less than "100 paces" to the adjoining Medici gallery during the night of July 16, the museum's director Jean-Luc Martinez said. The fragile 500-year-old painting is very rarely handled, and will remain protected by bulletproof glass in its temporary home.



In this file photo, the famous painting by Italian artist Leonardo da Vinci, the 'Mona Lisa', is on display in the Salle des Etats room at the Louvre museum in Paris. — AFP

The portrait of a Florentine noble will be returned to her spot in the States Room just before a blockbuster Leonardo exhibition opens at the world's biggest museum in October. The Louvre holds the largest collection of the Italian artist's work. Martinez said the move was part of

an immense rolling renovation of the museum, which is struggling to cope with more than 10 million visitors a year.

Tens of thousands of people each day pass through the room in which the painting is shown opposite Paolo Veronese's giant canvass, "The Wedding Feast at Cana". It has been sealed inside protective wooden shuttering while the work goes on.

Blockbuster Leonardo show

"The population of a town" passes every day through the room, said Martinez, which hasn't been redecorated since the early 2000s. He said the "Mona Lisa" will stay in its original place for the Leonardo show-which begins on October 24 — as hanging it with the polymath's other works would have caused such bottlenecks that visitor numbers would have to be limited. "We could not deprive 15,000 people a day from seeing the 'Mona Lisa'," the director insisted.

The painting, thought to have been begun in the first years of the 16th century, has been moved very rarely since it was first housed in the Louvre in 1804. Indeed it hasn't left its walls in 45 years, and curators are strongly opposed to it doing so again, citing its fragility. The painting was done on a thin panel of poplar, which has buckled over time, revealing a thin slit. It last travelled in 1974 to Russia and Japan, having crossed the Atlantic in 1964 to be shown in the United States despite the fierce protests of the Louvre's curators.

The lady's not for touring

France's last culture minister, Francoise Nyssen, had hinted that it might tour during the refurbishment work. Locals in Lens, a former mining town in the north of France which houses an outpost of the Louvre, campaigned for the "Mona Lisa" to be exhibited there. Football fans even unveiled a huge banner of her in the local team's colours as part of their charm offensive. Her hometown Florence has also pleaded for the painting to be shown there.—AFP



Artist Perry Dino paints at his studio in Hong Kong, China. — Reuters

Artist wields paintbrush at Hong Kong mass protests

For 53-year-old Perry Dino, a paintbrush and canvas are weapons for opposing the Hong Kong government as it faces mass protests against a now-suspended bill that would allow extraditions to mainland China. Dino, who has painted many of Hong Kong's social movements including the pro-democracy Umbrella Movement in 2014, considers it important to record what is happening in the Chinese-ruled city.

"I am already one of those standing on the front line to defend Hong Kong," Dino told Reuters. Hong Kong's government has indefinitely suspended the bill that would allow criminal suspects to be sent to mainland China for trial in courts controlled by the Communist Party. However activists, mostly students in face masks, hard-hats and goggles, are demanding the bill be fully withdrawn.

The bill has seen millions of people, fearing erosion of freedoms promised when Hong Kong returned to Chinese rule in 1997, through the streets in protest, plunging the former British colony into political crisis. Braving tear gas, rubber bullets and beanbag rounds earlier this month when protests turned violent, Dino says he has drawn and painted as much as he can about the mass rallies.

"I hope the future generation can understand what Hong Kong has gone through," he said. Dino, a part-time teacher, says he hopes that when Hong Kong has true democracy, he can donate his artwork to a "democracy progression museum". None of his artwork is currently for sale. "Making how much money doesn't matter to me. Only the future matters," he said.

Among his paintings, which feature colorful brushstrokes, are ones showing demonstrators' tents occupying major thoroughfares and a flower-etched tribute to a protester who fell to his death. One painting depicts police firing tear gas, with thick plumes of smoke billowing across a mass of demonstrators. An abstract canvas shows activists shielding their eyes as they flee while a police officer with a rifle grins.

Since he started doing protest artwork in 2012, Dino has joined the annual June 4 Tianamen vigil and he made 25 paintings during the 2014 umbrella movement, when protesters paralyzed parts of the financial hub for 79 days. Dino said that during protests, Hong Kong police have told him to paint somewhere else. In the mainland, Chinese censors strive to erase or block news or depictions of the protests.—Reuters



A handout archive picture taken in 1893 shows Tower Bridge under construction in London. — AFP photos



In this file photo fireworks explode above Tower Bridge in London to celebrate the opening of the London 2012 Olympic Games.

London's Tower Bridge an icon at 125 years old

London's iconic Tower Bridge celebrates its 125th anniversary today by showing off the weird and wacky alternative designs that were nearly built instead. The globally-recognized landmark which opens and closes for large boats plying the River Thames, has become one of the symbols of the British capital. But it could have been very different. The fairytale castle-style masterpiece was just one of 50 designs which vied to solve the conundrum of erecting a much-needed new bridge that would still allow large ships into what was the world's busiest port.

"There were all sorts of weird and wonderful, really creative ideas," said Tower Bridge head Chris Earlie. "There were spiral roadways-like you would see in car parks-either side of the River Thames and then a high-level bridge," the bridgmaster told AFP. "One design that got quite far was a very high-level bridge with long approaches. But it was found that horses pulling carts would get exhausted before they got near the top!" Other ideas included rotating bridges or even tunnels.

Engineer John Wolfe Barry and architect Horace Jones's winning design was a bridge that flips open in the middle, with huge chambers in the feet of two towers to accommodate the counterweights swinging down as the bridge halves swing up. For the anniversary weekend, some of the alternative designs are being recreated to be displayed on the bridge for passing pedestrians to study.

Actors in Victorian costumes will wander about, portraying the workers, engineers and bridge-users of the time. Twelve concerts are planned in the counterweight chambers inside the tower legs, featuring original compositions that can handle the ambient noise of the road above and the tidal river outside. The chambers can accommodate 50 concert-goers, Earlie said.

Right royal debut

The bridge took eight years to build and was opened on June 30, 1894 by the future king Edward VII and queen Alexandra. It cost about £1.6 million-just £200 million in today's money. The critics were sniffy, feeling its Victorian

Gothic style was pastiche and unambitious. However, it very quickly became a much-admired London landmark. In its first year, the steam-powered bridge was opened more than 6,000 times.

Now run on oil and electricity, it opens around 850 times a year, mainly for tourist vessels, which must give 24 hours' notice. River traffic takes precedence over the road and some cheeky captains make their masts a bit taller just to get the bridge to open. Some 213 feet tall and 801 feet long, it is the last bridge downstream in London and is crossed by more than 40,000 pedestrians and 21,000 vehicles per day.

Fairytale on the river

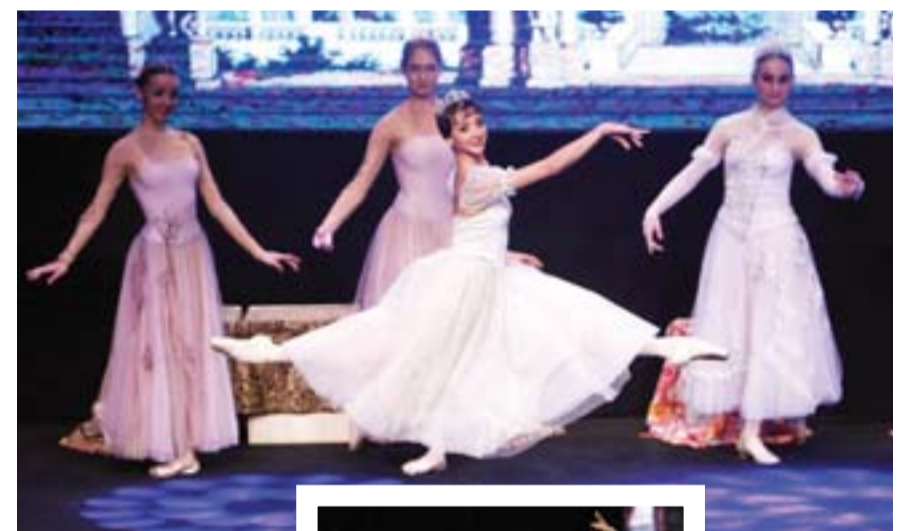
"There is still nothing like it in the world," said Earlie. "It is a steel and iron structure of three different types of bridge: a suspension, a girder and a bascule bridge," he said. "But because it's covered in this fantastic Portland stone and Cornish granite it means it's a fairytale castle on the river." The bridge is popular with British and European

tourists but the biggest growth in visitor numbers is from China and the United States.

It is often mistakenly called London Bridge-its upstream neighbor, now a mundane 1970s concrete construction-but takes the error as a compliment, quipped Earlie. Some 864,652 people visited the inside of the attraction in 2018. The ticket money goes to the City of London's charitable arm, raising more than £6 million per year. The bridge continues to inspire copycat structures around the world.

There is a four-tower version in Suzhou in China and early soundings for one in the Philippines. The original remains a draw in the social media age, providing a defining image of a trip to London. Earlie said: "Everyone seems to have a story about Tower Bridge, or an emotional connection to it."—AFP

PHOTO FEATURE



Russian dancers perform 'The Sleeping Beauty,' a ballet based on the musical composition by Pyotr Ilyich Tchaikovsky, during a cultural festival held at Al-Dasma theatre in Kuwait City.
— Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Lifestyle | Features



Drag queens Scalene Onixx and Athena Kills read to people gathered for Drag Queen Story Hour at Cellar Door Books in Riverside, California. — AFP photos

DRAG QUEEN STORY HOUR: ONCE UPON A TIME IN A BOOKSTORE

Athena and Scalene, their long blonde hair flowing down to their sequined leotards and rainbow dresses, are reading to around 15 children at a bookstore in Riverside, a quiet California town. The scene would be unremarkable—except that they are both drag queens. “We have a message, and the message is to empower the youth to be good people and to accept everybody for who they are, through storytelling,” says Athena Kills, a 22-year-old student whose real name is Jovani Morales.

The reading workshop is part of Drag Queen Story Hour, an initiative launched in 2015 by a handful of libraries and schools across the United States. Far from the LGBTQ bastions of San Francisco or New York, which this week is celebrating “World Pride” with great fanfare, the small Cellar Door Books store joined the movement a year ago. On this Saturday morning in Riverside, southeast of Los Angeles, there is no politics or proselytizing, no reference to gender or sexuality—just a tyrannosaurus, a princess, a robot trying to understand love.

Athena and Scalene read a few classic children’s books, throwing in some theatrical flair only to capture and retain the attention of their young audience. “Just by showing up and being here, that in itself is sending a message, that you can be whoever you want to be,” says Athena. However, the young man admits he has experienced many difficulties along the way.

“Being a drag queen, and being gay in general, rejection is something I’ve lived with my whole life—sometimes even from my own family,” Morales tells AFP. “So it’s something I’ve always grown up with,” he adds, expressing regret that he never had a “role model” to look up to at a young age.



