

2 India seeks long-term energy security with Arab countries



12 KIB realized a significant growth in its KPIs in 2018



21 Janet Jackson, Radiohead, The Cure enter Rock Hall of Fame



28 Man City go top; United in top four; Huddersfield out



Tens of thousands protest at Gaza border as truce holds

Palestinians mark protest anniversary • Three youths shot dead



TUNIS: Tunisian President Beji Caied Essebsi welcomes HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah upon his arrival at Tunis-Carthage International airport yesterday to attend the Arab Summit today. — AFP (See Page 2)

GAZA CITY: Tens of thousands of Gazans gathered at the Israeli border yesterday to mark a year since protests and clashes erupted there, but fears of mass bloodshed were averted after late Egyptian-led negotiations. Israel deployed several thousand troops along the border, with the anniversary coming at a sensitive time ahead of its April 9 elections. Three Palestinians were killed by Israeli fire, one during an overnight demonstration and two 17-year-olds in clashes later yesterday, the health ministry in Gaza City said. Another 316 Gazans were wounded.

But fears of a repeat of similar protests and clashes to those that saw more than 60 Palestinians killed on May 14, when the United States transferred its Israel embassy to Jerusalem, did not materialize. Egypt tried to mediate between Israel and Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas to rein in violence. Hamas officials said Friday an understanding had been reached that would see Israel ease its crippling blockade of Gaza in exchange for the protests remaining calm.

Tens of thousands gathered at five protest points along the frontier yesterday, but the vast majority stayed away from the border fence, AFP journalists said. East of Gaza City, small groups of young men approached the fence and sought to break it multiple times but were forced back by Israeli tear gas and live fire. The protesters threw stones at the Israeli soldiers.

Continued on Page 24



GAZA: A Palestinian protester flashes the victory sign while marching with others flying Palestinian and Turkish flags during a demonstration marking the first anniversary of the "March of Return" protests near the border with Israel yesterday. — AFP

Pope, Moroccan King: Jerusalem must be open to all

RABAT: Pope Francis joined Morocco's King Mohammed VI yesterday in declaring Jerusalem the "common patrimony" of Christians, Jews and Muslims, on the first day of a visit to the North African country. The spiritual leader of the world's 1.3 billion Catholics was invited by King Mohammed VI for the sake of "interreligious dialogue", according to Moroccan authorities. In a joint statement, the two leaders said Jerusalem was "common patrimony of humanity and especially the followers of the three monotheistic religions," during the pontiff's visit to Rabat.

"The specific multi-religious character, the

spiritual dimension and the particular cultural identity of Jerusalem... must be protected and promoted," they said in the declaration released by the Vatican. Their statement came after US President Donald Trump's landmark recognition of the disputed city as capital of Israel, sparking anger across the Muslim world, especially from Palestinians who see Jerusalem as the capital of their future state.

Improving relations with other religions has been a priority for the Argentine pontiff, whose papacy has been marred by a wave of child sex abuse allegations against clergy. Addressing thousands of Moroccans who had braved the rain to attend the welcome ceremony, Francis said it was "essential to oppose fanaticism". He stressed the need for "appropriate preparation of future religious guides", ahead of meeting trainee imams later yesterday. Catholics are a tiny minority in the country where 99 percent of the population is Muslim. The king is revered across West

Africa as "commander of the faithful".

Speaking at the ceremony at the Tour (or tower) Hassan mosque and nearby mausoleum in Rabat, Francis defended "freedom of conscience" and "religious freedom". "Live as brothers," he told a crowd of around 25,000, after arriving from the airport in his Popemobile, passing rows of Moroccan and Vatican City flags. An estimated 12,000 well-wishers packed the esplanade outside the partly-finished 12th century mosque, some in traditional dress, according to Moroccan officials. Some 130,000 people across Rabat watched the first stage of the pope's visit, which was beamed onto giant screens, officials said.

Francis will also visit an institute where around 1,300 students are studying to become imams and preachers, teaching "moderate Islam" and backed by the king. "It's a very significant event, the first time that

Continued on Page 24



RABAT: Morocco's King Mohammed VI (right) and Pope Francis talk during their meeting at the Royal Palace in the capital yesterday. — AFP

Facebook to tighten live stream access

SAN FRANCISCO: Facebook on Friday said it is tightening live video streaming rules in response to the service being used to broadcast deadly attacks on mosques in

New Zealand. The Christchurch attacks - carried out by a self-avowed white supremacist who opened fire on worshippers at two mosques - claimed 50 lives. Many people have "rightly questioned how online platforms such as Facebook were used to circulate horrific videos of the attack," chief operating officer Sheryl Sandberg said in an online post.

"In the wake of the terrorist attack, we are taking three steps: strengthening the

Continued on Page 24

Lights go out worldwide for Earth Hour

SYDNEY: The Sydney Opera House and the Harbour Bridge were plunged into darkness for an hour yesterday as part of a global campaign to raise awareness about climate change and its impact on the planet's vanishing biodiversity. The 13th edition of Earth Hour, organized by the green group WWF, saw millions of people across 180 countries turn off their lights at 8:30 pm local time to highlight energy use and the need for conservation. "We are the first generation to know we are destroying the world. And we could be the last that can do anything about it," the charity said. "We have the solutions, we just need our voices to be heard."

WWF-Australia CEO Dermot O'Gorman told AFP that "Earth hour still is the world's largest grassroots

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KUWAIT: The ministry of electricity and water marks Earth Hour yesterday.

Anesthesia meet begins at Jaber Cultural Centre



KUWAIT: Head of Anesthesiology and Intensive Care Department at Jahra Hospital Dr Mohammad Khaja (left) and Dr Abdulrahman Alrefai (right) honor the CEO of Central Circle Co Dr Ziad Al-Alyan (center) during the Anesthesia Conference yesterday.

KUWAIT: The 9th Kuwait Anesthesia Conference kicked off yesterday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre to discuss specific topics in the field of anesthesia and anesthesiology. Assistant Undersecretary for Development and Quality Affairs Dr

Mohammed Al-Khashti stressed on the importance of the three-day conference and its contribution to upgrading the health system in the state, pointing out that its recommendations will be the focus of the health ministry. (See Page 5)

Sisi ups wages to help assuage economic woes

CAIRO: Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi has raised the country's minimum wage to 2,000 Egyptian pounds (\$116) a month from 1,200 pounds, he said at an event yesterday celebrating women. Sisi said the raise would apply to all Egyptian workers and added that pensions would rise by 15 percent, with pensioners receiving a minimum increase of 150 pounds to take the minimum pension to 900 pounds. "This was supposed to come out on June 30. But I said this matter cannot wait,"

the president said.

Egypt has implemented a series of tough economic measures, including devaluing the pound, slashing energy subsidies and introducing a value-added tax, to help meet conditions of a \$12 billion IMF loan. The measures have left many of Egypt's nearly 100 million people struggling to make ends meet. Remaining fuel subsidies are expected to be cut around mid-2019, and the petroleum minister said last month Egypt would implement an automatic price indexation mechanism on 95 octane petrol starting in April.

Under the measures announced by Sisi, state employees will receive a raise of 7 percent, or a minimum of 75 pounds, while those not employed in the civil service will receive a 10 percent raise, also receiving at

least 75 pounds. All state employees will also get a bonus of 150 pounds to help compensate for inflation, Sisi said, urging Egyptians to alter their spending behavior to help combat rising prices.

"You want to control prices, don't buy things that get more expensive. The matter is simple. By God, by God, by God, anyone selling and buying wants to profit and be successful - if they find that their prices are exaggerated and people don't go buy their commodities, prices will fall," he said. The pay increases will cost the state 30.5 billion Egyptian pounds in total, Sisi said, noting that more than 300 billion pounds would be allocated for salaries in the 2019/2020 budget, up from 270 billion in the previous year. — Reuters

Local

Amir heads to Tunisia to partake in Arab Summit

Amir to head delegation at 30th regular session of Arab League Conference



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah is seen on his way to Tunisia to partake in the Arab Summit. — KUNA



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday left to Tunisia to partake in the Arab Summit scheduled today. HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, along with an accompanying official delegation, departed Kuwait, heading for the sisterly Republic of Tunisia to head the State of Kuwait delegation at the 30th regular session of the Arab League Conference at the Summit Level, due in the Tunisian capital.

HH the Amir and his entourage were seen off at the airport by His Highness the Deputy Amir and Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Ali Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and senior State officials.

His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad was accompanied by Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Minister of Finance Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf, Amiri Diwan Advisor Mohammad Abulhassan, Head of Amiri Protocol Sheikh Khaled Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah Al-Nasser Al-Sabah, Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Suleiman Al-Jarallah, Head of Media and Cultural Affairs at the Amiri Diwan Sheikh Fawaz Saud Nasser Saud Al-Sabah, senior officials from the Amiri Diwan and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. —KUNA



India seeking long-term energy security with Middle East: Kuwait

NEW DELHI: Indian Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu hailed his country's good relations with Kuwait and Arab countries in general during a meeting with Kuwait Ambassador to India Jassim Al-Najim and Ambassadors of other Arab nations. In a statement to KUNA, Ambassador Al-Najim said yesterday that discussions with Prabhu in the presence of other mission head of Arab countries touched upon a number of issues pertaining to India-Arab relations including trade, investment and energy and food security.

The Indian minister underlined that India is poised to become a five trillion economy by 2022 and will become a USD 10 trillion economy by 2030. He also pointed out that the ties between the two sides are based upon mutual benefit as India is seeking long-term energy security, while some Arab countries are looking to India for their food security. The central government has drawn a plan to achieve the proposed economic growth and five districts have been chosen to conduct experiments in this connection, Prabhu said.

Both India and Kuwait reviewed the results of bilateral talks held in January over enhancing cooperation in the aviation sector and the process of increasing seats for public aviation companies of both the countries which would help to increase the income substantially as the aviation sector is witnessing a 20 percent annual growth. The minister also pledged to take all necessary steps to bring about ease of doing business and make the business ecosystem more conducive for attracting foreign investment. On his part, Ambassador Al-



NEW DELHI: Indian Minister of Commerce and Industry and Civil Aviation Suresh Prabhu meets with Kuwait Ambassador to India Jassim Al-Najim. — KUNA photos



Najim said that the Kuwaiti leadership is ready to take every possible step to cement the ties between the two nations in every sec-

tor and hailed the historical people to people relations built upon solid foundations between the two nations. — KUNA



KUWAIT: The ambassador of the People's Republic of China Li Minggang along with Defense Attache Senior Col Zhang Ge visited Kuwait Times and discussed matters of mutual concern with Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan.



The Ambassador of the Republic of Cuba Fernando Perez Maza visited Kuwait Times and discussed various matters and mutual relations with Kuwait Times Editor-in-Chief Abd Al-Rahman Al-Alyan. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

Kuwait FM meets Egyptian peer ahead of Arab summit

TUNIS: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah on Friday met with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry on the sidelines of the preparatory ministerial meeting for the Arab League summit. The 30th Arab summit is scheduled to be held in Tunis today. The meeting, attended by assistants to the Kuwaiti foreign minister Sheikh Dr Ahmad Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Sabah and Fahad Al-Awadhi, dealt with the bilateral relationship as well as regional and international issues on the agenda of the summit.

Tunisia is set to hold the 30th Arab Summit with high hopes on Arab reconciliation and unification as analysts described. Although the summit's agenda is not yet finalized, it will include key Arab issues including the Palestinian Cause, the crises in Libya, Yemen and Syria, Arab security and foreign relations, Arab League Assistant Secretary General Abdullatif Obaid told KUNA yesterday.

The league is optimistic that the summit will create reconciliation between Arab countries and boost their joint work on all levels, he added. On his part, political analyst Monther Thabit affirmed that the summit will allow Tunisia to once again play a diplomatic role in tackling issues and conflict between Arab states. He hoped the summit will unify the stance of conflicting parties in Libya to end the current crisis. He added that Libya is moving in the right direction towards stability after agreeing on holding elections.

Meanwhile, political analyst Salahuldin Al-Jorshi said that the conflict between Arab countries gave the opportunity for other regional powers to attempt to take control

over Arab's affairs and violate their sovereignty. Tunisia's diplomacy is tasked with exerting great efforts in this summit to unify Arab states.

UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres left for Tunisia on Friday to participate in the Arab Summit and to address summiteers, a UN statement said. It added Guterres would meet with Tunisian President Beji Caid Essebsi and senior government officials. He would also meet university students to discuss the critical role of young people in national and international conversations and policies, and UN's efforts to ensure that their voices are heard, and their views were translated into action, it added.

Guterres will also inaugurate new UN House in Tunis, la Maison Bleue, and hold a meeting with women leaders and civil society representatives, said the statement. The Secretary-General's main priority for this visit will be the situation in Libya. He will attend a Quartet meeting on Libya, which brings together UN, Arab League, the African Union and the European Union. —KUNA



TUNIS: Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah with his Egyptian counterpart Sameh Shoukry. — KUNA

Local

KAC organizes annual international sales conference with top officials



local spotlight

Isra and Meraj



By Muna Al-Fuzai

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The Kuwaiti government has decided to consider Thursday, April 4, 2019 as an official holiday for all government departments, public and private institutions and schools and universities to celebrate the anniversary of Isra and Meraj. This event marks the night Allah took Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) on a journey from Makkah to Jerusalem and then to heaven. Lailat al Meraj marks this journey to what the Holy Quran describes as the "farthest mosque in Jerusalem". It takes place just a month before Ramadan.

Usually in Kuwait, the ministry of awqaf holds a celebration to commemorate this religious occasion and to review its events as a lesson for the lives of Muslims. This article is not the place to explain the circumstances of the holy journey of the Prophet (PBUH), but to look into the present to improve our situation today in order to adjust and upgrade our situation for the future.

There is no doubt that the Islamic world today is experiencing a difficult phase, where many innocents are being killed and subjected to violence because of civil conflicts or terrorism by extremists. So we need to consider where we stand today and how to deal with the bad conditions and take from the spirit of this occasion a lesson to combat grief and weakness.

I believe that extremism and terrorism threaten the Muslim world. Ignorance appears to be a weapon that is being used by many, and education does not appear to be a priority for governments in the Muslim world to fight terrorism. Efforts to stop killings do not seem strong and shy appeals are not enough.

We are required during such religious occasions to review our mistakes and spread the Islamic religion as a religion of tolerance, learning, knowledge and wisdom, using what we have for a better future. But how does learning and education make us better? Education in Islam is essential. Education contributes to sustainable development for all, especially children.

According to research carried out by UNESCO in 2013 in developing countries, some 47 million children suffer from early childhood illnesses due to malnutrition, and about 1.7 million children can be saved. Mothers in those countries only have primary school education, and about 12.2 million children can be saved by mothers with a secondary education.

Throughout history, education has been an important pillar of societal progress and a key driver of civilizational development. The first rule in building a strong nation is building a human being first as a strategic goal of nation-building. The first brick of this building is to develop a strategic plan for education based on their progress.

Education is therefore one of the most important forces to achieve economic development and prosperity. Thus, education is a great force for spreading goodness in societies and the message of tolerance. No one can deny that the social and economic growth of any nation is linked to science, and its role is essential in the advancement of states.

But, the question is why did we not become like other countries having scientific and technological progress at a time when we have many important tools for this? I think education should seek to develop awareness among the younger generations, not only as users but as makers and inventors. There are rules in the Quran to obtain scientific knowledge, and the Islamic religion is based on science and knowledge. On this holiday, we should review our position among nations and what we lack.

KUWAIT: Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) recently organized the annual international sales conference with the attendance of board chairman, Yousfi Abdul Hameed Al-Jassem, CEO, Kamel Al-Awadhi KAC officials and sales managers abroad. The conference was held from March 27-28 and included special workshops discussing KAC achievements in various overseas offices as well as the company's future plans and strategies. It also included the honoring of overseas office managers for their outstanding performances.

Speaking on the occasion, Al-Jassem thanked everybody for the efforts they had exerted to achieve KAC's targets and help to excel further and increase its revenues.

Al-Jassem added that KAC revenues during the first quarter of 2019 had increased by 5 per cent and that the total number of passengers it served had increased by 8 per cent compared to the same period in 2018.

Furthermore, Al-Jassem said that KAC had carried the total of 4.1 million passengers in 2017 and 4.5 million passengers in 2018 and expressed hopes this number would reach 4.7 million by the end of 2019. He also noted that KAC is keen on achieving the highest safety and security standards and punctuality, which was rated 90-95 per cent exceeding international levels of 85 per cent in various airlines.

Speech by US Ambassador at Independence Day event

KUWAIT: The US Embassy in Kuwait held its annual Independence Day celebration at its premises in Bayan on Wednesday evening. The event was hosted by US Ambassador to Kuwait Lawrence Silverman and his wife Vicki Silverman. Below is a transcript of the speech he gave to open proceedings.

"Good evening all, it's an honor to be here in this beautiful theater, which carries the name of the legendary actor and cultural pioneer Abdulhussein Abdulredha. Thank you to Mr Ali al-Youha and the National Council for Culture, Arts, and Letters, who have generously sponsored the visit of the musical group you are about to enjoy tonight.

We at the US Embassy appreciate your support and look forward to working with you to bring even more artists and cultural visitors to Kuwait. Such cooperation will be made easier by a new educational and cultural exchanges agreement that Mr Al-Youha and our officials signed during Secretary of State Pompeo's visit here one week ago.

Ladies and gentlemen, you are in for a treat this evening. The group you are about to see and hear, Kyle Dillingham and Horseshoe Road, is a country music ensemble that has performed around the world on tours, wowing audiences from Liberia to Thailand to Russia to South Korea. This is the group's first stop on a multi-nation tour and their first visit to Kuwait. They came all the way from the state of Oklahoma to perform for you. I'm not the only Ambassador here tonight;

Al Kout assault suspects being tracked: MoI

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Interior Ministry's Relations and Security Information Department commented on a video clip on social media about an assault by some youth against a security guard at a Fahheel mall, saying that the suspects are being sought. A call was received about a fight at Al-Kout Mall, where an Arab security guard said he was attacked by a group of youths because he prevented them from entering the families-only mall.

Safety licenses

The Municipality's public relations department said Ahmadi safety department inspected companies and plants in Kuwait's southern area in order to ensure the validity of safety licenses. Department Director Al-Humaidi Al-Mutairi said a citation of KD 11.8 million was issued for using state property and fencing without municipal permits. He said 33 cautions were also issued for encroachment on state property and dumping construction debris in front of homes.

Ministerial decree

The Interior Ministry's PR department said brochures and printed material were distributed in Wafra, Kabd, Grand Mosque and Sheraton roundabout coinciding with the implementation of ministerial decree 135/2019 which scrapped the residency sticker and replaced it with the civil ID.

Jahra fire

Firemen extinguished a blaze in a Jahra grocery store Thursday evening. Jahra and occupational fire centers found the baqala had collapsed and the fire had spread to two vehicles. No injuries were reported.

Kyle has been appointed as ambassador for the State of Oklahoma. American music is as diverse as our people. And while Horseshoe Road is described as country or bluegrass, you will hear many other American musical influences and styles here tonight. While they are in Kuwait, the group will give a workshop on American country music to middle and high school boys and to students at the Public Authority for Applied Education and Training.

Kyle is an incredibly gifted violinist and singer who was featured at the Grand Ole Opry theater in Nashville. He has performed with legends of country music such as Roy Clark and Hank Thompson. It is my honor to introduce our musicians: Kyle Dillingham on the violin, Peter Markes on the guitar, and Brent Saulsbury on the upright bass."



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Local

Photo of the Day



An aerial photo of Kuwait City taken from The Liberation Tower. — KUNA

CBK concludes Ya Zeen Turathna campaign

KUWAIT: Within its 8th Ya Zeen Turathna campaign, the Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) recently received students from The English School for Girls (ESG) so that the students could explore Kuwaiti heritage, traditions and some of the lifestyles of Kuwait's ancestors. In

this regard, CBK's deputy director for corporate communication, Amani Al-Wer'a stressed that the visit highlights CBK's care for students in general and the need to keep them in touch with the history of our ancestors. She added that the visit included showing an educational

documentary about Kuwaiti traditions and old Kuwaiti terminology in addition to holding a number of competitions. Al-Wer'a added that the school administration was awarded with an encyclopedia about old Kuwaiti dialect towards the end of the visit.



Burgan Bank surprises mothers on their special day

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank recently celebrated Mothers' day by distributing rose bouquets across The Avenues, 360 Mall & Al Kout Mall to Mothers. The joyous celebration is aimed to honor every mother and thank them for their immense contribution to the welfare of the society and as a grand gesture of love and gratitude.

Burgan Bank continuously seeks to enhance and strengthen its relationship with its customers & society by celebrating such worthy occasions. Mothers around the malls had heartwarming smiles on their faces as they saw the bank's appreciation. The bank continues to showcase its important values by creating positive impacts in our loving society. Burgan Bank participation in this special day falls under the strategic vision to reflect the bank's objectives on the importance of core values, while shedding light on important aspects in life.



ACK organizes field trip to NBK Tower project

KUWAIT: The Australian College of Kuwait (ACK) recently concluded a field trip to the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Tower organized by the Australian Embassy in collaboration with ACK's School of Engineering.

According to Dr Mohamed Salem, Assistant Professor of Industrial Practice at ACK, NBK Tower was chosen for the trip because the project is an engineering challenge in terms of design, implementation and supervision, moreover, the project is being carried out by a selection of the

largest engineering offices and contracting companies, along with local and international project managers.

The visit focused on the essential aspects of managing such a large project, which helped students learn about important safety systems, quality control and the latest methods in engineering and construction management. "This field trip was organized in line with ACK's vision in mind of focusing on and giving prominence to vocational and hands-on experience for students, and not only giving focus to traditional classroom learning," said Dr Salem.

In addition, Dr Salem expressed his gratitude for both the Australian Embassy and NBK for making this trip possible. And specifically thanking both Jack Hajjar, Commercial Counselor at the Australian Embassy, and Ezzat Hallal, Chief Engineer at NBK, for organizing this trip, their hospitality towards ACK students, and for their efforts in making this field trip a success," concluded Dr Salem.



KUWAIT: Over 30 embassies and 80 diplomats participated in a trip to Failaka Island along with Department Director Dr Sultan Al-Duwaish and the antiquities team on Friday.

Local

9th Kuwait Anesthesia Conference begins at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre



Central Circle staff are seen with the Assistant Undersecretary and some of the leaders of anesthesia in Kuwait. — Photos by Joseph Shagra

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: The 9th Kuwait Anesthesia Conference kicked off yesterday at Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Cultural Centre to discuss specific topics in the field of anesthesia and anesthesiology. Assistant Undersecretary for Development and Quality Affairs Dr Mohammed Al-Khashti stressed on the importance of the three-day conference and its contribution to upgrading the health system in the state, pointing out that its recommendations will be the focus of the health ministry.

In a speech during the opening ceremony, Khashti said the conference provides an opportunity for doctors of different specialties to review the latest scientific and practical developments in the field of anesthesia and intensive care related to heart disease. He added that the field of anesthesia recently witnessed a remarkable development in the expertise of doctors in terms of dealing with difficult situations and the development of vital surveillance techniques. Khashti revealed that the ministry is planning to hold around 30 conferences and 40-50 workshops depending on the budget of the ministry, which was KD 1.8 million last year. Khashti delivered the speech on behalf of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah.



Dr Mohammed Al-Khashti



(From left) Dr. Abdulrahman Alrefai and Dr. Al-Khashti testing some of the latest technologies the Central Circle has to offer.



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CALIFORNIA: Pedestrians walk towards the US-Mexico border at the San Ysidro Port of Entry on in San Diego, California. President Donald Trump has threatened to close the United States border if Mexico does not stem the flow of illegal migrants trying to cross. — AFP

Trump threatens to close US-Mexico border

US government faces a ‘system-wide meltdown’

WASHINGTON: President Donald Trump has threatened to close the US border with Mexico next week, potentially disrupting millions of legal border crossings and billions of dollars in trade, if Mexico does not stop immigrants from reaching the United States. “There’s a very good likelihood that I’ll be closing the border next week, and that will be just fine with me,” Trump told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida.

Trump has repeatedly said he would close the US border with Mexico during his two years in office and has not followed through. However, this time the government says it is struggling to deal with a surge of asylum seekers from countries in Central America who travel through Mexico. Department of Homeland Security (DHS) officials warned that traffic with Mexico could slow as the agency shifts 750 border personnel from ports of entry to help process asylum seekers who are turning up between official crossing points.

“Make no mistake: Americans may feel effects from this emergency,” Homeland Security Secretary Kirstjen Nielsen said in a statement. Nielsen said the personnel shift would lead to commercial delays and longer waiting times at crossing points. Some of those delays were already being felt on both sides of the international border.

On Friday afternoon, the wait was longer than usual on the Mexican side of the crossing between Ciudad Juarez and El Paso, Texas, with long lines of freight trucks carrying goods from Mexican factories into the United States, according to a Reuters witness. One

driver said she had been stuck in line for three hours on her way to her job in the United States. Nielsen and other US officials say border patrol officers have been overwhelmed by a dramatic increase in asylum seekers, many of them children and families who arrive in large groups fleeing violence and economic hardship in El Salvador, Honduras and Guatemala.

March is on track for 100,000 border apprehensions, DHS officials said, which would be the highest monthly number in more than a decade. Most of those people can remain in the United States while their asylum claims are processed, which can take years because of ballooning immigration court backlogs. Nielsen warned Congress on Thursday that the government faces a “system-wide meltdown” as it tries to care for more than 1,200 unaccompanied children and 6,600 migrant families in its custody.

Mexico played down the possibility of a border shutdown. “Mexico does not act on the basis of threats. We are a great neighbor,” Mexican Foreign Minister Marcelo Ebrard said on Twitter. Mexican Senator Ricardo Monreal, who leads President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador’s party in the chamber, said in a state-

ment on Friday he would seek to send a diplomatic note to the U.S. Congress criticizing what he called Trump’s “xenophobic attitudes.”

‘Siamese twins’

It was not clear how shutting down ports of entry would deter asylum seekers because they are legally able to request help as soon as they set foot on US soil. But a border shutdown would disrupt tourism and commerce between the United States and its third-largest trading partner, with trade totaling \$612 billion last year according to the US Census Bureau.

“We’d be looking at losses worth billions of dollars,” said Kurt Honold, head of CCE, a business group in Tijuana, Mexico, in response to Trump’s threat. “It’s obvious he’s not measuring what he says.” A shutdown could lead to factory closures on both sides of the border, industry officials say, because the automobiles and medical sectors have woven international supply chains into their business models. “We are Siamese twins - we are so entangled together,” said Alan Russell, chief executive of the Tecma Group, an outsourcing firm.

Lean hog futures at the Chicago Mercantile

Exchange fell 5.7 percent on worries that the border closure would disrupt exports to the top US pork market. US ports of entry recorded 193 million pedestrian and vehicle-passenger crossings last year, according to the US Department of Transportation. As president, Trump has legal authority to close particular ports of entry but he could be open to a legal challenge if he decided to close all of them immediately, said Stephen Legomsky, a former chief counsel at US Citizenship and Immigration Services under Democratic President Barack Obama.

Trump is trying to convince Congress to sign off on a revised trade agreement with Mexico and Canada that his administration negotiated last year. Trump launched his presidential bid in June 2015 with a promise to crack down on illegal immigration, saying Mexico was sending rapists and drug runners into the United States. He said on Friday Mexico should do more to prevent Central American migrants from reaching the United States.

“It’s very easy for them to stop people from coming up, but they don’t choose to do it,” he said. Lopez Obrador said on Thursday tackling illegal immigration was an issue chiefly for the United States and the Central American countries to address. Trump has so far been unable to convince Congress to tighten asylum laws or fund a proposed border wall, one of his signature policies. He has declared a national emergency to justify redirecting money earmarked for the military to pay for building a wall. — Reuters

Quebec to ban religious symbols in public service

MONTREAL: Canada’s Quebec province has unveiled controversial draft legislation that would ban a significant section of public servants from wearing religious symbols such as a crucifix, yarmulke or hijab. The measure - which applies to police, teachers and others in positions of authority - is expected to become law by June with Premier Francois Legault’s government holding a majority of seats in the Quebec legislature.

But it was swiftly panned by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who said: “For me, it’s unthinkable (that) a free society would legitimize discrimination against anyone based on religion.” Montreal mayor Valerie Plante voiced “serious concern about the message that this bill sends to minorities about their fundamental rights.”

The important thing, she said, was that the process of making laws was secular, not that people divested themselves of religious attire and symbols. Teachers unions said they would not enforce the law, while pundits and the government’s own lawyers, according to reports, anticipate a court challenge for contravening Canadians’ Charter right to personal religious freedom. The Quebec government, however, has

already made it clear that it would invoke a rarely-used constitutional clause to quash any rights challenges.

“Some people will find that we are going too far, others not enough, and we are convinced that we have struck the right balance,” Quebec Immigration Minister Simon Jolin-Barrette told a press conference. The government said the measure - combined with the removal of a cross installed in the main chamber of the national assembly in 1936 - underscored Quebec’s break with religion a half century ago, when it rejected the Catholic Church’s powerful influence in local politics.

The secularism bill would also enshrine into law a rule previously adopted by Quebec that denies government services to people wearing face veils, reflecting a backlash against Muslim immigration. Jolin-Barrette argued that this was intended to simply bolster safety and security by being able to verify the identity of people accessing services.

Both measures, along with curbs on immigration, were promised by Legault during an election campaign last year, after a decade of divisive debate on secularism and religious freedom that was influenced by a similar discourse in France. In addition to France, eight other European countries enforce restrictions on religious attire. “We will do whatever we can to bring together people,” Legault said Thursday before the law was presented.

“That should be the objective of everyone in the weeks ahead, to have a serene debate. We are responding to what a large majority of Quebecers want.” The opposition, however, accused the government of rushing the legisla-



US president battling to stem asylum surge



tion, with Liberal Helene David saying not enough time has been allotted to debate its impacts on “living together” as a society. This is the fourth attempt by successive Quebec governments to pass a secularism law. What began as a pushback against a few cases of religious accommodation of minorities in public institutions and private businesses led to a public inquiry.

The tribunal heard testimony on the merits of secularism that ranged from the metaphysical to the absurd - such as outrage that an eatery had removed pork from its pea soup to accommodate Muslims. Jews and Sikhs were also the subject of controversy, but the focus shifted to Muslims - Muslim women in particular. One previous government tried but failed to impose a values charter that would have limited “ostentatious” displays of religiosity. In the end, the regulations were narrowed to apply only to public servants.— AFP

Celibate Americans at a record high

WASHINGTON: The share of American adults having no sex in the past year reached an all-time high in 2018, an intimate survey revealed Friday, and many of those missing out are men in their 20s. An analysis of new research data by The Washington Post reveals a battle of the sexes, with 18 percent of the women between the ages of 18 and 30 reporting no sex in the past year-but 28 percent of men.

Male millennials are often portrayed in popular culture as the most sexually active-or at least the most sexually eager-and the news prompted a surprised reaction on social media. “Reasons why likely include a greater preference for video games and for porn,” tweeted US psychologist and practicing family doctor Leonard Sax, who was speaking generally about the issue before the survey’s release.

