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# Cabinet, information ministers grilled; MP files to grill PM

Saleh's interpellation ends quickly • 10 MPs file no-confidence motion against Jabri

## Awazem swiftly raise KD 10m in 'blood money'

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: After spending 19 years in prison, Khaled Neqa Al-Azmi, a high-ranking police officer who was convicted of killing a prominent Kuwaiti journalist, will be released after the victim's family agreed to receive 'blood money' of KD 10 million. In order to collect this large amount, Azmi's family decided to seek help from the Azmi tribe. The tribe then applied for permission from the ministry of social affairs and labor to legally hold a fundraiser. The ministry allowed the tribe to collect the compensation amount, with the condition of immediately stopping the proceedings after the amount of KD 10 million was raised.

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Hidaya Al-Salem



Khaled Al-Azmi



KUWAIT: Bundles of cash to pay the blood money are seen.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: As the National Assembly was in the middle of a marathon session grilling two ministers over alleged violations, opposition MP Abdulkareem Al-Kandari filed a new grilling against HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah for allegedly failing to implement development programs. The first grilling against Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh ended quickly, but in the second grilling, 10 MPs filed a no-confidence motion against Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri.

Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem told reporters the premier's grilling will be listed on the agenda of the next session. The Assembly decided to debate the grilling of the two ministers and approve two laws till late at night yesterday and cancel the session today. Kandari charged the prime minister has failed to perform his job as the head of the Council of Ministers, which is responsible for drawing and implementing public policies and development plans.

The lawmaker also insisted that the prime minister is responsible for the failure of the government to implement key policies on correcting the demographic structure, which resulted in expatriates reaching 3.36 million against just 1.4 million citizens. During the session yesterday, MP Safa Al-Hashem said Kuwaitis have been victims of rising crimes carried out by expatriates, including prostitution and drugs. She called for actions by the government to force expatriate single males out of mostly-family residential areas.

In the grilling, Kandari also charged that the prime minister is responsible for the Council of Ministers conceding parts of its responsibilities like allowing the Amiri Diwan to carry out key projects that are the work of the government. Kandari charged that the Council of Ministers under HH Sheikh Jaber had failed to implement the necessary policies to cut spending and also failed to safeguard national unity and identity with regards to the controversial issue of using illegal methods to get Kuwaiti citizenship.

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## News in brief



Amir opens causeway today

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah will inaugurate the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway today at 10:00 am local time. —KUNA

## Riots erupt in Venezuela amid 'coup' attempt

CARACAS: Venezuela's self-proclaimed acting president Juan Guaido claimed yesterday that troops had joined his campaign to oust President Nicolas Maduro, whose government vowed to put down what it called an attempted coup by the US-backed opposition leader. An apparently carefully planned attempt by Guaido to demonstrate growing military support disintegrated into rioting as palls of black smoke rose over eastern Caracas. The government said it was "deactivating" an

attempted coup by a small group of "treacherous" soldiers.

And there was little early sign Maduro's iron grip on the military - which has kept him in power in a months-long standoff with Guaido - had slipped. On Twitter, he claimed the military chiefs had assured him of their "total loyalty". Confusion reigned in Caracas as a crowd that swelled to thousands, many waving Venezuelan flags, flocked onto a highway near a Caracas military base.

Guaido had rallied his supporters with an early morning video message that showed him with armed troops he said had heeded months of urging to join his campaign to oust Maduro. The 35-year-old National Assembly leader - recognized as interim president by more than 50 countries

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CARACAS: Members of the Bolivarian National Guard who joined Venezuelan opposition leader Juan Guaido fire into the air to repel forces loyal to President Nicolas Maduro near La Carlota military base yesterday. — AFP