Clowns and ultra-conservatives

Athena started doing readings a year ago—this is his fourth session. “The kids? They love it,” he says. “All these things, a bunch of bright colors and stuff. What little kid wouldn’t want to see that?” “We’re just like prettier clowns!” he adds. The presence of drag queens at children’s reading events does not make everyone laugh,

however. Drag Queen Story Hour is regularly targeted by ultra-conservatives and extreme-right groups who try to disrupt the sessions.

On television networks, such as the Fox News channel, some commentators criticize the “unhealthy lifestyle” of drag queens, raising the specter of AIDS and suggesting they have ill intent. “Drag Queen Story Hour is really just

people reading books to kids ... there is no underlying mission,” says Elisa Thomas, 26, a saleswoman at Cellar Door Books who had the idea of organizing the readings. Thomas, who is a lesbian, recruited her own drag queen friends free of charge for the occasion.

The Riverside bookstore has not escaped internet hate campaigns, and has had one Christian extremist storm into a session. Its owner has been subjected to anti-Semitic insults and threats on social networks.

‘I love their outfits!’

But this unintended publicity has only attracted more fans. One mother, Melissa, drove from an hour away with her two daughters who “love drag queens, an inspiration to them.” “I want to let them experience people showing they can be what they want,” says Melissa. “We live in the desert, you don’t have that around our place.” Her daughter Waverly, 10, agrees. “It’s just cool that they don’t let people tell them what to do,” she says, adding: “I love their outfits!”

Joshua, who is seven, was visiting the bookstore by chance with his mother Rochelle at the time of the reading, and both decided to stay out of curiosity. Intensely focused during the session, the boy told AFP afterwards he simply found it “funny.” “I really liked the story of the T-Rex,” he says, not interested in talking about anything else. “He loves stories,” his mother laughs. “It could have been an astronaut or a policeman reading—I believe it wouldn’t have been very different for him.”—AFP

New film shows painful legacy of China’s one-child policy

To see what China’s one-child policy has done to the most populous country on Earth, you just have to look around you, said acclaimed filmmaker Wang Xiaoshuai. “There is often one child now to six grown-ups. You have the four grandparents and two parents for one child. It’s a bit unbalanced,” the director added with not a little understatement. “So Long, My Son”, which won its stars Yong Mei and Wang Jingchun the best actor award at the Berlin film festival earlier this year, plunges audiences into the ocean of pain and heartbreak the policy caused.

The tragic story of a couple whose only son is drowned in an accident, is an epic account of how families were bent and buckled during the 36 years of the world’s biggest demographic experiment. “It made me realise to what extent we as Chinese people lived through something that was completely out of the ordinary and unique in the world,” Wang said just before the film opened in France.

“That is what pushed me to shoot the film,” said the director, who made his name in the West with “Beijing Bicycle”, a prize-winner at Berlin back in 2001. “Generally speaking people in China don’t live for themselves, or put themselves forward,” he said.

‘We don’t control our lives’

“We are not in control of our own lives” and everything can be changed by the “smallest directive from on high”, “People do things for the collective, for the country. That is why every time there is a new policy, even one which has a huge impact on their lives, people tend to bend to it.” When the one-child policy was first adopted in 1979, “people kind of understood” it was in the country’s economic interests, Wang said, with three-quarters of the popula-

tion said to support it. “Of course there were people who fought against it but after 30 years people had accepted it.”

Finally getting rid of it four years ago was “a good thing”, Wang argued, because “it allows people to be more in charge of their own lives, to have more freedom on what kind of family they want to build.” But by the time it was replaced by a two-child policy in 2016, the single child family “had become anchored” in society, the new norm reinforced by the rise of the middle classes. The “rush to make money” has effectively sustained it. “Even if people can now have more children, they opt not to have any more because there is too much economic pressure,” he said. Wang is one of the leading film-makers of China’s “Sixth Generation” that includes a wave of talented directors like Zhang Yuan, Jia Zhangke and Lou Ye.

Censorship worries

But like many he is worried about where the industry is going, with a ramping up of censorship since President Xi Jinping came to power in 2012. One of the country’s most famous directors, Zhang Yimou, the maker of “Raise the Red Lantern”, was forced to withdraw his latest film, “One Second”, in February on the eve of the Berlin festival. Another Chinese movie, “Better Days”, that had also been scheduled to show in the German capital, failed to get the go-ahead in time from Beijing.

“Summer of Changsha”—which to Western eyes contained nothing to scare the horses—was shown at the Cannes film festival in May, but without its makers. And on Wednesday the premiere of the war epic “The Eight Hundred”—billed as the Chinese “Dunkirk” showing a heroic defeat to the invading Japanese—was cancelled at the last minute after being deemed “inappropriate”. China recently introduced regulations that require movies to be given a “dragon seal” of approval before films can be screened.

“The pulling recently of these films raises questions,” Wang said. “Before you had to get the go-ahead from the censor concerning the content of the film” to show it at festivals, “and then a second one for it to be released”. “Now the two have been put together. To have permission withdrawn is extremely serious for a film,” he added.—AFP



Brazilian artist Rodrigo Camacho, 40, works on one of his art pieces made with bullets at his atelier, located at his home garage, in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP photos



Brazil ‘bullet’ artist enjoys fame in pro-gun Bolsonaro era

“I don’t know much about arms, I know art,” says Rodrigo Camacho as he wields a replica AK-47 assault rifle that he made out of bullet casings in his Rio de Janeiro garage. A fervent admirer of the police, military and President Jair Bolsonaro, the heavily tattooed Brazilian artist creates pictures and sculptures out of ammunition casings discarded by police during training or by sport shooters. “My intention is to show that each one of these pieces passed through the hands of a police officer, a soldier, a sergeant, people who train to defend us,” Camacho, 40, tells AFP.

In his workshop—a brightly-lit garage next to his two-story house, which he shares with his wife and black Labrador called Prince—Camacho stores thousands of used casings, fuses and projectiles in wooden boxes. With glue and the skill of a former architecture student, Camacho spends many hours transforming the bits of metal into effigies whose true form is only visible from a distance.

“Some people compare my work to trench art (pieces sculpted by soldiers with remnants of ammunition), but I just consider myself to be a Brazilian artist who believes in his country,” Camacho says in a gentle voice that belies his tough image. It is a conviction literally etched on his skin, with the musical score of the national anthem tattooed around his left forearm.

His work features portraits of politicians of all stripes—including far-right Bolsonaro and a left-wing governor in the northeast—police and military symbols, replicas of AK-47s and even a chair made entirely from bullets that was inspired by the popular “Game of Thrones” television series and displayed at an international arms fair in Rio earlier this year. “I work with controversial things and people,” Camacho admits.

Tribute to real heroes

Camacho began working with bullets and casings 18 months ago after visiting the Rio headquarters of BOPE, a special operations unit of the military police which is often deployed in the city’s crime-ridden neighborhoods. Before then he had done carpentry and made rustic

decorations on request. “A deputy commander friend in BOPE invited me to the headquarters to make a bench out of pallets,” he says. “Seeing the cartridges on the ground gave me the idea of using them to make” the group’s logo.

The intimidating image—a skull pierced with a dagger superimposed on two handguns—was used to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the elite unit. Camacho’s newfound fame only

unabashed admirer of Rio de Janeiro state Governor Wilson Witzel, who has applauded the deployment of snipers in the fight against drug traffickers and even suggested he would like to use missiles against criminals.

“Rio needs a strong arm,” says the artist, who gifted a larger-than-life portrait to the controversial governor. Following media coverage of the Bolsonaro and Witzel portraits, Camacho



increased when he gave Bolsonaro one of his portraits of the president. Camacho pulls out his cellphone to proudly show the video of the moment he handed Bolsonaro the piece—the president’s serious face in gold and black bullet casings, framed by the outline of Brazil.

“The first time that I saw him, I looked him in the eye and sensed his conviction. God willing, he will change the country, not from one day to the next but in three years,” Camacho says of Bolsonaro, a former army captain who took power in January on a promise to relax gun laws and crack down on crime. Camacho is also an

has been inundated with orders, mainly from police and military units looking to decorate their bases with pieces exalting their work.

But as most of his work ends up being unpaid—in many cases in exchange for the bullet casings—Camacho is looking for sponsors, public or private. His favorite piece, made for a seminar on police deaths and injuries in Rio, shows the silhouette of an officer on crutches saluting the grave of a fallen colleague. “They are the real heroes,” says Camacho.—AFP



Classifieds

Sunday, June 30, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Very hot with light to moderate north westerly wind to light variable wind, with speed of 08 - 30 km/h.

BY NIGHT: Relatively hot with light to moderate north westerly wind, with speed of 12 - 38 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 29/06/2019 0000 UTC		
KUWAIT CITY	49 °C	37 °C			
KUWAIT AIRPORT	50 °C	30 °C			
ABDALY	50 °C	30 °C			
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C			
JAHRA	50 °C	34 °C			
FAILAKA ISLAND	47 °C	31 °C			
SALMIYAH	41 °C	37 °C			
AHMADI	41 °C	37 °C			
NUWAISIB	47 °C	34 °C			
WAFRA	49 °C	30 °C			
SALMY	48 °C	30 °C			

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Sunday	06/30	Very hot	49 °C	30 °C	VRB-NW	08 - 32 km/h
Monday	07/01	Very hot and causing rising dust over open areas	48 °C	31 °C	NW	15 - 45 km/h
Tuesday	07/02	Very hot and causing rising dust	47 °C	32 °C	NW	15 - 50 km/h
Wednesday	07/03	Very hot and causing rising dust	47 °C	33 °C	NW	20 - 50 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:16
Sunrise	04:51
Zuhr	11:51
Asr	15:25
Sunset	18:51
Isha	20:24

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	51 °C
MIN. Temp.	30 °C
MAX. RH	19 %
MIN. RH	02 %
MAX. Wind	NW 46 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

Automated enquiry about the Civil ID card is

1889988

EMERGENCY



112

CHANGE OF NAME

I. Shaikh Hassan Bathusha
 Azhikottayil Kunhimon
 holder of Indian Passport
 No M 5457545 issued at
 Kuwait on 03.03.2015
 hereby change my
 name to **SHAIKH**
HASSAN BATHUSHA
PARAYANGATTIL
KUNHIMON