“Young men tell me that the video games, and the porn, are vastly better today than they were 20 years ago.” The

largest disparity is between age groups, with only seven percent of thirtysomethings reporting a barren year in the love stakes. The figure is as impressive among frisky fortysomethings-only nine percent said they’d struck out in 2018 - and those aged between 50 and 59. Just 13 percent of this group say they didn’t get lucky last year.

For those 60 and older, the share reporting no sex over the past year has remained steady around 50 percent. But the overall 23 percent figure-up from 19 percent two decades ago-paints a picture of a nation growing gradually but steadily less amorous. Celibacy as a corrosive force hit the headlines recently with emergence of the “incel” online subculture of angry young men unable to find sexual partners-with the movement linked to several mass shootings in the US.

But it has had its high-profile champions too: Andy Warhol, J Edgar Hoover, Isaac Newton and Joan of Arc were all said to be proud celibates. The data on America’s bedroom habits was collected for the General Social Survey conducted by the NORC research organization at the University of Chicago and analyzed by the Post. The newspaper said its analysis underscored a three-decade trend line marked by an aging population and higher numbers of unattached people. —AFP

International

A market bustles in desperate Al-Hol refugee camp in Syria

Some residents have money, while others queue for handouts

AL-HOL CAMP, Syria: Plump fruits, bright slushies, and hair dye - the colorful market in Al-Hol is an unlikely sight in a Syrian camp overflowing with desperate people displaced as the Islamic State group's "caliphate" collapsed. Clothing stalls stacked with colorful scarves line the side of a muddy road. Plastic containers display glowing oranges, fresh tomatoes and large, shiny eggplants. Children crowd around pristine slushie and ice cream machines. A young girl eyes a series of colourful cakes laid out in a row.

More than 70,000 people, the bulk of whom escaped IS-held territory, pack this overcrowded shelter in northeastern Syria. They include more than 9,000 foreigners, who are holed up in a fenced section of the encampment, under the watch of Kurdish forces. Syrians and Iraqis stroll freely through the market in the heart of the camp. But foreigners who are deemed a security threat are accompanied by an escort.

Some of the camp's residents have enough money to purchase clothes, fruits and vegetables. Others queue for hours for aid and food handouts. "There are many people who buy, but there are also people who find it difficult, because they can't afford to," says Salam, a baker. The scent of freshly baked pastries wafts from a

rudimentary stone oven inside the Nour Bakery, where he works. He places a long wooden tray carrying flattened dough topped with minced meat in an oven.

The 24-year-old Iraqi, who has been living in the camp for over a year, says he earns about four dollars a day, which he uses to support his parents and six younger siblings. Elsewhere in the market, women in all-covering black niqabs stand in front of a stand displaying hair dyes and other trinkets. Nearby, another stand is inundated with perfume bottles. At the end of the market, sheep are kept in a pen. Two butchers skin a carcass hanging from a hook.

Despite the lively market, the camp has been described by residents and international organizations as a humanitarian hell-scape, lacking basic accommodation and medical facilities. According to Save the Children, some

30 per cent of children under the age of five screened at the camp since early February suffer acute malnutrition. The World Food Program says it has recorded several cases of dehydration and diarrhea. "The needs in the camp are huge," said Amjad Yamin, a spokesperson for Save the Children. And just a few steps away from the market, the destitution is visible: women queue in seemingly endless rows in front of a WFP warehouse, awaiting food rations. — AFP



AL-HOL CAMP, Syria: A combo of images shows market scenes in the Al-Hol camp for displaced people in northeastern Syria. —AFP

A year of Gaza border protests: The key facts

GAZA: Thousands of Palestinian protesters gathered along the Gaza-Israel border yesterday to mark the first anniversary of mass demonstrations for the right of return for Palestinian refugees. Here are some facts about the protests and the deadly clashes that have accompanied them:

Dead and injured

The first day, March 30, 2018, saw 20 Palestinians killed across the Gaza Strip. Since then dozens more have been killed during the at least weekly protests. Around 200 Palestinians have been killed, with the vast majority shot by Israeli snipers, though others have been hit by tear gas canisters or shrapnel.

One Israeli soldier was shot dead by a Palestinian sniper. The Palestinians killed have been distributed over five designated protests sites along the border. Some have proved more deadly than others. In particular, Khan Yunis in southern Gaza, with at least 54 deaths, and east of Gaza City, with at least 42, have proved particularly dangerous, according to the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights. A further 6,500 people have been shot, according to the Gaza health authorities, the vast majority in the legs.

Palestinian attacks

While many protesters have remained far back from the heavily fortified border fence and demonstrated peacefully, other have approached in numbers and clashed with Israeli forces. They have routinely burned tyres, thrown stones and hurled homemade explosives



GAZA-ISRAEL BORDER: Palestinian protesters use slingshots to hurl rocks as smoke billows from tires burning during clashes with Israeli forces yesterday. — AFP

at the fence and towards soldiers on the other side. There have also been attempts to breach the fence.

The army says since the protests began, there have been 18 incidents of gunfire along the border and around 600 Molotov cocktails thrown. A particular concern has been incendiary devices attached to balloons, which are floated across the border. In total, these balloons have sparked 1,963 fires and have caused damage across 35 square kilometers (nearly 14 square miles) of land, according to figures published by the army.

Who are the dead?

The overwhelming majority of those killed have been male and young. Around 40 have been under 18,

according to UNICEF. Two journalists in marked press vests and three medics have been killed, including 22 year-old Razan al-Najjar. Her case grabbed global attention.

Israel says it is investigating 11 deaths, including Najjar's. The political affiliations of those killed has been a matter of debate. After more than 60 people were killed in demonstrations against the transfer of the US embassy to Jerusalem on May 14, Israel seized on comments by a Hamas official that the vast majority were affiliated with the movement, which both the European Union and the United States blacklist as a terrorist group. Others said the official was potentially exaggerating the movement's role and no official figures exist on political affiliation. — AFP

paign manager formally submits the president's candidacy, just ahead of the deadline.

'Chaos'

On March 5, as thousands march again, the army chief pledges to guarantee national security, accusing unidentified groups of wanting a return to the "painful years" of Algeria's 1992-2002 civil war. Bouteflika on March 7 warns of "chaos" if troublemakers infiltrate the demonstrations. On March 8, tens of thousands in several cities take part in the biggest rallies yet against Bouteflika's candidacy.

Bouteflika quits race

On March 10, Bouteflika returns from Switzerland. The next day, he pulls out of the race. "There will not be a fifth term" and "there will be no presidential election on April 18," he announces on official media. Interior minister Noureddine Bedoui is named prime minister, replacing unpopular premier Ouyahia. On March 15, a huge crowd marches through Algiers for a fourth consecutive Friday, demanding Bouteflika's ouster. Major protests are held in other key cities.

Holding on

On March 18, Bouteflika issues a statement confirming he will stay on as president beyond the end of his term on April 28 and until new elections are held, following a constitutional review. On March 20, Bouteflika's National Liberation Front (FLN) party says it supports protesters' calls for change, while advocating his initiative for dialogue.

'Unfit'

On March 22, exactly a month after the protests started, hundreds of thousands of Algerians again stage demonstrations across the country, despite bad weather. On March 26 army chief Ahmed Gaid Salah calls for Bouteflika to step down or be declared medically unfit to rule under the constitution. A day later the ruling party's longtime coalition ally, the National Rally for Democracy (RND) of former prime minister Ouyahia, says it "recommends the resignation of the president". — AFP

News in brief

30 Egyptians sentenced

CAIRO: Thirty men were sentenced to between 10 years to life imprisonment yesterday for planning a suicide bombing on a church in the Egyptian city of Alexandria and other charges, court official said. Authorities said at the time of their arrest that the defendants had embraced the ideas of the Islamic State group and received training abroad and in Egypt. Twenty of the defendants who appeared in court, dressed in white prison garb, did not react to the sentences, and there was no immediate comment from lawyers representing them. The other 10 are still on the run and were sentenced in absentia. The attack on the church did not take place. But minority Christians have faced a series of assaults in Alexandria and other parts of Egypt in recent years. Islamic State claimed responsibility for suicide bombings on churches in Alexandria and Tanta in April 2017 that left 45 people dead. — Reuters

Taleban kill nine police

GHAZNI: Nine Afghan policemen were killed when Taleban fighters stormed their checkpoints and launched a follow-up ambush in the eastern Afghanistan city of Ghazni, officials said yesterday. The assault began early Friday when the Taleban attacked two adjacent checkpoints, Ghazni police spokesman Ahmad Khan Seerat said. The Taleban then ambushed a group of police rushing to the scene, killing the local police head, Seerat added. In all, nine policemen were killed and six were wounded, he said. Arif Noori, spokesman for the Ghazni governor, confirmed the toll. In August, Taleban fighters briefly held Ghazni, a city of about 300,000 people some 150 kilometers southwest of Kabul, before they were pushed out by US air strikes and Afghan forces. Noori added that in a separate part of Ghazni province Friday, a mortar round hit a school, killing four students and wounding 15 students and teachers. —AFP

Burundi releases prisoners

NAIROBI: Burundi has released the first 142 prisoners from a promised 3,000 detainees to promote reconciliation, the justice minister said, but critics said it was only to ease pressure on crowded jails. Justice Minister Aimee-Laurentine Kanyana attended a release ceremony in the prison at Gitega, the new official political capital of the small east African nation, for the first batch of released prisoners. President Pierre Nkurunziza promised the prisoner releases in December 2018, the third time he has granted mass pardons to prisoners since the country spiraled into crisis in 2015, sparking mass arrests. The government has said the releases are to promote "national reconciliation". But opposition and civil society groups in exile say no political prisoners are to be released and that the move is just to free up more space in jail. Prisons are massively overcrowded. — AFP

German terror attack plot

BERLIN: German police arrested 10 people in pre-dawn raids yesterday on suspicion they were planning major attacks with stockpiled weapons and explosives, a prosecution spokesman said. One of the 10 was confirmed as a Tajikistan national, but officials disclosed few other details about the suspects who were detained in the early hours in western and southern parts of the country. Public broadcaster BR later reported that the 10 had been released but investigations were continuing. Prosecutors said the suspects were arrested for allegedly plotting a "serious, state-endangering crime". Local media reported that they were sympathizers of the Islamic State militant group. Germany has been the scene of several Islamist militant attacks in recent years, including a 2016 truck attack on a Berlin Christmas market that left 12 people dead. —AFP

Cellphone apps fight Africa sexual taboos

PRAIA, Cape Verde: When Charles Immanuel Akhimien was a medical student he was shocked to learn that a former classmate had died from a back-alley abortion. The brilliant young woman's life may have been spared if she had the kind of apps that are available today that discreetly inform young people about sex, Akhimien said. "When it comes to contraception, the lack of communication generates more and more AIDS infections and unwanted pregnancies. These tragedies could be avoided," Akhimien told AFP. In the doctor's native Nigeria, 3.1 million people are HIV-positive and 34,000 women die each year from botched abortions, according to official statistics.

Akhimien's app "myPaddi" anonymously connects young people with doctors who advise them on sex and contraception. The software was among 30 medical innovations showcased at the World Health Organization's second Africa Health Forum, hosted in Praia, the capital of Cape Verde in West Africa. Selected from among more than 2,400 submissions, many of the apps address reproduction and sexually transmitted diseases in countries where sex education is often taboo and abortion is generally illegal.

Akhimien's compatriot Morenike Fajemisin has the same determination to combat the paucity of sex education in Nigeria and to help women claim control over their own bodies. A pharmacist, the 30-year-old developed a cellphone app called "Whispa" - suggesting discretion - through which women can obtain contraception anonymously, without having to answer probing questions. "If a young girl asks for the pill at a doctor's office or in a pharmacy, she might be lectured," Fajemisin said. "Isn't she too young? Is she a virgin? How many partners did she have?" — AFP

Over one month of Algerian protests

ALGIERS: Algeria has been rocked for more than a month by unprecedented protests against ailing President Abdelaziz Bouteflika, sparked by his bid for a fifth term after two decades in power. He has since withdrawn his candidacy but said he will remain president after his term expires on April 28. Here is a timeline:

First protests

On February 22, tens of thousands of people demonstrate in several cities in the first major protests against Bouteflika's candidacy in April 18 elections. After rallying calls on social media, thousands turn out to chant "No fifth mandate!" -including in Algiers, where demonstrations have been banned since 2001. Police fire tear gas to block a march on the presidential palace, prompting demonstrators to respond by throwing stones.

Warning

On February 26, thousands of students rally peacefully in Algiers. Two days later, a dozen journalists are detained for several hours as they participate in a rally against alleged censorship of protest coverage. The prime minister Ahmed Ouyahia compares the growing protest movement to the demonstrations that erupted in Syria in 2011 and sparked a war now in its ninth year. On March 1, tens of thousands protest across the country. "Regime murderers," some chant in Algiers. There are also marches in second and third cities Oran and Constantine.

Final term pledge

On March 2, Bouteflika, in Switzerland for nearly a week undergoing "routine medical checks", sacks his veteran campaign manager. The next day, a letter from the president is read on state television, in which he says this run will be his last. He vows to not serve a full term if re-elected and to organize early polls in which he will not stand. Shortly afterwards, his new cam-

Alaska bakes under record heat wave ‘linked to climate change’

Dramatic warming wreaks havoc on communities, wildlife, economy

LOS ANGELES: Alaska residents accustomed to sub-zero temperatures are experiencing a heat wave of sorts that is shattering records, with the thermometer jumping to more than 30 degrees Fahrenheit (16.7 Celsius) above normal in some regions. “Both February and March have been exceptionally warm,” Rick Thoman, a climate specialist with the Alaska Center for Climate Assessment and Policy, told AFP. “Many places are on their way to their warmest March on record.”

He said that cities and towns in the northern half of the state, including Wainwright, Nuiqsut, Kaktovik and Barrow (also known as Utqiagvik), could see temperatures soar 25 to 40 degrees Fahrenheit (14 to 22 Celsius) above normal this weekend as the warm trend continues. “At Barrow, through yesterday, they’ve had daily record high temperatures five separate days this month ... and that’s quite an achievement,” Thoman said. “This is following on the heels of the very warm, and in some places record warm February,” he added. “We now have April or May weather in March.”

In Barrow, for example, the temperature jumped to 30 degrees Fahrenheit (-1 Celsius) on Thursday when the normal high is minus three Fahrenheit. “Deadhorse, AK, is set to finish March about 23°F (12.7 Celsius) above normal for the month,” Brian Brettschneider, a climatologist based in Alaska tweeted on Thursday. Thoman predicts the warm streak to continue through

April, with the highest temperature spikes expected in the western part of the state.

Frozen rivers melting early

He said the dramatic warming Alaska has experienced in recent years - which is partly linked to a decline in sea ice and Arctic ocean warming - had wreaked havoc on local communities, wildlife and the economy. Many recreational sled dog races have had to

be canceled this year and the routing of the famed Iditarod race had to be changed as what is normally solid sea ice was open water on part of the race route.

Crab fishing has also been affected as the sea ice used as a platform for fishermen was non-existent or too thin in some areas. Thoman said the seal population is also likely to be affected in the coming

months as some of the species give birth on solid ice. Amy Holman, regional coordinator for Alaska at the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, said the warmth has in addition had a deep impact on transportation as two thirds of communities in Alaska are not accessible via roads.

“In the winter, frozen rivers become major transportation corridors connecting villages,” she told AFP. “The Kuskokwim River is a primary example of this. “The warmer temperatures have melted the river ice to the extent it is no longer safe for truck or car travel.” Thoman said global warming had led to the lowest ice



ALASKA: The Exit Glacier is pictured in Seward, Alaska. Alaska residents accustomed to subzero temperatures are experiencing a heat wave of sorts that is shattering records, with the thermometer jumping to more than 30 degrees Fahrenheit above normal in some regions. — AFP

levels in the Bering Sea - which connects with the Arctic Ocean - since 1850, when sea ice records began. “My worst fear is the speed of change and being able

to cope,” he said. “Alaskans are resilient, our indigenous culture has been here for 10,000 years but change has never occurred at this pace.” — AFP

News in brief

Earthquake shakes Greece

ATHENS: A 5.2-magnitude quake jolted central Greece yesterday, the country’s civil protection said, with no immediate reports of damage. The quake had a depth of around 14 kilometers and an epicentre near the town of Galaxidi in the Gulf of Corinth, some 200 kilometers northwest of the Greek capital, the authority said. The national geodynamic institute had earlier measured the earthquake at a magnitude of 5.3. “It was a strong earthquake felt in the general area and in Athens as well,” Efthymios Lekkas, head of Greece’s earthquake planning and protection agency, told state TV ERT. “The situation is under control and we are monitoring it. There are many fault lines in the Gulf of Corinth,” he said. Seismologists will know if this was the main tremor in about 48 hours, Lekkas said. Local mayors said inspection crews had not reported any significant damage. — AFP

5 killed in factory explosion

BEIJING: Five workers were killed and three injured in a factory explosion caused by a gas leak in eastern China, local authorities said yesterday. The blast happened Friday night at a perlite workshop in Shandong province, city officials said in a statement. All five victims were night shift workers inside the Qingzhou city factory during the explosion. Three others outside the workshop suffered mild injuries and are still in hospital under observation. “The cause of the accident was initially found to be a liquefied natural gas leak, and the specific cause is under further investigation,” the statement said. A company official from the Yongli Perlite Plant has also been detained by local authorities, it added. Perlite is a form of volcanic glass that it mined and processed, often used in horticulture, insulation and plastics production. — AFP

Pentagon chief for Mideast

WASHINGTON: General Frank McKenzie has taken the leadership of the US Central Command, which oversees US military operations in countries including Syria and Afghanistan. At a ceremony led by Acting US Defense Secretary Patrick Shanahan, McKenzie pledged to continue the work done by his predecessor, General Joseph Votel, who is retiring. Votel for his part said that while the Islamic State group had lost its “caliphate” and peace talks with the Taleban appeared to be progressing, the US military presence in Syria and Afghanistan was still necessary. “It is time to bring these conflicts to a conclusion. This won’t be as quick as anyone would like, but it can be done if we continue to keep our objectives and interests in mind, trust our partners, and enable our forces,” Votel stressed. — AFP

Brunei defends new Islamic laws

KUALA LUMPUR: Brunei has defended its right to implement Islamic laws that would allow death by stoning for adultery and homosexuality against growing global criticism. Brunei, a Muslim-majority former British protectorate with a population of around 400,000, will implement the Sharia laws from April 3, punishing sodomy, adultery and rape with the death penalty, including by stoning, and theft with amputation. The laws, elements of which were first adopted in 2014 and which have been rolled out in phases since then, will be fully implemented from next week, the prime minister’s office said in a statement on Saturday. “The (Sharia) Law, apart from criminalizing and deterring acts that are against the teachings of Islam, also aims to educate, respect and protect the legitimate rights of all individuals, society or nationality of any faiths and race,” the statement said. — Reuters

Netherlands ‘cow toilets’ in aim to cut e-moo-ssions

THE HAGUE: Teaching cows to use the toilet is not the easiest task, but a Dutch inventor is banking on a new bovine urinal to help cut emissions that cause environmental damage. Tests have started on a farm in the Netherlands on the device which collects some of the 15 to 20 litres of urine that the average cow produces a day. That produces huge amounts of ammonia in a country like the Netherlands, which is the world’s second biggest agricultural exporter after the United States.

“We are tackling the problem at the source,” Henk Hanskamp, the Dutch inventor and businessman behind the “Cow Toilet”, told AFP Friday. “A cow is never going to be completely clean but

you can teach them to go to the toilet.” The way the toilet works is “udderly” ingenious. The urinal is in a box placed behind the cow, while in front is a feeding trough. Once the animal finishes eating a robot arm stimulates a nerve near the udders, which then makes it want to urinate.

The cow toilets are currently being tested on a farm near the eastern Dutch town of Doetinchem and seven of its 58 cows have already learned how to use them without the need for stimulation. “The cows have got used to it,” Hanskamp said. “They recognize the box, lift their tail, and pee.” “The stables have become cleaner and the ground is drier. Less damp ground is better for the health of the cows’ hooves,” Jan Velema, a vet who took part in the tests, was quoted as saying by De Volkskrant newspaper.

The Netherlands is already introducing stricter rules on emissions of ammonia, which can cause atmospheric pollution and irritate the eyes in humans. The chemical can also be implicated in the creation of environmentally damaging



BOUVRON: A cow stands in a field at the sunset in Bouvron. — AFP

algae blooms when it mixes with water. Hanskamp, whose company develops agricultural machinery, says it could “reduce by at least half the amount of

ammonia produced” were the cow to urinate on open ground. The company aims to have them on the market by 2020, he said. — AFP

US state passes a bill banning first-heartbeat abortion

MIAMI: The governor of the southern US state of Georgia was expected to sign a bill banning abortion as soon as a heartbeat is detected, after legislators on Friday approved the text which Hollywood celebrities vowed to fight. Abortion is one of the most politically divisive issues in the United States and numerous states have tried to limit access to abortions. Georgia’s lower house approved the “heartbeat bill” which prohibits abortions as soon as the first beats of the fetus are heard-from six weeks-something that happens when most mothers still don’t know they are pregnant.

“Georgia values life. We stand up for the innocent and speak for those who cannot speak for themselves,” Governor Brian Kemp, a Republican, wrote in a statement congratulating legislators. The country’s major human rights group, the American Civil Liberties Union,

vowed a legal challenge. “If Gov Kemp signs this abortion ban bill into law, the ACLU has one message: we will see you in court,” said Andrea Young, ACLU’s executive director for Georgia. Thirteen US states have studied or approved versions of the “heartbeat bill” this year.

Although judges in Kentucky and Iowa blocked such laws, the aim of those who promote the legislation is to reach the Supreme Court and reverse the right to abortion at the national level, according to Planned Parenthood, the largest organization supporting abortion rights. The US Supreme Court legalized abortion nationwide in 1973 with its decision in Roe v Wade. Since taking office in 2017, President Donald Trump has named two justices to the Supreme Court who oppose abortion, leading activists who support abortion rights to fear that Roe v Wade could be overturned.

Georgia is an important destination for film and television production, but dozens of Hollywood celebrities threatened to take their business elsewhere if the law takes effect. “We will do everything in our power to move our industry to a safer state for women” if the bill is approved, said a letter to lawmakers signed by Alyssa Milano, Alec Baldwin, Amy Schumer, Ben Stiller, Sarah Silverman, Mia Farrow and others. — AFP



WASHINGTON: Activists rally in Lafayette Square to protest the Trump administration’s ‘global gag rule’ on NGOs in Washington, DC. The so-called ‘global gag rule’ bans funding to NGOs who provide abortion services or advocacy. — AFP

Burundi suspends Voice of America, bans the BBC

NAIROBI: Burundi has banned the BBC and indefinitely suspended Voice of America, moves that campaigners and the international broadcasters described as a blow to press freedom. The central African nation’s media regulator revoked the BBC’s licence and accused it of airing a documentary that it said was false and damaged the country’s reputation. It extended an existing suspension on VOA, accusing it of employing a reporter who opposed the government.

Both broadcasters were suspended, initially for six months, in May last year in the run-up to a referendum that opposition politicians and activists said was designed to extend the president’s rule for at least a decade. At the time it accused both of breaching press laws and unprofessional conduct. They have been off air in Burundi ever since. “The unwarranted decision of the Burundi government to ban the BBC and suspend indefinitely Voice of America strikes a serious blow against media freedom, and we strongly condemn it,” the BBC said in a statement.

The publicly funded British broadcaster aired a documentary last year about what it said were secret detention and torture sites in Burundi. The government dismissed the report and the BBC said it stood by its journalism. Burundi’s regulator on Friday also banned journalists from working for either organization. “We are alarmed that reporters in Burundi are now forbidden to communicate with VOA and believe these continuing threats to our journalists undermine press freedom in the country,” VOA Director Amanda Bennett said.

Hundreds of Burundians have been killed in clashes with security forces and half a million have fled abroad since President Pierre Nkurunziza announced in 2015 he would run for a third term in what his opponents saw as a breach of the constitution. He won re-election. Last May’s referendum overwhelmingly approved changes that could let the president stay in power to 2034 - though the opposition rejected the results and the United States said the process had been marred by voter intimidation.

Burundi ranks 159th out of 180 countries on the World Press Freedom Index 2018, compiled by the advocacy group Reporters Without Borders. Burundi has denied that there are widespread restrictions. “The withdrawal of the BBC’s operating license and continued suspension of the VOA are further brazen efforts by the Burundian authorities to silence the media,” Amnesty International’s Sarah Jackson said in a statement. — Reuters

International

The Philippine journalists taking the rap in Duterte's latest war

News site Rappler and staff face string of charges

MANILA: When Filipino journalist Pia Ranada fell into a ditch and injured her leg on election day, May 9, 2016, the presidential candidate she was reporting on drove her to hospital and sat with her as she was treated. Less than two years later, that same man, by then in the midst of a bloody crackdown on drugs in which around 5,000 suspects were killed by police, attacked her during a national broadcast. "You are a Filipino who was allowed to abuse our country ... in the name of the holy grail of press freedom," President Rodrigo Duterte said in a speech in January 2018, addressing Ranada directly. "You are not only throwing toilet paper, you are throwing shit at us."

It was an explosive moment during a period of simmering tension between Ranada's news outlet, Rappler, and Duterte's administration, part of a chain of events that has drawn global concern for one of Southeast Asia's few remaining corners of relatively free and open press. Now facing multiple criminal charges against the site and its staff - the latest of which led to the arrest of its chief Maria Ressa on Friday - Rappler's management say they will not bow to what they see as government intimidation.

Duterte's office says it has no grudge against Rappler and the government is not behind any of the cases against the news site and its staff. Reuters also has no evidence that Duterte was directly involved. Instead, interviews with Philippine officials and journalists show that close allies of Duterte coordinated the investigations against Rappler,

and that Duterte was deeply angered by some of its reporting. A spokesman for Duterte's office said accusations his government was abusing or harassing Rappler were "unreasonable".



Battle sparks global concern over press freedom

Making waves

Rappler Executive Editor Ressa, who previously held senior positions at US broadcaster CNN, started Rappler with some associates on Facebook in 2011, and it became a news website in 2012. The name comes from combining "rap" and "ripple", meaning to discuss and to make a wave. Ressa told Reuters she had found Duterte "utterly refreshing" when she interviewed him in the run-up to the 2016 election. Ressa added that her site's extensive coverage of

Duterte's campaign allowed the septuagenarian to tap into a young, social media-savvy voter base that helped a provincial city mayor secure an unlikely triumph over challengers from Manila's political establishment.

Yet Duterte's victory was also founded on a pledge to eliminate crime and drugs, and allegations the crackdown that ensued involved widespread extrajudicial executions by police quickly became a focus of Rappler's and other media outlets' reporting on his presidency. Ressa said she believes their hard-hitting drug war reports, as well as stories accusing the administration of creating a social media "ecosystem" where bloggers and internet trolls attack Duterte's opponents, quickly put them on a collision course with the president.

Facebook this week said it had removed an online network in the Philippines for "coordinated inauthentic behavior", and linked it to a businessman who has previously said he helped manage the president's social media election campaign in 2016. The tide turned on Rappler in late 2016, when the government's top lawyer, Solicitor-General Jose Calida, requested the Philippines' Securities and Exchange Commission investigate the firm over alleged ownership violations. Calida is seen as a close ally of Duterte and helped manage his election campaign before being appointed solicitor-general in June 2016.

But a source close to Duterte, who wished to remain anonymous, said Calida was not acting under orders from

the president. "Duterte doesn't really care about stories about the war on drugs," the source recounted. "It was really Calida trying to gain brownie points." A spokesman for Calida's office said via email "it is a serious misconception" he was focused on the president's opponents. The Office of the Solicitor-General declined to comment on Rappler citing ongoing legal proceedings.

Ressa said "attacks" by the government which started in 2016 led to board members leaving, a 45 percent drop in advertising revenue and a hefty voluntary pay cut for key management. She added that this "pressure cooker" environment forced a change in Rappler's business model and that its finances have since improved. Rappler now operates pending a review after its licence was revoked for violating rules against foreigners owning stakes in media.

Throughout 2017, Duterte stepped up criticism of certain press outlets, singling out Rappler as "fake news" and "foreign-owned" in public speeches. But Ranada - the Rappler reporter assigned to cover the president - said on a personal level their relationship was at a "very good point" during the same period. Indeed, Duterte and Ranada spent so much time together at a media Christmas party at the presidential palace in December 2017, her peers started to worry she was getting exclusive material, journalists and officials present said. That was just weeks before Duterte's expletive-laden rant about Ranada. — Reuters

Floods kill at least 35 in Afghanistan

KABUL: Flash floods caused by heavy rains have killed at least 35 people in Afghanistan, washing away houses and cutting off access to remote villages across parts of the country, officials said yesterday. Heavy flooding that started early Friday killed at least 12 people in the northern province of Faryab and 10 people in the western province of Herat, said Hashmat Bahaduri, a spokesman for Afghanistan's National Disaster Management Authority (ANDMA).

Eight people were killed in Badghis province in the west and five in Balkh province in the north, Bahaduri told AFP, adding that more than 3,000 houses had been destroyed. In Herat, 10 districts and some parts of Herat city were impacted, said Jailani Farhad, spokesman for the province's governor. "Hundreds of houses have been destroyed and thousands dis-

placed," he said. Mir Gulabuddin Miri, director of the Afghan Red Crescent in Herat, said access to some areas had been cut off, preventing teams from reaching affected people.

"The destruction is huge. Over 12 areas in the province have been badly hit, people have lost their houses. We've only been able to provide them with some food and blankets so far," he said. Aid workers in the northern provinces of Faryab and Balkh have also been struggling to deliver humanitarian assistance to affected families. "We have dispatched our food and non-food assistance for the affected families, but the scale of the disaster is massive. We need more humanitarian assistance," an ANDMA spokesman in northern Afghanistan told AFP.

Rescue and aid delivery efforts after disasters such as avalanches and flash floods - which often hit as snow melts in the spring - are frequently hampered by a lack of equipment in Afghanistan. Poor infrastructure also makes it difficult for aid workers to reach isolated areas. Earlier this month, at least 20 people were killed by flash floods caused by heavy rains that swept away thousands of homes and vehicles in southern Kandahar province. — AFP



GUZARGAH-E-NUR: Afghan displaced women wash their clothes in an area affected by landslides and flash floods in the Guzargah-e-Nur district of the Baghlan province of Afghanistan. Flash floods caused by heavy rains have killed at least 35 people in Afghanistan, washing away houses and cutting off access to remote villages across parts of the country. — AFP

Fixing Lebanon's electricity crisis

BEIRUT: Lebanon's electricity crisis has pushed it to the brink of financial ruin, as power cuts hobble the economy and subsidies have racked up one of the world's largest public debt burdens. Lebanon has not had capacity to supply 24-hour electricity since its 1975-1990 civil war, leaving many households reliant on their own generators or private neighborhood suppliers who charge hefty fees to keep a few lights on or other appliances running during regular daily cuts that can last several hours. The largely unregulated neighborhood suppliers, responsible for a web of power cables slung across city streets, are popularly called the "generator mafia" for their supposed political clout. The owners say they simply offer a service that the state can't.