## Iran designates all US troops terrorists

LONDON: Iranian President Hassan Rouhani signed a bill into law yesterday declaring all US forces in the Middle East terrorists and calling the US government a sponsor of terrorism. The bill was passed by parliament last week in retaliation for President Donald Trump's decision this month to designate Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards a foreign terrorist organization. Rouhani instructed the ministry of intelligence, ministry of foreign affairs, the armed forces, and Iran's supreme national security council to implement the law, state media reported. — Reuters

## Japan rings in new era as Naruhito becomes emperor

TOKYO: A new era dawned in Japan today as Naruhito officially became emperor at midnight following his father's historic abdication from the Chrysanthemum Throne, the world's oldest monarchy. The 59-year-old Naruhito will formally take possession of the sacred imperial regalia at a solemn ceremony later today, but he became the 126th emperor at the stroke of midnight, ushering in the "Reiwa" imperial era.

His father, the popular 85-year-old Akihito used his final royal speech to offer his "heartfelt gratitude to the people of Japan" and pray for global peace as the curtain came down on his 30-year reign that saw him transform the role of emperor. During a 10-minute ceremony in the Imperial Palace's elegant Room of Pine, he stopped to offer a hand to his wife of 60 years, Michiko, as she stepped down from the stage

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TOKYO: Japan's Emperor Akihito walks in front of Crown Prince Naruhito and Crown Princess Masako as he leaves at the end of his abdication ceremony yesterday. — AFP

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## Trump seeks to label Brotherhood terrorist group

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump is seeking to blacklist the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group, a far-reaching step that would place the United States firmly on the side of its authoritarian allies in the Middle East. "The president has consulted with his national security team and leaders in the region who share his concern, and this designation is working its way through the internal process," said White House Press Secretary Sarah Sanders.

The Brotherhood, a nearly century-old Islamist movement born in Egypt with pockets of support across the Arab world, was designated a terrorist organization by Cairo after the military in 2013 ousted Mohamed Morsi, a democratically elected president with roots in the movement. Placing the Muslim Brotherhood on Washington's list of foreign terrorist organizations would make it a crime for any American to assist the group and would ban from the United States its members, who are active in political parties in several countries.

The move comes three weeks after Trump welcomed Egypt's President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi, who has cracked down heavily on the Muslim Brotherhood as well as other movements ranging from Islamic State extremists to secular activists. During their White House talks, Trump praised Sisi for "doing a great job," saying the United States and Egypt had "never had a better relationship". The terrorist designation would delight Sisi as well as Saudi Arabia, which despite its ultraconservative Wahhabi ideology, disdains the Muslim Brotherhood due to its support for political change in the kingdom, including over Riyadh's alliance with Washington.

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## Dubai announces futuristic projects

DUBAI: Dubai announced a series of futuristic urban projects yesterday, including a 15-km cable car system above the emirate's main road. A 380-metre long Sky Garden, with an area of 3,422 sq m, will be "a new tourist destination", said WAM. The "Skypods" project - consisting of cable cars above Sheikh Zayed Road - will include 21 stations and will move up to 8,400 people an hour in each direction. The news agency said ride-hailing app Careem will provide 3,500 bicycles at 350 stations across the emirate, in cooperation with the Roads and Transport Authority. — AFP

## UAE sentences Turk to life

ABU DHABI: The United Arab Emirates' supreme court upheld a life sentence against a Turkish citizen for promoting Islamist groups in Syria and transferring funds out of the Gulf state, state media reported. The supreme court in Abu Dhabi upheld the life sentence of the 49-year-old Turkish citizen for "launching an extensive campaign on a Facebook account named 'Ali Ozturk Mehmet' without getting an official permit" to promote "the ideologies of the two terrorist groups and sending them funds through money transfer companies in the UAE", the state news agency WAM said. — AFP

## Indian army mocked for yeti 'footprint' pics

NEW DELHI: Photos of "yeti footprints" posted online by the Indian army triggered a social media storm yesterday, with users ridiculing the military for propagating theories debunked by science. The army tweeted three images late on Monday showing a series of foot-shaped impressions, each almost a meter long in the snow in the Himalayas near the Nepal-China frontier.