Airlines

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



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DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 30/6/2019				Departure Flights on Sunday 30/6/2019			
Airlines	Fit	Route	Time	Airlines	Fit	Route	Time
FEG	441	Asyut	00:05	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
KAC	540	Sharm el-Sheikh	00:10	MEA	405	Beirut	12:05
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:55
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10
KAC	102	London	00:50	JZR	115	Doha	13:25
AHY	119	Baku	00:55	KAC	541	Cairo	13:30
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	ETH	3621	Addis Ababa	13:30
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	MSR	611	Cairo	13:45
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	KAC	515	Tehran	13:55
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
PGT	840	Istanbul	01:50	AXB	394	Kozhikode	14:10
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:50	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
THY	1464	Istanbul	01:50	FDB	8192	Dubai	14:50
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
JZR	262	Beirut	02:05	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
QTR	1086	Doha	02:40	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	QTR	1079	Doha	15:30
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:50	UAE	878	Dubai	15:30
THY	768	Istanbul	02:55	SVA	501	Jeddah	15:45
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	JZR	405	Kochi	16:00
PGT	856	Istanbul	03:10	KAC	615	Bahrain	16:10
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:20
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	619	Doha	16:25
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	FEG	442	Asyut	16:55
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	675	Dubai	17:00
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	FDB	052	Dubai	17:10
JZR	1738	Cairo	04:45	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:50	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
THY	1414	Trabzon	05:05	KAC	503	Beirut	17:40
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	FEG	242	Alexandria	17:45
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	KAC	343	Chennai	17:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	621	Doha	17:50
UAE	873	Dubai	05:40	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:10
QTR	8511	Doha	06:05	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:15
BAW	157	London	06:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
JZR	708	Luxor	06:15	JZR	127	Doha	18:20
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	403	Hyderabad	18:25
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	IRA	664	Shiraz	18:35
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	501	Lahore	18:35
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	JZR	733	Cairo	18:35
RBG	559	Alexandria	06:50	JZR	253	Amman	19:10
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	JZR	261	Beirut	19:10
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20
KAC	358	Kochi	07:25	KAC	345	Ahmedabad	19:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
JZR	724	Alexandria	07:50	FDB	064	Dubai	19:45
QTR	1084	Doha	08:00	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	RJA	641	Amman	20:05
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	RBG	556	Alexandria	20:20
JZR	706	Asyut	08:25	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:30
IRC	528	Ahwaz	09:00	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	351	Kochi	20:45
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	DLH	624	Dammam	20:55
QTR	1070	Doha	09:20	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	353	Trivandrum	21:05
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:25
SAW	703	Damascus	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:50
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
OMS	223	Muscat	10:35	KAC	203	Lahore	22:00
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:10
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	THY	1403	AYT	22:25
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	KAC	383	Delhi	22:50
JZR	738	Cairo	12:20	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
ETH	3620	Addis Ababa	12:30	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	KAC	551	Cairo	23:00
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
				ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
				JZR	701	Asyut	23:45



An aerial view taken on Friday shows sailing boats lying at anchor on the Bodensee (Lake Constance) in Konstanz, southern Germany. — AFP

Gulf, Israel closer after Bahrain conference, but full ties unlikely

DUBAI: The US-organized economic workshop in Bahrain failed to deliver tangible results over the long-awaited Middle East peace plan but it opened the door for closer Israeli-Gulf ties, analysts say. Despite this, the normalization of ties between the Gulf oil monarchies and the Jewish state - staunch US allies who have common concerns over Iran - remains unlikely without progress in resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, they say.

In an unprecedented interview of a senior Gulf official by an Israeli journalist, Bahrain's Foreign Minister Khalid bin Ahmed Al-Khalifa said on the sidelines of the two-day workshop in Manama that Israel is part of the region's heritage. "Israel is part of this heritage of this whole region, historically, so the Jewish people have a place amongst us," he said in the interview broadcast late Wednesday on Israel's Channel 13 television.

Sheikh Khalid, a member of the ruling family of the tiny state, called in a separate interview with the Times of Israel for improved relations with Israel, but reiterated his country's commitment to the Arab Peace Initiative. Neil Patrick, a London-based Middle East analyst, said

the Bahraini foreign minister's comments "will be the main achievement" of the workshop "as far as the US and Israel are concerned".

Meanwhile, an Israeli journalist published on her Twitter account an interview with prominent UAE businessman Mohammed Alabbar, who was among a group of business leaders who attended the Bahrain workshop. "Young people and our children... want to live a life that has hope and optimism and a better future," Alabbar, chief of real estate giant Emaar Properties, told the journalist when asked what message he wants to send Israeli audiences.

'Clear' message

After getting special permission, a handful of Israeli journalists attended the conference in Bahrain, with which their country has no diplomatic relations - like all Arab countries excluding Jordan and Egypt. "Countries such as Bahrain are more willing to float the carrot of overt engagement, but I think it would be highly premature to expect anything beyond flirtation without mean-

ingful change on the ground," said Elizabeth Dickinson, senior analyst with the International Crisis Group think-tank. "The Gulf message is actually somewhat clear in my view: Israel could be a useful, stable ally in a volatile region - but only if there is an agreement with the Palestinians," she told AFP.

In recent years Israel has been courting Arab nations which do not recognize the Jewish state, and in October Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu held surprise talks in Muscat with the ruler of Oman. These efforts at rapprochement came as Iran - the arch-foe of Israel and regional rival Saudi Arabia - was bolstering its influence in several Arab countries. US President Donald Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, launched the long-awaited Middle East initiative at the conference, which the Palestinian Authority boycotted over fears it sought to buy off the Palestinians and deprive them of an independent state.

Normalization 'some way off'

Patrick said it remained unlikely the conference in

Bahrain "will lead directly to full diplomatic relations with Israel without the Palestinian leadership backing the final and political 'deal'". He said the "full and proper political normalization with Israel is still some way off", especially after the United States recognized Jerusalem as the capital of Israel in 2017. According to the International Crisis Group, normalization of ties between Arab countries and Israel still depends on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

"If the Bahrain workshop secures a place in future history books, it will be for exposing the limits of Arab-Israeli rapprochement," it said in a report on Wednesday. It underlines that "Israel's overt acceptance in the region requires it to resolve its conflict with the Palestinians," it said. The Palestinians have boycotted the US administration since Trump broke with decades of consensus by recognising Jerusalem as Israel's capital and moving the US embassy from Tel Aviv to the holy city last year. US officials have hinted the political part of the Middle East plan - which could come out later this year - will not mention the creation of an independent Palestinian state, a goal of decades of US diplomacy. — AFP

At G20, Putin leads attack on liberalism

OSAKA: Russian President Vladimir Putin has used a global summit founded on liberal ideas to attack them in a demonstration of Moscow's apparent confidence amid international discord. Kicked out of the G-20's more exclusive cousin G-8 in 2014 for annexing Crimea, Putin is now not the only one defending illiberal views on issues ranging from sexuality to immigration, even winning a vague endorsement from US counterpart Donald Trump.

"The liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population," Putin told the Financial Times in an interview ahead of the summit. He criticized Germany for welcoming immigrants, saying multiculturalism was letting immigrants "kill, plunder, rape" without punishment - and was understanding to Trump's idea of building a wall on the Mexican border.

Yesterday, he repeated that western liberal policies on sexuality and gender identity were being forced on people, often children, and that parents who opposed this were "often jailed". "Overreach" by proponents of liberalism is what caused protests in Europe and Trump's surprise election, Putin said.

EU leaders on defensive

Putin's views, undiplomatically expressed in a language usually reserved for his domestic working class constituency rather than global leaders, touched a few nerves in Osaka and beyond. "What I find really obsolete are authoritarianism, personality cults, the rule of

oligarchs, even if sometimes they may seem effective," EU President Donald Tusk said. Elton John accused Putin of hypocrisy: While the Russian leader denied violating rights of LGBT community, John's recent film Rocketman was heavily censored in the country to cut out all scenes of gay intimacy.

French President Emmanuel Macron also countered, saying: "I am convinced that, in a world full of uncertainty, liberal democracies still have a lot to offer." But Trump, asked if he agreed with Putin, said the Russian leader "sees what's going on", before adding that US cities San Francisco and Los Angeles are "sad" because they are run by an "extraordinary group of liberal people".

'Crusade' on liberalism

A political veteran first elected president in 2000, Putin had initially adhered to liberal ideas, but his advisers from those days are some of his biggest critics now. Since then, he has punished opposition, silenced media and sided with most Russians in criticizing the liberal economic policies of predecessor Boris Yeltsin. Criticism followed by sanctions from the West was met with increasingly anti-Western policies, while lobbying of the Russian Orthodox Church has increased in recent years, resulting in conservative laws.

Opposition politicians point out that pro-Kremlin figures or media figures who uphold Putin's conservative, anti-Western rhetoric often have mansions in Europe, while their children attend Western schools, suggesting that the traditionalist and patriotic fervor is just an act. But Putin's public lashing of western liberalism could be a bid to unite right-wing or conservative forces that oppose liberal values, analyst Vladimir Frolov said. "It's a bid for a crusade against liberalism," he told Dozhd television channel. "In the West, they have gotten used to Vladimir Putin in his new role as leader of the right, and this gives him confidence and some independence." — AFP

tional umbrella of the rights of all people around the globe, according to a foreign ministry statement. However, Hakim said his country needs more backing from the UNSC following the defeat of the so-called Islamic State (IS), with the Iraqi government planning to pursue a reconstruction investment program. He elaborated that he had briefed the UNSC team on the current situation in Iraq and government efforts to ensure security and stability and to rebuild cities and towns retaken from the IS.

The UNSC delegation was in Kuwait Friday, where they met with Kuwaiti Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah. During their second visit to Kuwait, Deputy Special Representative for Political Affairs and Electoral Assistance of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) Alice Walpole briefed the delegation on the status of Kuwait's missing people in Iraq and the development within the file of Kuwaiti belongings stolen during the Iraqi invasion. Representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) provided a similar briefing. — KUNA



OSAKA: Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks during his press conference on the sidelines of the G-20 summit yesterday. — AFP

India's World Cup 'away'...

Continued from Page 1

Eight of the 10 nations at the World Cup have an alternate kit in case of a color clash and England also wear light blue, hence the switch. But the kit has stirred controversy and prompted satire in India. Members of the opposition accused Prime Minister Narendra Modi's right-wing Hindu nationalist party of pushing its trademark saffron color on the team.

But many Twitter users made fun of the kit, compar-

ing it to the uniform worn by the employees of state-run company Indian Oil. Users mocked the Indian cricket board's decision by flooding the social media site with spoof pictures of Indian players holding fuel dispensers at filling stations. "It actually looks like Uniform of Petrol Pump employees. It should have been completely Orange colored jersey @BCCI why you choose this Jersey ???" a Twitter user wrote, adding a picture of Kohli with a fuel dispenser.

Sri Lanka changed to yellow shirts against England and decided to keep them for the rest of the tournament as a lucky charm after their shock win against the hosts. India, unbeaten in their six games, need just one win from their remaining three games to book a semifinal berth while Eoin Morgan's England must win both of their final games to guarantee progress. — AFP

Kuwait's envoy to UN urges...

Continued from Page 1

Iraq's foreign policy is based on non-interference in the neighboring policy and focus on the many participants with neighboring and regional countries, in order to preserve security and stability and achieve the interests and prosperity of all peoples of the region and avoid tensions, crises and wars, said Abdel-Mahdi. For his part, Otaibi expressed happiness at the visit, which he described as historic. He stressed that the delegation's message is that they support Iraq, its unity and sovereignty, affirming that the international community stands by Iraq and supports the partnership with it through the efforts of the international mission in Iraq.

Iraqi Foreign Minister Mohammad Al-Hakim later said his country is willing to fulfill UN Security Council (UNSC) resolutions. He hailed the UN as the interna-

Turkey hopes to avoid sanctions...

Continued from Page 1

Washington has warned that if the S-400 system is delivered to Turkey, the country faces penalties under the Countering America's Adversaries Through Sanctions Act (CAATSA) which bars business with Russia's state and private defense and intelligence sectors. Turkish officials have previously said they are preparing for US sanctions. In a line of argument that appears to have played well with Trump, Erdogan told him that the reason for purchasing the S-400 was that his predecessor Barack Obama had failed to secure a deal to sell Turkey the American Patriot system instead, with the sale blocked by Congress at the time.