Ageing power plants run by the state use expensive fuel oil that, along with exhaust from diesel generators, adds to the smog lingering over cities in the nation of 6 million people. The government has promised change, including improving bill collection to help pay for cleaner, more efficient plants. But it also needs foreign funds, which will mean raising power prices and other reforms that the government has struggled to deliver.

How big is the problem?

The government, World Bank and International Monetary Fund all say electricity reform is vital to cutting debt, now equivalent to about 150 percent of gross domestic product (GDP). The government says net transfers to state power firm Electricite du Liban (EdL) now amount to \$1 billion-\$1.5 billion a year, most of it spent on fuel oil. This is equivalent to about a quarter of last year's budget deficit of \$4.8 billion.

The accumulated cost of subsidizing EdL amounts to about 40 percent of Lebanon's entire debt, the IMF said in 2016. The World Bank says electricity

shortages rank second only to political instability in hindering business. The economy has expanded by an annual rate of just 1-2 percent in recent years. Relying on fuel oil power plants and diesel generators also comes with a health cost: air pollution that can cause respiratory disease. Air pollution in Beirut was three times levels deemed a hazard by the World Health Organization, according to 2014 data.

Why is it so difficult to fix?

Consumer power prices have not changed since 1996, when oil cost only \$23 a barrel. Crude now trades nearer \$70. But asking people to pay more when the service is so poor is a tall order. The main power plants have an average capacity of just over 2,000 megawatts (MW), compared to peak demand of 3,400 MW. For Beirut, the best supplied city, that means daily cuts of three hours a day. Elsewhere, it can mean outages for much of the day.

Lebanon plans new, privately financed, gas-fuelled plants. But it does not yet have a regulator that can set prices or arbitrate disputes between government and power producers. Distribution and revenue collection are also big problems. EdL collects payments for only half the power it produces, with some power lost through creaking transmission network and other supplies siphoned off the system through unauthorized cables. In 2012, the government appointed private companies to run metering, billing and payment collection for EdL, but it gave them little power to enforce payment.

Lebanon has made sporadic attempts to end power shortages for decades, but its efforts have been thwarted by conflict, political instability and the challenge of policy-making in a system of government that depends on a delicate balance of interests across that nation's fractious sectarian groupings. Lebanon had no president for two years from 2014-16 and had a caretaker government for nine months until February this year because of political squabbling over cabinet appointments. — Reuters

New laws could see social media executives jailed over terror images

SYDNEY: Australia pledged yesterday to introduce new laws that could see social media executives jailed and tech giants fined billions for failing to remove extremist material from their platforms. The tough new legislation will be brought to parliament next week as Canberra pushes for social media companies to prevent their platforms from being "weaponised" by terrorists in the wake of the Christchurch mosque attacks.

Facebook said it "quickly" removed a staggering 1.5 million videos of the white supremacist massacre livestreamed on the social media platform. A 17-minute video of the March 15 rampage that claimed the lives of 50 people was widely available online and experts said it was easily retrievable several hours after the attack.

"Big social media companies have a responsibility to take every possible action to ensure their technology products are not exploited by murderous terrorists," Prime Minister Scott Morrison said in a statement. Morrison, who met with a number of tech firms Tuesday - including Facebook, Twitter and Google - said Australia would encourage other G20 nations to hold social media firms to account.

Attorney-General Christian Porter said the new laws would make it a criminal offence for platforms not to "expeditiously" take down "abhorrent violent material" like terror attacks, murder or rape. Executives could face up to three years in prison for failing to do so, he added, while social media platforms - whose annual revenues can stretch into the tens of billions - would face fines of up to ten percent of their annual turnover. "Mainstream media that broadcast such material would be putting their licence at risk and there is no reason why social media platforms should be treated any differently," Porter said. — AFP

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Washington Watch

Irish Senator Black makes case against Israeli settlements

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

This past week, we hosted Irish Senator Frances Black in Washington. Black is the Chair of the Irish Seanad's (Senate) Palestine Working Group and the lead sponsor of the legislation to ban the import of products from Israeli settlements in occupied Palestinian lands into Ireland.

The "Control of Economic Activity (Occupied Territory) Bill of 2018" (CEA-OT) has passed the Seanad and successfully completed two rounds in the lower house (Dail) of the Irish parliament. In the Dail's first vote the bill passed by a wide 78-45 margin. All of Ireland's major parties, except for the minority governing party, have endorsed Black's legislation and there is strong support for the bill and for Palestinian rights among the Irish public.

The CEA-OT has been carefully crafted and doesn't over reach. By limiting its purview to products from settlements, it is clearly not an effort to impose BDS (Boycott Divestment & Sanctions) on Israel. When this legislation was first brought up for a vote in the Seanad, Senator Black's remarks in support included the following poignant observations:

"Though these settlements are repeatedly condemned as illegal by the European Union, the United Nations, and the Irish government, they continue to extract valuable natural resources and agricultural produce. These goods are exported and sold on shelves around the world, including in Ireland...There is a clear hypocrisy here - how can we condemn the settlements as 'unambiguously illegal,' as theft of land and resources, but happily buy the proceeds of this crime?"

"I saw the impact of settlement expansion when I visited the West Bank this year: the restrictions on movement, the shrinking space for housing and health care, the lack of electricity. I witnessed the crushing indignity of a Palestinian community cut off from their water supply so that it could be diverted to an Israeli chicken farm. That commercial settlement, built on stolen land beyond internationally recognized borders, is a war crime. Is the moral response to condemn this illegality, but then ask, 'how much for the eggs?'"

"Ultimately, trade in settlement goods sustains injustice. We can criticize all we want, but years of empty rhetoric simply have not worked. As long as we buy their produce and they stay profitable, nothing will change."

At this critical juncture, with just a few more steps before the legislation comes to a final vote in the Dail, a group of pro-Israel US Members of Congress, led by Representatives Peter King (R-NY) and Eliot Engel (D-NY) have inserted themselves into the process with a letter to the Irish Taoiseach (Prime Minister) and foreign minister threatening Ireland with "severe implications were this bill to become law."

The Congressional letter falsely claims that the boycott of settlement products called for in the legislation would run counter to the US Export Administration Act (EAA) thereby making it difficult for US companies (like Apple, Google, Microsoft, etc.) to continue to do business in Ireland. The King-Engel letter more than suggests that what is at stake for Ireland is the 67 percent of its foreign direct investment that comes from the US.

While it is disturbing that US members of Congress would attempt to blatantly interfere in the democratic processes of another country on behalf of Israel, even more troubling is their brazen mischaracterization of the EAA. That law was passed in the 1970s to prohibit US companies from submitting to pressures from the Arab League to boycott Israel. The Irish CEA-OT, however, has nothing to do with Ireland responding to the Arab League. It has everything to do with international law. And, in any case, the boycott does not apply to Israel.

It only boycotts goods produced, in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention, in Palestinian territories occupied by Israel. (The Geneva Conventions specifically prohibit an occupying power from transferring its people into the territories it has occupied, displacing the indigenous population, and exploiting the resources from those territories for its own benefit. The United Nations and the International Court of Justice have repeatedly ruled that Israel's behaviors in the occupied Palestinian territories are in violation of the Conventions.)

During her four day visit to Washington, Senator Black had one public event co-hosted by the Arab American Institute and the Foundation for Middle East Peace, a luncheon with a number of organizations working on issues related to Israeli-Palestinian peace, as well as meetings with a number of Members of Congress. There was broad support for her efforts and a determination to help correct the record on the mischaracterization of EAA. As she repeatedly noted, should the CEA-OT become law, its economic impact on Israel will be minimal - the best estimates are that Irish imports from the settlements only amount to between €500,000 and €1,000,000 annually. The importance of the CEA-OT is, therefore, not in the economic impact it makes, but in the clear message it sends that Israel's incessant drive to colonize the West Bank with continued settlement expansion will no longer be tolerated. Instead of wringing its hands in frustration with Israeli policy, the Irish government will send a clear message that "enough is enough."

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



This undated picture released on March 27, 2019 shows a general view of the 5th meeting of company leaders and political instructors of the Korean People's Army (KPA) in Pyongyang. — AFP

Trump called on Kim to hand over nukes

On the day that their talks in Hanoi collapsed last month, US President Donald Trump handed North Korean leader Kim Jong Un a piece of paper that included a blunt call for the transfer of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and bomb fuel to the United States, according to the document seen by Reuters. Trump gave Kim both Korean and English-language versions of the US position at Hanoi's Metropole hotel on Feb. 28, according to a source familiar with the discussions, speaking on condition of anonymity. It was the first time that Trump himself had explicitly defined what he meant by denuclearization directly to Kim, the source said.

A lunch between the two leaders was canceled the same day. While neither side has presented a complete account of why the summit collapsed, the document may help explain it. The document's existence was first mentioned by White House national security adviser John Bolton in television interviews he gave after the two-day summit. Bolton did not disclose in those interviews the pivotal US expectation contained in the document that North Korea should transfer its nuclear weapons and fissile material to the United States.

The document appeared to represent Bolton's long-held and headline "Libya model" of denuclearization that North Korea has rejected repeatedly. It probably would have been seen by Kim as insulting and provocative, analysts said. Trump had previously distanced himself in public comments from Bolton's approach and said a "Libya model" would be employed only if a deal could not be reached. The idea of North Korea handing over its weapons was first proposed by Bolton in 2004. He revived the proposal last year when Trump named him as national security adviser.

The document was meant to provide the North Koreans with a clear and concise definition of what the United States meant by "final, fully verifiable, denu-

clearization", the source familiar with discussions said. The White House did not immediately respond to a request for comment. The State Department declined to comment on what would be a classified document. After the summit, a North Korean official accused Bolton and Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of "gangster-like" demands, saying Pyongyang was considering suspending talks with the United States and may rethink its self-imposed ban on missile and nuclear tests.

The English version of the document, seen by Reuters, called for "fully dismantling North Korea's nuclear infrastructure, chemical and biological warfare program and related dual-use capabilities; and ballistic missiles, launchers, and associated facilities". Aside from the call for the transfer of Pyongyang's nuclear weapons and bomb fuel, the document had four other key points.

It called on North Korea to provide a comprehensive declaration of its nuclear program and full access to US and international inspectors; to halt all related activities and construction of any new facilities; to eliminate all nuclear infrastructure; and to transition all nuclear program scientists and technicians to commercial activities.

The summit in Vietnam's capital was cut short after Trump and Kim failed to reach a deal on the extent of economic sanctions relief for North Korea in exchange for its steps to give up its nuclear program. The first summit between Trump and Kim, which took place in Singapore in June 2018, was almost called off after the North Koreans rejected Bolton's repeated demands for it to follow a denuclearization model under which components of Libya's nuclear program were shipped to the United States in 2004.

Seven years after a denuclearization agreement was reached between the United States and Libya's leader, Muammar Gaddafi, the United States took part in a NATO-led military operation against his government and he was overthrown by rebels and killed.

'Miserable fate'

Last year, North Korea officials called Bolton's plan "absurd" and noted the "miserable fate" that befell Gaddafi. After North Korea threatened to cancel the Singapore summit, Trump said in May 2018 he was not pursuing a "Libya model" and that he was looking for an agreement that would protect Kim. "He would be there, he would be running his country, his country would be very rich," Trump said at the time. "The Libya model was a much different model. We decimated that country," Trump added.

The Hanoi document was presented in what US officials have said was an attempt by Trump to secure a "big deal" under which all sanctions would be lifted if North Korea gave up all of its weapons. US-North Korean engagement has appeared to be in limbo since the Hanoi meeting. Pompeo said on March 4 he was hopeful he could send a team to North Korea "in the next couple of weeks," but there has been no sign of that.

Jenny Town, a North Korea expert at the Washington-based Stimson Center think tank, said the content of the US document was not surprising. "This is what Bolton wanted from the beginning and it clearly wasn't going to work," Town said. "If the US was really serious about negotiations they would have learned already that this wasn't an approach they could take." Town added, "It's already been rejected more than once, and to keep bringing it up ... would be rather insulting. It's a non-starter and reflects absolutely no learning curve in the process."

North Korea has repeatedly rejected unilateral disarmament and argues that its weapons program is needed for defense, a belief reinforced by the fate of Gaddafi and others. In an interview with ABC's "This Week" program after the Hanoi summit, Bolton said the North Koreans had committed to denuclearization in a variety of forms several times "that they have happily violated." — euters

Candidate or clown? Zelensky keeps audience guessing



Volodymyr Zelensky

When is a presidential campaign not a presidential campaign?

When it's being fronted by Volodymyr Zelensky, the Ukrainian comedian who has a serious chance of becoming the country's leader going into a weekend vote. As other candidates in the unpredictable race made last-ditch appeals to the electorate on Friday, Zelensky - who is comfortably ahead in polls for today's first-round of voting - was performing with his sketch troupe at an arena in the Kiev suburbs. "We're not doing any campaigning today," he said to laughter and applause from the audience of more than two thousand people.

Some were there as supporters of Zelensky's candidacy but many had simply come because they were fans of his television work and stand-up. As often in the extraordinary election, the line between popular performer and presidential hopeful was blurred. The show began with a large-screen advertisement for a new series of "Servant of the People" - a television comedy in which the 41-year-old actor plays the president.

Until this year it was the closest he had come to politics. The program traces the journey of an everyman teacher who ends up winning the presidency after a video rant against Ukraine's endemic corruption goes viral. Friday's arena spectacle-made-up of sketches, stand-up and upbeat musical numbers - saw the candidate joined on stage by members of his Kvartal 95 comedy group. Despite Zelensky's tongue-in-cheek insistence the two-hour performance would be free of politics, he used the platform to take shots at his rivals.

Incumbent Petro Poroshenko, who is neck-and-neck in polls with ex-prime minister Yulia Tymoshenko to face Zelensky in

a run-off vote next month, was a particular target. "Why is Poroshenko going for a second term? So that he doesn't get a first," Zelensky said, with the implication of a jail term for a leader who has been accused of corruption. "That's not funny," his on-stage partner replied, despite a smattering of laughter from the crowd. "Well, it wasn't a joke," Zelensky shot back.

Song to the motherland

Dressed in a black suit and white shirt, the diminutive comedian closed the show with a song about his love for his motherland as images of Ukraine landmarks played on a screen behind him. "Everything will be fine for Ukraine in the end," he said, encouraging the audience to use the torches on their phones to make a sea of light. "And if it's not fine, it's not the end."

Zelensky has come under fire from the start for the vagueness of his manifesto, the key pledges of which were chosen following a public vote on social media. Critics say he has no serious suggestions for how to tackle graft or bring an end to a conflict with Russia-backed separatists in the east of Ukraine that has so far cost some 13,000 lives. Some accuse Zelensky of acting as a front for the interests of oligarch Igor Kolomoysky, who owns the channel that broadcasts his shows, though the entertainer denies any political links.

Supporters say only a fresh face can clear up Ukraine's murky politics. He has steadily risen in the polls and now sits around 10 points clear of his nearest rivals, according to several surveys. "I think he's funny," said Nadezhda, a Kiev office worker who was at the arena show with her husband and young daughter. — AFP

Touring the town, researchers feel London's pulse

An Italian anthropologist is touring London on a red double-decker bus on a mission to capture the capital's views on Brexit in the middle of an unprecedented crisis. Domenico Sergi, 39, said his research for the Museum of London had taken him to the capital's "shopping centers, pubs and high streets". Brexit "has become part of the fabric of how people relate to each other," Sergi told AFP on his latest stop in Hillingdon, a west London suburb that voted heavily in favour of Brexit in the 2016 referendum.

"Brexit Talks" is one part of a four-year "Curating London Programme" funded by the Arts Council and Sergi hopes it will educate future generations of Londoners about a historic moment in the city's history. To that end Sergi and the museum have hired a "London icon" - a red double-decker bus from 1965 - and taken it to two outer London boroughs, Hillingdon and Bromley, and two inner city ones, Hackney and Newham. Sergi is also collecting Brexit-related artefacts.

He has asked Charlie Mullins, the pro-Remain chief executive of Pimlico Plumbers, for his advertising hoardings saying "Bollocks to Brexit". Sergi has also requested some of the beer mats and pamphlets produced by pub chain Wetherspoons, whose chairman Tim Martin is a major supporter of Brexit. "We were quite puzzled by the amount of trades and businesses that jumped on the wagon of Brexit to sell more of their products and channel certain discussions," Sergi told AFP.

With the political landscape in chaos over Brexit, it is unsurprising that the researchers have found very different views. One of the more striking trends researchers have found in their 100 plus interviews with Londoners has been "how Brexit is affecting family dynamics," Sergi told AFP in an interview during a visit to

Brunel University - located in high-profile Brexiteer Conservative lawmaker Boris Johnson's constituency.

"Last week at the Olympic Park in Newham we came across a couple from Havering and one partner voted to remain, the other to leave," he said, referring to a borough where 70 percent voted to quit the European Union. London as a whole voted overwhelmingly in favour of remaining in the EU by 60 to 40 percent - compared with the overall national result of 52-48 in favor of leaving.

'Nationalism and xenophobia'

Sergi says a lot of the people interviewed admit to suffering from "fatigue". "People feel overwhelmed by the public discussion and are a little bit puzzled about the confusion taking place all round them," said Sergi. "It is interesting that people are wanting to express Brexit fatigue and not holding back on what they think." Not everyone the researchers ask at the university wants to take part but two visiting professors acquiesced.

"We will eventually get to a place at some point 20 years from now where people will be looking back on this and learning from it," Sally Broughton Micova, a lecturer in political communication at the University of East Anglia, told AFP. "So having a variety of views knowing how people felt about it is quite important," said the 45-year-old Micova, who sported a yellow "Bollocks to Brexit" sticker, said she adhered to German sociologist Ulrich Beck's idea of "cosmopolitan nations". "We can nurture local and national while being part of something bigger and that is something I believe in. I hope we have not lost the chance," she said.

Ivor Gaber, a professor of political journalism at Sussex University, believes the project will teach future generations about globalization. "As the world becomes more globalized, people cling to particular identities which has a good side and a bad side," he said. "We have seen aspects of nationalism and xenophobia in this country playing a role as we saw in the Brexit debate." Gaber said many Leave voters "felt their English sense of identity was threatened by joining the EU". — AFP

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Business

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BEIJING: (Left to right) US Deputy Trade Representative Jeffrey Gerrish, US Ambassador to China Terry Branstad, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, China's Vice Premier Liu He, Yi Gang, governor of the People's Bank of China (PBC) and National Development and Reform Commission Vice Chairman Ning Jizhe pose for a group photo at the Diaoyutai State Guesthouse in Beijing yesterday. —AFP

US, China report progress in trade talks

Trump: If it's not a great deal we can't do it

BEIJING/PALM BEACH, Fla: US President Donald Trump said on Friday that trade talks with China were going very well, but cautioned that he would not accept anything less than a "great deal" after top US and Chinese trade officials wrapped up two days of negotiations in Beijing.

Both sides reported progress in the talks and China also approved majority-owned brokerage joint ventures for US bank JP Morgan Chase and Japan's Nomura, a step toward meeting US demands for more access to China's financial services market.

"The trade deal is going very well," Trump told reporters at his Mar-a-Lago resort in Florida. "It is a very comprehensive, very detailed enlisting of problems that we've had with China over the years," Trump said of the talks. "And it's going to have to be a great deal. If it's not a great deal, we can't do it."

In an earlier statement, the White House said the two sides "continued to make progress during candid and constructive discussions on the negotiations and important next steps," but did not elaborate on the nature of the progress. The talks are set to resume next week in Washington with a Chinese delegation led by Vice Premier Liu He.

US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin and US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer were in the

Chinese capital for the first face-to-face meetings between the two sides since Trump delayed a scheduled March 2 increase in tariffs on \$200 billion worth of Chinese goods.

China's state news agency Xinhua said the two sides discussed "relevant agreement documents" and made new progress in their talks, but did not elaborate in a brief report. US Senate Finance Committee Chairman Chuck Grassley told Reuters in Malvern, Iowa, that he has been told the Trump administration is planning to complete a deal with China by the end of April.

However, Trump administration officials, including White House economic adviser Larry Kudlow, have said the negotiations are "not time dependent" and could take weeks or even months to complete.

"We've made great progress on intellectual property, on trade secrets, on their government not forcing our business to give them our technologies and on currency manipulation, among several other things," Grassley said at a farm event.

But the Iowa Republican, whose state has been hit hard by China's retaliation against US tariffs, added that without an effective enforcement mechanism to hold China to its promises, "none of this other stuff matters." Trump imposed tariffs on \$250 billion of Chinese imports beginning last July in a move to force

China to change the way it does business with the rest of the world and to pry open more of its economy to US companies.

Though his blunt-force use of tariffs has angered many, Trump's push to change what are widely viewed as China's market-distorting trade and subsidy practices has drawn broad support.

Lobbyists, company executives and US lawmakers from both parties have urged Trump not to settle simply for Beijing's offers to make big-ticket purchases from the United States to help reduce a record trade gap.

Lost in translation?

Going into the talks at the Diaoyutai State Guest House in Beijing, people familiar with the negotiations had said there were still significant differences on enforcement and the sequence of when and how US tariffs on Chinese products would be lifted.

Analysts had anticipated the scope of this round of talks to be quite narrow, but that both countries hoped to signal they were working hard toward a resolution. Reuters reported previously that the two sides were negotiating written pacts in six areas: forced technology transfer and cyber theft, intellectual property rights, services, currency, agriculture and non-tariff barriers to trade.

One person with knowledge of the talks said "translation is definitely an issue," referring to discrepancies between the Chinese- and English-language versions.

'There are going to be problems'

There remains skepticism that any deal can permanently resolve US-China trade tensions.

"Whatever implementation mechanism China agrees to, whether it is monthly or quarterly meetings or other check-ins, there are going to be problems," James Green, a senior adviser at McLarty Associates who until August was the top USTR official at the embassy in Beijing, told Reuters.

Trump's demands include an end to Beijing practices that Washington says result in systematic theft of US intellectual property and the forced transfer of American technology to Chinese companies. US companies say they are often pressured into handing over technological know-how to Chinese joint venture partners, local officials or regulators as a condition for doing business in China.

The US government says technology is often subsequently transferred to, and used by, Chinese competitors. China says its laws enshrine no requirements on technology transfers that are a result of legitimate transactions. — Reuters

URC announces KD 103.5 million revenues, KD 9m net loss for 2018

KUWAIT: United Real Estate Company K.S.C.P (URC), one of the leading real estate developers in the MENA region, announced its financial results for the year 2018, recording a KD 103.5 million in revenues as compared to KD 87 million in 2017, and net loss of KD 9 million in 2018 as compared to net profit of KD 2.2 million for the year end 2017.

The decrease in the company's profits was due to several factors mainly from decline in properties value inside and outside Kuwait including the United Arab Emirates, in addition to the increase in the annual amortization of BOT investments in Kuwait due to the near end of these investments period.

The total assets of United Real Estate Company increased by 2.39 percent to reach

KD 617 million, as compared to KD 602 million in 2017. The company recorded a decrease in operating profit from KD 21 million in 2017 to reach KD 9 million during 2018 for the same reasons as the company's losses in 2018.

Commenting on the results, Tariq Mohammed AbdulSalam, Chairman of URC, said that despite the announced losses, the company has achieved number of positive and promising achievements for the future, the most important of which is the maintaining same operational performance (before provisions) and the continued growth in the services and construction sectors in line with the company's recent diversification strategy.

In the same year, the company succeeded in issuing KD 60 million worth of bonds for five years with strong demand from high net worth individuals and institutions, reflecting investor confidence in the strategy put in place by the company.



Tariq Mohammed AbdulSalam

US judge scraps Trump order opening Arctic, Atlantic areas to oil leasing

ANCHORAGE, Alaska: A federal judge in Alaska has overturned US President Donald Trump's attempt to open vast areas of the Arctic and Atlantic oceans to oil and gas leasing.

The decision issued late Friday by US District Court Judge Sharon Gleason leaves intact President Barack Obama's policies putting the Arctic's Chukchi Sea, part of the Arctic's Beaufort Sea and a large swath of Atlantic Ocean off the US East Coast off-limits to oil leasing.

Trump's attempt to undo Obama's protections was "unlawful" and a violation of the federal Outer Continental Shelf Lands Act, Gleason ruled. Presidents have the power under that law to withdraw areas from the national oil and gas leasing program, as Obama did, but only Congress has the power to add areas to the leasing program, she said.

The Obama-imposed leasing prohibitions "will remain in full force and effect unless and until revoked by Congress," Gleason said in her ruling. Trump's move to put offshore Arctic and Atlantic areas back into play for oil development came in a 2017 executive order that was part of his "energy

dominance" agenda. The order was among a series of actions that jettisoned Obama administration environmental and climate-change initiatives.

The Trump administration has proposed a vastly expanded offshore oil leasing program to start this year. The five-year Trump leasing program would offer two lease sales a year in Arctic waters and at least two lease sales a year in the Atlantic. The Trump plan also calls for several lease sales in remote marine areas off Alaska, like the southern Bering Sea, that are considered to hold negligible potential for oil. Obama had pulled much of the Arctic off the auction block following a troubled offshore Arctic exploration program pursued by Royal Dutch Shell. Shell spent at least \$7 billion trying to explore the Chukchi and part of the Beaufort. The company wrecked one of its drill ships in a grounding and managed to complete only one well to depth. It abandoned the program in 2015 and relinquished its leases.

Gleason, in a separate case, delivered another decision Friday that blocks the Trump administration's effort to overturn an Obama-era environmental decision. Gleason struck down a land trade intended to clear the way for a road to be built through sensitive wetlands in Alaska's Izembek National Wildlife Refuge. The Obama administration, after a four-year environmental impact statement process, determined that the land trade and road would cause too much harm to the refuge to be justified. Trump's then Interior Secretary Ryan Zinke broke the law when he summarily reversed the Obama policy without addressing the facts found in the previous administration's study of the issue, Gleason ruled. — Reuters

KIB realized a significant growth in its KPIs in 2018

Al-Jarrah: AGM decided to distribute 11% cash dividends and 4% free bonus shares

KUWAIT: The Shareholders Annual General Meetings (AGM/EGM) of KIB which was held on Thursday, 28 March 2019 and attended by 81,145 percent of shareholders, approved the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 11 percent of the nominal value of the share (11 fils per share), and bonus shares of 4 per cent of the authorized, issued and fully paid up capital (4 shares for every 100 shares) to shareholders registered in the Bank's register of shareholders at the end of the entitlement date set as Monday, 22 April 2019. Such cash dividends and bonus shares shall be distributed to the entitled shareholders on Sunday, 28 April 2019.

Within this context, Chairman of KIB, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, lauded KIB's outstanding performance during 2018, saying: "In the face of intense competition witnessed this year in the local banking sector, KIB was able to achieve great results by enhancing its financial position, shareholders' equity, as well as achieving significant improvement in its key performance indicators (KPIs) including asset quality, improving its internal operations and its digital banking solutions while enhancing its customer focus."

Al-Jarrah stated that, as per the audited consolidated financial statements for the year ended 31 December 2018, KIB achieved a net profit of approximately KD 21 million, registering a growth of 18 percent compared to 2017. EPS also increased by 18 percent reaching 22.4 fils compared to 19 fils approximately for the last year. The Bank's improved performance reflected positively on its core operating income for 2018, reaching KD 66.6 million compared to KD 64.2 million in last year. This was a result of 20 percent growth in financing income, (approximately KD 15 million), to reach approximately KD 89.5 million compared to approximately KD 74.6 million recorded in 2017.

Strategic Plan Developments

Al-Jarrah also stated that KIB is moving ahead with the implementation of its comprehensive strategic plan through a bank-wide transformation launched in 2015. The five year strategy aims to fulfill the vision to become the 'Islamic Bank of Choice in Kuwait' with five key objectives: become the fastest growing Islamic bank in Kuwait; improve asset quality with below market average NPL; enhance shareholders' returns; be recognized as the most innovative bank in Kuwait and become an employer of choice for the Kuwaiti youth.

Al-Jarrah added: KIB's ambitious new approach to customer service has been transforming the entire customer experience to include a mix of live and digital channels during 2018. KIB also launched an innovative VIVR service in addition to its 'Live Chat' service, which provides customers access to most of its services via a visual interface, rather than just a voice-activated self-service interface, thereby enabling the Bank to offer a better self-service call experience. KIB continued the strategy implementation with a myriad of changes, trickling down to its banking vision. KIB's new strategy focuses on becoming more customer-centric by offering an integrated customer banking experience. In this context, a key component of this latest transformation is a comprehensive digital strategy, which is set to deploy services across all of its digital channels, both online and mobile, to enhance and streamline KIB's virtual customer banking experience. By embracing technology and innovation as the core component of its customer-centric business strategy, the Bank aims at providing the latest digital solutions that are user friendly and easily accessible at all times. KIB is focused on becoming a truly customer-centric business, delivering greater value to customers, and remaining as an essential extension to their everyday lives. Establishing itself as a partner in every aspect of its customers' lives; a true "Bank for Life"

Growth and Continued Success

Furthermore, Vice Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of KIB, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, shed light on KIB's performance during 2018 and noted that total assets increased by 13 percent, reaching approximately KD 2.2 billion. This increase is attributable to a growth in the financing portfolio by KD 301 million to reach KD 1.6 billion compared to KD 1.3 billion last year, registering a 23 percent growth. Additionally, the investment portfolio increased by KD 20 million, or 14 percent reaching KD 166 million compared to KD 146 million approximately in 2017. Depositors' accounts rose to KD 1.3 billion compared to KD 1.2 billion recorded at the end of the previous year, an increase of KD 115 million representing a growth of 10 percent. This came as a result of KIB's successful development of its customer-base through the launch of a number of innovative deposit products and promotional campaigns supported by distributing competitive and distinctive profit rates on deposits. Additionally, the Bank increased its customer confidence through its new brand identity.

Bukhamseen also stated that KIB's asset quality matrices have improved significantly in 2018 mainly due to continuous efforts in monitoring its existing and new portfolio. NPL ratio stood below 1 percent, which is one of the lowest among peers while total coverage ratio at 343 percent in 2018, one of the highest in the region.

Competitive Profits

In a continuation of this positive financial performance, Bukhamseen noted that KIB achieved competitive distribution rates for its depositor accounts in 2018 for a fourth consecutive year, whereby the annualized return on Arzaaq (KD) Deposit progressively increased to 2.73 percent in Q1 2018, 2.75 percent in Q2 2018, 2.81 percent in Q3 2018, and 3.25 percent in Q4 2018. Average annualized rate for 2018 stood at 2.886 percent. Arzaaq Deposit enjoys a high return on investment and flexibility in deposit periods, ranging from one month to a year. The deposit account is also available in all major foreign currencies, where profits are distributed quarterly from one to six months and distributed annually for annual deposits. Meanwhile, Al-Boushra (three-year) KD deposits were offered an annualized return of 3.65 percent in Q4 2018 with an average rate of 3.55 percent for second half 2018. Al-Boushra (three-year) Deposit enjoys the highest profit rates among all KIB's deposit accounts, with semi-annual distribution. Profits will be credited to eligible depositors' accounts upon announcement of financial results.