"For the first time, an #IndianArmy Mountaineering Expedition Team has sited Mysterious Footprints of mythical beast 'Yeti', the apparently serious tweet on the army's official account said.

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In this handout photo taken by the Indian Army on April 9, 2019, large footprints are seen in the snow near the Makalu Base Camp in the northeastern Himalayas. — AFP

## Local



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



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



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the newly-appointed Ambassador of Somalia to Kuwait Abdullah Mohammad Odoua.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the new Ambassador of Argentina Claudia Alejandra Zampieri.

# Amir, Crown Prince receive Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad at Bayan Palace

## Amir sends condolences to Burkina Faso president over church attack victims

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah. His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah also received His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad at Bayan Palace.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Crown Prince received the newly-appointed Ambassador of Somalia to Kuwait Abdullah Mohammad Odoua. His Highness the Crown Prince also received the new Ambassador of Argentina Claudia Alejandra Zampieri. Furthermore, His Highness the Crown Prince received Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, as well as Sheikha Dr Suad Al-Sabah, who presented him with a book titled 'Kuwait in the Era of Abdullah bin Sabah Al-Sabah (1866-1892)'.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences to President of Burkina Faso Roch Marc Kabore over victims of the attack on a church in Soum province northern the country. Reaffirming Kuwait's strong condemnation of such criminal act that targeted innocent lives and goes against all humane values, His Highness prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon the victims. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to President Kabore. — KUNA



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah receives a book from Sheikha Dr Suad Al-Sabah.

## Municipal Council faces challenges to achieve vision: Minister



Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Shula delivers a speech.



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah attends the first conference of the Municipal Council yesterday. — KUNA

KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Shula said yesterday that the biggest challenge facing the Municipal Council is to contribute in realizing Kuwait's vision 2035 and making the country attractive for investment to be a financial and commercial center. This came in a speech by the Minister during the opening of the first conference of the Municipal Council under the patronage and presence of His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Sabah. He stressed

that the state's interest in this conference is evidence of the firm belief in the vital role played by the municipal council in the field of development in the State of Kuwait.

He said that the conference is the first of its kind for the council, which includes many young national talents who "are eager to serve our dear country and contribute to its advancement and raise its banner." He said that everyone knows the importance of the role of the Council since the beginning of this period of Kuwait's modern history, as well as being the starting point for

Kuwaiti democracy for decades. He said that the Municipal Council also participated in the development process and in enhancing the process of participation in the formulation of policies and the development of plans and reporting of projects in all matters related to the functions of municipality's urban, environmental, health and other activities.

In a speech at the opening ceremony of the conference, His Highness the Prime Minister praised the role of Kuwait's Municipal Council in enhancing coordination

and cooperation with various concerned state bodies in the development plan. His Highness the Premier stressed the importance of these conferences to review ideas, proposals and initiatives that support the country's development plans, and achieve the vision of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah to transform Kuwait into a financial hub. The ceremony was also attended by President of the Municipal Council Osama Al-Otaibi, and a number of high-ranking state officials. — KUNA

## Zain sponsors AUM Career Fair 2019

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced its gold sponsorship of the American University of the Middle East (AUM) Career Fair for the year 2019, which was held at the main campus in Egaila from 29 - 30 April. The event was organized by AUM's Tawteen Career Development and Recruitment center, and witnessed the attendance of Zain Kuwait's Chief Human Resources Officer Nawal Bourisli.

Zain is keen on supporting this career fair on an annual basis given the high

turnouts it witnesses from both students and graduates who are eager to learn about the company's available job vacancies. Students of various business and engineering majors learned about Zain's leading experience in the telecom sector, as well as its internal policy and wonderful work atmosphere.

Zain participated in the career fair through its dedicated booth, where it highlighted the available job vacancies in the company, provided a detailed explanation of the nature of work at various departments and divisions, as well as answered questions and inquiries visitors had. Zain also showcased the available vacancies for undergraduates to work in part-time jobs as part of its Future University Network (FUN) program.