The Patriot is an anti-missile and anti-aircraft weapon system, similar to the S-400. The US finally approved the sale of the Patriot system to Turkey in

December. Trump said Erdogan should not be blamed for Obama's failure. "We have a complicated situation because the president (Erdogan) was not allowed to buy the Patriot missiles... he wasn't allowed by the Obama administration," Trump told reporters in Osaka. "So he buys the other missile and then, all of a sudden, they say, 'Well, you can now buy our missile,'" Trump said, adding: "You can't do business that way. It's not good."

Washington has nonetheless threatened to remove Turkey from its F-35 fighter jet program, giving Ankara until July 31 to cancel the S-400 purchase or have its pilots kicked off the training course and expelled from the US. Turkey has plans to buy 116 F-35s, Erdogan said, and has invested a total of \$1.4 billion in the production so far. Relations between Turkey and the US have been tense over multiple issues, including American support for a Kurdish militia in Syria and the failure to extradite a Pennsylvania-based Muslim preacher blamed for the 2016 failed coup. But the two leaders said they were committed to increasing bilateral trade. — AFP

Sports

Rockies pound Ryu, end Dodgers' dominance for 13-9 win in Denver

Olson homers twice, powers Athletics past Angels

DENVER: Nolan Arenado homered and had four hits, David Dahl and Pat Valaika also went deep, and the Colorado Rockies beat the Los Angeles Dodgers 13-9 on Friday night in Denver. Charlie Blackmon had three hits and three runs, and Antonio Senzatela (7-5) tossed five innings to help Colorado end a 12-game losing streak to Los Angeles. Max Muncy and Alex Verdugo homered for the Dodgers. Los Angeles led 5-2 entering the fifth inning, when the Rockies sent 13 men to the plate and scored eight runs. Valaika got it going with a two-run homer, Ian Desmond hit a run-scoring double, and Dahl gave the Rockies a 7-5 lead with his homer. Daniel Murphy, Valaika and Blackmon added RBI singles in the rally.

ORIOLES 13, INDIANS 0

Chance Sisco homered and drove in five runs, Anthony Santander homered and had four RBIs, and Baltimore routed visiting Cleveland. Sisco hit a two-run homer in the first inning and an RBI single in the second against Cleveland starter Mike Clevinger (1-2), who lasted just 1 2/3 innings. The Orioles jumped to an 8-0 lead with two early four-run rallies. Baltimore had lost 13 of its previous 14 games, including the past three in a row. Orioles starter John Means (7-4) came off the injured list after recovering from a shoulder strain, and he threw five shutout innings.

WHITE SOX 6, TWINS 4

Ross Detwiler pitched five strong innings to earn the victory in his Chicago debut, and James McCann and Eloy Jimenez hit two-run home runs in a home win over Minnesota. Miguel Sano hit a pair of two-run home runs for Minnesota, including one in the ninth inning that summoned White Sox closer Alex Colome, who retired the final three hitters to notch his 17th save in 18 opportunities. Detwiler (1-0) pitched five innings of six-hit, two-run ball with three strikeouts and no walks. The White Sox purchased the left-hander's contract from Triple-A Charlotte before the game.

ATHLETICS 7, ANGELS 2

Matt Olson had two home runs and five RBIs before the end of the third inning, helping visiting Oakland cruise to a victory over Los Angeles in Anaheim, Calif. Olson connected against Angels opener Noe Ramirez in the first inning for a two-run homer, then hit a three-run homer in the third off Felix Pena, raising his season total to 16. That was all that Oakland starter Mike Fiers needed. The only offense the Angels could muster against Fiers (8-3) came in the sixth inning when Shohei Ohtani reached on an infield single, took second on a wild pitch and scored on a single by Albert Pujols, cutting Oakland's lead to 5-1.

BLUE JAYS 6, ROYALS 2

Eric Sogard hit the go-ahead home run with two outs in the seventh inning, Lourdes Gurriel Jr. homered twice, and Toronto defeated visiting Kansas City. Randal Grichuk added a two-run homer in the eighth for the Blue Jays, who had lost their three previous

games. Daniel Hudson (4-2) allowed one hit and struck out three in 1 1/3 innings to pick up the win. Martin Maldonado hit a home run and added two doubles for the Royals, who took a 2-0 lead in the top of the sixth before Toronto rallied.

RANGERS 5, RAYS 0

Lance Lynn pitched eight strong innings, and Texas defeated Tampa Bay in St. Petersburg, Fla., for its sixth straight win. Rougned Odor had three hits and an RBI for Texas, and Ronald Guzman had two RBIs. Lynn (10-4) allowed three hits, struck out 10 and walked one while reaching double digits in wins for the seventh straight season. He left after throwing 112 pitches in his longest outing of the season in terms of innings. Jose Leclerc pitched around a ninth-inning walk to complete the shutout. Coming off a marathon 18-inning, 5-2 victory at Minnesota on Thursday, the Rays didn't manage an extra-base hit until the eighth inning in losing for the 12th time in their past 17 games.

PIRATES 3, BREWERS 2

Kevin Newman drove in the go-ahead run in the ninth inning, and visiting Pittsburgh rallied for a win against Milwaukee. Newman also homered, Bryan Reynolds had three hits and a walk, and Adam Frazier had two hits for the Pirates, who have won seven of their past eight. Pittsburgh starter Chris Archer went four innings, allowing two runs and three hits. Felipe Vazquez (2-0) earned the victory. Ben Gamel had two hits for the Brewers, who have lost eight of 11.

REDS 6, CUBS 3

Joey Votto ripped an RBI single to highlight a four-hit performance, and Sonny Gray tossed 6 1/3 strong innings as host Cincinnati recorded a victory over Chicago. Phillip Ervin belted a homer to lead off the second inning, and rookie Nick Senzel had a two-run double to ignite a four-run fourth for the Reds, who snapped a four-game losing streak. Jason Heyward launched a two-run homer in the seventh inning for Chicago, which saw starter Cole Hamels (6-3) depart after tossing a warm-up pitch prior to the start of the second. The Cubs announced that Hamels felt something in his left side.

BRAVES 6, METS 2

Mike Soroka tossed 6 1/3 strong innings to earn the win, and Atlanta never trailed after Austin Riley launched a two-run homer in the second inning in a victory at New York. The Braves improved to 19-7 this month, the best record in the majors during that span. The Mets lost their sixth straight and fell to a National League-worst 9-17 in June. Soroka (9-1) allowed two runs on seven hits and no walks while striking out four as he once again became eligible to qualify for the NL ERA title. The 21-year-old right-hander has a 2.13 ERA—the second lowest in the league behind the Los Angeles Dodgers' Hyun-Jin Ryu—in 84 2/3 innings. Soroka retired the first 10 batters he faced before Pete Alonso homered to close the Braves' lead to 3-1.



DENVER: Ian Desmond #20 of the Colorado Rockies hits a 2 RBI double in the fifth inning against the Los Angeles Dodgers at Coors Field in Denver, Colorado. — AFP

MARLINS 6, PHILLIES 2

Brian Anderson homered, doubled and drove in three runs to lead Miami to a victory over visiting Philadelphia. Garrett Cooper had three hits and two RBIs for the Marlins, who snapped a three-game slide. The loss snapped the Phillies' four-game winning streak. Miami starter Eliaser Hernandez (1-2) scattered three hits in 5 2/3 innings, allowing two runs. Hernandez struck out seven and walked two. Phillies starter Vince Velasquez (2-5) allowed four runs, six hits, struck out six and walked two in 4 1/3 innings.

NATIONALS 3, TIGERS 1

Anibal Sanchez pitched six strong innings in his return to Comerica Park, Juan Soto blasted a solo homer, and Washington handed host Detroit its eighth straight loss. Sanchez (4-6) pitched for the Tigers from 2012-17. He had never previously faced Detroit in his long career. The right-hander gave up one run on six hits and one walk while striking out eight. Howie Kendrick supplied two hits and an RBI for the Nationals, who have won nine of their past 11 games. Nicholas Castellanos' homer accounted for the lone Detroit run. The Tigers have lost 21 of their last 23 home games.

ASTROS 2, MARINERS 1 (10 INNINGS)

Yuli Gurriel hit a walk-off home run with one out in the 10th inning, and Houston survived another sluggish offensive effort to beat visiting Seattle. Gurriel drilled a 2-2 fastball from Matt Festa (0-2) out to left field for his eighth home run on the season, making a winner of Will

Harris (2-1) and saving the Astros from another tough loss. Houston has scored just four runs over its past three games. Josh Reddick breathed life back into the Astros with his two-out, eighth-inning home run—his 10th. Seattle's Austin Nola hit his first career homer in the third inning for the game's first run.

PADRES 3, CARDINALS 1

Fernando Tatis Jr. and Eric Hosmer hit back-to-back homers off Michael Wacha in the sixth inning to power host San Diego to a win over visiting St. Louis. The home runs erased a 1-0 Cardinals lead that came on a fourth-inning run that erased a season-worst streak of 19 straight scoreless innings by St. Louis. Wacha (5-4) took the loss despite allowing only two runs on six hits and a walk with two strikeouts over seven innings. Padres starter Eric Lauer needed 98 pitches to negotiate four innings. Cal Quantrill (2-2) allowed a hit and a walk with two strikeouts in two scoreless innings to get the win.

GIANTS 6, DIAMONDBACKS 3

Buster Posey and Brandon Crawford had three hits apiece, and Alex Dickerson added a home run, powering host San Francisco to a win over Arizona. Rookie Shaun Anderson (3-2) took a lead into the sixth inning, and four relievers combined for 3 1/3 innings of one-run ball, helping the Giants beat the Diamondbacks in San Francisco for the first time in five tries this season. Jarrod Dyson and Carson Kelly had three hits apiece while Eduardo Escobar collected two for the Diamondbacks. — Reuters

Lashley hangs onto PGA Tour lead as Champ charges

WASHINGTON: Nate Lashley maintained his one-shot lead at the US PGA Tour's Rocket Mortgage Classic Friday, firing a five-under par 67 for a 14-under par total of 130 to keep red-hot Cameron Champ at bay.

Champ, seeking the second victory of his inaugural US PGA Tour season, surged up the leaderboard at Detroit Golf Club with an eight-under 28 on the front nine before finishing with a seven-under 65. He was in the clubhouse on 13-under 131 as Lashley, an alternate who was the last player to make it into the field, finished his follow-up to a first-round 63.

Two-under through his first nine holes, Lashley added three birdies coming in, including back-to-back birdies at the first and second and a birdie at the par-five seventh. Champ, who missed the cut in eight of his last 10 starts, set a sizzling early pace, reeling off five birdies in a row starting at the second hole before an eagle at the par-five seventh and a birdie at the ninth.

He needed only 12 putts on the front side with birdie putts from six feet at two, 11 feet at the third, eight feet at the par-5 fourth, 13 feet at the par-3 fifth and 14 feet at the sixth, then eagled from seven feet at seven and dropped a birdie putt from just inside 19 feet at the par-3 ninth. "The putt on five, the par-3 there, was a big breaker downhill. I put it right down the middle," Champ said. "On six same thing. Everything kept flowing. For the first nine holes, the hole looked pretty big for a while."