Distinguished Collaboration between Functions

Mohamed Said El Saka, KIB's Deputy Chief Executive Officer, noted that the remarkable collaboration between KIB functions, namely: Operations, Financial Control & Planning, Audit, IT, Risk Management and Human Resources, has successfully contributed to the management plan which aims at cutting costs. In 2018, KIB continued to invest in its new branding and Information Technology infrastructure, intro-



KUWAIT: KIB Chairman Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah addresses the Annual General Meetings (AGM/EGM) of KIB on Thursday



Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah



Mohamed Said El Saka



Raed Bukhamseen

Al-Jarrah: KIB managed to achieve outstanding results, thanks to the Board's constant support and prudent directives, and to the new Transformation Strategy,

- Al-Jarrah: KIB maintained its growth in all major KPIs in 2018.
- Al-Jarrah: The AGM decided to distribute 11% cash dividends and 4% free bonus shares.
- Al-Jarrah: Affirmation of KIB's external credit rating is proof of the continuous improvements of the Bank.
- Al-Jarrah: We achieved distinguished results thanks to the support and guidance of the Bank's Board of Directors and the implementation of the new strategy.
- Al-Jarrah: We look forward to KIB becoming the "Islamic Bank of Choice in Kuwait".
- Bukhamseen: Less than 1% NPL ratio, with a coverage ratio of 343%.
- Bukhamseen: 23% growth in financing portfolio...an evidence of KIB's competitiveness in the market.
- Bukhamseen: KIB's total assets increased by 13% or approximately KD 2.2 billion.
- Bukhamseen: Depositors' accounts increased to KD 1.3 billion, or by 10%.
- El Saka: KIB continued to invest in its new branding and IT infrastructure.
- El Saka: KIB distributed the highest profits on depositors' accounts.
- El Saka: KIB did not maintain an active investment trading book, in line with the Bank's conservative risk appetite.

ducing improvements to enhance the digital banking experience while controlling its other costs.

El Saka mentioned that the net financing income comprised of 81 percent of the operating income during the year compared to 76 percent recorded last year. This improvement reflects the strength of KIB's core business activities, as it does not operate an active investment trading book as per its conservative risk appetite. Alternatively, KIB's investment portfolio raised by 14 percent to reach KD 166 million primarily as a result of increased exposure towards high quality sukuk. Investment income is lower compared to 2017 on account of certain one offloads of non-core investments during the previous year. Focused efforts on financing portfolio resulted in its distinguished growth. KIB has effectively participated in high-quality syndications at the local and regional level specifically in oil & gas, telecom, and hospitality sectors and expect a similar trend to continue.

El Saka added that growth of customers' deposits resulted from better profits offered by the Bank. Investment Savings Account has, particularly achieved noticeable success in 2018 with the highest returns in the marketplace, whereby the net annualized return on Investment Savings Account (KD) progressively increased to 1.64 percent in Q1 2018, 1.65 percent in Q2 2018, 1.69 percent in Q3 2018, and 1.95 percent in Q4 2018, with an average net annual return of 1.732 by end of 2018. This account is designed specifically for individuals and offers the benefits of savings and investment combined into one single account. It can be opened in Kuwaiti Dinar or in any other major foreign currency. Moreover, there is no mini-

mum amount required to open the account and profit distribution takes place on a quarterly basis.

Al-Ithmaar Call Account, offered to corporate customers, combines the benefits of both current and savings accounts. Additionally, this unique account offers corporate customers instant access to funds through unlimited deposits and withdrawals, and provides a chance for companies to earn a profit on the account balance. Businesses are able to enjoy greater flexibility, better returns and unrestricted access to funds at the same time, as well as a cheque book option. Al-Ithmaar Call Account offered an average annual net return of 1.443 percent at the end of 2018.

With regard to the impact of the adoption of IFRS 9 on KIB, El Saka stated, "The current regulation requires that we implement CBK provisions or IFRS 9 ECL, whichever is higher, which resulted in comfortable buffers for KIB."

Local, Regional and International Awards

In recognition of its remarkable achievements across various areas during 2018, KIB has garnered many prestigious local, regional and international awards that stood as a testament to the Bank's robust performance and stellar reputation within the banking industry.

Some of KIB's most notable achievements throughout 2018 was receiving the Best Islamic Bank - Kuwait" award from World Finance; the "Excellence in Islamic Banking Products and Services" award from the World Union of Arab Bankers (WUAB); the "Best Customer Acquisition - Kuwait"; "Best Branding - Kuwait" 2018 awards from CPI Financial; as

well as the "Best Shari'a-Compliant Bank - MENA" award for the fourth consecutive year and the "Fastest Growing Islamic Bank - MENA" award in 2018 from Capital Finance International for the third consecutive year.

KIB also earned the ISO 27001:2013 certificate for information security management systems from GMS Intercert Services and the ISO 22301:2012 certification for Business Continuity Management (BCM) Systems for British Standards Institution (BSI). KIB was also recognized with many information security and cybersecurity awards during 2018.

In addition to these achievements and recognitions, World Finance also recognized KIB's leadership team for its outstanding efforts, as the Bank's Chairman, Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah was named "Islamic Banking Chairman of the Year" for 2018 from World Finance; he was also awarded the Red Purple Sash adorned with the Golden Medal Award of Merit and a patent certificate in the category of Wise Leadership in the Arab region in 2018 from Tatweej Academy for Excellence Awards in the Arab Region.

A Remarkable Role in the Community

As part of its strategy, KIB aims at becoming a national financial institution that positively impacts every aspect of the local community, particularly its customers. This strategy has been embedded into the Bank's social responsibility program during the year 2018, covering a range of social concerns and issues, underscoring its integral role as a national financial institution. Accordingly, the Bank has committed itself to investing in various social responsibility initiatives, which fall under four main pillars of its social responsibility program, namely: financial and banking literacy, social impact, community development and youth empowerment.

Credit Rating

KIB has been always internationally recognized for its high credit rating and robust financial position. During the annual credit review carried out by Fitch Ratings, KIB managed to get positive results. Fitch Ratings in its report for 2018, affirmed KIB's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (LT-IDR) at 'A+' with a Stable Outlook. Fitch has also affirmed the Bank's Viability Rating (VR) at 'bb-'. Fitch also indicated an upside for KIB's VR could come from further improvements in the Bank's profile, franchise and risk appetite, in spite of the challenges and severe competition between local banks.

New Board of Directors

KIB's Shareholders' General Assembly elected a new Board of Directors, consisting of 9 board members, namely: Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Dr. Haider Hassan Al-Jummaa, Anwar Jawad Bukhamseen, Raed Jawad Bukhamseen, Jassem Hassan Zainal, Dr. Abdullah Abdul Samad Marafie, Saleh Sulaiman Al-Trad, Anwar Fozan Al-Sabej and Marzouq Khalid Al-Marzouq.

Shareholders' Opinion

Shareholders lauded KIB's Board of Directors' directives, as well as the relentless efforts exerted by the executive management during last year. Their efforts heavily contributed in achieving such a distinguished performance and an increase in the Bank's returns, in addition to an improvement of most of its key performance indicators (KPIs).

11% Cash Dividend and 4% Bonus Shares

The Shareholders General Meetings (AGM/EGM) approved all the items listed in the meetings' agendas, including the Board of Directors' recommendation to distribute cash dividends of 11 percent of the nominal value of the share (11 fils per share), and bonus shares of 4 percent of the authorized, issued and fully paid up capital. It has been decided to distribute the cash dividends and bonus shares effective from Sunday, 28 April 2019 to shareholders registered in the Bank's register of shareholders at the end of the entitlement date set as Monday, 22 April 2019.

Thanks and Appreciation

Al-Jarrah expressed his sincere gratitude to HH the Amir of Kuwait, Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, and HH, the Crown Prince, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, for their constant support of the nation's economic stability and growth.

He also thanked the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK), and all other regulatory authorities, for their continuous support of the banking sector in Kuwait.

Al-Jarrah also extended his thanks and appreciation of all shareholders and customers for their ongoing support and trust in KIB's performance, as well as its product and service offerings. He also noted that this trust and loyalty propels the Bank to achieve more returns for both its shareholders and customers. Al-Jarrah also thanked KIB staff across all levels and departments for their unwavering commitment, continuous efforts and for achieving positive results.

Key Financial Indicators			
	YE2018	YE2017	Increase %
Net Profit Attributable to Shareholders (in KD million)	20.9	17.7	18%
Earnings Per Share (in fils)	22.38	18.96	18%
Financing Income (in KD million)	89.5	74.6	20%
Total Assets (in KD billion)	2.17	1.92	13%
Financing Receivables (in KD billion)	1.60	1.30	23%
Customer Deposits (in KD billion)	1.32	1.20	10%

Business

White House wants Fed to cut rates to protect US economy

Eurozone virtually in a recession, China, very, very very soft: Kudlow

WASHINGTON: White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow on Friday urged the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates to protect the US economy. Kudlow told CNBC that it was necessary to reduce rates as a "protective measure," after earlier being quoted by Axios as saying the Fed should "immediately" cut rates by half a percentage point.

"We just don't want that threat" of higher rates, the aide said, adding that this reflects President Donald Trump's view. "There is no inflation out there, so I think the Fed's actions were probably overdone," he said, referring to its decision to raise rates four times in 2018, with the last and most controversial increase coming in December.

Trump also took aim at the Fed's rate hikes on Friday. "Had the Fed not mistakenly raised interest rates, especially since there is very little inflation, and had they not done the ridiculously timed quantitative tightening, the 3.0 per cent GDP, & Stock Market, would have both been much higher & World Markets would be in a better place!" the president tweeted.

Speaking about the slowdown in the global economy that could threaten US growth, Kudlow referred to the "eurozone, virtually in a recession. China, very, very very soft as we negotiate our trade. Troubles in Latin America."

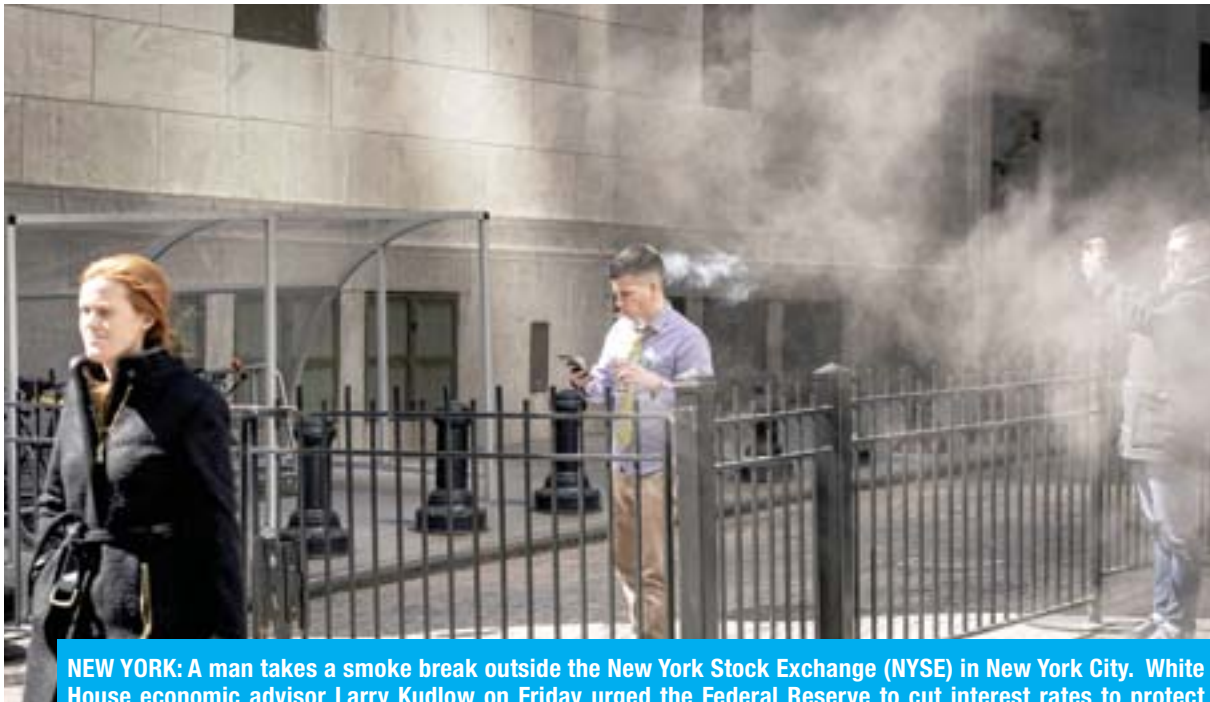
"We don't want to threaten this great recovery," he said. "We are, as everyone else in the world, aware of some of these external threats from around the world," he said, adding that Trump also wants the Fed to stop cutting its Treasury bill portfolio.

The advocacy of a sharp rate cut echoes the position of Stephen Moore, a conservative economist whom Trump has tapped to join the Fed. Most economists and institutions—with the exception of the White House—predict a slump in US growth both this year and in 2020. The Fed recently reduced its growth projection to 2.1 percent for 2019 and 1.9 percent for next year, but the Trump administration says the economy will grow by 3.2 percent this year.

The Fed's Monetary Committee left rates unchanged last week and gave up its plans for increases to the cost of credit for this year.

Optimistic

A senior Federal Reserve official said Friday he remains "optimistic" about the US economy's momentum.



NEW YORK: A man takes a smoke break outside the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. White House economic advisor Larry Kudlow on Friday urged the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates to protect the US economy. —AFP

and believes the central bank will have to raise interest rates again "at some point."

The comments come at a time when some economists are predicting the Fed will have to cut its benchmark interest rate this year, given increasing signs US growth is hitting speed bumps amid a global slowdown.

In a speech in New York, Randal Quarles, the Fed's vice president in charge of banking regulation, said he remained "optimistic about the outlook for the US economy, and I think that we have the potential to maintain growth at a healthy pace in the years ahead."

While he supports the Fed's plan to remain patient before further adjusting the benchmark rate-giving officials time to better gauge the path of the economy—Quarles said, "My sense is that further increases in the policy rate may be necessary at some point."

The Fed raised the policy rate four times last year, most recently in December amid surging concern about growth, particularly over the US-China trade war. It

now sits at 2.25-2.5 percent. But Quarles said the neutral level—the optimal rate that does not stimulate or slow the economy—"remains somewhat north of where we are now."

He acknowledged, however, that inflation pressures remain muted and have not responded as expected to very low unemployment rates—which tend to drive up wages and prices.

"I am very comfortable remaining patient at this point and monitoring the incoming data," he said in the prepared speech. Quarles said the central bank needs to make clear that while it is responding to changes in economic data trends, "we are not reacting to every piece of volatile data."

Among the closely watched data, the government reported Friday that the Fed's preferred measure of inflation fell again in January to below the central bank's 2 percent goal. Still, Quarles said, it is "roughly consistent" with the target. —AFP

French banks call for end to 'yellow vest' violence

PARIS: French banks called yesterday for an end to violence against branches, cash machines and personnel as the country braced for a 20th day of "yellow vest" protests.

Since the "yellow vest" anti-government protests began in November, more than 760 banks have suffered damage. "It is time for all to condemn acts committed against banks," the French banking federation's executive committee said in comments published in the daily Le Monde.

"Yellow vest" demonstrations are expected Saturday in several French cities despite bans in hotspots such as the Champs-Elysees avenue in Paris and the centre of Bordeaux.

Banks have often been the targets of vandalism and arson during the protests, and last week 11 people were injured when a Banque Paribas branch was set on fire near the Champs Elysees.

"We must quickly put a stop to this unbridled and unjustified violence," the federation said.

It called for order to be restored "so that our colleagues and shopowners can work safely" and meet their clients' needs. The call was echoed by the police union Alliance, which told AFP Saturday its members "were fed up" with critics that sought to blame them for the violence.

"Our duty is to maintain public peace, even if that sometimes means restoring public order," Alliance secretary general Frederic Lagache said.

The banking federation's executive committee comprises the bosses of six large French banks: BPCE, BNP Paribas, Credit Mutuel, Banque Postale, Credit Agricole and Societe Generale. "For a little more than four months, hundreds of local branches that are essential links in local life... have been targeted, vandalized, pillaged and burned, and bank officers physically threatened," the federation said. — AFP

Gulf Bank statement

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank announced to its customers yesterday that it had a service disruption to its network that impacted international transfers, and have confirmed that this has not affected any of their customer accounts in any way. The Bank took all the necessary action immediately and effectively.

Based on their current assessment, this service disruption may result in a maximum potential loss to the bank of KD 2.8 million. To give all stakeholders comfort, the Bank estimated this amount to only 0.4 percent of their equity.

Gulf Bank also assured all its stakeholders that they will be dealing with this matter with the utmost transparency and urgency and will continue to take all the necessary measures to protect its customers interests.

Ride-hailing firm Lyft rises in Wall Street premiere

NEW YORK: Lyft shares raced out of the starting gate but then throttled back slightly in a strong stock market debut Friday, raising \$2.3 billion in an IPO that marks a turning point for the ride-hailing business and the so-called "sharing economy."

The six-year old San Francisco-based company, trading on Nasdaq under the ticker "LYFT," opened at \$87.24, up 21 percent from its initial offering price before retreating somewhat. Shares closed the official trading day at \$78.29, up 8.7 percent.

Lyft was first off the line with its stock offering ahead of an expected IPO later this year from its much larger rival Uber. Other hotly-anticipated tech IPOs are expected this year from business collaboration firm Slack and visual discovery engine Pinterest.

Uber and Lyft are among the most prominent firms in the sharing economy, which also includes home-sharing platform Airbnb, and high-light a trend away from ownership to services.

Both companies have driven the smartphone economy to spectacular growth to the detriment of the taxi industry, while also raising questions for automakers about car sales.

"Ridesharing has transformed our lives, making it easier and cheaper to get where we need to go, and it's pioneering an undeniable trend toward transportation as a service," Gene Munster and Will Thompson of the investment firm Loup Ventures said in a research note this week.

These firms, which also are stepping up moves to autonomous rides, have been expanding aggressively—with Lyft gaining market share in the United States and Uber in dozens of international markets.—AFP



Renault takes top honors at Middle East Car of the Year 2019

KUWAIT: Renault Middle East made swift wins across multiple award categories at the highly-coveted MECOTY Middle East Car of the Year Awards 2019. The esteemed awards ceremony was held alongside the International Motor Show Abu Dhabi and the Custom Show Emirates at the Al-Ma'ared Hall, Adnec, Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Now in its 6th year, the MECOTY awards is widely considered to be the most coveted regional automotive industry awards - integrates a complex yet transparent nomination and scoring methodology which is developed, tested and implemented by the most experienced 'motoring minds' of the industry.

The voting process for MECOTY involves one Jury Award for each category and only one unique Public Award amongst all nominated cars and categories to enable public car

enthusiasts to have their say on the overall Car of the Year.

Renault's triumph at the 2019 awards got off to a flying start with the All-New Renault Duster winning the prestigious MECOTY Public Award, receiving the most public votes amongst all nominated cars and categories. The Duster's win was testament to its distinctive styling and off-road capabilities, which make it the perfect companion for adventure-filled experiences.

Also facing fierce competition, the new Renault Megane R.S. proved it is leading and redefining the C-segment sport market by securing top honors, recognized by the Jury Award in the Performance Hatchback category. Equally capable both on and off the racetrack, the Megane R.S. is at the forefront of sporting performance and design and also pays homage to Renault's competi-

tive racing heritage.

Driving automotive innovation into the future, the Zoe Z.E. 40 capped off a stunning night for Renault by charging to first place to secure the Jury Award in the Electric Vehicles class. This 100 percent electric vehicle is leading Renault's commitment towards enabling accessibility of eco-friendly designs for environmentally conscious consumers.

Commenting on Renault's superb victories at the prestigious regional awards ceremony, Marwan Haidamous, Managing Director, Renault Middle East, said: "At Renault, we are committed to delivering driving innovations that enrich the driving experience and the lives of our customers. Our recent triumph at the MECOTY awards reflects this commitment and reiterates the passion we share with our customers for automotive excellence."

Together
We Succeed
For Life



For the 3rd Consecutive Year
Fastest Growing Islamic Bank
MENA - 2018

In Recognition of its New Brand Excellence
Best Branding
in Kuwait for 2018

For the 5th Consecutive Year
Best Islamic Bank
in Kuwait for 2018

In Recognition of its Innovative Services & Products
Best Customer Acquisition
in Kuwait for 2018

For the 4th Consecutive Year
Best Sharia Compliant Bank
MENA - 2018

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Business

NBK holds symposium on regional and Kuwait economic outlook

Kuwait's growth is insulated from global slowdown: Dr Chami

KUWAIT: Dr Saade Chami, Group Chief Economist at National Bank of Kuwait spoke at a symposium organized by NBK and said that there is a synchronized slowdown in major economies, noting that the earlier revision of global growth to 3.5 percent in 2019 by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) is likely to be revised downwards again.

Dr. Chami highlighted that US growth is softening on fading tax cut impact and trade war fallout, adding that the latest job figures and real estate sector indicators are not encouraging, which may lead to a slower growth rate of less than 2.0 percent in 2019.

As for the Eurozone, Dr. Chami indicated that trade tensions and uncertainty surrounding Brexit will be a drag on growth; the European Central Bank (ECB) revised growth to 1.1 percent this year from 1.7 percent earlier.

He also mentioned that the Chinese government has lowered growth target to 6-6.5 percent this year, much lower than past growth readings on account of trade tensions and the failure of stimulus measures to lift growth up.

GCC Economic Outlook

Dr. Chami added that besides some financial sector linkages, global economic conditions affect the region mainly through two important channels: interest rates and oil price, both are expected to remain stable in the short term. GCC growth is expected at around 2 percent in 2019, driven mainly by public spending. In the meantime, Non-oil growth is seen at 2.5-3 percent, while oil sector growth is expected to be marginal due to production cuts. On the other hand, with moderate oil prices, the external current account of GCC countries taken together will register a large though less than surpluses registered in past years.

Dr. Chami noted that most GCC countries currently have more relaxed fiscal policies, which would lead to widening the budget deficits and subsequently higher public debt on oil prices remaining moderate and given that a large part of public debt is maturing is maturing this year. According to preliminary estimates, GCC debt



KUWAIT: Dr Saade Chami, Group Chief Economist at NBK, speaks at the symposium

issues could reach about \$50 -60 billion this year, but could vary with oil prices. Saudi Arabia is expected to be the largest borrower in 2019 with about \$30 billion, although with the latest sale of part of SABIC to ARAMCO in the amount of \$70 billion, the need to borrow will likely be less.

Dr. Chami added that Oman and Bahrain could tap the sukuk and bond market to finance their deficits, noting that Bahrain's borrowing needs are lower owing to the GCC financial support, and the fiscal measures taken lately. Meanwhile, Oman will face higher borrowing costs as a result of its credit rating downgrade.

Generally, debt to GDP ratios remains moderate in most GCC countries and there is no reason for concerns in the short/medium term.

Kuwait's growth

Dr. Chami said that Kuwait's economic performance is somewhat insulated from the global slowdown, noting that



non-oil growth is seen at about 2.5-2.8 percent in 2019-20, helped by expansionary fiscal policy and prudent monetary policy. He expected oil GDP growth to remain flat due to Kuwait's compliance to OPEC output cuts, with production averaging 2.7 mb/d, with expected headline growth at about 1.5-2 percent in 2019-20.

Dr. Chami explained that the consumer sector is performing well, supported by low inflation, high employment, low interest rates and the CBK recent measures loosening consumer loan limits. Credit growth set to remain healthy this year and it grew by 5 percent in January. The real estate sector is also recovering after falling in 2015-16 on drop in oil prices, as the sales rose 56 percent last year with strong support from the residential sector.

Stressing on the role of monetary policy in supporting growth, Dr. Chami mentioned that CBK followed a slower pace in hiking its key interest rates compared to US Federal Reserve and other GCC countries and the. CBK

opted to maintain relatively lower rates to boost credit growth and support non-oil sector by encouraging consumer spending and investments. As such, the CBK successfully mitigated the effects of the Fed's tight policy, thus shielding domestic interest rates and private sector activities in general, benefiting also from an exchange rate system that pegs the Kuwaiti Dinar to a basket of international currencies rather than being tied to the US dollar alone.

Meanwhile, fiscal balance improved in FY18/19 compared to the budget on higher oil prices and lower spending, providing space for spending hikes in FY19/20. Moreover, the draft budget for FY19/20 outlines a solid 5 percent rise in spending, with capex maintained at a decent level. It is expected that deficit could be 5 percent of GDP before transfers to the Future Generations Fund (FGF) and about 8 percent of GDP after this transfer, excluding investment income on financial savings. Additionally, project spending is expected to pick up as many projects in the pipeline including in housing, oil and petrochemical sectors.

Dr. Chami confirmed that debt levels remain very low, noting that no debt issuance is expected until the parliament approves the debt law. He also added that even if the draft debt law is approved, it is unlikely that Kuwait will issue any large debt this year, if at all.

While the economic condition looks fairly solid, nonetheless there are some challenges on the horizon, including low Capex spending; drop in oil prices; investors perception of the business environment; and in the absence of reforms, declining GRF reserves in case budget deficits continue in the medium.

Finally, Dr. Chami concluded by saying that Kuwait enjoys one of the highest credit ratings at AA, reflecting substantial hydrocarbon reserves and abundant financial savings in the FGF, one of the first SWFs in the world. This attests to the farsightedness and vision of Kuwaiti leaders who established that fund and continued to add to it through regular transfers and to refrain from drawing on it even in the most difficult circumstances.

Gulf Bank announces first Al-Danah quarterly draw winner

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced Amirah Ahmad Awadh Al-Ali as the winner of its first quarterly Al-Danah draw who took home a cash prize of KD 150,000. The announcement was aired live on Wednesday, 27th March 2019, on the Kuwait Pulse (88.8 FM) 'Diwaniyat Al-Yaqout & Al-Ansari' program. The draw took place in the presence of a representative from the Ministry of Commerce.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah second quarterly draw 2019 will be held on 26 June 2019, for the prize of KD 250,000, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD 500,000 on 25 September 2019. The final Al-Danah draw for KD 1,000,000, will be held on 16 January 2020, where the Al Danah millionaire will be announced at a live event.

Customers can increase their chances of winning with Al-Danah by depositing more into their Gulf Bank accounts using the new ePay (Self-Pay) service, which is available on Gulf Bank's online and mobile banking services.

Al-Danah is the only draw account in Kuwait that transfers all your chances from the previous year onto the following year as an award for your loyalty. Furthermore, Al-Danah offers a number of unique services to customers, including

the Al-Danah Deposit Only ATM card, which allows account holders to deposit money into their accounts at their convenience. Account holders can also calculate their chances of winning the draws through the 'Al-Danah Chances' calculator available on the Gulf Bank website and app.

Gulf Bank's Al-Danah account is open to Kuwaiti and non-Kuwaiti residents of Kuwait. Customers require a minimum of KD 200 to open an account and the same amount should 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 KD2 fee will be charged to their 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 Al-Danah 2019 upcoming quarterly and yearly draws, customers must meet the required hold period for each draw.

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



Al Mulla Exchange launches first foreign currency delivery service in Kuwait

KUWAIT: Al Mulla Exchange announced the launch of its foreign currency delivery service throughout Kuwait. The new service allows customers to order all major foreign currencies and have them delivered anywhere in Kuwait through Al Mulla Exchange's easy-to-use smartphone app or official website.

This innovative service is available for the Al Mulla Exchange customers who are registered for online usage, and it can be availed on the Al Mulla Exchange website (www.almullaexchange.com) or via the Al Mulla Exchange App. Current customers of Al Mulla Exchange need not visit any branch to register online. They just need to visit the Al Mulla Exchange website or download the app and register in a few simple steps.

By selecting the FX delivery icon, customers can choose the currency they need, the date of delivery, the time and the place to which the delivery has to be done, and the order will be processed immediately to deliver the money to all urban areas in Kuwait.

Al Mulla Exchange always strives to come up with new ways to deliver the best services to customers and prides

itself for being the first company to come out with the Foreign Currency Delivery services not just in Kuwait but also across the GCC.

After a few weeks of launching the app, more and more customers are using the new service, as it offers both convenience and the best rates. The highly intuitive app has been received very positively by customers and it is now one of the top downloaded finance apps in Kuwait.

The Al Mulla Exchange app and website offer several services, making it a very convenient solution for customers in Kuwait. They can be used conveniently to remit money to foreign bank accounts in seconds. The easy-to-use application can be downloaded from Google Play or Apple's App Store.



KUWAIT: Sheikh Faisal Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and a number of KPC employees with the delegation from AUB during the meeting.

KFH unveils metal Visa Infinite Charge Card

KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has launched KFH Visa Infinite Charge Card with enhanced benefits to customers. This comes as part of its efforts to continually expand its products and services to meet the modern lifestyle needs of its customers while offering them a wide array of rewards and sought-after benefits.

General Manager Private Banking at KFH, Abdullah AlMejhem, said: "Visa Infinite Charge Card is the ultimate Visa product, exclusively designed for private banking customers so they can live their life by their own rules." He added in a press release, that the card will bring cardholders to a world of indulgences created to enhance even the most exceptional of lifestyles, travel, dining and shopping opportunities. Also, it gives access to several airport lounges all around the world, and complimentary access to a concierge service that exists to satisfy every taste, in addition to an international support network for medical emergencies with foreign language support. Hotel offers with Agoda.com, Visa Luxury Hotel Collection, discounted Meet and Greet services at select international airports, access to premium Global Blu Lounges across key locations in Europe to process VAT refunds, multi-trip Travel



per highest standards of service quality. The Bank optimally utilizes its resources for the best interest of its customers. This helps in achieving the highest returns on Private Banking customers' investments.

Moreover, KFH works tirelessly to meet all requirements of its private banking customers by providing a highly qualified line-up of Relationship Managers who take great care of all customers' needs in ultimate privacy.

Meanwhile, Ankush Devadason, Visa's Country Manager for Kuwait, said: "Visa is delighted to partner with KFH, a leader in premium financial products, to launch the KFH Visa Infinite Charge Card for the bank's private banking customers. We look forward to working closely with KFH to introduce more of such innovative offerings tailored to different segment of cardholders, so that they have access to convenient, secure, seamless and rewarding payment experiences."

AUB discusses plans to open branch at KPC

KUWAIT: Within the framework of cooperation and strengthening the close relations between Ahli United Bank and national companies operating in the oil sector, Ahli United Bank has announced the holding of a meeting at the headquarters of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation to discuss the arrangements for the forthcoming opening of a branch at KPC headquarters for providing banking services to the Corporation's employees to facilitate the receipt by KPC employees of all banking services and facilities without the need to leave their work area.