During the event, Zain HR officials - led by Zain Kuwait's Chief Human Resources Officer Nawal Bourisli - took part in a special seminar, where they discussed Zain's HR



KUWAIT: A group photo at Zain's booth.

strategy, the company's efforts in offering its workforce with equal opportunities for gender quality and achieving inclusion, as well as other topics related to working in the private sector.

Zain participates in career fairs all year round as part of its Human Resources strat-

egy, which closely focuses on supporting the education sector hand in hand with various universities, colleges, and educational institutions in Kuwait (both public and private), with aim of providing students and graduates with career opportunities in the private sector.

Zain is committed to playing an active role in the investment in the human capital of Kuwait. The company seeks to provide young and eager Kuwaitis with job opportunities that allow them to apply their practical skills, achieve their potential, and fully develop their capabilities.

## Local

# Doctors convicted of manslaughter in former lawmaker's death

## Minister reduces expat advisors' rewards

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

**KUWAIT:** The misdemeanors court sentenced two doctors (a Kuwaiti and an Egyptian) to a year in jail for manslaughter in the death of former MP Falah Al-Sawwagh. The court decided they can pay KD 5,000 to stop the implementation of the sentence. The health ministry and the coroner said the death of Sawwagh was due to a medical error, with tests showing the presence of toxins and bacteria. Separately, the appeals court ordered the arrest of a citizen accused of forging a law degree which he used to apply for a deputy prosecutor's job. The court of first instance had sentenced the suspect to five years in jail, in addition to two Egyptian men: one works in the Ministry of Higher Education and the other owns an institution in a Gulf country.

### Expat advisors

Minister of Public Works and State Minister for Housing Affairs Dr Jenan Bushehri approved the lists of outstanding performance for 1,168 employees at the housing care authority. The total rewards are KD 675,000 - KD 1,500 for the first group and KD 1,250 for the second group, all the way down to KD 200 according to the job

grade. Rewards of all expat advisors were reduced from KD 1,500 in past years to KD 800 this year. Meanwhile, an official at the Civil Aviation Directorate said the directorate is evaluating 3,600 employees to grant those who deserve outstanding work rewards at the start of June.

### Ramadan preparations

Social affairs ministry spokesman and assistant undersecretary for cooperative affairs Abdelaziz Shuaib said the ministry has completed its preparations for the holy month of Ramadan. He said the cooperative sector followed efforts with regards to the Ramadan basket cooperatives present to their shareholders each year. He said the price of the basket varies between one co-op and another according to the policy of the board of directors and according to the contents of the basket.

Kuwait Food Bank announced a partnership agreement with Jahra Governorate that aims at presenting social and charity initiatives and programs in order to improve social action in the governorate and help needy families. The bank said the partnership is within the cooperation framework between Kuwait Food Bank and Jahra governorate. The agreement was signed in the presence of food bank officials represented by Deputy Chairman Meshaal Al-



The late former MP Falah Al-Sawwagh

Ansari and General Manager Salem Al-Hamar, Jahra Governor Nasser Al-Hajraf and other officials.

Ansari said as per an initiative by Hajraf, clear procedures were set through which social work can be improved in cooperation with the food bank in order to support needy families to improve their living conditions.

He said the partnership between the food bank and Jahra governorate will have a positive impact in supporting needy families, especially areas with a high population density, where individuals need help to improve their living situation. Ansari appreciated instructions of Hajraf in increasing the understanding of social responsibility, his support of the food bank's efforts and affirming its balance in serving the Kuwaiti society, which is a model that should be followed at the regional level and Gulf region in particular.