While visions of breaking 60 abounded, Champ cooled off on the back nine, making bogey at 13 and following a birdie at the par-5 17th on a nine-foot putt with a closing bogey, missing a four-footer for par. "The back side, I really didn't play terrible. I just hit a few shots that limited my ability to get it close to the hole," Champ said. "Missed a few putts I wish I could get back but that's how it goes." Champ's only prior US PGA title came last October at the start of the current campaign when he captured the Sanderson Farms Championship, which was played opposite the WGC HSBC Champions event in Shanghai. Charles Howell was alone in third after a 67 for 132. Gary Woodland, the American who won his first major title two weeks ago at the US Open at Pebble Beach, fired a 69 but his two-under total of 142 saw him miss the cut by three strokes, as did world number two Dustin Johnson. — AFP



SPIELBERG: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc sits in the car at his team garage in the pit lane during the qualifying session of the Austrian Formula One Grand Prix in Spielberg yesterday. Ferrari's Charles Leclerc shut out Lewis Hamilton to take pole for the Austrian Grand Prix with a new lap record in final qualifying. —AFP

Charles Leclerc on top in chaotic Austrian practice

SPIELBERG: Charles Leclerc topped the times after a gusty wind and a more demanding set of twists and gradient changes served up the season's most incident-filled practice with two red-flag interruptions at the Austrian Grand Prix on Friday.

Leclerc for Ferrari posted the quickest lap ahead of Mercedes' Valtteri Bottas and Red Bull's Pierre Gasly, but it was an afternoon of errors and mishaps that saw three of the sport's top drivers in dramatic off-circuit excursions.

On a sweltering afternoon in the Styrian Alps, with an air temperature of 31 and the track at 55 degrees, defending five-time champion Lewis Hamilton was fourth for Mercedes and Sebastian Vettel was eighth in the second Ferrari. Max Verstappen, who wound up ninth, crashed his Red Bull as did Bottas later in his Mercedes, both men escaping unhurt. "I was already complaining about the wind being tricky and then I got in the corner and the rear turned around," said Verstappen. "These cars, in general, are really sensitive to the wind and crashes can happen..." Bottas said: "It's all ok. I just lost the rear end suddenly into Turn Five. It was very unexpected, I made a correction, but it was a bit too late. "This afternoon is a bit more windy and the track is very penalising on making mistakes. It can happen I guess."

While Bottas continued, Verstappen was left to rely on

Gasly to give him the long-run data for today. "In general, I was happy with the car and that's what I focused on," said Verstappen. "I don't know if I can get on the second row yet, but we'll see."

Carlos Sainz was fifth for McLaren ahead of Romain Grosjean of Haas, Kimi Raikkonen of Alfa Romeo, Vettel, Verstappen and British rookie Lando Norris in the second McLaren. Slewled off. Five days after a flat, processional and uneventful French Grand Prix, the Spielberg circuit delivered the busiest and most chaotic free practice of the season, as Mercedes struggled to repeat their customary supremacy.

Hamilton had been fastest in the morning's opening session, the first time this year he topped FP1, but it was a different story in the afternoon heat as Leclerc set the pace. The Monegasque driver put his Ferrari on top after 16 minutes and despite being outpaced by Bottas and then Hamilton he found a response that lifted him beyond them again with half an hour remaining.

By then, Bottas was back in the paddock after losing control of the rear end of his Mercedes at Turn Six where he slewled off into the gravel and hit the barriers head-on. Both front wheels broke free, but were retained in their tethers. "Is he ok?" asked Vettel on Ferrari team radio, just 10 minutes before he, also, lost control of his car at T10 and managed to catch it, in a frantic flash of drama, before he crashed.

He returned to the pits for new tyres as the third of the main front-runners to have had difficulties, Verstappen having smashed into the wall at Turn 10 to bring out the red flags for the first time in his Red Bull after 37 minutes. The Dutchman, backed by a very sizeable 'orange army' of fans, lost the rear end and crashed backwards. He walked, or ran, back to the pits. —AFP

Commey batters Beltran with 8th round knockout

SAN DIEGO: Richard Commey knocked down Ray Beltran four times en route to a dominant eighth round technical knockout victory in an IBF light-weight fight on Friday.

The pair were supposed to fight for Commey's 135-pound title but that was scuttled after Beltran couldn't make the weight at Thursday's weigh-in. The 32-year-old Commey, of Ghana, ended the fight when Beltran walked into a crushing left hook to the chin that sent the Mexican flying backwards across the ring. A dazed Beltran got up but the referee stopped the fight, putting an end to the lopsided bout at the Pechanga Casino in Temecula, California. Commey knocked Beltran down twice in the first round—first with a right hand halfway through the round, and then again moments later while he had him pinned on the ropes.

In the fifth, Commey hit Beltran with a short left hook on the nose that sent him to the canvas for the third time. It looked like the referee might step in and stop the fight, but Beltran worked his way off the ropes and was able to continue.

This was the fifth straight win for Commey after back to back losses. The planned title fight was thrown into chaos when Beltran badly missed weight on Thursday, coming in at 136.8 pounds. Organizers fined Beltran \$40,000 with \$20,000 going to the boxing commission and \$20,000 being added to Commey's purse of \$350,000.

Commey, who improved to 29-2, with 26 knockouts, won a vacant world title by second-round knockout of Isa Chaniev on February 2. However during that fight he suffered a right hand injury that ended a title unification bout with pound-for-pound king Vasiliy Lomachenko in April.

Lomachenko ultimately faced WBA mandatory challenger Anthony Crolla, knocking him out in the fourth round. Beltran dropped to 36-9-1 as he was seeking to win a world title for the second time after having won a vacant belt by decision over Paulus Moses in February 2018. On the undercard, undefeated Carlos Adams won his 18th straight fight with a unanimous decision victory over Patrick Day in a junior middleweight bout. — AFP

Sports

Jaguares trample Brumbies to reach first Super Rugby final

'Each year we have improved and now we are in the final'

BUENOS AIRES: Matias Orlando scored twice and Joaquin Diaz Bonilla kicked 14 points as the Argentine Jaguares routed the Australian ACT Brumbies 39-7 Friday to reach their first Super Rugby final. The South Americans scored 20 unanswered points within 20 minutes of the semi-final in Buenos Aires, led 20-7 at half-time and added three more tries during the second half.

Entering the semi-final after six straight victories, the Jaguares reacted to a 30,000 singing, clapping crowd by winning far more comfortably than expected. Despite the long flight across the Pacific, the Brumbies were hopeful of making it to the final for a fourth time having won seven consecutive matches to reach the penultimate stage.

But they struggled in the lineouts and held an advantage only at the scrums, where they won several penalties and shoved the South Americans back several times. Competing in Super Rugby for only the fourth season, the Jaguares will face the Canterbury Crusaders or the Wellington Hurricanes, in the final next weekend.

If the Crusaders justify their season-long role of title favourites, they will stage the final in Christchurch while victory for the Hurricanes would mean Buenos Aires plays hosts. Whoever emerges as champions, the Jaguares have been the story of the season, developing from a team that won only four of 15 matches three seasons ago to reaching the title decider.

"This is a dream come true," said Jaguares and

Argentina lock Guido Petti. "We have come a long way since a disappointing first season not too long ago. "Each year we have improved and now we are in the final. We are looking forward to playing the Crusaders or the Hurricanes.

"It would be wonderful to have the final here at our home ground in front of such passionate supporters, but we will not fear travelling to New Zealand." Brumbies skipper and fly-half Christian Lealifano, one of several in the Canberra team making a final appearance before joining other clubs, said it was "a sad day".

"I am really disappointed with the result, but the Jaguares were very good and put a lot of pressure on us which, inevitably, resulted in mistakes. "I am leaving the Brumbies now, but my heart will be with this club forever. I have had wonderful times here."

The Jaguares were on the front foot from the start and led after only five minutes when a Toni Pulu blunder enabled former Brumbie Tomas Cubelli to score and Bonilla converted. A couple of Bonilla penalties stretched the lead to 13 points before Tomas Lavanini barged over following a line-out and Bonilla converted for a 20-0 advantage.

Although they continued to dominate possession and territory, the Jaguares did not score again before half-time and the Brumbies' first visit to the Argentine 22 proved profitable. After sustained pressure, Folau Fainga'a went over for his 12th try this season—a remarkable feat for a hooker and bettered only by Crusaders winger Sevu Reece with 13. Brumbies need-



BUENOS AIRES: Argentina's Jaguares centre Matias Orlando (C) scores a try and celebrates with teammates past Australia's Brumbies full back Thomas Banks (L) during their Super Rugby semifinal match at Jose Amalfitani stadium in Buenos Aires. — AFP

ed to score first in the second half to have a realistic chance of clawing back into the game, but could not unlock a superb Jaguares defence. Instead, Orlando

(twice) and Emiliano Boffelli scored tries, two of which Bonilla converted to the joy of the biggest crowd to watch the Jaguares this season. — AFP

Kohli thriving under pressure

BIRMINGHAM: India captain Virat Kohli says he relishes the intense pressure at the World Cup as he targets a win against England today that would seal a place in the semi-finals. The two-time champions have won five of their six league games, with one washout, and need to win just one of their last three matches to guarantee progress from the group phase.

Kohli, the world's top-ranked Test and one-day international batsman, has hit four consecutive half-centuries and on Thursday became the fastest batsman to 20,000 international runs across all formats. "I would say that's a lie if I say I'm not under pressure," said Kohli on the eve of the match at Edgbaston. "I'm probably good at hiding it. If I don't (feel pressure) then probably I don't have enough motivation to play anymore.

"That is the excitement that all of us carry as international cricketers—to walk into a pressure situation and come out on top." England are wobbling badly after two straight defeats to Sri Lanka and Australia and they need to beat both India and New Zealand to guarantee a place in the semi-finals. Kohli said he did not know why Eoin Morgan's side, who started the tournament as favourites, had stumbled so badly. "Look, everyone is a bit surprised. We thought England is probably going to dominate in their own conditions," said Kohli.

"But as I said at the beginning of the tournament in the press conference, that pressure is going to be a massive factor to handle and low scores are going to be defended." India have impressed at the tournament in England and Wales but their middle-order batting has been a concern, with M.S. Dhoni and Kedar Jadhav questioned over slow scoring in the middle overs.

Dhoni was criticised for his 52-ball 28 against Afghanistan, a game that India won by 11 runs, but Kohli defended the veteran wicketkeeper-batsman and the other players. "That discussion is always going to go on because we've had such a strong top order that these guys have hardly had a chance to bat," said Kohli. "We're not looking too much into it. He (Dhoni) knows exactly what he needs to do." — AFP

ICC to take action after fans clash at Pak-Afghan match

HEADINGLEY: The International Cricket Council has said it will take action against any fans involved in "scuffles" before the Cricket World Cup match between Pakistan and Afghanistan at Headingley yesterday.