Within this framework, Sheikh Faisal Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, KPC acting Managing Director for Human Resources received a delegation from Ahli United Bank headed by Tareq Muhmood, AUB acting Chief Executive Officer, including Jehad Al-Humaidhi, Deputy Chief Executive Officer for the Support Banking support group at Ahli United Bank, Mishari Al-Jassim, Deputy General Manager for Retail Banking at the Bank and Adel Meerza, Head of Administration Affairs and Services at the Bank. On the KPC side, it was attended by Ahmed Al-Hamad, Deputy Managing Director for Administrative Affairs and Salah Al-Hajri, Commercial and Services Department Manager.

Speaking on this occasion, Tareq Muhmood, expressed his happiness with the opportunity to serve KPC employees through AUB's branch. He emphasized that the Bank's management is deeply aware and highly values KPC's contribution to Kuwait's economic progress, and equally

appreciates its leading role in the oil sector which has enabled the country to have a unique presence among the GCC and other Arab countries.

Tareq Muhmood referred to the historical relations between Ahli United Bank and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation, going back more than 77 years when the bank first open in February 1942 as the first bank operating in Kuwait. At that time, he reminisced, Kuwait Oil Company, a subsidiary of KPC, provided the bank with an iron safe for keeping money and provided a residence for Matheson, the Bank's first General Manager.

Kuwait Oil Company opened all its bank accounts with the Bank at the time. Indeed, the bank employees used to perform the role of a mobile bank for the Bank. They made regular visits to the inhabitants of Failaka Island and Ahmadi area where the Kuwait Oil Company employees resided. The purpose was to cater for their banking needs without the need for them to visit the bank's head office in Kuwait City, given the long dis-

tance and difficult transport conditions at the time.

In turn, Jehad Al-Humaidhi said: "Our branch at the headquarters of Kuwait Petroleum Corporation is another new evidence of the success of Ahli United Bank in its services and products expansion drive. We look forward to the opening our branch at KPC and trust that it will be another milestone on the road toward strengthening our relationship with Kuwait Petroleum Corporation in particular and all the other Kuwaiti oil institutions and companies in general."

Mishari Al-Jassim commented that the new AUB branch at Kuwait Petroleum Corporation will prove to be a unique banking experience because we intend to provide the branch with a fully-integrated national team to offer the best in quality banking services to the employees of this vital sector. In fact, we are already working on preparing a package of exclusive and attractive banking services that will cater for the needs and aspirations of KPC employees."



What's On



Nespresso expands the Positive Cup initiative in the Middle East with recycling program launch

Nespresso has extended its sustainability commitments in the Middle East with the launch of its first recycling program in the Kuwait. Nespresso is the first global coffee brand in the Middle East to instigate a bespoke recycling program for its product refuse and has invested considerable resources to fund the program, without imparting any additional cost to the consumer.

The new recycling program will give customers the facility to recycle Nespresso capsules through the network of specialist Boutiques across the country. The service is also available from the convenience of the customer's own home, thanks to a pick-up service that collects used capsules with the delivery of the new order. Offices, hotels and restaurants which serve Nespresso coffee can also avail of the recycling program through a used capsule pick-up service.

In 2011, Nespresso commissioned Quantis, a team of world-leading experts in the field of environmental life cycle assessment (LCA), to compare the environmental impact of all options to make an espresso coffee in a Nespresso machine. The study showed that when it comes to environmental performance, Nespresso aluminium capsules that are recycled after use are the optimal way to make an espresso coffee in a Nespresso machine, among all investigated options.

Here in the Middle East, even with the emergence of 'green' initiatives and the rise of a more sustainable approach, resident's waste output is still at record levels. Faced with the challenge that, as in most markets, the Nespresso capsule cannot be recycled via traditional waste collection and recycling systems; Nespresso decided

to invest in its own bespoke recycling device, developed in line with its global standards. The Nespresso recycling operation will be managed by MRC, a leading eco-industrial company headquartered and listed in Kuwait, offering sustainable waste management and recycling since 1987.

The Nespresso capsule recycling device has a working capacity to recycle up to 8,000 aluminium capsules per hour, separating the coffee grounds from the aluminium. The aluminium will then go through a smelting process and can be recycled infinitely to make new aluminium products, while the coffee grounds will be used as a natural fertilizer for agriculture and gardening at a local farm in Kuwait.

Recycling aluminium requires only 5% of the energy used to make new aluminium and the process involves simply re-melting the metal, which is far less expensive and energy intensive than creating new aluminium. With the introduction of capsule recycling in the Kuwait, customers can boost their sustainability credentials by recycling their used capsules and reducing their personal carbon footprint.

Nespresso commenced its recycling program in Europe over 20 years ago with the first recycling initiative in Switzerland. Since then, Nespresso has worked with its many business partners, stakeholders and innovators to achieve a capsule collection capacity of over 92% across more than 44 countries, with Kuwait joining the global recycling program.

Today, the Nespresso Positive Cup program focuses on three distinct pillars of responsible coffee sourcing, responsible managed aluminium and carbon footprint



reduction. Nespresso's AAA Sustainable Quality Program was launched in 2003 in collaboration with the environmental NGO Rainforest Alliance to provide training and technical assistance to coffee farmers to improve coffee quality, and to promote sustainable agriculture practices and farm productivity.

Nespresso has pledged to source 100% of its coffee from farmers in the AAA Program by the end of 2020; helping to secure the highest quality green coffee, while protecting the environment and enhancing farmer wel-

fare. To address the carbon footprint of Nespresso products, the company conducted a life cycle assessment to understand how every aspect of the business can become more sustainable. The result was a pledge by Nespresso to inset 100% of Nespresso's operational carbon footprint and the one of a cup of Nespresso coffee by 28% versus 2009. Nespresso currently offers recycling solutions in 7 countries across Middle East and North Africa with the ambition to roll out the program across its expansive network by 2020.



Health & Science

French Garfield beach phone mystery highlights plastic pollution

For more than 30 years bright orange "Garfield" phones have been washing up on the French coast to the bemusement of local beach cleaners, who have finally cracked the mystery behind them. Locals had long suspected a lost shipping container was to blame for the novelty landline phones, modeled on the prickly feline cartoon character, which have plagued the northern Finistere beaches for decades. "Our association has existed for 18 years and in that time we have found pieces of Garfield telephones almost each time we clean," said Claire Simonin, head of the beach cleaning group Ar Viltansou in Brittany.

But it wasn't until a local resident revealed that he had discovered the container after a storm in the 1980s that they were finally able to locate it-wedged in a partially submerged cave only accessible at low tide. "He told us where it was... it was very, very dangerous," Simonin told AFP after an expedition to track it down. "We found this incredible fissure that is 30 metres (100 feet) deep and at the very bottom, there were the remains of a container." "Under the boulders in front of the entrance, we found 23 complete handsets with electronics and wires. They were everywhere," she added.

But the mystery, first reported by the France Info public broadcaster, is not fully solved. "We have no idea what happened at the time: we do not know where it came from, what boat," said Fabien Boileau, director of the Iroise Marine Nature Park in Finistere. "And we don't know if several containers fell into the water, or only one." The dry-witted Garfield, first dreamed up by illustrator Jim Davis in the late 1970s, has since spawned a television show, a film series starring Bill Murray as the voice of the

titular cat, and a merchandising empire worth hundreds of millions of dollars annually.

Pollution problems

The "Garfield" phone discoveries in France however highlight the problem of plastic in the oceans, campaigners say. "Seeing these plastic phones on the beaches, especially so long after the incident, is a stark reminder of the persistence of plastic waste in the ocean," Jo Ruxton, co-founder of Plastic Oceans Foundation, told AFP. "Plastic was designed not to break down and large items like these being hardly weathered after 30-40 years is a clear indication of this," she added.

The world currently produces more than 300 million tons of plastics annually, and there are at least five trillion plastic pieces floating in our oceans, scientists have estimated. Some forecasts predict that there will be more plastic in the seas than fish by 2050. But lost shipping containers-of which there were 1,390 in 2017, according to the World Shipping Council-account for a small proportion of the pollution compared with the packaging industry.

"Phones typically don't end up in the sea," said Jocelyn Bleriot of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation, a British charity that focuses on reducing waste. "Whereas plastic packaging is pervasive. You find it pretty much everywhere. On every beach, you'll find a bottle of shampoo, you'll find a packet of crisps, or you'll find a bottle of soda or whatever. That's what you see on beaches. That's what washes up." Even animals living in the deepest ocean trenches have been found with fragments of plastic in their gut, according to new research published in February showing how the scourge reached into the bowels of the planet.



FRANCE: Spare parts of plastic 'Garfield' phones are displayed on the beach in Plouarzel, western France, after being collected from a sea cave by environmental activists.— AFP

Eventually plastics like the phones "become so weathered that they start to become brittle and break up into ever smaller fragments, attracting harmful chemicals during the process," Ruxton explained. "Eventually they become so small that they are mistaken for plankton and are eaten by marine animals and become part of the food chain that

leads to us." The longterm impact of plastic on humans is still undetermined, but governments are beginning to take action to stem the levels of plastic that reach the ocean. The European Parliament this week approved a proposal that would ban the top 10 most common single-use plastic products in Europe by 2021. — AFP

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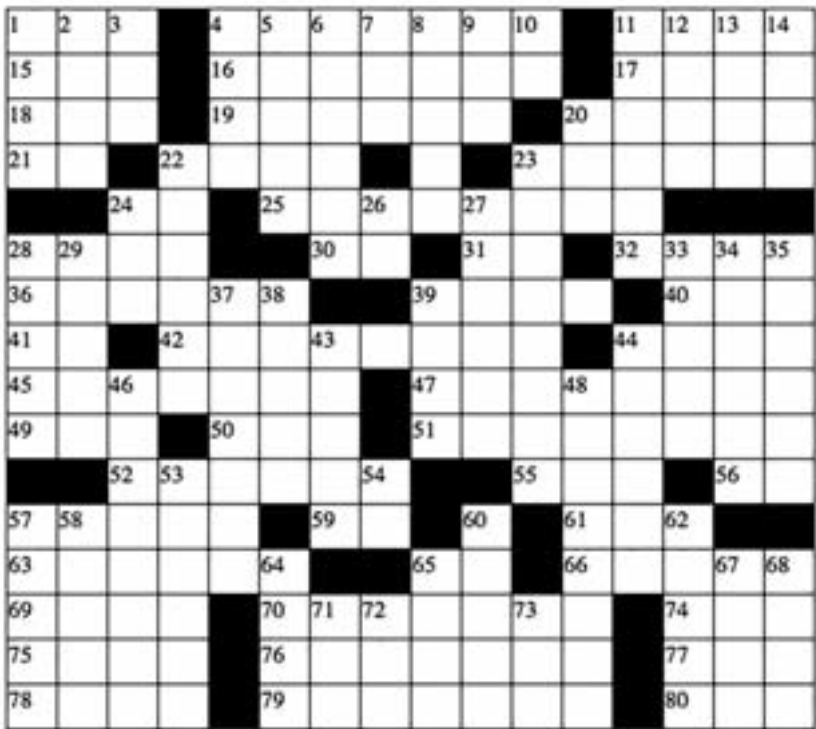
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ACROSS

1. Take in solid food.
4. A metal urn with a spigot at the base.
11. A contagious skin infection caused by the itch mite.
15. Psychoactive substance present in marijuana.
16. A crystalline amino acid that occurs in many proteins.
17. The basic unit of money in Botswana.
18. A period of time spent sleeping.
19. A gay feeling.
21. The blood group whose red cells carry both the A and B antigens.
25. Casserole of eggplant and ground lamb with onion and tomatoes bound with white sauce and beaten eggs.
28. A mark left by the healing of injured tissue.
30. A state in northwestern North America.
31. An ancient city of Sumer located on a former channel of the Euphrates River.
32. An informal conversation.
36. One of two flaps attached to a cap to keep the ears warm.
40. (Irish) Mother of the ancient Irish gods.
41. 16 ounces.
42. Periodic maintenance on a car or machine.
45. A Powhatan Indian woman (the daughter of Powhatan) who befriended the English at Jamestown and is said to have saved Captain John Smith's life (1595-1617).
47. Often cultivated for the decorative foliage.
49. American prizefighter who won the world heavyweight championship three times (born in 1942).
50. A Chadic language spoken in northern Nigeria.
51. Not normal.
52. To or from every one of two or more (considered individually).
55. Any of several small ungulate mammals of Africa and Asia with rodent-like incisors and feet with hooflike toes.
56. A toxic nonmetallic element related to sulfur and tellurium.
57. English theoretical physicist who applied relativity theory to quantum mechanics and predicted the existence of antimatter and the positron (1902-1984).
59. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
61. A boy or man.
63. Spider monkeys.
66. Bottle that has a narrow neck.
69. Great in vertical dimension.
70. South American palm yielding a wax similar to carnauba wax.
74. Aircraft landing in bad weather in which the pilot is talked down by ground control using precision approach radar.
75. (Norse mythology) Goddess of old age who defeated Thor in a wrestling match.
76. Resembling or characteristic of or appropriate to an elegy.
77. A barrier constructed to contain the flow or water or to keep out the sea.
78. Two items of the same kind.
79. Capable of being tamed.
80. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.

DOWN

1. An inactive volcano in Sicily.
2. According to the Old Testament he was a pagan king of Israel and husband of Jezebel (9th century BC).
3. A protocol developed for the internet to get data from one network device to another.
4. An narrative telling the adventures of a hero or a family.
5. Fear resulting from the awareness of danger.
6. South American plant cultivated for its large fragrant trumpet-shaped flowers.
7. Used of a single unit or thing.
8. The type genus of the family Vitaceae.
9. One or some or every or all without specification.
10. A rare heavy polyvalent metallic element that resembles manganese chemically and is used in some alloys.
11. A medicinal drug used to evoke vomiting (especially in cases of drug overdose or poisoning).
12. The lowest brass wind instrument.
13. Wearing or provided with clothing.
14. Swift timid long-eared mammal larger than a rabbit having a divided upper lip and long hind legs.
20. East Indian tree bearing a profusion of intense vermilion velvet-textured blooms and yielding a yellow dye.
22. Thick stew made of rice and chicken and small game.
23. A rural area where farming is practiced.
24. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
26. A monarchy in northwestern Europe occupying most of the British Isles.
27. A residential district located on the outskirts of a city.
29. A clique that seeks power usually through intrigue.
33. Living quarters reserved for wives and concubines and female relatives in a Muslim household.
34. A genus of tropical American plants have sword-shaped leaves and a fleshy compound fruits composed of the fruits of several flowers (such as pineapples).
35. (Mexican) Corn and corneal dough stuffed with a meat mixture then wrapped in corn husks and steamed.
37. Reprehensible acquisitiveness.
38. A superior grade of black tea.
39. An informal term for a father.
43. Farm consisting of a large tract of land along with facilities needed to raise livestock (especially cattle).
44. Of or relating to or near the tarsus of the foot.
46. Small genus of North American herbs having mostly basal leaves and slender racemes of delicate white flowers.
48. The part of a coal seam that is being cul.
53. Abnormally deficient in color as suggesting physical or emotional distress.
54. (Akkadian) God of wisdom.
58. A republic in southern Europe on the Italian Peninsula.
60. (Sumerian and Babylonian) A solar deity.
62. (Irish) Chief god of the Tuatha De Danann.
64. The universal time coordinated time on board the spacecraft.
65. Mentally or physically infirm with age.
67. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
68. God of love and erotic desire.
71. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.
72. A recurring sleep state during which dreaming occurs.
73. A metric unit of volume or capacity equal to 10 liters.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You've got a way with words and expressing your emotional needs as well now. You work to get your life in order. That means making every part of your life orderly now too starting with home. Love means a lot right now. You're still debating the merits and policies of your love life and have been for days now. "Love the one you're with," isn't necessarily the song you're singing. You take your time deciding what and how you want the rest of your life to go, first making the decisions and then taking the time to implement those plans. You have a need to be respected right now, Aries. You can't seem to do enough.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Though you're in the mode of material and emotional adjustment for your life now and in the future, you're also aware that even through the hard times you've got a great life. You are creating what you need both money and love. You won't take less than you crave. With that in mind you march on through life at work and home with the enthusiasm you know is needed to achieve your desires. You don't mind doing the hard things it takes to make it, such as administering people and organizing work affairs to make it the best it can be. You're coming to terms with your life now, Taurus. When you do, you'll receive the accolades and the love you so richly deserve.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

You're right where you need to be, in the heart of family, friends and your lover. Children and those close to you mean the most to you today. It's a preview of things to come in your relationship, you hope. Your emotions are high and you find yourself thinking about the meaning of your life. Others look at you with respect and admiration. From the group you're with, you find this more than endearing. Today, you're able to communicate your loving feelings with all who are present. You arranged the group that way. This is all about you and the person you think is the love of your life. Enjoy.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

New solutions for old problems are your forte now. Thinking about how to solve those issues give you comfort today. A friend understands how you've been feeling and comes to your side. That's the only person you wish to be around you now. You know that friend is sincere. You also know, Cancer, that you don't believe as many of your friends and family do now. You've grown up so to speak. You're moving on mentally and emotionally or so you think. Everything that goes around comes around. History repeats itself until we learn lessons needed and go on to new. Your life is about to get much better.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

While you know you're appreciated by all that know you, one person may not agree with you on a quality you have. He or she may call you on the carpet for your belief. Another understands your thoughts and even agrees with you. The thought for your day is not to allow another to upset your appeacart. Let them have their convictions just as you do, Leo. You don't have to agree with them either but that old saying about two people fighting leaving others to wonder which one is stupid is at play here. That is, if you allow a fight to ensue. In that case it means you give your control to another. That's not like you.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You're not good at being patient on anything now. Waiting for an answer to a new job invitation could make you just a bit anisy. You seek out intelligent, open individuals with which to converse today. Virgo, you can't seem to sit still and you don't want to work around the house. People are what you want to be in the middle of, hearing their ideas and opening up to new ways of doing old familiar things. This is really a good day but you're unsure of that for most of it. Emotional energy drives you and will help put you in front of others who see your abilities and may be able to assist you.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Animals 4 - Word Search

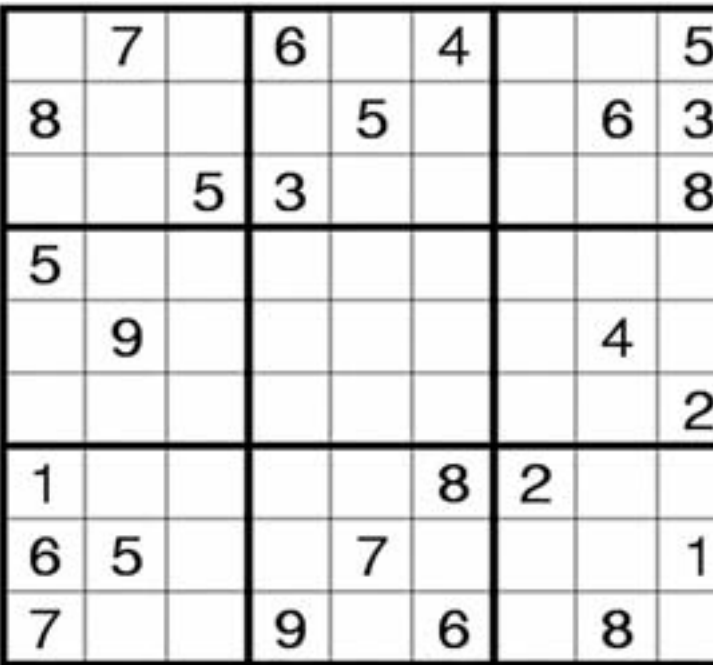


BOBCAT
CHICKEN
DEER
ELEPHANT
FROG
GIRAFFE
GORILLA
HORSE

KANGAROO
LEMMING
LYNX
MOCKINGBIRD
MOUSE
ORANGUTAN
PANTHER
PENGUIN

RHINOCEROS
SHEEP
WALLABY
WEASEL
YAK

Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution

Animals 3 - Solution

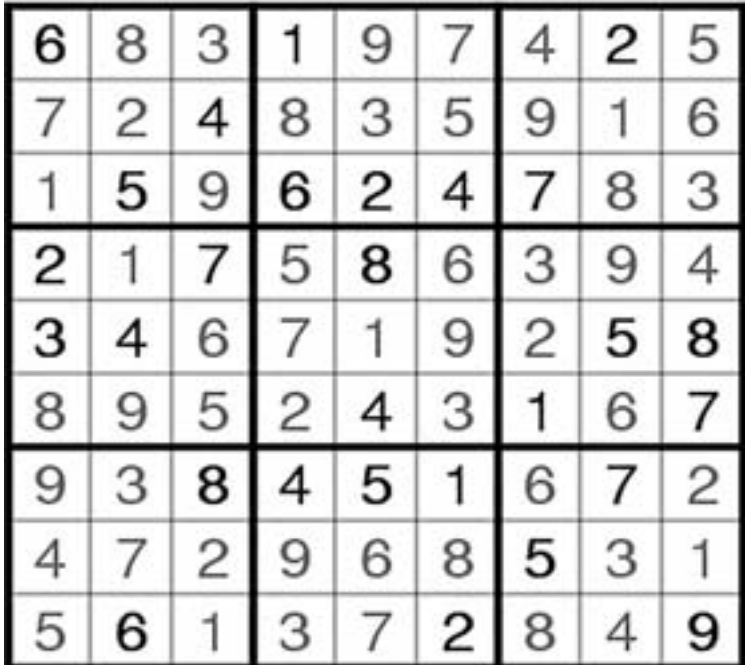


ANTELOPE
BAT
BEAVER
BUFFALO
COYOTE
CRANE
DOLPHIN
DUCK

GAZELLE
GOOSE
HUMMINGBIRD
JAGUAR
LAMPREY
MONKEY
ORCA
PARAKEET

PUMA
RATTLESNAKE
TURTLE
WALRUS
WHALE

Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

SUNDAY, MARCH 31, 2019

In this file photo taken on May 24, 2015 French director Agnes Varda poses on stage with her honorary Palme d'Or during the closing ceremony of the 68th Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southeastern France. — AFP



French film pioneer **Agnes Varda** dead at 90

French film legend Agnes Varda, the only woman director to emerge from the so-called New Wave scene in the 1960s, has died aged 90 after a battle with cancer, her family said Friday. With her two-tone bowl haircut, Varda was seen as the arty, eccentric “grandmother” of French cinema and tributes poured in for the highly-political artist revered for her originality. Varda died overnight at home “of complications from cancer. She was surrounded by her family and friends,” the family said in a statement.

Varda worked right up to the end of her life, with a new autobiographical documentary premiering at the Berlin film festival just last month. She was still giving media interviews last weekend at an exhibition of her art-works. “She was so far ahead of everyone else; she was the first to make films that influenced the New Wave”—a form of European art cinema, French director Claude Lelouch told AFP. “She always chose the right battles.” Madonna tweeted a picture of herself with Varda in Paris in December 2015, Varda’s head resting on the singer’s shoulder.

“Farewell to one of my favorite filmmakers - Agnes Varda always a curious, creative, child-like spirit to the last moment. We will miss you!!” “Selma” director Ava DuVernay also tweeted a picture of herself with the French filmmaker. “Merci, Agnes. For your films. For your passion. For your light. It shines on,” she wrote. French President Emmanuel Macron hailed a “tremendous filmmaker, photographer and visual artist who will be terribly missed in the French creative scene.”

Last November, Varda won an honorary Oscar at age 89 for her documentary “Faces Places”, which saw her ditch her walking stick during the ceremony for an impromptu celebratory dance with Hollywood star Angelina Jolie. With her eyesight failing but imagination undimmed, Varda admits at one point during the film that “every new person I meet feels like my last one.” Her death came just before she was to inaugurate a show of her whimsical art installations at the Chaumont-sur-Loire castle in the central Loire valley of France on Saturday.

Husband and wife team

Varda and her late husband, director Jacques Demy, were one of the New Wave’s great double acts, with her pitching in on his masterpieces like “The Young Girls of Rochefort”, “The Umbrellas of Cherbourg” and “Bay of Angels”. She made her name in 1962 with her first feature “Cleo de 5 a 7” (Cleo from 5 to 7), about a hypochondriac singer who gets increasingly worried that she has cancer while she is waiting for test results from her doctor.

But it was in her documentaries and films that mixed real-life events with fiction that Varda weaved her very particular brand of gritty poetry. She won the Golden Lion at the Venice film festival and a host of other awards for her 1985 film “Vagabond”, which retraced the life of a homeless woman found frozen to death in a ditch. Her social conscience was also clear in the now classic documentary, “The Gleaners & I” (2000) — about people who comb the fields after the harvest for

leftover grain and fruit, and urban gleaners who make a living from junk.

It is on the BBC’s list of the best films made since the turn of the century. Varda never hid her interest in politics, making a series of documentaries in the United States and Cuba as both countries reeled from social and political revolutions, including “Black Panthers” (1968), “Hi Cubans!” (1971) and “Far From Vietnam” (1967). Born in Belgium in 1928 to a French mother and Greek father whose family had fled Turkey, Varda changed her first name from Arlette to Agnes when she turned 18 and began her career as a photographer.

Her work often crossed over between cinema and art and her own personal story, like her documentary “Uncle Yanco” (1967) about San Francisco hippie artist Jean Varda—a relative of hers. Some of her most poignant work focused on the three decades she spent with Demy until his untimely death in 1990 — “Jacquot de Nantes” (Jacky from Nantes), “The Beaches of Agnes” and “The World of Jacques Demy”. Varda often used her own life as the framework for her art, which brought her an honorary Palme d’Or at the Cannes film festival in 2015 — the first time a woman won the coveted award. “Her work and her life are infused with the spirit of freedom, the art of driving back boundaries, a fierce determination and a conviction that brooks no obstacles,” the Cannes festival said at the time.—AFP

George Clooney urges boycott of Brunei-owned hotels

American actor George Clooney has called for a boycott of nine Brunei-owned hotels over the sultanate’s imposition of the death penalty for gay sex and adultery. “Every single time we stay at or take meetings at or dine at any of these nine hotels, we are putting money directly into the pockets of men who choose to stone and whip to death their own citizens for being gay or accused of adultery,” Clooney wrote on the website Deadline Hollywood.

“I’ve learned over years of dealing with murderous regimes that you can’t shame them. But you can shame the banks, the financiers and the institutions that do business with them and choose to look the other way,” he added. Brunei is an absolute monarchy which has been ruled for 51 years by Sultan Hassanal Bolkiah. The former British protectorate on Borneo island is surrounded by Malaysia. It has long depended on abundant, but declining, crude reserves and was plunged into recession when global prices fell about five years ago.

The nine hotels mentioned by Clooney are located in the US, Britain, France and Italy. Brunei will implement the harsh new penal code—which also mandates amputation of a hand and foot for theft—starting next Wednesday. Homosexuality is already illegal in the sultanate, but it will now become a capital offence. The law only applies to Muslims.

The government did not respond to AFP’s request for comment but on Saturday the prime minister’s office issued a statement saying the country has always practiced “a dual legal system,” one based on Islamic Shariah law and another on Common Law. “In fully implementing the Shariah Penal Code Order (SPCO) 2013 from 3rd April 2019, both systems will continue to run in parallel to maintain peace and order and preserve religion, life, family and individuals regardless of gender, nationality, race and faith,” the statement said.

Brunei first announced the measures in 2013, but implementation has been delayed as officials worked out the practical details, and in the face of opposition by rights groups. In addition to his film-making work that has netted him two Oscars, Clooney is known for his globe-trotting political activism, especially his tireless campaigning to draw attention to the conflict in Sudan’s Darfur region.—AFP



In this file photo taken on February 13, 2019 French director Agnes Varda reacts on stage as she is awarded with the Berlinale Camera award at the 69th Berlinale film festival in Berlin.



This file photo taken on April 16, 1970 shows French director Agnes Varda. — AFP photos

Jada Pinkett Smith unfollows Kardashians on Instagram

Although the 47-year-old actress was a close friend of the reality TV family, she recently unfollowed matriarch Kris Jenner and her daughters Kim Kardashian West and Khloe Kardashian on the picture-sharing platform, due to the fallout from the Tristan Thompson cheating scandal, TMZ reports. Jada recently took Jordyn Woods' side after the model - who was best friends with Kris' daughter Kylie Jenner - was accused of hooking up with Tristan, the father of Khloe's baby True. Jordyn - whose late father was a good friend of Jada's husband Will Smith - appeared on Jada's 'Red Table Talk' to discuss the incident, during which she admitted Tristan kissed her, but insisted

she did not kiss him back. Jada is said to have "made it clear" that everyone should try to put the cheating incident behind them but the Kardashian family's new trailer for 'Keeping Up with the Kardashians' season 16 has shown that they are not ready to let it go. Jordyn was reportedly left devastated after the show's new trailer aired this week, as it shows Khloe breaking down in tears over the allegations. Speaking about the trailer, a source told Us Weekly magazine: "[Jordyn is] obviously mortified by the trailer, and her mom is upset about it too, but they expected it. It's still difficult to relive, and Jordyn is glad to be out of L.A. while everyone is talking about it. It's humiliating and she is still haunted by it. She's trying to look fabu-

lous on social media, but it's still a lot for any person to deal with." In the clip, Khloe can be seen crying as she opens up about the alleged affair - which caused the end of her relationship with Tristan - and says it has been tough working through such a difficult period in the public eye. She said: "It just sucks it has to be so public. I'm not just a TV show. "Like, this is my life... Tristan might love me, whatever that means. He has no respect for me whatsoever." Later in the trailer, Khloe - who shares 11-month-old daughter True with the NBA star - is seen screaming in the car while she's on the phone. She shouts: "My family is ruined."



Claire Holt gives birth to her first child

The 'Vampire Diaries' actress and her husband Andrew Joblon - who tied the knot in Beverly Hills, California, in August - welcomed son James Holt Joblon earlier this week. Andrew shared a picture of his wife and son on Instagram and wrote: "Claire - you are my hero. Thanks for doing such a good job cooking this sweet little boy. Baby James Joblon 3.28.19 - 10:23 pm." Claire also shared a picture of the tot and added the message: "James Holt Joblon. Everything they say is true. There is no love like it." Claire - who previously suffered a miscarriage - announced her pregnancy in October, two months after her wedding to Andrew. She wrote on Instagram: "My heart is bursting. I'm so happy to share with you that we are having a baby! It still doesn't feel real. These past few months have been filled with excitement, anxiety, tears, joy, uncertainty but most of all gratitude. You never forget the deep pain of loss. It dims with time but it informs many of your experiences. Our loss earlier this year was the darkest moment of my life. Yet, it made me infinitely more thankful for the precious baby growing inside me today. I want to take a moment to acknowledge all those struggling with miscarriage, infertility or any of the difficulties that come with bringing new life into the world. I know that these announcements can hurt. I've felt it all. My heart is with you and I pray that our story gives you hope. Thank you all so much for your love and support - I can't wait to share this journey with you."