### Mock drill at Ibn Sina Hospital

Kuwait medical emergencies department carried out a mock evacuation exercise at Ibn Sina Hospital as part of the health ministry's strategy to qualify government hospitals' workers to implement, activate and upgrade emergency plans. Assistant health ministry undersecretary for allied medical services Dr Fawaz Al-Rifaa said the medical emergencies department, with the participation of Ibn Sina Hospital, carried out an evacuation and moved patients of other wards who were not affected, while some cases were transferred to supporting hospitals. He said the department participated with its teams and ambulances in coordination with the hospital, adding that these mock exercises aim at keeping hospitals ready for any emergency.

## Kuwait calls for protecting Palestinians

**NEW YORK:** Kuwait called on the international community to protect Palestinian civilians and pressure Israel to halt all acts of aggression against them. This came in a speech by Kuwait's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Bader Al-Munayekh at the UN session on the situation in the Middle East late Monday. "Palestine cannot remain an exception to this rule. The international community must abide by the international mandate of UNRWA and secure the resources and financial contributions necessary for its budget and activities," Munayekh stressed.

"Today we commemorate the 52nd anniversary of the Israeli occupation, the 25th anniversary of the Oslo Accords, the 25th anniversary of the Ibrahim Mosque massacre and the first anniversary of 'The Great March of Return' demonstrations,"

he noted, adding that Israel's ongoing occupation limits chances for peace denies the Palestinian people its legitimate rights. He added that the occupying power continues pushing forward with its illegal settlement activities, demolitions and forced displacement of civilians while tightening its 12-year-old siege of Gaza. "The occupying power makes unilateral decisions, refuses to review the mandate of the Temporary International Presence in Hebron and is attempting to change the historical character and demographics of Jerusalem," he said.

Turning to the Syrian Golan Heights, Munayekh said recognition of Israel's sovereignty over that territory is a violation of UN Charters and relevant international laws and agreements. He noted that the report of the Human Rights Council's Independent Inquiry to investigate protests at the Gaza fence in 2018 found that the use of force by the Israeli Defense Force led to 183 deaths and many more injuries, saying that such actions amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. "The ongoing siege of Gaza constitutes a violation of international norms," he further noted. He stressed the importance of sup-



NEW YORK: Kuwait's Deputy Permanent Representative to the UN Bader Al-Munayekh speaks at a UN session on the situation in the Middle East. — KUNA

porting peace efforts, to end the Israeli occupation imposed since 1967 and allow Palestinians to fully restore their legitimate

political rights and establish their independent state on their land, with East Jerusalem as its capital. — KUNA



## Kuwait Project Company launches 'Munjiza' initiative

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Projects Company (Holding) (KIPCO) in association with Burgan Bank, a member of KIPCO Group, has launched an initiative titled 'Munjiza' with a private dinner at the Chairman's Club in KIPCO Tower this past Monday.

Munjiza highlights those extraordinary women and their work by providing them with a platform to share their work. Munjiza also builds a community where women can strengthen and create partnerships for future collaborations. The concept of this initiative stemmed from The

KIPCO Sharakah Forum and its partnership theme, its concept ensured the start of Munjiza. The KIPCO Sharakah Forum connects NGOs allowing them to build partnerships for a better society. Munjiza will focus on those extraordinary women and the specific NGOs that concentrate on them and their different issues. Munjiza will help them achieve the partnerships that the KIPCO Sharakah Forum has created for a better society.

"Our dinner event was successful as 45 distinguished Kuwaiti women were of those in attendance, and total of 17 of those women were from NGOs that focus on subjects pertaining to women. The majority of those in attendance showed interest in taking part in the Munjiza initiative and we would like to welcome any NGOs in a relevant field that believe they can benefit or contribute to the Munjiza initiative as well to please join us. KIPCO values women empowerment and considers it an important topic of discussion, demonstrated by the fact that we have

recently signed the UN Women 'Women Empowerment Principles' to drive change for gender equality and ensure an equal opportunity for all," said Abeer Al-Omar, Director of Corporate Social Responsibility at KIPCO.