Videos shared on social media showed supporters of both countries fighting outside the venue and security personnel being forced to intervene, while ESPNcricinfo reported that at least two fans had been evicted from the ground.

"We are aware of some scuffles among a minority of fans and are currently working with the venue security team and the local police force, West Yorkshire Police, to ensure there are no further incidents," an ICC spokesperson said.

"We do not condone this type of behaviour, and will take appropriate action against any anti-social behaviour that spoils the enjoyment for the majority of fans." Local media reported that the trouble started when a plane towing the message 'Justice for Balochistan' flew over the venue. Balochistan is the largest province in Pakistan and borders Afghanistan to the north.

"We work with local police forces around the country to prevent this type of incident occurring and were assured that given Headingley is under the flight path for the Leeds Bradford Airport it would not be an issue," the spokesperson added.—Reuters

'Flatline' NZ star Williamson impresses O'Brien

LONDON: Former New Zealand paceman Iain O'Brien says the inability of opposition teams to read "flatline" captain Kane Williamson is a huge asset to the Black Caps at the World Cup.

Williamson has been leading from the front in style heading at Lord's against reigning champions Australia, who beat the Black Caps in the 2015 final. One of the world's leading batsmen, he has scored 414 runs in the tournament so far at an average of 138, including match-winning hundreds against South Africa and the West Indies.

"You just expect him to do well and he expects himself to do well, hence you don't see a lot of emotion

from him either when he fails or when he succeeds," O'Brien told AFP. "He's just so flatline. It's kind of great to see. In terms of the New Zealand captaincy, (Daniel) Vettori before him was similar—you just can't read him.

"Not letting your emotion get involved is a massive asset for what Kane does and how he succeeds." Reflecting on the tournament as a whole, O'Brien said it was no surprise to see Pakistan, who won the 2017 Champions Trophy in England and Wales, making a late surge for a semi-final place.

"I had them in my top four pre-tournament, because of the Champions Trophy here two years ago and it's pretty much the same team," he said. "You ride the ups and downs with Pakistan and that's brilliant," said O'Brien, who was speaking at an event at the Oval in London to raise funds for the redevelopment of Christchurch's Hagley Oval in the South Island of New Zealand.

Pre-tournament favourites England, however, have lost their past two matches, against Sri Lanka and Australia, to leave their hopes of a first World Cup title in the balance. And another defeat, by an unbeaten

India side, on Sunday would leave them on the brink of a first-round exit.

"England have been, regrettably, the best team in the competition but can't get it right," said O'Brien. "I think they are just suffering under the burden of expectation and their own expectation." O'Brien, who now lives in England, had little time for suggestions that an unusually wet start to the English season had hampered Eoin Morgan's men by leaving them to play on surfaces with greater movement for bowlers rather than on the true, hard, pitches that favour their aggressive batting style.

"If they didn't expect tough pitches at this time of the summer in England and Wales, then I think they haven't done their prep right," said O'Brien. "They should have expected wickets that weren't going to be 400 (ones on which teams scored 400 runs). But they are still good enough, they've still got the best team in the tournament given any surface.

"As soon as they click, they'll be fine and they've got two games to click (against India and New Zealand). If they don't... but they are still my favourite team to win the competition, which is stupid." — AFP



BIRMINGHAM: England's captain Eoin Morgan takes part in a training session at Edgbaston in Birmingham, central England yesterday, ahead of their 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match against India. — AFP

England's WCup on the line against India

BIRMINGHAM: How has it come to this? It's a question many England fans will be asking now their side's World Cup hopes are in the balance. An England side widely tipped to end their World Cup drought by triumphing on home soil find themselves facing the very real prospect of a first-round exit heading into their match against unbeaten India at Edgbaston today.

England, despite coming into the World Cup as the top-ranked side in one-day internationals, have lost three pool matches, including their last two, against Sri Lanka and reigning champions Australia.

Another defeat by Virat Kohli's India would leave them on the brink of a first-round exit ahead of their concluding match in the 10-team round-robin phase against New Zealand. To make matters worse for the home side, England opener Jonny Bairstow has found himself involved in a public row with former captain Michael Vaughan, who labelled his fellow Yorkshire cricketer's claim that people are waiting for the hosts to fail at the World Cup "negative" and "pathetic".

England's white-ball revival from the depths of their first-round exit at the 2015 World Cup was built on aggressive top-order batting that saw them compile huge totals. But they have been unable to adjust their game on the more bowler-friendly surfaces at this World Cup, where lower totals and a more old-fashioned approach of not losing early wickets and then accelerating has been the policy of successful sides such as Australia.

Now they are set to face India's spinners on an Edgbaston pitch that generally provides more turn than any other World Cup venue. England's two most recent defeats have coincided with the absence through a hamstring injury of Jason Roy, with replacement James Vince struggling to fill the gap left by the Surrey opener.

Vince is only in the squad because England ditched regular back-up batsman Alex Hales for a second positive test for recreational drug use—a decision taken on the grounds of maintaining team "culture" that they could live to regret. "We know we can perform better as a group and Jason is a fantastic player to have available. It would be a boost to have him play." England's Jos Buttler said at Edgbaston on Friday. England's dilemma was summed up by Ben Stokes after his 89 failed to prevent a 64-run defeat by Australia at Lord's on Tuesday. "We just need to adjust to situations and then conditions, but we are not for one minute going to take a backward step," he said.

Former England captain Mike Atherton, writing in The Times, said: "It requires thought and intelligence to adapt, without sacrificing the intent that is fundamental to their approach—a tricky balance."

Buttler said the side were capable of handling the stresses of tournament play, saying "pressure is a privilege". Adding to England's problems are injury fears over fast bowler Jofra Archer (side) and leg-spinner Adil Rashid (shoulder), while Sunday's match may well feel like an away game given India fans could constitute the majority of the Edgbaston crowd. Two-times champions India, by contrast, will guarantee a place in the semi-finals if they win, although there are concerns they are too reliant on Kohli for runs. "At the top of the order, Rohit Sharma has not fired the last couple of times, and that means KL Rahul needs to do more," said former India opener Krishnamachari Srikkanth. "Everyone knows he is capable of doing it, he has done it before and will need to correct his course." So too will England. — AFP

Waldschmidt targets record as Germany meet Spain in Euro U21 final

UDINE: Germany star Luca Waldschmidt will be looking to set a new goal-scoring record as the defending champions take on Spain in today's final of the European under-21 championships in Udine.

Waldschmidt has scored seven goals so far in the tournament and one more would see him overtake Swede Marcus Berg's record achieved in 2009 for the most scored at the continental championships.

"What matters more is the title," insisted Waldschmidt, who has emerged as one of the stars of the tournament which also doubled as a qualifier for the 2020 Olympics. It is estimated that the 23-year-old's value has tripled from the five million euros (\$5.7 million) paid last summer by Bundesliga club Freiburg, where he scored nine goals in his first season.

But the Vespa-loving player whose full name is actually the Italian 'Gian Luca' has come into his own in Italy. Waldschmidt scored a hat-trick against Serbia in the group stage and a brace against Romania in the semi-finals.

Coach Stefan Kuntz insisted however there was more to his team than Waldschmidt. "(Waldschmidt) had a great performance, but I don't want to single out one of my players," said Kuntz after the semi-finals in Bologna.

"It's the group that's important, even those who didn't play a minute are also important for the team spirit." Waldschmidt conceded he was feeling more at ease ahead of today's match in the north-eastern town of Udine which will be a repeat of the title showdown two years ago. "When you come from behind in a semi-final against such a good side it gives you confidence," he said ahead of Germany's bid for a third continental title. Spain last lifted the trophy in 2013 and are bidding to match Italy's record of five European titles. The 'Rojita' have their own star in Real Madrid midfielder maestro Dani Ceballos, among the stand-out players in Spain's run to the final as he was in Poland two years ago.

Ceballos, 22, has scored two goals and provided two assists so far, with the Spanish sweeping past France 4-1 in the semi-finals. "This team is getting better with every match," said coach Luis De la Fuente, whose side had started the tournament with a defeat by Italy.

"I have a team that is growing, which is capable of overcoming difficult moments." The defeat against Italy made us stronger. I don't think my players are yet at their maximum." Temperatures in Udine should be slightly cooler than during the semi-finals with forecasts of 35 degrees Celsius (95 degrees Fahrenheit) for the town on the border with Slovenia. — AFP

Sports

Rapinoe knocks out hosts and fires USA into WCup s-finals

France leave their own tournament with more than a few regrets

PARIS: Megan Rapinoe stole the headlines again as her brace took the United States through to the semi-finals of the women's World Cup on Friday, the holders beating France 2-1 in Paris to puncture the hopes of the host nation.

Rapinoe's free-kick five minutes into this quarter-final evaded a sea of bodies in the box on its way into the net to stun the home crowd at the Parc des Princes. The USA then soaked up pressure before delivering the knockout blow midway through the second half when Rapinoe turned in Tobin Heath's centre, although Wendie Renard pulled a goal back late on for France to set up a tense finish.

Jill Ellis's team held on and they go through to a semi-final against England in Lyon next Tuesday as they seek to retain their crown and win a fourth World Cup in eight editions. "This is so special to beat the host nation in the Parc des Princes. You can't ask for any more than this," said Rapinoe.

The pink-haired Rapinoe has been crucial on the field in this run, while dominating headlines off it thanks to her spat with President Donald Trump over her refusal to attend any post-tournament reception at the White House. The 33-year-old had already scored twice in the win over Spain in the last round. Here, she took her tally for the tournament to five goals on the occasion of her 157th cap.

Meanwhile, France will leave their own tournament with more than a few regrets. Ellis praised the hosts, saying: "That's a fantastic team we played tonight, and that is the most intense match I have ever been a part of."

Nevertheless, that will be scant consolation for them. They were the only team to defeat the USA in the two years leading up to the World Cup and they did not

really do themselves justice here before an expectant crowd.

Coach Corinne Diacre had been set the target of going all the way to the final on home soil, yet that always looked a tall order from the moment the draw was made last December and they were set on a quarter-final collision course with the best team in the world.

"It's a failure in a footballing sense, we can't hide from that. We are far from fulfilling our objective," said Diacre. "I hope we at least won people's hearts tonight and since the start of the tournament."

Only once before had they even made it to the semi-finals, and for the second World Cup running their adventure ends in the last eight, the same stage at which they went out of the 2016 Olympics and the last three European Championships.

Having started this tournament with a first-half blitz against South Korea in the opening game, Les Bleues never really reached the same heights again. The country's leading sports daily L'Equipe had called this "the challenge of a lifetime", and in that context conceding the opening goal so early on a sweltering Parisian evening was a disaster.

Alex Morgan was fouled by Griedge Mbock outside the area to the USA left, and Rapinoe's low delivery went in without taking a touch, passing through the legs of France skipper Amandine Henry en route. The home side then had lots of the ball but rarely really troubled USA goalkeeper Alyssa Naeher.

Their opponents had not created much either, although they made their intent clear right at the start of the second half as a Samantha Mewis strike drew a fine save from Sarah Bouhaddi, who then did well to keep out Heath's follow-up.