Tom Holland's family keeps him grounded

The 22-year-old actor credits his parents and his brothers for keeping him humble despite his huge celebrity status. He said: "My parents and brothers are such cool people that they wouldn't really let my life change that much. I'll come home from a hard day's work and my mum will tell me to do the dishes, 'It's your turn.'" Tom rose to fame playing the titular role in 'Spider-Man: Homecoming' and it is a role he has wanted since he was a young boy. He added: "I've been playing Spider-Man in my bedroom since I was a kid. I grew up watching the films and I watched all the cartoons. I was kind of obsessed with him. When I walked on set for my first day it was my first day on the MCU (Marvel Cinematic Universe) but it was my thousandth time playing Spider-Man so I felt like I had it in the bag ... I feel like a lot of Superheroes are very abnormal people. Tony Stark is a billionaire, Captain America is a super soldier, Thor is a god and I just think that it's nice to have a kid." Tom likes how superhero movies help people to "forget" all the "horrible things" going on all over the world. He told Man About Town magazine: "There seem to be horrible things all over the world, and these films are a really nice way to forget about the world in which we're living, enter into this magical world, enjoy a bit of freedom and watch these people who we admire and who we look up to do good and ultimately save the day."



Angelina Jolie calls for eradication of sexual violence in warzones

The 'By The Sea' star made the impassioned speech as she attended the UN Defense Peacekeeping Ministerial in America on Friday. She said: "Around the world there are countless examples of women rising, taking leadership, taking their destiny into their own hands, inspiring all of us. But women and girls are still the majority of the victims of war. They are over half of all refugees, and the vast majority of the victims of rape and other sexual and gender-based violence. Women are at the absolute epicenter of modern conflict, in the worst possible sense. But more often than not they are still on the outside looking in when it comes to politics and decisions about their future. If we went by the principle that those affected by a problem should be in charge of determining the solu-

tion, then the majority of the world's peace negotiators, foreign ministers and diplomats would be women. We all know the reality." And the 43-year-old actress - who was appointed special envoy for the UN High Commissioner for Refugees in 2012 - believes equality for men and women will help make the world a more peaceful one. Speaking at the conference, she added: "Denying half a population representation in peace negotiations or in government is not the route to long-term stability. As long as we continue to put almost every other issue ahead of women's rights and participation, we will remain stuck in a cycle of violence and conflict. We will have learnt nothing. And our institutions will count for far less than they should."

James Arthur donates £1,000 to terminally ill fan

The 31-year-old musician was due to perform at a charity show for the Teenage Cancer Trust at London's Royal Albert Hall on Thursday night, but pulled out just hours before he was due on stage as he admitted he has been suffering from poor mental health. And after cancelling his performance, James made a £1,000 donation to a GoFundMe page set up for Jade Davis, on which she listed the 10 things she'd most like to do in her life, including meeting James. Jade, 23, suffers with Type 1 Chiari Malformation, which pushes the lower part of the brain into the spinal canal and means she cannot work, cook, or shower on her own. Following his donation, Jade took to Twitter to post a screenshot of her GoFundMe page showing his generosity, and wrote: "What an amazing man @JamesArthur23 (sic)" The 'Say You Won't Let Go' hitmaker had told his fans he was pulling out of the charity concert for the sake of his mental health, which he says has been "badly affecting" him for "days". On Twitter, he wrote: "I'm deeply sorry to announce that I'm going to have to pull out of the Teenage Cancer Trust performance tonight. "I have been feeling crippled by anxiety and poor mental health over the past few days and it's badly affecting me. I simply cannot perform tonight." James then apologized to the Teenage Cancer Trust for dropping out of the show, and declared he is "looking to get help" from a professional for his mental health.



Barbara Palvin is addicted to lip balm

The 25-year-old model - who was recently named Victoria's Secret's newest angel - is known for her flawless complexion and on off the catwalk, however, the star has revealed that her desert island beauty product is "lip balm", and every night she always makes sure her perfect pout is smothered in her go-to salve. In US Harper's Bazaar's 'Go To Bed With Me' series, she said: "I'm a lip balm addict so day and night I can also sleep in my lip balm. I put a lot on. My recent favorite one is the Giorgio Armani Neo Nude Ecstasy Balm [\$34]." The Hungarian-born beauty also insisted that when she is removing her make-up every night, she always makes sure to gently "wipe off" her mascara first because it prevents wrinkles. She added: "Before I would always rub my eye, and they [makeup artists] told me that it's actually not good. You have to be gentle even though it's faster when you rub it. You have to soak it a little bit and then wipe it off because it's much better for your eyes. Don't pull it too much because then you don't get wrinkles. "My mum told me not to pull my eyes so much because then I stretch the skin and since then I am very careful. Even if people are not watching. I promise. I always remove my makeup when I go to bed because if you're not wearing makeup your skin can breathe in the night and rest and you're going to have gorgeous skin."



Lupita Nyong'o's red carpet looks inspired by 'Patrick Bateman and a chainsaw'

The 36-year-old actress plays both the lead character and the main villain in Jordan Peele's much-anticipated horror movie, which follows the story of a family faced with their worst nightmare when they return to the mother's childhood home. And according to the star's stylist Micaela Erlanger, Lupita's press tour style was based on the 2000 hit film, 'American Psycho' and Christian Bale's serial killer character. Speaking to Vogue UK, she said: "We really wanted to have fun with this tour and capture the duality of the characters in the film. "It reminded me of the infamous [American Psycho] scene with Patrick Bateman and a chainsaw. But we made it fashion, of course!" Erlanger also insisted that the red carpet was an excuse to "take risks" with Lupita's fashion as it followed from the 'Black Panther' press tour. She added: "The red carpet doesn't need to be this precious thing. It's an opportunity to have fun, take risks, and express yourself. It was really fun to follow Black Panther with a tour for a horror film." Lupita's hairstylist Camille Friend previously admitted that the star's hair looks were created to be "modern" and "natural" for her two roles as Adelaide Wilson and her villainous doppelganger, Red. Speaking to the New York Post newspaper's Page Six column, Friend said: "Jordan is one of the best filmmakers of our time. He's really an awesome, awesome guy. I can't wait to do another film with him, but a lot of my dialogue for Lupita's look was really with her. "We came up with the sialerlock [hairstyle] because she wanted to do something that was natural, plus I love it because it's nothing that has been seen on camera before. "We're always trying to push the envelope and do things that are different, even within the natural [hair] genre. It represents her as a woman. It's really modern and what people are doing now."



(From left to right) Inductees Michael Dempsey, Pearl Thompson, Perry Bamonte, Boris Williams, Lol Tolhurst of The Cure pose in the press room during the 2019 Rock & Roll Hall Of Fame Induction Ceremony at Barclays Center in New York City.



Inductee Janet Jackson



Harry Styles and inductee Stevie Nicks — AFP photos

Janet Jackson, Radiohead, The Cure enter Rock Hall of Fame

Genre-bending acts Radiohead and The Cure led a British invasion into Brooklyn Friday night to take their spots in the Rock & Roll Hall of Fame, while pop icon Janet Jackson entered the shrine in an induction many industry insiders consider long overdue. American folk rock legend Stevie Nicks became the first woman inducted twice-having already earned a spot in the rock pantheon as a member of band Fleetwood Mac-during a gala concert at New York's Barclays Center in Brooklyn to celebrate the seven 2019 honorees.

Heavy metal group Def Leppard, pop experimentalists Roxy Music and English psychedelic rock harmonists The Zombies rounded out the five-strong class of British inductees. The inclusion of Jackson-whose socially conscious, sexually provocative and eminently danceable tracks made her a household name in the 1980s-comes as the Hall of Fame increasingly expands its definition of rock to include the likes of R&B.

She joins The Jackson 5 and her brother Michael in the Cleveland-based rock shrine, which has refused to remove the late pop king from its honored artist list despite pressure over a documentary reviving pedophilia accusations against him. Jackson declined to perform at the event, an unusual move some US reports owed to the fact that it would be broadcast on HBO, the network which aired the

documentary about her brother, "Surviving Neverland."

Citing Jackson's "legendary black girl magic," pop futurist Janelle Monae inducted the 52-year-old superstar who spearheaded the creation of New Jack Swing. Her synth-driven sound came to define the cutting edge of New York's club scene in the late 1980s. Jackson steered clear of Michael discussions but noted her family's "extraordinary impact on popular culture," saying that as the youngest she "was determined to make it on my own." "Tonight your baby sister has made it," she said, telling the Hall: "2020, induct more women!"

British sensation Harry Styles inducted Stevie Nicks-whose poetic vocals and bewitching stage presence have made her an intergenerational rock legend. She opened the show with a performance of "Stand Back," wearing her original shawl from the video and twirling to show off its shimmering gold fringe. Speaking to journalists backstage, Nicks, 70, voiced hope that as the first woman twice inducted she was "opening up the door for other women, to go like, 'Hey man, I can do it.'"

Play some music

Radiohead frontman Thom Yorke skipped the ceremony, saying he was busy preparing a classical piece to debut at the Paris Philharmonic. The lyricist of the vision-

ary art rock band recently told Variety the group was "blase" about such honors, and like Jackson, Radiohead opted not to perform. Radiohead soared to fame in the 1990s thanks to their haunting power ballad "Creep," going on to enjoy a cocktail of international commercial success, critical love and adoration from indie purists.

Members Ed O'Brien and Phil Selway accepted the award on behalf of the atmospheric group chosen in their second year of eligibility. Acts can be inducted 25 years after their first commercial music release. The Cure-known for enduring New Wave hits including "Lovesong"-has had a number of lineup swaps over its more than 40 years in the business, but always included frontman Robert Smith. The 59-year-old known for his wailing voice and deathly complexion appeared with his signature shock of black hair and raccoon eyeliner.

Smith ran through a laundry list of thanks before picking up his guitar for the band's performance. "I'd rather use the allocated time to play some music," he said, later telling journalists he's "not quite sure about the whole thing." "At the same time, there are people in it who are my heroes," he said. "It would be really, really wrong of me to be anything other than delighted." "How's that? I'm gonna run for office," he said, a smile cracking through his messy red lipstick.

Magical moment

English rockers Def Leppard-who formed 42 years ago and kicked off the 1980s metal era-said it owed the award to its fans, who packed stadiums for guitar anthems like "Pour Some Sugar on Me." Lead Singer Joe Elliott told journalists the band was "soaking up" the honor but said "tomorrow morning, we have other mountains to climb." Another British act, Roxy Music-formed in 1970 in glam rock's heyday, providing a model for the 1980s New Wave scene-saw Bryan Ferry reunite with the group.

Former member and ambient pioneer Brian Eno, however, snubbed the event due to "other commitments." English rockers The Zombies-the 1960s group known for lush harmonies and intricate arrangements on hits like "Time of The Season"-were all smiles for the gala, perhaps a preview of their performance at a festival this summer to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Woodstock. "We play with the same passion now that we did when we were 18 years old," said keyboardist Rod Argent.—AFP



(From left to right) Inductees Reeves Gabrels, Simon Gallup, Robert Smith, Roger O'Donnell and Jason Cooper of The Cure.



(From left to right) Inductees Joe Elliott, Phil Collen, Rick Allen, Rick Savage and Vivian Campbell of Def Leppard.



Inductees Rod Argent, Chris White, Hugh Grundy, and Colin Blunstone of The Zombies.

Beyonce and Jay-Z

dedicate GLAAD award to family members

Music superstars Beyonce and Jay-Z were honored by advocacy group GLAAD as allies of gay and transgender people and the couple dedicated the award to gay family members. At the GLAAD Media Awards in Los Angeles on Thursday, the couple received the Vanguard Award for their work "accelerating LGBTQ acceptance." Beyonce has spoken out against laws that discriminate against gay

and transgender people and has included them in her videos, the group said.

Beyonce dedicated the honor to an uncle who she said helped raise her and her sister and was "the most fabulous gay man I've ever known." "Witnessing his battle with HIV was one of the most painful experiences that I've ever lived," Beyonce said. "I'm hopeful his struggle opened pathways for young people to live

more freely." Standing next to Beyonce on stage, Jay-Z praised his mother, Gloria Carter. The singer's 2017 song "Smile" revealed that his mother was a lesbian. "I get to follow in her footsteps of spreading love and acceptance," he said. —Reuters

'Afghan Star' TV show winner to fight Taleban with music

The first woman to win the Afghan version of American Idol says she will fight the Taleban with her music, embracing a victory rich in symbolism as her country faces an uncertain future. Zahra Elham won the 14th edition of Afghan Star last week, after male contestants took the prize in the hugely popular televised singing competition 13 years in a row. Elham, from Afghanistan's ethnic Hazara minority, enchanted audiences with her high-pitched, raspy voice, performing Hazara and Persian folk music in traditional loose, colourful Afghan dresses and heels.



In this photo, Afghan singer Zahra Elham, who won the final of the television music competition Afghan Star, looks on during her interview in Kabul. — AFP

The result made international headlines at a time when many women in the deeply patriarchal country fear their hard-won rights may come under threat as Washington, seeking a way out of the war, holds talks with the Taleban. Elham, who spoke to AFP in an interview at private television channel Tolo, which produces Afghan Star, appeared taken aback by her new fame more than a week on-but determined to use it to inspire other girls.

"I was very proud of myself but at the same time shocked to be the first woman to win the contest," the young woman in her early 20s said, her hair elegantly covered with an olive green scarf, visibly still uncomfortable with a camera. No one sings in her family, she said. She was inspired to compete after watching YouTube videos of idols such as Aryana Sayeed, an Afghan pop singer and social media star often likened to Kim Kardashian-a characterisation that in conservative Afghanistan is a bold, deeply political one.

When asked if she, like Sayeed, is now a role model for Afghanistan's young women, Elham's response underscored the importance of her new platform in a country where women are largely absent from public spaces. "Yes, my voice is important for the women of Afghanistan," she replied bluntly. "Other girls will get courage and sing, like I have been following Aryana Sayeed ... when I saw a girl like Aryana Sayeed I thought to myself, 'If she can, so can I. She has two hands and two legs, as do I.'" —AFP

Music, motorbikes mark UK funeral of Prodigy frontman Keith Flint

Dance music played out for the hundreds of fans who flocked to the town of Braintree in eastern England on Friday for the funeral of Keith Flint, former frontman of the Prodigy. Face painting and free tattoos were on offer to those who had come to pay their respects to the "Firestarter" star. Flint, a figurehead of the 1990s rave movement, was found dead at his home

earlier this month aged 49. An inquest which opened this month confirmed he had died as the result of hanging. It has been adjourned until July 23 for a full hearing.

Renowned for his facial piercings, heavy makeup and eccentric devil-horned hair cut, Flint played a major role in establishing the credibility of dance and electronic music. The funeral procession followed a 2-1/2-mile path to St Mary's Church and while the church service itself was reserved for friends and family, Flint's bandmates had invited fans to line the route to "raise the roof for Keef!" Steve Hales was among those who heeded the call.

With dark makeup and a single strip of green hair reminiscent of Flint's style, Hales said the amount of support for him was hardly surprising. "His was music for generations," he began, before being drowned out by motorbikes roaring up and down the streets. The horse-drawn hearse was decorated by vibrant orange flowers spelling "Keef" and "Chief", while his infamous fluorescent green microphone and an elegant arrangement of white and red roses adorned the coffin.



Fans gather for British singer Keith Flint of techno group The Prodigy funeral in Braintree, Essex, Britain. — Reuters photos



A coffin of British singer Keith Flint of techno group The Prodigy is carried during his funeral in Braintree, Essex, Britain.



People play chess at the Munuki Chess Club in Juba, South Sudan. — AFP photos

Chess, the war game building bridges in South Sudan

The scorching sun is finally beginning to dip on a late Saturday afternoon in Juba, where a small group gathers to watch a tense battle between two of their best men. Deng Costa, a wiry, soft-spoken 28-year-old, stares at the chessboard in angst as smooth-talking Angelo Legge, 36, with a faux gold watch and mischievous glint in his eye, counters his Sicilian Defense at every move. Next to the small courtyard where they are facing off, a deafening roar from young men crammed into a wooden structure watching a Premier League football match briefly breaks their concentration.

But this is not enough to help Costa. Legge—who says some call him “Angelo the Great”—traps him in checkmate. Costa walks off in a huff. Nevertheless, after more than five years of war, pitting different ethnic groups in the fledgling nation against one other, the Munuki Chess Club is a haven of peaceful coexistence.

‘In chess, I find solutions’

It is a typical weekend at the chess club, one of several in war-torn South Sudan, where a growing enthusiasm for the game saw the nation last year secure its first ever gold medal in an international competition since gaining independence in 2011. Legge was introduced to club chess during his civil engineering studies in Khartoum during the south’s war for independence from Sudan. In South Sudan’s first ever chess tournament in 2014, he came third.

For the young man struggling to forge a life in a country where war has left millions like him in limbo, chess is a panacea. “When I feel traumatized about my plans as an engineer... I go to chess, I find solutions,” he said. “It’s a matter of passing time but also to refresh my mind and give me the vision of what will be my next move in life.”

‘Brotherhood’

“As you can see, most of the different ethnicities, different tribes, are here playing chess, we become a brotherhood and we establish respect between ourselves,” Legge said.

His opponent Costa, who learned to play as a teenager, is a student of Applied Sciences at the University of Juba and dreams of making it to the Chess Olympiad one day. “Chess brings people together and that is why I love it. If things go well, chess will be... the second most popular game in South Sudan after football.”

South Sudan’s chess association was co-founded by Jada Albert Modi in 2009, two years before independence. It became a fully-fledged member of the World Chess Federation (FIDE) in 2016 in Baku, Azerbaijan, which hosted the first Olympiad attended by the country’s players. “It was quite a shock to some of our players, it was the first time some of them were travelling out of the country,” Modi said.

The South Sudanese came second in their group, but two years later they came first, beating 45 other countries. “That was the first gold medal for South Sudan in any sport,” said Modi. FIDE ranks South Sudan 126th out of 185 countries. The top-ranking African nation is Egypt at number 47.

Chess between battles

Modi says that the popularity of the game is hard to pinpoint. “During the liberation struggle, when officers and soldiers were not fighting, they would be playing chess, a lot of our senior government officials do play chess,” Modi is proud of the cohesion among chess players at the Munuki club, named after a district in Juba, which also sees doctors or ambassadors playing against students. “There is really great diversity... This unity was shown when we had the conflict

in 2013, we looked after each other here. In 2016, the same—it didn’t create rifts,” he said of the two major battles in Juba.

“I think sports really brings people together... and South Sudan really needs people to know each other. Not through the tribal lens or ethnic lens, but through capacities, capabilities, hobbies and mutual interests,” Modi added. The chess association president dreams of a day when South Sudan has a dedicated space-free of rowdy football fans to play chess in peace and quiet, and programmes introducing the game in schools, especially to girls.

And, who knows, he adds, maybe it will also have a “number of grandmasters”—the highest title a chess player can attain. “The challenge we face is in order to rise up in the ranks, you need to have your players playing competitively... and financially most of our players cannot afford it,” Modi said.

Longing for stability

Juba was rocked by violent bloodshed when war broke out between supporters of President Salva Kiir and his former vice-president Riek Machar in December 2013, and again in July 2016 when a peace deal collapsed. The last agreement to end the war was signed in September 2018, and fighting has largely stopped in much of the country, with residents of Juba remarking on the absence of evening gunfire. For young people like Legge, peace makes a stable future a real possibility. “We need our leaders to stick to the agreement to bring peace because we, as a generation—I, as an engineer—want to participate. “I want to have the role of putting something on the ground.”—AFP



National tourist boards host networking-event in Dubai ahead of ATM

Demonstrating their commitment to the Gulf region, the European national tourist boards of Germany, Switzerland, Austria and France are hosting an exclusive networking-event in Dubai in April ahead of the Middle East’s leading tourism fair Arabian Travel Market (ATM) to raise awareness ahead of the busy summer season.

In a combined effort, Atout France’s travel trade workshop ‘Marhaba’ will kick off their two-day event on April 24, 2019, while the national tourist boards of Germany, Switzerland and Austria will take over on April 26, 2019, and host the ‘Heart of Europe Travel Summit’ in the beautiful settings of the Sofitel, The Palm, Dubai.

More than 40 tourism suppliers from France and 80 from Germany, Switzerland and Austria - ranging from local tourist boards, hotels, destination management companies, airports, shopping facilities, transport companies as well as medical clinics - are looking forward to developing the knowledge on the destinations and provide travel trade from the GCC with the opportunity to source products to enhance their holiday offerings for the summer season and beyond. The four tourism boards expect the attendance of over 100 buyers from the GCC region.

Highlighting the importance of the travel trade industry in the Gulf region, Sigrid de Mazieres, Director for the Gulf countries at the German National Tourist Office (GNTO), an affiliate of the German National Tourist Board, said: “We are excited to collaborate with our European neighboring countries, and to facilitate business relations between our touristic partners and the local travel trade through this new innovative platform”.

Commenting on this exclusive networking-event, Robert Groblacher, Director Middle East and South East Asia, Austrian National Tourist Office said: “Our four countries are amongst the most visited and most popular premium destinations by travellers from the GCC in Europe. We are very proud to join forces and thus provide a perfect networking opportunity for the top touristic players from our countries and the GCC region”

The travel trade workshops will include pre-scheduled B2B appointments, cutting-edge presentations and exten-

sive social programmes to experience the destinations’ hospitality and networking opportunities with participating decision makers. “Switzerland Tourism is happy to welcome the most successful GCC tour operators and travel agents on the Heart of Europe Travel Summit. The Summit is a fantastic opportunity to showcase the beauty of Switzerland and its neighbors to the GCC travel trade. The event enables dedicated buyers and suppliers to meet in a very convenient way and nice setting in Sofitel the Palm, Dubai and its straightforward approach will guarantee a great return on investment”, commented Matthias Albrecht, Director GCC, Switzerland Tourism.

For travel trade interested in selling the respective European countries, the event is the perfect opportunity to strengthen ties and discover the latest product offerings from Germany, Switzerland, Austria and France. By working together and investing in this workshop, the tourist boards showcase their support of the GCC travel trade, and reflect the value of the industry for their tourism business.

“We believe that one of many challenges facing the travel trade industry today is to keep abreast of the growing and changing needs of travelers from the region. This joint and unprecedented event is a direct response to assist the travel trade in selling our countries,” explains Karim Mekachera, Regional Director of Atout France Middle East.

The GCC is one of the Top 15 source markets for Germany and Austria and the third largest non-European source market, after China and USA. For Switzerland, the GCC market is the 5th biggest foreign market and the 1st market in daily expenditure spending with approx. - 450 CHF daily per person. MENA (North Africa, Levant and The Gulf Countries region) represents 2.5 million visitors in France from which 60 percent are GCC’s travellers in 2018.

In addition, the tourist boards of Germany, Switzerland and Austria will be participating with dedicated stands at the trade fair ATM to further boost tourism growth from the Gulf region.

After Putin in bullets, artist paints Ukraine president in sweet wrappers

A Ukrainian artist who made headlines with a giant portrait of Russia’s Vladimir Putin in bullet shells has now taken aim at her own President Petro Poroshenko—using wrappers from around 20 kilograms of sweets to craft his image. Poroshenko, who amassed a vast fortune in the chocolate business and came to power after a 2014 popular uprising forced his predecessor from office, is facing an uphill re-election battle this weekend.

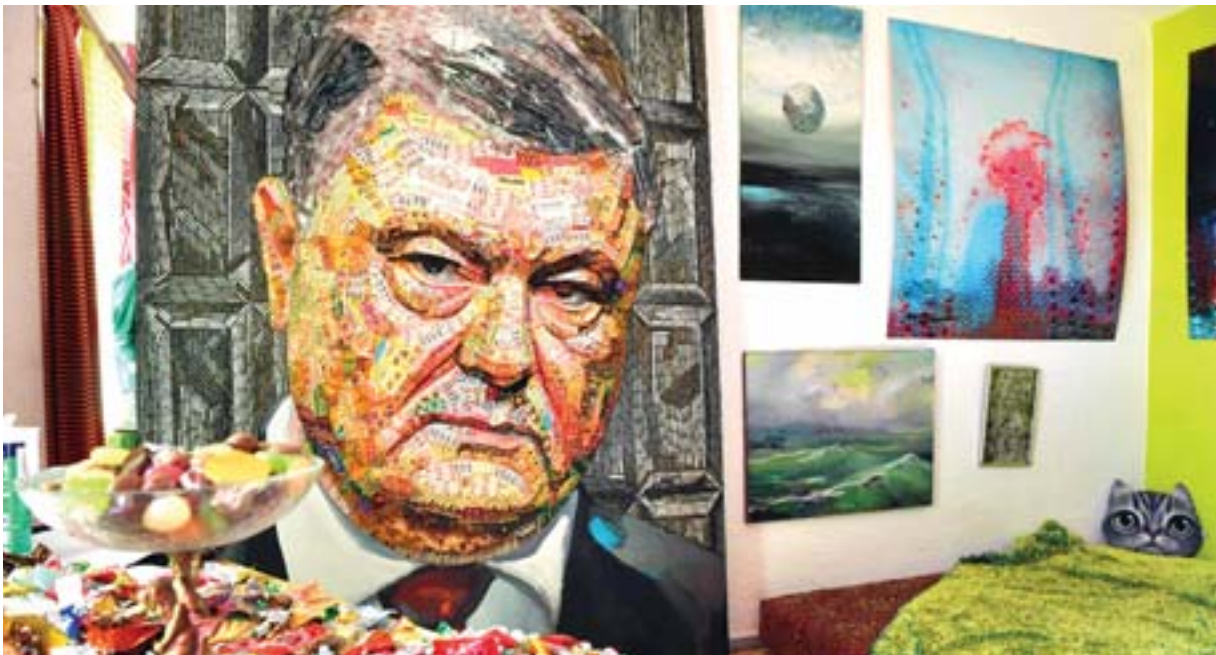
“There’s a feeling that they offered us a sweet but they didn’t give it to us,” said artist Daria Marchenko of the unrealised hopes of the revolution, five years on. “So what do we have? We have an empty wrapper—the remnants,” the 37-year-old said, gesturing at the large-scale artwork she has named “The Face of Corruption”. Poroshenko’s glowering image, formed from the multicoloured wrappers of his Roshen brand of confectionery and framed with bullet shells collected from the separatist conflict in Ukraine’s east, covers half a wall of Marchenko’s Kiev flat.

“It’s also a symbol of business... business is our president’s priority.” Poroshenko came to power promising to

tackle graft and shut down the conflict with Russian-backed rebels in the east. Despite some reforms, after his first term corruption is still endemic and the ongoing conflict has cost some 13,000 lives. Marchenko, along with co-creator Daniel Green, took part in the protests that forced pro-Russian Viktor Yanukovich out of office.

But she says that, after they created a portrait of Putin made up of more than 5,000 bullet shells in 2015 as a comment on his role in the Ukraine conflict, the pair received threats and decided to leave the country. Working in the US, they attracted attention with another large-scale work—this time of President Donald Trump, made from coins and poker chips. Marchenko says she decided to return to Ukraine this year but Green remains abroad.

On Sunday, Ukrainians will vote in the first round of an unpredictable election that polls suggest may see Poroshenko booted from office. Comedian Volodymyr Zelensky, whose sole political experience is playing the president in a popular TV show, is well ahead of his rivals, according to surveys. But analysts say his largely young support base may not turn out to vote. Marchenko, who says she will take part, is keeping her options surprisingly open. “I can’t say that I haven’t considered Poroshenko. That’s the situation we’re in the country—we’re choosing from a number of evils.”—AFP



Ukrainian artist Daria Marchenko creates a large-scale artwork entitled ‘The Face of Corruption’ depicting the President Petro Poroshenko made with sweet wrappers in her workshop in Kiev ahead of the presidential elections. — AFP photos

Classifieds

Sunday, March 31, 2019

STATE OF KUWAIT
DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT



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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY DAY: Partly cloudy to cloudy with moderate to fresh south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 50 km/h causing rising dust over open areas with a chance for rain that might be thundery.

BY NIGHT: Cool and Partly cloudy to cloudy with light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 20 - 55 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WATCH	Freis Wind + Thunder Rain		
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 30/03/2019 0000 UTC
KUWAIT CITY	25 °C	21 °C	
KUWAIT AIRPORT	25 °C	16 °C	
ABDALY	27 °C	16 °C	
BUBYAN	-- °C	-- °C	
JAHRA	29 °C	18 °C	
FAILAKA ISLAND	24 °C	17 °C	
SALMIYAH	24 °C	20 °C	
AHMADI	23 °C	20 °C	
NU'WAISIB	25 °C	16 °C	
WAFRA	28 °C	16 °C	
SALMY	28 °C	17 °C	

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
Sunday	03/31	Unstable and rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	26 °C	18 °C	SE	20 - 55 km/h
Monday	04/01	Dusty	26 °C	19 °C	SW-NW	25 - 60 km/h
Tuesday	04/02	Warm and Hazy and some scattered clouds will appear	27 °C	15 °C	VRB-NE	06 - 28 km/h
Wednesday	04/03	Warm and some scattered clouds will appear	27 °C	14 °C	NE-SE	12 - 35 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	04:21
Sunrise	05:41
Zuhr	11:53
Asr	15:23
Sunset	18:05
Isha	19:23

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	26 °C
MIN. Temp.	14 °C
MAX. RH	88 %
MIN. RH	22 %
MAX. Wind	E 32 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

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CHANGE OF NAME

I, Priyanka Elizabeth Babu (given name) holder of Indian Passport L4904943 do hereby change my name to Priyanka Elizabeth (given name) Babu (surname) for all purposes. I also undertake to effect the change in all my other public documents. (C 5507)

I, Noble John holder of Indian Passport No: J5545465 issued at Kuwait on 19/05/2011. Hereby declare that, my given name is Noble and surname is John. (C 5509)

I, Asha Abraham holder of Indian Passport No: J6456943, issued at Kuwait on 27/07/2011. Hereby declare that, my given name is Asha and surname is Abraham. (C 5509)

I, Anabel Noble John holder

of Indian Passport No: S9733164, issued at Kuwait on 11/09/2018. Hereby declare that, my given name is Anabel Noble and surname is John. (C 5509) 31-3-2019

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DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Sunday 31/3/2019							Departure Flights on Sunday 31/3/2019									
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time				Airlines	Flt	Route	Time						
JZR	254	Amman	00:05	KAC	774	Jeddah	AIC	988	Hyderabad/Chennai	00:05	JZR	213	Jeddah			
KAC	504	Beirut	00:45	KAC	672	Dubai	MSR	2615	Cairo	00:30	QTR	1075	Doha			
THY	772	Istanbul	00:50	QTR	1078	Doha	TQQ	231	KRT	00:30	MSR	611	Cairo			
KAC	102	London	00:50	GFA	221	Bahrain	FDB	072	Dubai	00:40	JZR	123	Dubai			
JZR	734	Cairo	00:50	FDB	059	Dubai	BBC	044	Dhaka	00:45	JZR	115	Doha			
JZR	724	Alexandria	00:55	KAC	364	Colombo	JZR	721D	Alexandria	00:55	SAW	702	Damascus			
PGT	858	Istanbul	01:00	KAC	562	Amman	KAC	677	Dubai	01:50	KAC	541	Cairo			
JZR	128D	Dubai	01:10	KAC	792	Madinah	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00	THY	767	Istanbul			
DLH	625	Dammam	01:35	SVA	500	Jeddah	KAC	417	Manila	02:00	AXB	394	Kozhikode			
UAE	853	Dubai	01:45	JZR	222	Riyadh	DLH	625	Frankfurt	02:25	UAE	872	Dubai			
THY	764	Istanbul	01:50	KAC	618	Doha	PGT	859	Istanbul	02:30	GFA	222	Bahrain			
IGO	1757	Kochi	01:55	KAC	304	Mumbai	THY	773	Istanbul	02:30	KAC	673	Dubai			
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	IGO	1758	Kochi	02:55	FDB	060	Dubai			
RBG	551	Alexandria	02:25	KAC	516	Tehran	RBG	552	Alexandria	03:05	JZR	103	Bahrain			
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	JZR	602	Baku	ETH	621	Addis Ababa	03:05	QTR	1079	Doha			
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:30	KAC	692	Muscat	UAE	854	Dubai	03:40	SVA	501	Jeddah			
KLM	446	Bahrain	02:30	KNE	529	Jeddah	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:55	KNE	530	Jeddah			
OMA	643	Muscat	02:55	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	OMA	644	Muscat	03:55	JZR	405	Kochi			
RJA	648	Amman	02:55	OMA	645	Muscat	THY	765	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	775	Riyadh			
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	KKK	1269	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	563	Amman			
KKK	1268	Istanbul	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00	KAC	615	Bahrain			
PGT	860	Istanbul	03:10	KAC	546	Cairo	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15	ABY	128	Sharjah			
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	FEG	341	Sohag	MS	8613	Cairo	04:15	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi			
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	FDB	051	Dubai	PGT	861	Istanbul	04:25	OMA	646	Muscat			
OHY	352	Istanbul	04:00	KAC	118	New York	OHY	351	Istanbul	05:00	KAC	785	Jeddah			
KAC	414	Bangkok	04:00	JZR	732	Cairo	LMU	511	Cairo	05:00	KAC	619	Doha			
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	QTR	1072	Doha	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10	FEG	442	Asyut			
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	502	Beirut	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15	KAC	675	Dubai			
KAC	418	Manila	04:25	JZR	116	Doha	KAC	103	London	05:20	FDB	052	Dubai			
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:30	SVA	510	Riyadh	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:25	QTR	1073	Doha			
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	GFA	215	Bahrain	FDB	070	Dubai	06:00	UAE	858	Dubai			
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	IRA	665	Shiraz	JZR	715	Sohag	06:00	KAC	503	Beirut			
KAC	382	Delhi	05:05	JZR	214	Jeddah	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30	KAC	283	Dhaka			
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:10	JZR	124	Dubai	JZR	121	Dubai	07:15	KAC	343	Chennai			
JZR	404	Hyderabad	05:10	JZR	104	Bahrain	GFA	212	Bahrain	07:15	KAC	621	Doha			
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	QTR	1080	Doha	RJA	649	Amman	07:15	KAC	381	Delhi			
JZR	704	Asyut	05:35	JZR	302	Istanbul	JZR	113	Doha	07:30	SVA	511	Riyadh			
KAC	332	Trivandrum	05:40	MSR	620	Cairo	KAC	165	Rome	08:00	JZR	721	Alexandria			
JZR	406	Kochi	05:45	UAE	875	Dubai	KAC	171	Frankfurt	08:00	GFA	216	Bahrain			
KAC	344	Chennai	05:50	RJA	640	Amman	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00	JZR	127	Dubai			
JZR	402	Mumbai	06:05	GFA	217	Bahrain	IGO	1756	CNN	08:10	JZR	403	Hyderabad			
BAW	157	London	06:10	FDB	063	Dubai	BAW	156	London	08:35	IRA	664	Shiraz			
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:10	ABY	123	Sharjah	FDB	054	Dubai	08:35	JZR	733	Cairo			
KAC	302	Mumbai	06:25	KAC	156	Istanbul	QTR	8512	Doha	08:45	JZR	501	Lahore			
KAC	678	Dubai	06:50	RBG	555	Alexandria	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50	QTR	1081	Doha			
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC	616	Bahrain	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50	KAC	345	Ahmedabad			
KAC	204	Lahore	07:10	KAC	674	Dubai	KAC	561	Amman	08:55	JZR	253	Amman			
KAC	358	Kochi	07:35	KAC	776	Riyadh	KAC	117	New York	09:00	MSR	621	Cairo			
QTR	8511	Doha	07:45	FDB	057	Dubai	KAC	613	Bahrain	09:00	GFA	218	Bahrain			
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	KAC	104	London	KAC	161	Geneva	09:00	FDB	064	Dubai			
JZR	722D	Alexandria	07:50	KAC	166	Rome	KAC	791	Madinah	09:10	ABY	124	Sharjah			
KAC	384	Delhi	08:00	OMA	647	Muscat	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15	RJA	641	Amman			
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	DLH	624	Frankfurt	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15	RBG	556	Alexandria			
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	MEA	402	Beirut	KAC	691	Muscat	09:20	FDB	058	Dubai			
IRC	528	Ahwaz	09:00	KAC	620	Doha	JZR	601	Baku	09:20	JZR	401	Mumbai			
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	542	Cairo	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40	UAE	876	Dubai			
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	QTR	1088	Doha	KAC	741	Dammam	09:40	KAC	351	Kochi			
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	KLM	445	Amsterdam	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40	DLH	624	Dammam			
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KAC	172	Frankfurt	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45	OMA	648	Muscat			
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	UAE	856	Dubai	09:50	KAC	333	Trivandrum			
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	UAE	859	Dubai	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55	MEA	403	Beirut			
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ALK	229	Colombo	JZR	301	Istanbul	09:55	KAC	301	Mumbai			
OMS	223	Muscat	10:20	KAC	676	Dubai	OMA	642	Muscat	10:00	DHX	171	Bahrain			
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	622	Doha	IRC	529	Ahwaz	10:00	QTR	1089	Doha			
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	GFA	219	Bahrain	GFA	210	Bahrain	10:05	KAC	203	Lahore			
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	564	Amman	KAC	101	London	10:05	KLM	445	Bahrain			
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	KAC	162	Geneva	KAC	515	Tehran	10:35	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi			
JZR	114	Doha	11:10	QTR	1082	Doha	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40	ALK	230	Colombo			
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40	UAE	860	Dubai			
MSR	610	Cairo	11:50	KAC	786	Jeddah	FDB	056	Dubai	10:40	KAC	383	Delhi			
JZR	716	Sohag	12:10	AIC	989	Chennai/Ahmedabad	KAC	617	Doha	10:40	GFA	220	Bahrain			
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	JZR	128	Dubai	KAC	155	Istanbul	10:40	KAC	783	Jeddah			
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	BBC	043	Dhaka	SVA	513	Riyadh	11:00	KAC	1543	Cairo			
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	MSR	614	Cairo	OMS	224	Muscat	11:00	KAC	411	Bangkok			
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	FDB	071	Dubai	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi			
KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	PIA	205	Lahore	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35	QTR	1083	Doha			

US boots on the Moon in 2024? It won't be easy

WASHINGTON: For the past 15 years, America has sought to put its astronauts back on the Moon, but NASA did not think it could be done before 2028. On Tuesday, the government of President Donald Trump set a new deadline: 2024. But that timeframe is anything but ironclad, and would force the US space agency to upend its usual work practices and take serious risks. Just a few weeks ago, NASA chief Jim Bridenstine said the United States was not in any space race. But he was forced to change his tune when Vice President Mike Pence said NASA needed to put astronauts back on the Moon in 2024 "by any means necessary."

"Make no mistake about it, we are in a space race today," Pence said. Bridenstine now says the acceleration of the calendar is "aggressive" but doable. Industry experts and officials also believe it's possible, but with a list of caveats: more money is needed, fewer tests, more help from the private sector - and some even want a change at the top of NASA. "I assume that all means that we would need more funding in order to accomplish those goals," one lawmaker asked. "Yes," said Bridenstine.

The idea of allocating more money to NASA has some on Capitol Hill gritting their teeth. The space agency has already spent \$23 billion developing its new heavy-lift rocket (the Space Launch System, which is being built by aerospace giant Boeing), the Orion capsule to transport the astronauts (built by Lockheed Martin) and ground installations. Congress has granted it \$4 billion for 2019. Orion is nearly ready but the SLS is the real bottleneck: It will be more powerful than the rockets used on the original Apollo missions to the Moon, but it is years behind schedule.

At a NASA facility in New Orleans, the first stage of the SLS prototype, expected to take flight next year, is still being assembled. But its four engines have not yet been delivered. That first stage is then meant to be transported via barge to St Louis for testing, before being sent to Florida for final assembly. As for the planned June 2020 test flight, Bridenstine said: "I don't think that's in the cards."

Some of the engine testing could be cancelled to gain a few months. But that would fly in the face of the long-standing conservative work culture at NASA, which is still scarred by the Challenger and Columbia space shuttle disasters in 1986 and 2003. "Do you want to kill astronauts? Because this is how you kill astronauts," said Holly Griffith, a vehicle systems engineer working on the Orion capsule in Houston. "There's no reason to accelerate going to the Moon by four years," Griffith told AFP. "It's ridiculous."

The reality of Pence's announcement is that 2024 is politically significant: It would be the final year in Trump's eventual second term at the White House. "The administration has been frustrated for some time on the lack of progress on the mandate to return to the Moon," Greg Autry, the vice president for space development at the independent National Space Society, told AFP. "It's clear the president wants it to happen during his second term, presuming he's re-elected," added Autry, who was a member of Trump's presidential transition team.

So why has a return to the Moon taken so long - after all, Neil Armstrong made his legendary "giant leap for mankind" 50 years ago. Autry says NASA wants to be "100,000 percent sure this will be safe." He says a "culture change" is needed, along with the naming of new top brass at the space agency who are "more like the president" and come from the private sector.

Technically, the new mission is markedly different from the Apollo program. This time around, the Americans are not simply looking to plant the Stars and Stripes, but also to create a lasting infrastructure over the course of several trips, both in orbit and on the lunar surface. Also on the agenda is learning to extract frozen water from the Moon. Uncrewed missions would take place to build the Lunar Gateway in the vicinity of the Moon and deliver equipment. All of the above would be in preparation for eventual missions to Mars.

The other new element is that NASA wants to land at the Moon's South Pole, where the water has been



This NASA handout picture taken on July 20, 1969 shows one of the first steps taken on the Moon, that of US astronaut Buzz Aldrin of the Apollo 11 mission. — AFP

detected, as opposed to its equator, where the Apollo missions landed. "We're not starting from scratch," says Marshall Smith, who manages proposals at NASA for the future lunar lander, which will ferry astronauts back and forth from the station to the Moon. But "it's going to be a challenge," he admits - there is not even a design yet for the lander.

For 2024 to become a reality, NASA will need to rely heavily on private space companies, which are far more developed than they were in the 1960s and will be called upon like never before. The shorter timetable "may require them to partner a lot more with industry," said Thomas Orlando, the director of a NASA research center at Georgia Tech. — AFP

Lights go out worldwide for...

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movement for people to take action on climate change". "It's about individuals taking personal action but joining with hundreds of millions of people around the world to show that not only do we need urgent action on climate change but we need to be protecting our planet," he added.

Dozens of companies around the world said they will join this year's campaign, which also saw Singapore's skyline go dark and Hong Kong turn off the lights along the Victoria Harbor. Other global landmarks that took part in Earth Hour include the Eiffel Tower in Paris, New

York's Empire State Building, Dubai's Burj Khalifa and the Acropolis in Athens.

The event comes after some of the most dire warnings yet on the state of Earth's natural habitat and species. WWF's own "Living Planet" report in October said that 60 percent of all animals with a backbone - fish, birds, amphibians, reptiles and mammals - had been wiped out by human activity since 1970. Another study confirmed that a recent decline in bugs that fly, crawl, burrow and skitter across still water - fuelled by deforestation, urbanization and the rise of commercial farming - was part of an unfolding mass extinction event, only the sixth in the last half-billion years.

Last year, Earth Hour was observed in more than 7,000 towns and cities in 187 countries, according to the organizers. While the lights-off event is a symbolic gesture, Earth Hour has led successful campaigns over the past decade to ban plastics in the Galapagos Islands and plant 17 million trees in Kazakhstan. — AFP

Pope, Moroccan King: Jerusalem...

Continued from Page 1

a pope is welcomed to an institute for the training of imams," said Vatican spokesman Alessandro Gisotti. Rabat has stepped up security ahead of the first papal visit to the North African country since John Paul II in 1985. Buildings have been repainted, streets decorated and lawns manicured for the pope's two-day visit.

Last month Francis visited the United Arab Emirates, where he met with Sheikh Ahmed al-Tayeb, the imam of Cairo's Al-Azhar. Sunni Islam's prestigious seat of learning. The two signed a document which called for "freedom of belief" and "full citizenship" rights for minorities, a text which Gisotti said the pontiff will give to heads of state. In Morocco, where Islam is the state religion, authorities are keen to stress the country's "religious tolerance" which allows Christians and Jews to worship freely.

But Moroccans are automatically considered Muslim if they are not born into the Jewish community, apostasy is socially frowned upon, and proselytizing is a crim-

inal offence. Those who try to "rock the faith of a Muslim or to convert him to another religion" risk a prison term of up to three years. After years in the shadows, since 2017 the small number of converts have called openly for the right to live "without persecution" and "without discrimination". Around 30,000 to 35,000 Catholics live in Morocco, many of them from sub-Saharan Africa.

The pope was due to finish his schedule yesterday by meeting migrants at a center run by Catholic humanitarian organization Caritas. The charity runs day centers for migrants who are trying to reach Europe across the Mediterranean, as well as helping them access services. The number of people taking the sea route from Morocco to Spain has recently surged as it has become harder for them to pass through Libya. In 2017, Caritas centers in Rabat, Casablanca and Tangiers welcomed 7,551 new arrivals, according to the charity.

Rabat claims to have a "humanistic" approach to migration and rejects allegations by rights groups of "brutal arrest campaigns" and "forced displacement" to the country's southern border. Francis has throughout his papacy highlighted the plight of migrants and refugees, calling on Catholics as well as politicians to show solidarity with those in need. Today, the pope will celebrate mass at a Rabat stadium with an estimated 10,000 people attending. — AFP

border protests. Khalil Al-Hayya, another senior figure in the Islamist movement, said they were expecting to receive a timetable from Israel today. There was no Israeli comment on the alleged agreement.

Israel holds a keenly contested general election on April 9 in which Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces a stiff challenge from centrist former military chief Benny Gantz. He is widely seen as wanting to avoid a major escalation, but has at the same time faced political pressure over accusations of being soft on Hamas. The anniversary came only days after another severe flare-up of violence between Israel and Hamas, sparked by rare long-range rocket strike from Gaza. An Egyptian-brokered ceasefire restored calm.

The demonstrators are calling for Palestinians to be allowed to return to land their families fled or were expelled from during the 1948 war that accompanied Israel's creation. Israel says any such mass return would spell the end of a Jewish state and that its actions have been necessary to defend the border. It accuses Hamas of orchestrating violence, but its soldiers' use of live fire has come under heavy criticism. Last month, a UN probe said Israeli soldiers had intentionally fired on civilians in what could constitute war crimes.

Two million Palestinians live in impoverished Gaza, crammed between Israel, Egypt and the Mediterranean. Analysts highlight desperate living conditions and lack of freedom of movement as driving forces behind the protests. Israel, which has fought three wars with Hamas, has blockaded the enclave for more than a decade, and Egypt often closes Gaza's only other gateway to the outside world. — AFP

Cellphone 'Tower of Babel' highlights e-waste problem

BEIJING: A Chinese artist yesterday unveiled a sculpture made of discarded mobile phones and shaped like a cell tower in a bid to highlight the problem of electronic waste. The phones were rigged to a metal frame and synchronized so their screens would flash in various colors. "The inspiration of my tower comes from the Tower of Babel in the Bible," artist Shen Bolun told AFP, referring to the origin story explaining why people speak different languages.

Displayed in a busy shopping mall in Beijing, the sculpture attracted scores of curious bystanders who stopped to take photos of the exhibit. "I originally

thought environmental protection is waste sorting, but I didn't realize cellphones could be recycled and used again," said primary school student Li Jiaxing, who was viewing the artwork with his mother. "After seeing this tower, I decided to donate my old cell-phone here to make use of its remaining value."

China's waste from computers, mobile phones, and other electronics will reach 15.4 million tonnes by 2020, said environmental group Greenpeace, which organized the display. As a leading manufacturer and consumer of electronic goods, China was a logical place to launch an e-waste recycling and reduction campaign, the group said. Old electronic devices contain large amounts of metal that have economic value, said Greenpeace project manager Jiang Zhuoshan. "If these metals are recycled, we can reduce mining and damaging the environment," she added. But there are still many barriers - many are either unfamiliar with the recycling procedures or have privacy concerns about the prospect of someone else handling their personal devices. — AFP



BEIJING: A man looks at an art installation titled 'Tongtian' by Shen Bolun made from mobile phones at a shopping mall yesterday. — AFP

Facebook to tighten live...

Continued from Page 1

rules for using Facebook Live, taking further steps to address hate on our platforms, and supporting the New Zealand community," she added. Facebook is looking into barring people who have previously violated the social network's community standards from livestreaming on its platform, according to Sandberg.

The social network is also investing in improving software to quickly identify edited versions of violent video or images to prevent them from being shared or reposted. "While the original New Zealand attack video was shared Live, we know that this video spread mainly through people re-sharing it and re-editing it to make it harder for our systems to block it," Sandberg said. "People with bad intentions will always try to get around our security measures." Facebook identified more than 900 different videos showing portions of the streamed violence.

The social network is using artificial intelligence tools to identify and remove hate groups in Australia and New Zealand, according to Sandberg. Those groups will be banned from Facebook services, she said. Facebook this week announce it would ban praise or support for white nationalism and white separatism

as part of a stepped-up crackdown on hate speech. The ban will be enforced starting next week on the leading online social network and its image-centric messaging service Instagram. "It's clear that these concepts are deeply linked to organized hate groups and have no place on our services," the social network said in a statement.

Facebook policies already banned posts endorsing white supremacy as part of its prohibition against spewing hate at people based on characteristics such as race, ethnicity or religion. The ban had not applied to some postings because it was reasoned they were expressions of broader concepts of nationalism or political independence, according to the social network. Facebook said that conversations with academics and "members of civil society" in recent months led it to view white nationalism and separatism as linked to organized hate groups.

People who enter search terms associated with white supremacy will get results referring them to resources such as Life After Hate, which focus on helping people turn their backs on such groups, according to Facebook. Amid pressure from governments around the world, Facebook has ramped up machine learning and artificial intelligence tools for finding and removing hateful content. "We are deeply committed to strengthening our policies, improving our technology and working with experts to keep Facebook safe," Sandberg said. "We must all stand united against hate and work together to fight it wherever and whenever it occurs." — AFP

Tens of thousands protest at Gaza...

Continued from Page 1

An Egyptian security delegation visited the protest site east of Gaza City, as did Hamas leaders Ismail Haniya and Yahya Sinwar. Israel's army said around 40,000 "rioters and demonstrators" had gathered in spots throughout the border. It said grenades and explosive devices were hurled at troops, who responded "in accordance with standard operating procedures."

Protesters were marking the first anniversary of often violent weekly demonstrations in which around 200 Palestinians and an Israeli soldier have been killed. The death of the two 17-year-olds brought to at least 50 the number of Palestinian children killed in Gaza since protests began, charity Save the Children said. In the run-up to the anniversary, Egypt, the long-time mediator between the parties, had shuffled back and forth seeking to avoid major bloodshed. Senior Hamas official Bassem Naim called yesterday's protest "a very important message" that thousands had gathered "peacefully to raise their voice against aggression and the imposed siege on Gaza."

He confirmed that Egypt had made progress towards a deal that media reports said would see Israel allow more Qatari aid into the strip and ease some restrictions. In exchange Hamas would maintain calm at the

Karl-Anthony, Timberwolves top Warriors on controversial finish

Mitchell's 35 points carries Jazz past Wizards

MINNESOTA: Karl-Anthony Towns made a tiebreak-ing-and controversial-free throw with a half-second remaining in overtime Friday night, giving the Minnesota Timberwolves a 131-130 victory that dropped the visiting Golden State Warriors into a tie for the top spot in the Western Conference. Kevin Durant fouled Towns as he was breaking for the basket on an inbounds play. Durant was called for a pushing foul near the hoop even though the pass appeared to be over both players' heads. Towns made the first of two free throws before missing the second intentionally, which allowed time to run out. The Golden State defeat allowed Denver, which won earlier in the night at Oklahoma City, to draw even with the Warriors for the top spot in the West at 51-24 with seven games remaining. The controversial finish followed another potential game-determining call with 5.8 seconds remaining in the extra session and Golden State trailing by three, when officials waved off a 3-pointer Durant made while a foul was being called because they said the foul had occurred in the instant before the shot.

NUGGETS 115, THUNDER 105

Jamal Murray scored 27 points to lead visiting Denver past Oklahoma City and into a tie for first in the Western Conference with seven games remaining. The loss drops the Thunder to eighth place. Nikola Jokic had 23 points and 16 rebounds for the Nuggets, who shot 56.5 percent from the floor. It was Denver's third-best shooting performance of the season. Paul Millsap (14 points), Will Barton (12) and Mason Plumlee (11) also scored in double figures for the Nuggets. Russell Westbrook led the Thunder with 27 points, nine rebounds and nine assists, narrowly missing what would've been his second consecutive triple-double. Paul George, who was a game-

time decision due to left shoulder soreness, scored 25 points and also grabbed nine rebounds.

CELTICS 114, PACERS 112

Kyrie Irving made the go-ahead layup with 0.5 seconds remaining in the game as host Boston edged Indiana and moved into a tie with the Pacers for fourth place in the Eastern Conference. Indiana's Thaddeus Young completed an alley-oop to forge a tie at 112 before missing a driving layup on the next possession. Young redeemed himself with a steal, but Boston made a defensive stop and Irving gained a step on Wesley Matthews and made a ball fake on Young before converting the layup. Irving scored 20 of his 30 points in the second half and Al Horford added 19 for the Celtics, who pulled even in the standings with Indiana after winning back-to-back contests on the heels of a season-high-tying, four-game losing streak.

TRAIL BLAZERS 118, HAWKS 98

Damian Lillard scored 23 of his 36 points in the first half to help Portland win its sixth straight, a blowout at Atlanta. Lillard shot 13-for-25 from the field, sank four 3-pointers and handed out seven assists. Atlanta was led by Trae Young, who scored 20 of his 26 points in the first half but was just 1-for-8 from 3-point range. John Collins added 20 points for the Hawks.

JAZZ 128, WIZARDS 124

Donovan Mitchell scored 35 points to lead Utah to a victory over Washington in Salt Lake City. Joe Ingles added 18 points and 10 assists, and Rudy Gobert finished with 13 points and 17 rebounds for the Jazz. Jae Crowder added 18 points and Ricky Rubio chipped in 17. Utah shot 55.2 percent from the field to win for the



MINNEAPOLIS: DeMarcus Cousins #0 of the Golden State Warriors goes to the basket against the Minnesota Timberwolves on Friday at Target Center in Minneapolis, Minnesota. — AFP

ninth time in 10 games. Bradley Beal scored 34 points while Bobby Portis added 28 points and 13 rebounds to lead Washington.

LAKERS 129, HORNETS 115

LeBron James had 27 points and nine assists as Los Angeles prevented visiting Charlotte from moving closer to a playoff spot. Kentavious Caldwell-Pope scored 25 points, Kyle Kuzma scored 20, Rajon Rondo had a

season-high 17 assists, and Lance Stephenson contributed 14 points and a season-high 13 rebounds off the bench for the Lakers, who have won three out of four games for the first time since Dec. 8-15. Kemba Walker scored 24 points to lead the Hornets, who dropped two games behind the eighth-place Miami Heat in the Eastern Conference. Charlotte has seven games remaining, five on the road. Walker is now 0-28 in his career against James. — Reuters

AlSayer holds motul go-kart for race enthusiasts

KUWAIT: ALSAYER Engineering, a subsidiary of ALSAYER Holding recently held a special online campaign for Motul, advanced lubricants from France to select winners for the exciting Go-Kart racing event at the Sirbb circuit. The racing event was held under the supervision of Ali Makhseed - Kuwaiti Drift Champion, who is also the brand ambassador for Motul, in Kuwait. The event took place in the presence of Motul and ALSAYER Engineering team members.

During the campaign period, the participants of the campaign answered one of the questions about Motulin @alsayerengineeringwebsites and social media accounts to enter a bi-monthly draw for a chance to qualify for the exciting GO-KART challenge.

An electronic draw was held at the Ministry of Commerce to select 20 racers who entered the race and won cash prizes.

Below are the names of the winners:

	Names	Prizes
1st Place	Fahed Al Kahil	KD 400



2nd Place	Hussein Al Sayyed	KD 300
3rd Place	Ahmad Al Ali	KD 100

In addition, 100 racers also grabbed a chance to experience the excitement of GO-KARTING and they received attractive gifts at the end of the race.

As a specialist in synthetic oils, Motul has become the partner of many manufacturers and sports teams for

its technological developments in mechanical sports, car and motorcycle racing. Motul is present in many international competitions as official team supplier: MotoGP, Road racing, Trial, Enduro, Endurance, Superbike, Supercross, Rallycross, World Rally Championship, FIA GT, Le Mans 24 Hours, Spa 24 Hours, Le Mans Series, rally raid, Paris-Dakar, F3, etc.

NBK sponsors Fitness Challenge Festival at Al Shaheed Park

KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) sponsored Fitness Challenge Festival at Al Shaheed Park. The festival started on the 6th of March and will be concluded on the 6th of April with a special fitness challenge day; which will be held in collaboration with a number of gyms and vendors.

The sponsorship comes in line with NBK's commitment to support youths' health. Participants can visit the sports management website "Provision" for registration. This sponsorship aims to spread physical awareness and attract youth to participate in sporting events.

NBK Public Relations Team Leader, Talal Al Turki, said: "NBK's sponsorship to this sports event comes in line with the bank's

customary and ongoing spirit of corporate citizenship as well as the vital role it plays in supporting youth and their health. NBK always strives to empower youth to realize their potentials, providing different supportive opportunities".

"NBK will host games and various sports challenges on the 6th of April and will reward winners with valuable prizes", added Al Turki. "The purpose of this event is to increase fitness awareness for all Kuwait citizens. This event sheds the light on the potential of youth in regards to fitness and sport awareness".

The Fitness Challenge Festival will include sports challenges that will attract a large number of participants. The competitions in this festival comprised a range of physical challenges that depend on the strength, flexibility and endurance, all of which will contribute to raise the spirit of positive competition among youth.

NBK has always considered supporting youth an essential part of its social and philanthropic outreach which comes in line with the bank's commitment to encourage a merit-based system in health, education and environment that promotes the best and the brightest the country has to offer.



Abrar wins ninth fence jumping championship

KUWAIT: Equestrian Sports Club rider Abrar Al-Musallam won the 9th local fence jumping over 130 cm championship. The championship was organized by Masiela Equestrian Club with a large number of both genders riders from all local clubs participating. Laila Al-Hanbaly, Babil Foronco, Nasser Al-Zahim Latifa Al-Hajiri and Abdel Wahab Al-Lugman followed her.

In the 120 cm high fence Fahad Al-Masoud was first, Musaed Al-Shuaibi,

second, Babil Foronco, Hamad Al-Otaibi, Hamad Al-Hajiri and Abdallah Al-Awadhi followed.

Rider Abdallah Al-Awadha won first place in the 110 cm category, Fawaz Al-Ghunaiman won the 100 cm category followed by Abdelaziz Al-Adsani, Mohammad Al-Rifae, Mohammad Al-Dabous, Muhsin Al-Haili and Abdallah Al-Ammar.

In the 90 cm beginners category a large number of male and female riders succeeded in Jumping fences without faults.

Director General of Mesiela Club Bader Al-Mailam said "competition was very strong between several riders". He said many young people express their wish to participate and the beginners category includes a large number of riders who will have a distinguished future soon.



Tiger, McIlroy book last-16 showdown at WGC Match Play

WASHINGTON: Three-time tournament winner Tiger Woods rallied to defeat Patrick Cantlay 4&2 on Friday, advancing to an electrifying yesterday knockout match against Rory McIlroy at the WGC-Match Play Championship.

The 14-time major champion holed out from 82 yards for eagle at the par-4 13th in his fightback to book his duel with McIlroy, who beat England's Matthew Fitzpatrick 4&2 to finish an unbeaten group run.

"It's exciting for the tournament. I'm sure it's going to be exciting for us," McIlroy said. "I feel good about my game. I'm going to stick with my game plan and not look at him until I have to near the end." A showdown of the world's 64 top-ranked golfers at Austin (Texas) Country Club featured three days of group matches to decide 16 players for weekend knockout matches that will determine a champion.

Woods, seeded 13th, will meet fourth-seeded McIlroy of Northern Ireland in the round of 16 on Saturday morning. They have never met in match play. "I'll be ready," Woods said. Four-time major winner McIlroy, who could complete a Career Grand Slam at the Masters in two weeks, has never trailed in any match and dropped only three holes this week.

"I got up early and played some good golf on the front nine," McIlroy said. "I got scrappy toward the end but I'm through and I'm looking forward to tomorrow."

Former world number one Woods, a 14-time major champion, split his first two matches and needed a victory plus a loss by Brandt Snedeker to reach the weekend from his all-American group. Aaron Wise led after every hole in routing Snedeker 6&4 and Woods took care of the rest with an impressive fightback, showing the form that helped him win WGC Match Play titles in 2003, 2004 and 2008.

Woods made bogeys at the par-5 sixth and par-4 eighth to fall 2-down to Cantlay, who gave one back with a bogey at nine before Woods reeled off three birdies and an eagle to win the next four holes-sinking a 21-foot birdie putt at the par-3 11th and a six-footer at the par-5 12th, then holing out at 13 before making a 20-footer at 14.

"Patrick got a bad break at nine. I got a free hole there," Woods said. "I tried to carry the momentum to the back nine. I made a big putt at 11 and got it rolling from there." At 13, he bounced his approach onto the green and saw the crowd erupt as the ball rolled into the cup.