PARIS: United States' forward Megan Rapinoe (L) fights for the ball with 16 France's goalkeeper Sarah Bouhaddi during the France 2019 Women's World Cup quarter-final football match between France and United States, at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP

The second goal arrived in the 65th minute, with Morgan and Heath combining down the right before the latter's ball across goal was turned in by Rapinoe. France did not give up and set up a frenzied finale as

they reduced the deficit nine minutes from time, Renard evading her marker to head in Gaetane Thiney's flighted free-kick for her fourth goal of the tournament. But the USA saw out the victory. — AFP

Egypt legend Gomaa hails Salah, slams coach Aguirre

CAIRO: Egypt legend Wael Gomaa has praised superstar Mohamed Salah and criticised coach Javier Aguirre before the Africa Cup of Nations hosts confront Uganda in Group A today. "We depend on Salah and Trezeguet (Mahmoud Hassan) in attack, the determination of midfielder Tarek Hamed and brilliant defender Ahmed Hegazy," said the beIN Sports analyst.

"We have no tactics or strategy. Aguirre is so bad with his line-ups and substitutions," added the former Egypt and Al Ahly centre-back, who retired five years ago. Here, AFP Sport previews the final matches in Group A and Group B with record seven-time champions Egypt and Nigeria already sure of last-16 places.

EGYPT V UGANDA

This will be the fifth Cup of Nations clash between the countries and Egypt are set to maintain a perfect record and finish top of the table in Cairo. Mexican

Aguirre was puzzled by the second-half loss of tempo in a midweek win over the Democratic Republic of Congo and is considering making changes. "Many players appeared exhausted against the Congolese and need rest, so I am considering introducing new faces against Uganda." Uganda lie second and are set to reach the knockout phase of a Cup of Nations for the first time since 1978 whatever the result.

DR CONGO V ZIMBABWE

Although the Congolese have suffered two-goal losses to Uganda and Egypt, they could still sneak into the second round as one of the best four third-place teams if they win in Cairo. Woeful against Uganda, the Congolese were much better in their second outing and struck the woodwork twice when falling to Egypt. "After the unacceptable performance we produced against Uganda, the boys played a great game against Egypt and will fight for three points against Zimbabwe," vowed coach Florent Ibenge. Taking a point against Uganda means Zimbabwe are better placed than DR Congo to survive, provided the likes of captain Knowledge Musona finish better and secure maximum points.

NIGERIA V MADAGASCAR

Nigeria are through to the second round after two

single-goal Group B victories in coastal city Alexandria and debutants Madagascar should also progress. In the likely event that the Indian Ocean islanders lose to the three-time champions, they still look good to book a last-16 place as one of the four best third-place finishers. It would be remarkable achievement for a nation ranked so low that they had to beat Sao Tome e Principe just to reach the qualifying competition for the 2019 Cup of Nations. Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr was thrilled that the winner against Guinea followed a corner, saying: "We have spent a lot of time during training practising corner-kick situations."

BURUNDI V GUINEA

Guinea, whose best Cup of Nations finish was second behind Morocco in Ethiopia 43 years ago, must defeat debutants Burundi in Cairo to avoid a shock early exit. Belgian coach Paul Put axed goalkeeper Aly Keita after an error-riddled draw with Madagascar and the side performed much better despite losing to Nigeria. "We have made things difficult for ourselves," admitted Put, who took outsiders Burkina Faso to the 2013 final won by Nigeria. "We must beat Burundi to stand a chance of qualifying." Burundi need a win to have any chance of surviving and are looking to score for the first time in the tournament after losing twice to late second-half goals. —AFP

Rohr keeps Nigeria players on toes as top spot at stake

ALEXANDRIA: Nigeria coach Gernot Rohr pledged to ring the changes for his team's final Africa Cup of Nations group game against surprise package Madagascar to stoke competition in the squad. The Super Eagles are guaranteed a place in the last 16 but need a point today in Alexandria to secure top spot in Group B and set up a meeting with a third-place finisher in the next round.

"It's important to finish first of the group, it's better to play a team in third than second so we will do all to finish top," Rohr told reporters at a pre-match news conference in the Mediterranean city.

"We have our scout watching a lot of games in Cairo. We have to prepare to play against a good team. It could be South Africa, DR Congo or maybe Cameroon so in all cases it will be a very tough match in the round of 16, but we're not there yet and are focused on the game tomorrow."

"Will I make changes? Yes, because I want to put everyone under pressure and have that competition in each position. We'll see in the last training tonight which changes we will do," he added. Madagascar are well positioned to reach the knockout stages in their debut in the competition after collecting four points from their opening two games.

"It will be a really interesting match against a team that has a lot of offensive qualities. I think it will also be a 'final' in the group, the winner will be top and that's a big motivation for us." Nigeria forward Ahmed Musa said morale in the squad was good despite a training strike earlier in the week over unpaid bonuses.

"I don't think there's anything separating the team in camp," said Musa. "We have to fight for our country and we have to work very hard. "Each game is more important and we are improving each game and I think the next game will be even better."

A draw would send Madagascar through as runners-up but coach Nicolas Dupuis, who combines the role with his job a French fourth division club Fleury, insists the Indian Ocean islanders aren't quite there yet. "I'm very proud of my players, they've all been very good," said Dupuis. "We've played in our first CAN, got our first point and first win. "We're not yet qualified for the last 16 so I'm not going to try and calculate things. It would be a shame for it to end here." — AFP

Chile beat Colombia on penalties to reach Copa semis

SAO PAULO: Champions Chile maintained their hopes of a third straight Copa America victory after beating Colombia on penalties on Friday to reach the semi-finals. Chile could have won the game in normal time but had two goals ruled out for marginal decisions in a scoreless draw, before Alexis Sanchez stroked home the winning spot-kick.

It was just rewards for the champions after dominating a match in which Colombia held on thanks to a couple of tight VAR calls. Charles Aranguiz had a goal ruled out in the first half for a marginal offside against Sanchez in the build up to the move.

And after Arturo Vidal shot low into the far corner on 70 minutes, that was chalked off for a handball against Guillermo Maripan, who had teed up the Barcelona midfielder. Following eight successful penalties, William Tesillo casually put his effort wide for Colombia, leaving Sanchez to be the hero, as the Manchester United forward continues to make up in Brazil for a dreadful club season.

"We dominated practically the whole match. It was a great match against a team with a lot of quality," said Vidal. "We scored two goals that unfortunately VAR annulled. We deserved to have won in normal time, we couldn't, but we managed to score the five penalties and went into the next round."

They will face either Uruguay, who beat them 1-0 in the group stages tomorrow, or Peru in Wednesday's semi-final in Porto Alegre. "Penalties are more in the hands of God than the players, that's the way they've always been and always will be," moaned Colombia coach Carlos Queiroz.

The first half was dominated by Chile's 16th minute goal being controversially disallowed. Jean Beausejour made a surging, overlapping run down the left and his inviting cross was spilled by Arsenal goalkeeper David Ospina after Davinson Sanchez got in his way, allowing Aranguiz to nip in and slot home from a tight angle.

But much to the bemusement of many watching, the referee consulted VAR and the goal was chalked off for the most marginal of offsides. Until then, Colombia had been the better side. On five minutes, a Radamel Falcao cushioned header found Roger Martinez but the forward wanted an extra touch and his goal-bound volley was charged down.

James Rodriguez then had a free-kick in a danger-



SAO PAULO: Colombia's Duvan Zapata (L) and Chile's Gary Medel vie for the ball during their Copa America football tournament quarter-final match at the Corinthians Arena in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP

ous position but failed to clear the defensive wall. Ospina made an incredible one-handed save on 12 minutes to keep out an Eduardo Vargas header from a Jose Fuenzalida cross, but it wouldn't have counted anyway as the ball was deemed to have been out of play.

Soon after the disallowed goal tempers flared as Sanchez squared-up to Wilmar Barrios, only to then find himself face-to-face with Colombia's giant center-back Yerry Mina. Chile were by now in control of proceedings and Maripan headed over from a Beausejour cross.

The champions were buzzing and Mauricio Isla threaded a through ball to Vargas, whose shot was blocked by a sliding Mina. Chile were looking increasingly threatening as Sanchez fired wide, Fuenzalida had a shot blocked and Vidal went closest yet with a curler from 18 yards.

Colombia made a bright opening to the second period as Rodriguez curled a free-kick into the side-netting and Juan Cuadrado sliced well wide on a rapier counter-attack. Ospina was having a jittery performance and needed two attempts to gather a long range Vargas strike. The best chance of the match came on the hour when Aranguiz slipped in Sanchez behind the defence but under pressure from a backtracking Davinson Sanchez, the Manchester United forward sliced his shot horribly wide.

When Chile had the ball in the net again on 70 minutes after Vidal fired home through a forest of legs into the far corner, Argentine referee Nestor Pitana again signaled to VAR and Colombia were reprieved for the second time.

Chile continued to boss proceedings right to the end but in the shoot-out it was third time lucky as not even VAR could deny them victory this time. —AFP

Martinez, Celso goals earn Argentina Copa semi against Brazil

RIO DE JANEIRO: Argentina set up a mouth-watering Copa America semi-final against hosts Brazil as goals from Lautaro Martinez and Giovanni Lo Celso secured a 2-0 quarter-final victory over Venezuela on Friday. Martinez gave Argentina a 10th minute lead with a clever back flick between his legs and substitute Lo Celso secured the victory 16 minutes from time, pouncing on a mistake by Venezuela's goalkeeper Wilker Farinez at Rio de Janeiro's Maracana stadium. It was another improved performance from Lionel Scaloni's team who have grown into this tournament since beginning with a 2-0 defeat to Colombia and a 1-1 draw with Paraguay. They are bidding to end a 26-year wait for a major international trophy.

"We're Argentina and when there are knock-out matches, it makes us strong," said Sergio Aguero, who had a hand in both goals. "It won't be easy in any way (against Brazil) but we're Argentina and we'll try to do justice to the jersey."

Argentina started like a team determined to claim the prize at stake: a semi-final against their great rivals Brazil. Martinez played in Aguiro in the inside right channel after just three minutes but the Manchester City forward's low cross-shot was blocked by goalkeeper Farinez's foot.

Argentina should have gone in front when German Pezzella ran unmarked onto a flick-on at the back post but he seemed surprised and couldn't react in time with the goal gaping. There was constant pressure on the Venezuelan backline as Argentina won a succession of corners.

They had 80 percent of possession in the first 10 minutes and sure enough, Venezuela cracked. Aguero's angled shot was heading well off target as it skidded into a crowd of players, but Martinez instinctively flicked it between his legs, nutmegging an unsighted Farinez. It was the least Argentina deserved after such a furious start but gradually Venezuela started to settle and get a foothold in the match. "We struggled to get a foothold in the match and by the time we got going, we were already behind and facing an uphill battle," complained Venezuela coach Rafael Dudamel.

"Undoubtedly when looking back (on the tournament) we'll have a lot more positives than negatives," he added. Chances were few and far between but Pezzella got up well to meet a Lionel Messi free-kick, only to head well over the top.

Defenders were proving the most dangerous players on the pitch and Jhon Chancellor rose highest to head over from a corner at the other end. In first half injury time, Martinez almost had a second put on a plate for him by Marcus Acuna, but Roberto Rosales whisked it off his toe at the back post, four yards from goal as Argentina finished the half with another burst of attacking intent.