"I was just trying to get it up close and next thing you know it falls in," Woods said. "I'll take it." McIlroy, the 2015 Match Play winner, gave a nod to his final-round duel with Woods at last year's US PGA Tour Championship, where Woods captured his 80th career US PGA victory-and first triumph in five years-while McIlroy struggled. "I just hope I put up a better fight than I did in Atlanta last year," McIlroy said. The highest seed advancing was world number two Justin Rose of England, who edged US 22nd seed Gary Woodland 1-up to win his group. He next plays US 57th seed Kevin Na, the lowest seed in the last 16. — AFP

Federer ready for John Isner shoot-out for Miami crown

‘Playing big server like John is like being in a penalty shootout in soccer’

MIAMI: Roger Federer is gearing up for a Miami Open final shootout with John Isner on Sunday after blowing away young-gun Denis Shapovalov in straight sets. Federer produced a 6-2, 6-4 masterclass at Hard Rock Stadium to leave up-and-coming star Shapovalov, who grew up idolizing the Swiss, chasing shadows during a difficult first set.

The Swiss was superb in dismantling the 19 year-old's game, but knows with huge serving Isner lying in wait in what will be the former world number one's 50th ATP Masters final, the key will be to defuse the reigning Miami Open champion's monster service game.

Isner used it to great effect in his 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/4) win over Shapovalov's friend and compatriot Felix Auger-Aliassime earlier in the day, smashing down 21 aces. He'll be looking for more of the same against 20 time Grand Slam champion Federer.

"Playing a big server like John is like being in a penalty shootout in soccer, but I enjoy it," said number four seed Federer who coped brilliantly with Kevin Anderson's dangerous serve in the quarter-finals, winning the first set to love.

"Sometimes you go with momentum. Sometimes you go with feel. Sometimes you guess maybe a little bit and sometimes you see it. It's a combination of all sort of things. "You just hope that the stars align, that you pick the right side, that he picks the wrong side, that maybe he misses a serve, that you can put him in uncomfortable situations time and time again, and at the end somehow you find a way."

Federer had no such challenge from Shapovalov, playing his fifth ATP Tour semi-final. Even though the Swiss was standing in his way of a first final, the 19 year-old stressed beforehand that it was a "dream" to

take on Federer.

It quickly, however, turned into a nightmare. The Canadian displayed understandable nerves early on, a struggle with his first serve proving as much in a 10 minute opening game which he eventually won.

Yet it didn't settle him down and when another horribly loose backhand flew long, Federer pocketed a vital early break and stayed in the driver's seat. Shapovalov, who will jump to a career best 20th in the world thanks to this impressive run, enjoyed some much better moments in the second set and looked more relaxed, although the match was never in his hands.

He hit just eight winners in response to Federer's 30 but will learn from this. "It's kind of surreal, being on the court against Roger," admitted the Canadian who joked the only enjoyable moment for him was the warm up.

"Obviously I wasn't trying to focus on the fact that it's him on the other side. "I was just trying to play as good as I can, but he played an excellent match. I wasn't able stay at his level. I'm just going to try to learn from this and move forward."

Federer, assessing his own performance, said he played "very well". "I had to because when you let Denis play, he's got some serious power and he gets rhythm going. He can really put you in uncomfortable situations."

This was the first time since 2007 that two teenagers have reached an ATP Masters semi-finals and although both suffered disappointing defeats, they leave South Florida with their heads held high.

Auger-Aliassime's dream run finished with the youngster from Montreal competing confidently in the biggest match of his career even if he will rue the chances that escaped him after being broken while



MIAMI GARDENS: Roger Federer of Switzerland returns a shot to Denis Shapovalov of Canada during the men's semifinals of the Miami Open Presented by Itau at Hard Rock Stadium in Miami Gardens, Florida. — AFP

serving for the first and second set.

"Unusual," Isner called it. "It could have been a little bit of inexperience and maybe a little bit of fatigue, also." Despite the disappointment etched all over Auger-Aliassime's face at the end, his run here will give him great confidence moving forward as he, and Shapovalov, aim to prove their Grand Slam credentials.

The 18-year-old is the youngest-ever male semi-finalist in Miami and only the second qualifier to

reach the last four after Guillermo Canas reached the same stage in 2007 before losing to Novak Djokovic in the final.

Auger-Aliassime will also see his ranking jump from 55 to 33 in the world. "I think I did the best that I could," he said. "It's a chance you can't miss, serving two times for the set, and just-I don't know. It's just terrible. The biggest lesson I learned was to stay in the present and believe in yourself." — AFP

Cardinals’ Goldschmidt belts three home runs

MILWAUKEE: Paul Goldschmidt went 4-for-5 with three home runs and five RBIs to lead the visiting St. Louis Cardinals past the Milwaukee Brewers 9-5 on Friday night. The Cardinals evened the season-opening, four-game series at one victory apiece behind a 14-hit attack. Matt Carpenter and Paul DeJong both had two hits and an RBI for St. Louis. Milwaukee got much of its production from the top of the order. Ryan Braun had two hits, including a three-run home run. Christian Yelich added a solo home run as part of a two-hit night, and Lorenzo Cain also had two hits. St. Louis struck with three runs in the first inning. Goldschmidt's two-run home run-his first as a Cardinal-punctuating the rally. On the 10th pitch of his at-bat against Brewers righty Freddy Peralta, Goldschmidt the ball into the left field seats, delighting several pockets of Cardinals fans in the Miller Park stands.

DIAMONDBACKS 5, DODGERS 4 (13 INNINGS)

Carson Kelly delivered an RBI double in the 13th inning as Arizona outlasted Los Angeles in the longest regular-season game by time in Dodger Stadium history. The 6-hour, 5-minute contest came five months after Game 3 of the World Series between the Dodgers and Boston Red Sox ended after 18 innings and 7:20 when Max Muncy hit a game-ending home run. After a pair of two-out walks in the top of the 13th, Kelly blooped a hit down the right field line off Yimi Garcia (0-1). New Los Angeles outfielder A.J. Pollock gave his former team fits with a home run, a double, two singles and three RBIs. Matt Andriese (1-0) pitched 2 1/3 scoreless innings for the victory.

RED SOX 7, MARINERS 6

Pinch hitter Mitch Moreland hit a three-run homer in the top of the ninth inning as Boston rallied to win at Seattle. The Red Sox trailed 6-1 through four innings before coming back to even the series at a game apiece. Boston left-hander Brian Johnson (1-0) pitched a scoreless eighth inning, striking out the side, to get the victory. Mariners right-hander Hunter Strickland (0-1), who got two saves as Seattle opened the season last week with a two-game series against Oakland in Japan, took over in the ninth with a chance for another save but lasted just one-third of an inning.

PADRES 4, GIANTS 1

Left-hander Joey Lucchesi and two relievers ran the Padres' scoreless innings streak to 17 to start the season, and Ian Kinsler hit his first home run as host San Diego defeated San Francisco. The 17 scoreless innings were a Padres record to open a season. The record over the franchise's first 50 seasons was 14 straight scoreless innings to open the 2008 season. The bid for a second straight shutout ended when Evan Longoria opened the top of the ninth with a home run into the left field seats off right-handed reliever Phil Maton.

ANGELS 6, ATHLETICS 2

Andrelton Simmons capped a four-run eighth inning against the Oakland bullpen with a two-run single, delivering a win for visiting Los Angeles on the second day of a four-game series. The win allowed the Angels to even the American League West series at a game apiece after Oakland had returned from a winless trip to Japan with a 4-0 win in its California opener on Thursday. — Reuters

ABK sponsors Al-Tomoooh Sports Club for Intellectual Disabilities

KUWAIT: Al Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) recently sponsored the Al-Tomoooh Sports Club for Intellectual Disabilities. The Club represented Kuwait at the 15th World Special Olympics Games in Abu Dhabi in March.

The Special Olympics event is the largest sports and humanitarian event globally that celebrates the inclusion and empowerment of people of determination through the power of sport. This major international sporting event will bring together more than 7,500 athletes from over 190 nations.

Al-Tomoooh Sports Club represented Kuwait at the event with 87 participants, 65 per cent being women, who will participate in nine games, namely basketball, football, bowling, handball, swimming, athletics, badminton, table tennis, and aerobics.

ABK are advocates of inclusive, social and sustainable development, creating an all-encompassing equi-



table society is at the core of ABK's CSR strategy, and through this sponsorship initiative, ABK is honoured to

support the team and wishes them the very best while they support their country at the Olympic Games.

Vegas, St Louis make playoffs despite losses

LAS VEGAS: Eric Staal had a goal and an assist, and Devan Dubnyk made 35 saves as the Minnesota Wild held on to edge the Vegas Golden Knights 3-2 on Friday night in Las Vegas. Despite sustaining a fourth consecutive loss, Vegas still clinched a Stanley Cup playoff berth by virtue of Colorado's 3-2 shootout victory over the Arizona Coyotes. Kevin Fiala and Greg Pateryn also scored goals for Minnesota, which remained four points behind the Avalanche for the second Western Conference wild-card spot with four games remaining for both teams. Dubnyk, playing in his 65th game, a league high among goalies, hit the 30-win mark for the fourth straight season while improving to 4-0-1 all-time against the Golden Knights. Paul Stastny scored both goals for Vegas while Malcolm Subban finished with 29 saves to lose for just the second time (13-2-1) in his career at T-Mobile Arena.

RANGERS 4, BLUES 2

Jimmy Vesey scored the tiebreaking goal early in the third period for New York, which stormed back from a two-goal, first-period deficit and briefly denied visiting St. Louis a chance to clinch a playoff spot. The Blues later ended up earning a postseason berth when Colorado defeated Arizona. Vesey scored on the rebound of a shot by Brett Howden to cap a chaotic sequence deep in the Blues' zone. Howden had a point-blank shot and a backhanded attempt turned away by St. Louis goalie Jordan Binnington before Vesey swooped in and tucked over the leg of the sprawled-out Binnington at the 5:47 mark.

AVALANCHE 3, COYOTES 2 (SO)

Nathan MacKinnon matched a career high with his 39th goal and provided the lone score in the shootout as surging Colorado earned a key victory over Arizona in Denver. The

Avalanche seemed headed toward a 2-0 victory as time was winding down in the third period, but Oliver Ekman-Larsson took over for Arizona. The star defenseman sent a wrister from the far board blue line past Colorado's Philipp Grubauer to get the Coyotes within a goal with eight minutes left in regulation. Then, with goalie Darcy Kuemper on the bench and an extra skater on the ice, Ekman-Larsson struck from the left circle with 50.5 seconds remaining to tie the game, force overtime and eventually the shootout.

FLAMES 6, DUCKS 1

Sean Monahan scored twice and added two assists as host Calgary scored six unanswered goals en route to a blowout win over Anaheim. Calgary snapped a two-game losing skid. With one win in their remaining games, the Flames would win a conference title for the first time since the 1989-90 campaign. Mark Giordano, Garnet Hathaway, James Neal and Derek Ryan also scored for Calgary. The game's opening goal came from Ducks rookie Andy Welinski, the first of his NHL career.

PREDATORS 3, PENGUINS 1

Nashville scored in each period, and Pekka Rinne made a season-high-tying 42 saves in a solid win at Pittsburgh. Craig Smith and P.K. Subban each had a goal and an assist, and Viktor Arvidsson also scored for Nashville, which won its second in a row and tied Winnipeg for first place in the Central Division. Nick Bjugstad scored a goal, and Matt Murray made 23 saves for Pittsburgh.

RED WINGS 4, DEVILS 0

Dylan Larkin scored his team-high 31st goal and added an assist as host Detroit rolled to its fourth consecutive victory by silencing New Jersey. Tyler Bertuzzi scored an empty-netter and assisted on two more goals. Danny DeKeyser and Andreas Athanasiou also scored for Detroit. Jake Chelios, son of longtime Red Wings and Chicago defenseman Chris Chelios, made his NHL debut for Detroit. Chelios, 28, was an emergency call-up from the American Hockey League's Grand Rapids Griffins due to injuries. He logged more than 17 minutes of ice time against the Devils. — Reuters

Warner marks end of ban with match winning knock

MUMBAI: David Warner celebrated the end of his year-long ban from international cricket with a match winning innings of 69 on Friday, helping his Indian Premier League franchise Sunrisers Hyderabad overhaul a steep target against the Rajasthan Royals.

Former Australia captain Steve Smith and his deputy Warner were slapped with 12-month suspensions from international cricket last year for their involvement in the ball-tampering scandal in the Cape Town test against South Africa.

Two months out from the World Cup in England, Warner showed he had lost none of his marauding form at the top of the order by smashing 85 in 53 balls in Hyderabad's opening IPL match against Kolkata Knight Riders last Sunday.

He continued in the same vein against Rajasthan, the day after his international ban ended, scoring 69 off 37 deliveries as his team chased down their opponents 198-2, built on Sanju Samson's unbeaten knock of 102.

Hyderabad needed a fast start to their innings and Warner, who missed the 2018 IPL because of the ban, obliged with a half-century off 26 deliveries. "We got off to a good start and kept (going) on with that adrenaline," Warner said after the match. "As a batsman when your adrenaline is running you are in a mood."

Warner's form is timely as he attempts to win a place in Aaron Finch's World Cup squad, four years after being Australia's second-highest run scorer behind former captain Smith during the team's run to the title on home soil.

Finch said on Thursday selectors would find it hard to fit everyone in to the 15-man squad, with his current one-day side resurgent as they dominate Pakistan in the United Arab Emirates.

However, Glenn Maxwell, who struck 98 as Australia completed a six-run win over Pakistan in Dubai on Friday, said he looked forward to Warner and Smith joining the ODI squad.

"He's on fire over there and it's good to see, looking forward to them joining up with us," said Maxwell after Australia took a 4-0 lead in the five-match series. "They're certainly going to get plenty of cricket over there in the IPL." Left-hander Warner hit nine fours, three of them in England all-rounder Ben Stokes' first over, and two sixes in his knock and by the time he fell to Stokes, his team had already rocketed to 110 in less than 10 overs.

"When a player like David Warner bats like that, there's very less margin as a bowler," Rajasthan captain Ajinkya Rahane said. "I don't think the bowlers did anything wrong, their batsmen did very well. They didn't lose any momentum throughout when they were batting." Smith did not have an opportunity to bat as his side promoted Stokes ahead of him at number four. — Reuters

Sports

In-form Messi double sends Barcelona 13 points clear

Getafe slump to a 2-0 home defeat by Leganes

BARCELONA: Lionel Messi scored twice to earn Barcelona a 2-0 derby win over Espanyol and send them 13 points clear at the top of La Liga yesterday. With second-placed Atletico Madrid travelling to Alaves later in the day, the champions took advantage of the chance to extend their lead. A dull match was decided by Barcelona's number 10, who lofted home a free kick after 71 minutes and slotted in from substitute Malcom's cross towards the end.

Messi, the division's top scorer with 31 goals, suffered criticism in his native Argentina after withdrawing from a friendly against Morocco because of a groin problem, but was hailed by Barcelona fans after taking them one step closer to retaining the title. Messi has now netted eight times in his last four games for Barca.

"The important thing is that (Messi's) on our side, he scored a great free kick and without doubt having him is always an advantage for us," said midfielder Sergio Busquets. "Espanyol were ultra-defensive and it made it hard to find spaces. We had opportunities but they didn't go in. We had to work for it but in the end we took our chances and the result was justice for what happened in the game."

Ernesto Valverde started Messi along with Luis Suarez, who had recovered from an ankle sprain. But the duo and Philippe Coutinho were kept quiet in a tight first half, with Espanyol's five-man defense not giving the South

American trio any space. With Malcom's introduction in the final half hour, the game began to open up. The Brazilian winger had a cross shot tipped wide by Diego Lopez, with Coutinho firing over the bar as Barcelona pushed for a winner.

The Catalans were short on inspiration until Messi produced a cheeky dinked free kick, which midfielder Victor Sanchez could not keep out on the goal-line, before tucking home his second on the break. Barcelona were far below their fluid best but two moments of skill from talisman Messi secured three points from an otherwise forgettable game.

"I advise you to enjoy Messi while he's here, he's such a unique player," Espanyol coach Rubi said. "When he's not there you really notice it. He's very good and that's that. I had the luck to see him for a year in training (in 2013 at Barca under Tito Vilanova)."

Barcelona next visit Villarreal on Tuesday with a second successive title looking even more like a mere formality after a sixth straight victory extended their unbeaten league run to 17 matches. Earlier yesterday, fourth-placed Getafe missed the chance to solidify their spot in the Champions League places as they slumped to a 2-0 home defeat by Leganes. Uruguayan Michael Santos and Juanfran scored in the second half for Leganes to give Alaves the chance to move into the top four with a win over Atletico. —Agencies



BARCELONA: Espanyol's Venezuelan defender Roberto Rosales (left) fouls Barcelona's Argentinian forward Lionel Messi during a Spanish league football match at the Camp Nou stadium yesterday. — AFP

England sensation Hudson-Odoi eyes Chelsea spotlight

CARDIFF: For a player who has yet to start a Premier League game, rising Chelsea star Callum Hudson-Odoi has attracted an awful lot of hype this season.

That spotlight only grew brighter after his outstanding performances for England during the international break. However, it remains to be seen whether Chelsea manager Maurizio Sarri is as convinced by the 18-year-old's performances as a substitute against the Czech Republic and on his full international debut against Montenegro.

Sarri is weighing up whether to name the winger in his starting line-up for Chelsea's Premier League visit

to struggling Cardiff today. But Sarri remains guarded in his praise of a young player who has become the focus of a significant number of Chelsea's supporters.

And it would surprise no-one if the Italian refused to bow to popular pressure and again named the youngster on the bench. What is becoming increasingly clear, however, is that Sarri's handling of a player who has already attracted bids from Bayern Munich last January could help shape the manager's future at Stamford Bridge. England had barely returned from the 5-1 victory in Montenegro—a game in which Hudson-Odoi was one of a number of players to be subjected to racial abuse by home supporters—before reports were emerging linking the player with a lucrative move to Manchester United or Liverpool.

Sarri has attempted to inject what he views as a note of sober realism into the debate about the limited opportunities offered to a player who has risen through Chelsea's youth system and into the first team squad without following the more familiar route of spending time away on loan.

Hudson-Odoi's talent is obvious, as is his ability to handle the step up to a higher level if his performances for England are anything to go by. For Sarri, though, talent and potential are not enough as he looks for players to fit into the rigid roles in his tactical game-plan. In Sarri's eyes, the teenager still has a substantial way to travel along his learning curve. Increasingly, though, it appears the Italian's stance will be tested as Chelsea fight to qualify for the Champions League via a top four finish or success in the Europa League.

Hudson-Odoi is clearly an asset Chelsea don't want to lose, but the youngster's current contract runs only until the end of next season. The aim is to tie down the England international's future, but Hudson-Odi has already expressed his impatience and desire for more game-time by pressing for the move to Bayern before the turn of the year. Overshadowing all squad matters at Chelsea presently is the threat of the two-window transfer ban imposed on the club by FIFA after alleged breaches of rules in relation to the signing of a number of young players.—AFP

After Ronaldo bruising, Japan's Shoji now eyes stopping Mbappe

TOULOUSE: Japan defender Gen Shoji has already endured a bruising experience against one global superstar in Cristiano Ronaldo but hopes that experience will work in his favour when he confronts another in the shape of French World Cup winner Kylian Mbappe today.

Shoji gets his chance to shut out Mbappe, one of football's hottest properties, when his Toulouse team take on mighty Paris Saint-Germain in Ligue 1. The 26-year-old, who arrived in France in the winter transfer window, came off worse when Ronaldo bagged a hat-trick in a 4-2 win for Real Madrid over Kashima Antlers at the 2016 World Club Cup.

"With my Japanese club, we tried to stop Ronaldo collectively. In France, when we defend, I feel as if the individual duel is more important so I will have to adapt the way I do things against Mbappe and the others," said Shoji.

"To compare Ronaldo and Mbappe, I will have to have played both of them. I should have a better idea after the game but it will be complicated."

Shoji, a native of Kobe, left Kashima Antlers—his only previous club—after 11 years and has helped Toulouse to a respectable mid-table place in Ligue 1. "I wanted to have new experiences," said Japanese international Shoji who admitted he has had to quickly adapt to a vastly different culture in France.

"You have to get out of your shyness. In Japan, if you are a little reserved someone will come to you; here, if you don't make the effort, no one will come to you." To help him integrate in La Ville Rose (The Pink City), Toulouse have drafted in Japanese compatriot Toru Ota, who has played in the women's teams at Lyon and PSG.

She interprets for Shoji in the dressing room and translates tactical tips being passed on to the pitch from the bench. A French teacher is also in the process of being hired. Shoji opted against joining Toulouse after the World Cup last summer because he wanted to help Kashima win the Asian Champions League for the first time.

With that ambition achieved in November, Shoji was free to move to France in a three-million-euro deal. "He learns very quickly. He has been a good purchase," said Toulouse coach Alain Casanova.

For his part, Shoji believes that from a technical perspective "the Japanese championship is perhaps better" but "Ligue 1 is superior when you add in the speed and physicality".

"I was very surprised by the quality of French football," added the 15-time capped international who was left heartbroken by Japan's World Cup elimination in a 3-2 last-16 loss to Belgium in Russia last summer after they had led 2-0.

"But you will see and I do not know when, maybe it will be after me, but one day, Japan will go very, very far at the World Cup," he predicted.

In his brief Ligue 1 career, Shoji has endured some sobering experiences—a 5-0 rout at the hands of Lyon was particularly painful. "In Japan, with Kashima, we won all the time. I have never thought that I have made a bad choice. I don't have any experience of a team that has these kind of difficulties. It's important to have this kind of experience."

Casanova is confident that Shoji will be a success story in France. To help his new recruit, he has even picked up a smattering of Japanese. "I have mastered the main words—hello and goodbye!" —AFP

Live Matches on TV (Local Timings)		
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE		
Cardiff City v Chelsea FC	16:05	beIN SPORTS HD 2
Liverpool v Tottenham Hotspur	18:30	beIN SPORTS HD 2
SPANISH LEAGUE		
Levante v SD Eibar	13:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Rayo Vallecano v Real Betis	15:00	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Sevilla FC v Valencia C.F	17:15	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Real Valladolid v Real Sociedad	19:30	beIN SPORTS HD 3
Real Madrid CF v Huesca	21:45	beIN SPORTS HD 3
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE		
Parma Calcio 1913 v Atalanta	13:30	beIN SPORTS HD 4
ACF Fiorentina v Torino FC	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 1
AS Roma v SSC Napoli	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 4
Frosinone Calcio v spal	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 7
Bologna FC v US Sassuolo Calcio	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 4
Internazionale Milano v SS Lazio	21:30	beIN SPORTS HD 4
GERMAN BUNDESLIGA		
Hannover 96 v Schalke 04	16:30	beIN SPORTS HD 5
Eintracht Frankfurt v VfB Stuttgart	19:00	beIN SPORTS HD 5
FRENCH LEAGUE		
AS Monaco FC v Caen	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6
Saint Etienne v Nimes Olympique	16:00	beIN SPORTS
Amiens SC v FC Girondins de Bordeaux	16:00	beIN SPORTS HD 8
Dijon v OGC Nice	16:00	beIN SPORTS
FC Nantes v LOSC Lille	18:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6
Toulouse FC v Paris Saint	22:00	beIN SPORTS HD 6



SAKHIR, Bahrain: Ferrari's Monegasque driver Charles Leclerc steers his car during the qualifying session ahead of the Formula One Bahrain Grand Prix at the Sakhir circuit in the desert south of the capital Manama yesterday. — AFP

Ferrari rookie Leclerc claims maiden pole with F1 lap record

MANAMA: Ferrari new boy Charles Leclerc secured his first pole position yestrday when he set a new track record by topping a dramatic qualifying session for today's Bahrain Grand Prix. The 21-tear-old Formula One rookie became the first Monegasque driver ever to take pole for a world championship race. Leclerc lapped the Bahrain International Circuit in one minute and 27.866 seconds, beating the mark set by his team-mate and four-time champion Sebastian Vettel last year. Vettel qualified second to clinch a Ferrari lockout of the front row and was quick to congratulate his new team-mate who shone in only his second race weekend with the team.

"He deserved it," said Vettel "Yes, come on!" said Leclerc, who is 10 years younger than his team-mate. "Tomorrow is the race and it's where we score points, but it's a good beginning... It seems like we did a good job so I am extremely happy." Leclerc became the second youngest pole-sitter in F1 history behind Vettel, who qualified three-tenths behind him. "In the end, I think Charles did a very good job and he deserved it. I was a bit shy in the second sector," said Vettel. Five-time world champion Lewis Hamilton was less than a tenth of a second behind Vettel in third ahead of Mercedes team-mate Valtteri Bottas. "The Ferraris have been incredibly quick here," said Hamilton. "But that is not all there is to it and we have

to sit down and work out a way to try and beat them."

Dutchman Max Verstappen of Red Bull came in fifth ahead of Dane Kevin Magnussen of Haas. Carlos Sainz was seventh for a resurgent McLaren ahead of Romain Grosjean in the second Haas. Kimi Raikkonen of Alfa Romeo and British rookie Lando Norris in the second McLaren. After a quiet start in the cooler conditions, the track temperature having dropped from close to 50 degrees Celsius to a little more than 30, it was the embryonic championship leader Bottas who briefly set the early Q1 pace before Leclerc rocketed to the top by a second.

Vettel slotted in as second fastest ahead of Bottas and Sainz with Hamilton adrift of his team-mate by two-tenths before he improved to third and within seven-tenths of the Monegasque driver. Norris delivered an impressive lap to go through in fourth while, after a final scrap, the men eliminated were Antonio Ricciardo, pipped by Raikkonen, British-based Thai rookie Alex Albon of Toro Rosso, Pierre Gasly of Red Bull, Mexican Sergio Perez of Racing Point and Russian Daniil Kvyat of Toro Rosso. Mercedes were first out for Q3, but it made no difference as, after Hamilton outpaced Bottas, Leclerc equalled the qualifying lap record set by Vettel in 1:27.958 before trimming it on his second rapid run. — AFP

25 Karl-Anthony, Timberwolves top Warriors on controversial finish



26 Federer ready for John Isner shoot-out for Miami crown



27 In-form Messi double sends Barcelona 13 points clear



City cruise back top of Premier League

Leicester win to mark late owner's birthday



LONDON: Manchester City's English defender Kyle Walker (L) vies with Fulham's Cameroonian midfielder Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (R) during the English Premier League football match between Fulham and Manchester City at Craven Cottage in London yesterday. — AFP

LONDON: Manchester City cruised back to the top of the Premier League as relegation-bound Fulham were swatted aside by the champions 2-0 at Craven Cottage yesterday. Bernardo Silva and Sergio Aguero ensured the game was won in the first 27 minutes, but the final margin of victory could have been far greater had City chosen to click through the gears.

Pep Guardiola's men now lead Liverpool by a point with seven games remaining for both sides, but Jurgen Klopp's side can retake top spot with victory over third-placed Tottenham today. Fulham, by contrast, remain 13 points adrift of safety with just 18 left to play for. City remain on course for an unprecedented quadruple of Premier League, Champions League, FA Cup and League Cup, which they retained last month. A potential 14 games now stand

between them and history, but there will be far tougher tests in wait than a dispirited and dishevelled Fulham, who played a huge part in their downfall.

Sixty points now separate the sides at opposing ends of the table and the hosts' inability to play simple passes highlighted why they are set for the drop after just one season back in the top flight.

Aguero had already seen an effort cleared off the line before Silva opened the scoring just five minutes in. Kevin de Bruyne, on his return from a month-long injury absence, intercepted a loose pass deep inside the Fulham half and fed Aguero, who in turn played the ball to Silva to curl into the far corner on his favoured left foot. De Bruyne should have scored for just the second time in an injury-plagued Premier League season when he fired too close to Sergio Rico

with just the Fulham goalkeeper to beat, while the Spaniard also parried Ilkay Gundogan's effort from the edge of the box. A second City goal seemed only a matter of time, though, and again Fulham made it easy for their visitors by coughing up possession close to their own goal.

This time the roles were reversed as Silva slipped in Aguero who expertly found the top corner for his 29th goal of the season. So calamitous was Fulham's retention of the ball that every completed pass was met with loud cheers from the home fans at stages in the first-half. However, the hosts nearly had an unlikely route back into the game when Joe Bryan's shot flashed across Ederson's goal just before the break. City were happy to canter through the second period without expending too much energy

with eight games in a 25-day period to come in April. Kyle Walker came closest to adding to their advantage with a thumping shot off the outside of the post.

Meanwhile, Leicester City marked an emotional day for the club on what would have been the birthday of their late owner Vichai Srivaddhanaprabha by beating Bournemouth 2-0 at home in the Premier League yesterday.

Goals from captain Wes Morgan, only playing because of Harry Maguire's suspension, and Jamie Vardy inspired the Foxes as they continued their bright start under new manager Brendan Rodgers with a third straight league win.

Central defender Morgan scored in consecutive games for the first time in his Leicester career, although there may have been a touch of fortune about his deflection which went in off the post

from Ben Chilwell's 11th minute shot.

An entertaining match saw both teams' top strikers, Vardy and Callum Wilson, miss chances but Leicester, increasingly dominant, deserved the spoils when Vardy headed home his fifth goal in five games eight minutes from time.

It felt a fitting way for Leicester fans to honour Srivaddhanaprabha, their much-loved Thai owner who died in a helicopter accident after a game in October, on what would have been his 61st birthday. Before the game, his image flashed up on the big screen at the King Power Stadium along with the words 'Always in our hearts' and Srivaddhanaprabha's son, club chairman Aiyawatt, was introduced to the crowd. In the 61st minute of the match, the fans also rose to applaud his memory, singing 'Vichai had a dream.' — Agencies

Man United moved up to fourth with win over Watford

LONDON: Ole Gunnar Solskjaer celebrated his first game as permanent Manchester United manager with a 2-1 Premier League win over Watford at Old Trafford yesterday. It was a far from impressive performance from United but goals from Marcus Rashford and Anthony Martial earned the victory which moved them up to fourth in the table, level on points with third-placed Tottenham Hotspur.

United took the lead in the 28th minute when Luke Shaw played a delightful through ball into the path of Rashford who clipped it past advancing Watford keeper Ben Foster.

Watford enjoyed plenty of possession in United's half and looked dangerous when breaking but United

made sure of the points with Martial's strike in the 72nd minute. Substitute Jesse Lingard's low cross from the right saw Martial and Foster tangle for the ball, which fell kindly for the Frenchman who hooked home United's second.

Watford got some reward for their positive approach when Abdoulaye Doucoure slotted home in the 90th minute after an exchange of passes with Isaac Success. Norwegian Solskjaer, handed a three-year contract on Thursday, has led United to 15 wins in 20 matches in all competitions since taking over as caretaker manager in December.

Meanwhile, Huddersfield Town were relegated from the Premier League yesterday after a 2-0 defeat by Crystal Palace and results elsewhere meant they could not survive in the top flight.

Victories for Burnley at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers and Southampton away at Brighton & Hove Albion ended Huddersfield's two-year stay in the Premier League.

With six games still left to play this season, they become the second team ever to be relegated from the Premier League before the end of March. — Reuters



MANCHESTER: Manchester United's French forward Anthony Martial (R) is tackled by Watford's Zaire-born Belgian defender Christian Kabasele (L) during the English Premier League football match between Manchester United and Watford at Old Trafford in Manchester, north west England, yesterday. — AFP