Argentina made another fast start to the second half with Farinez having to punch away a wicked inswinging free-kick from Leandro Paredes, whose slide-rule pass then sent Martinez scampering into the box only to lash his shot against the outside of the post. Aguero bundled through a number of flimsy challenges but overran the ball and Farinez gathered. In Darwin Machis, Venezuela had a left winger with the beating of his marker Juan Foyth but the 'Vinotinto' (Red wine) were unable to get him into the game.

And when they did, Foyth twice got away with robust challenges on the speedy forward inside the box. The chance Venezuela had been waiting for came on 71 minutes when Tomas Rincon picked out Ronald Hernandez eight yards from goal at an angle, but he rushed his pushed volley and goalkeeper Franco Armani made a smart save. —AFP

25 Charles Leclerc on top in chaotic Austrian practice

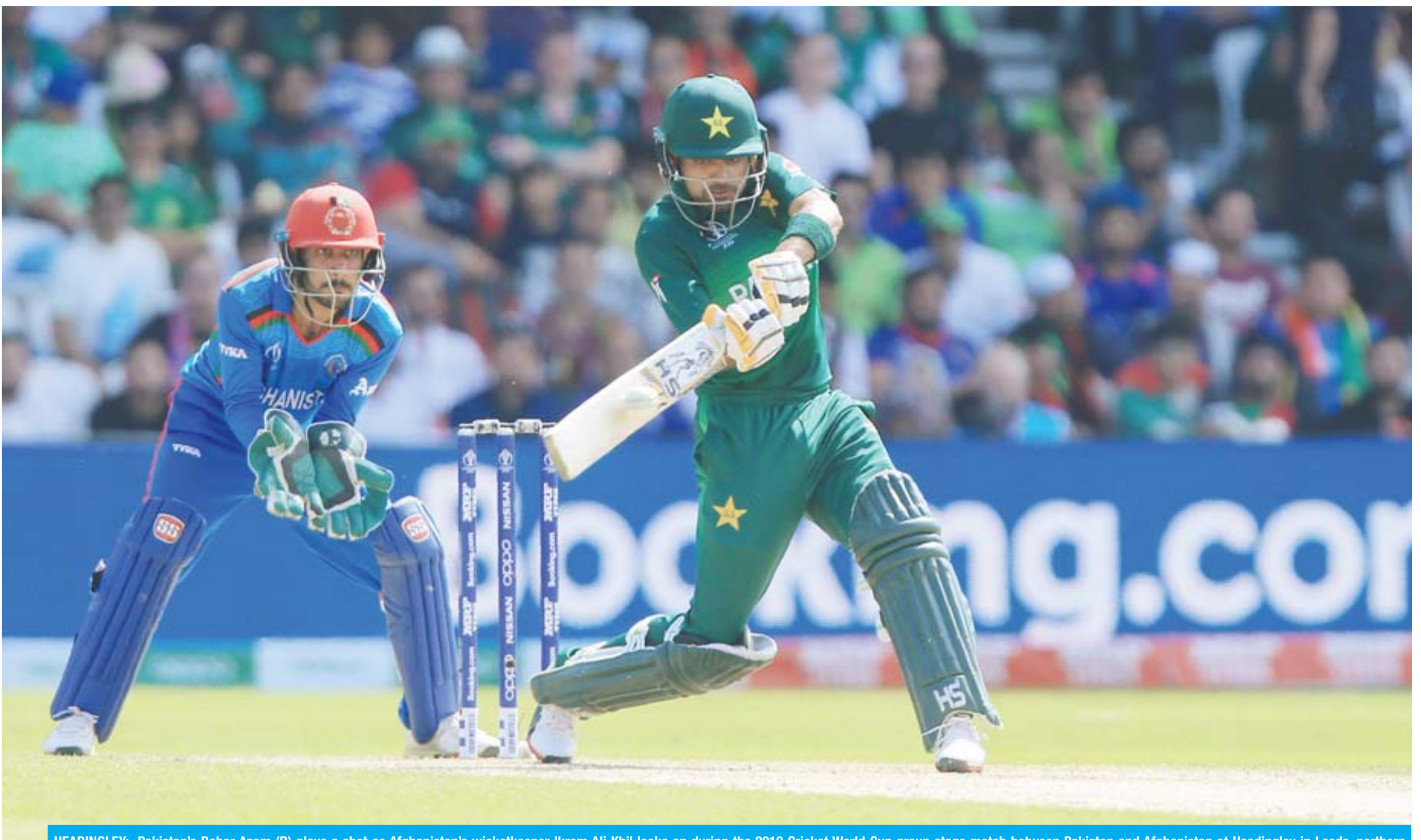
26 Jaguares trample Brumbies to reach first Super Rugby final

27 Rapinoe knocks out hosts and fires USA into WCup s-finals



Pakistan edge Afghanistan in thriller

Keep their hopes of reaching the World Cup semi-finals



HEADINGLEY: Pakistan's Babar Azam (R) plays a shot as Afghanistan's wicketkeeper Ikram Ali Khil looks on during the 2019 Cricket World Cup group stage match between Pakistan and Afghanistan at Headingley in Leeds, northern England, yesterday. — AFP

HEADINGLEY: All-rounder Imad Wasim's unbeaten 49 guided Pakistan to a thrilling three-wicket victory over minnows Afghanistan in Leeds yesterday, maintaining their hopes of reaching the World Cup semi-finals.

Chasing a target of 228, Pakistan lost opener Fakhar Zaman for a duck on the second ball of the innings when he was trapped leg-before by off-spinner Mujeeb Ur Rahman. Babar Azam, who scored his maiden World Cup century in Pakistan's win over New Zealand earlier this week, combined with Imam-ul-Haq to stabilise the innings with a steady 72-run partnership.

Off-spinner Mohammad Nabi removed the pair to expose the middle order, before Mohammad Hafeez and Haris Sohail fell cheaply to leave Pakistan reeling at 142-5. Captain Sarfaraz Ahmed (18) and Shadab Khan (11) were run-out to set up an intense finale but Wasim

and Wahab Riaz (15) ensured there were no further hiccups as they chased down the target with two balls to spare.

The game was marred by a clash between the supporters of both teams in the stands, with ESPNcricinfo reporting that at least two fans were evicted from the match. Videos shared on social media also showed fans fighting outside the venue, with the International Cricket Council saying it will take action against "any anti-social behaviour". — Reuters

Pakistan now need to win their final match against Bangladesh on Friday and hope other results go their way to advance to the semi-finals. Earlier, Pakistan fast bowler Shaheen Afridi claimed four wickets to restrict Afghanistan to a modest 227 for nine from 50 overs on a flat batting track at Headingley.

— Reuters

Pliskova dominates Kerber to take Eastbourne title

EASTBOURNE: World number three Karolina Pliskova cruised to her second Eastbourne International title with a 6-1, 6-4 destruction of Wimbledon champion Angelique Kerber yesterday. The Czech did not drop a set all week and raced through the final in little over an hour on court to claim her third title of the year.

"All week I was playing quite perfect," said Pliskova. "But not all the matches were as easy the score says, especially today." Kerber will head to London for the defence of her Wimbledon title next week as one of the favourites, but on this form it is Pliskova who looks capable of ending her long wait for a Grand Slam victory. "I tried my best but you deserved to win today," said Kerber. "Going back as a defending champion it will be a special moment stepping onto centre court again. "I'm feeling good, I'm playing good at the moment and hopefully I can continue on my play from last year."

Pliskova raced into an early 4-0 lead as the Kerber serve was broken three times in a rapid opening set. The German was broken again in the opening game of the second and that proved decisive as Pliskova served out the match in dominant fashion to close her head-to-head deficit against Kerber to 7-5.

Meanwhile, American Taylor Fritz claimed his maiden ATP title in Eastbourne, beating compatriot Sam Querrey 6-3 6-4 in the final yesterday. Playing only his second final, Fritz made a solid start to break Querrey to love in his first return game. Fritz went on to dominate the majority of the baseline rallies, while Querrey was undone by unforced errors in key moments of the match. The 21-year-old Fritz clinched another early break of serve in the second set before closing out the victory in just over an hour with an ace.

Fritz, son of former top-10 player Kathy May, will look to carry his success over to Wimbledon, where



EASTBOURNE: Czech Republic's Karolina Pliskova holds aloft the winner's trophy as she celebrates winning against Germany's Angelique Kerber during their women's singles final match at the WTA Nature Valley International tennis tournament in Eastbourne, southern England yesterday. — AFP

he begins his campaign against Czech Tomas Berdych on Tuesday. Querrey, who was playing his first final since the New York Open in 2018, will meet world number four Dominic Thiem in his opening match. — Agencies

SCOREBOARD

Scoreboard in the Pakistan v Afghanistan World Cup match in Leeds yesterday:

Afghanistan		Pakistan	
Rahmat Shah c Babar b Imad	35	Fakhar Zaman lbw b Mujeeb	0
Gulbadin Naib c Sarfaraz b Shaheen	15	Imam-ul-Haq st Alikhil b Nabi	36
Hashmatullah Shahidi c Imad b Shaheen	0	Babar Azam b Nabi	45
Ikram Alikhil c Hafeez b Imad	24	Mohammad Hafeez c Shahidi b Mujeeb	19
Asghar Afghan b Shadab	42	Haris Sohail lbw b Rashid	27
Mohammad Nabi c Amir b Riaz	16	Sarfaraz Ahmed run out	18
Najibullah Zadran b Shaheen	42	Imad Wasim not out	49
Samiullah Shinwari not out	19	Shadab Khan run out	11
Rashid Khan c Fakhar b Shaheen	8	Wahab Riaz not out	15
Hamid Hassan b Riaz	1	Extras: (b1, lb4, w5)	10
Mujeeb Ur Rahman not out	7	Total: (seven wks, 49.4 overs)	230
Extras: (lb8, w10)	18	Did not bat: Mohammad Amir, Shaheen Shah Afridi	
Total: (nine wks, 50 overs)	227	Fall of wickets: 1-0 (Fakhar), 2-72 (Imam), 3-81 (Babar), 4-121 (Hafeez), 5-142 (Sohail), 6-156 (Sarfaraz), 7-206 (Shadab).	
Fall of wickets: 1-27 (Naib), 2-27 (Shahidi), 3-57 (Shah), 4-121 (Asghar), 5-125 (Alikhil), 6-167 (Nabi), 7-202 (Najibullah), 8-210 (Rashid), 9-219 (Hassan)		Bowling: Mujeeb 10-1-34-2; Hassan 2-0-13-0; Naib 9.4-0-73-0 (1w); Nabi 10-0-23-2; Rashid 10-0-50-1 (3w); Shinwari 8-0-32-0 (1w).	
Bowling: Imad 10-0-48-2; Amir 10-1-41-0 (1w); Shaheen 10-0-47-4 (4w); Hafeez 2-0-10-0; Riaz 8-0-29-2 (4w); Shadab 10-0-44-1 (1w).		Result: Pakistan won by three wickets Man-of-the-match: Imad Wasim	