Burgan Bank has continuously supported KIPCO, its mother company in its CSR initiatives and has been the key supporter in Munjiza. Burgan Bank maintains a legacy as a highly dedicated member of the society that brings about positive change and contributes to Kuwait's transformation. Their commitment is driven by a dynamic full-fledged community program entitled 'ENGAGE' - Together to be the change, which promotes social welfare through educational, cultural and health driven initiatives.

Omar concluded, "We welcome government, private, and the civic sectors, to partner with us on this initiative specifically its functions. We believe it will benefit every sectors CSR and sustainability visibility within our community."

the environment and its impact on human life, inviting them to show their love to the Earth, illustrating the resulting impacts on the lives of individuals where Earth Day has a special symbol not restricted to a certain country or people, but it is a day for all Earth inhabitants, so that we all can think together about protecting the environment and actively participate in initiatives and activities aimed at stopping pollution and damaging the environment.

Dashti emphasized that AUB is promoting the culture of environmental protection through recycling and reducing wastes which are harmful to the environment. In this spirit, during celebrating Earth Day, the Bank offered to the guests' eco-friendly coffee cups with the slogan "Make Every Day Earth Day". The Bank also distributed free flowers seedlings to the public. On the other hand, the bank provided 1,500 biodegradable bags to more than five health centers in Kuwait as a further initiative for environment protection.

Dashti stressed on the importance of sustainable work and constant cooperation with all relevant entities to launch and implement effective initiatives that will protect the environment and all its components, reduce pollution and stop harmful practices that cause harm to the environment, given that preserving the environment and its natural resources contribute to achieving environmental sustainability in particular, which falls under the concept of sustainability in its overall framework in general.



## Ahli United Bank celebrates World Earth Day

**KUWAIT:** Ahli United Bank (AUB) celebrated the World Earth Day anniversary on 22nd April supporting its focus on the environment as a part of its social program. The celebration included switching off the lights in the Bank Head Office from 6:00 pm to 5:00 am next day, reflecting the importance of saving energy to protect the Earth. Tareq Muhmood, AUB Acting Chief Executive Officer, and Sahar Dashti, General Manager Customer Protection, being responsible for social responsibility programs at Ahli United Bank have planted seedlings around the Bank building in a simple but worthy message to demonstrate the Bank's commitment to encourage protection of the environment.

On this initiative, Sahar Dashti said in a press release "We at AUB consider Earth Day one of the most important events to raise public perception and enhance environmental awareness for its positive impact towards better and more beautiful Earth by preserving it and drawing the attention of public opinion to the importance of

### Legalese

## Ramadan hours for domestic workers

By Attorney Fajer Ahmed



**D**omestic workers in Kuwait are a big part of our lifestyle. I have always heard my family, friends and colleagues say they really need a domestic worker to assist the household in Ramadan. Some will even allow their domestic workers to go on holiday early, just as long as they come back for Ramadan. Ramadan is a great time to connect with the family and enjoy food, and this means large family gatherings with feasts. This also means more work or different work schedules for our household helpers.

I hope you understand that some domestic helpers aren't Muslim, and therefore would like to eat during the day. Please understand that there is no law that forces them to fast indoors and it is their right to choose whether to fast or not, regardless of their religion. If you do not want to see them eat or smell the aroma of food, because you may feel weak while fasting, please provide them with a safe non-judgmental space where they can eat.

Keep in mind that some are Muslim and would like to fast and pray; therefore, please reduce their hours so they are able to do so. The working hours of employees in the private sector are reduced by law from eight hours to six a day. Those of you who fast and have a desk job like me will understand why this law might have come into effect - it is really hard to muster energy, even mentally in Ramadan, when you are detoxing your body. So can you imagine how difficult it must be for domestic helpers, who might have to cook, iron, carry goods, clean, etc? So be considerate, and reduce their hours also.

I wish you and your families a blissful Ramadan. Please be kind and considerate to others regardless of their religious beliefs, and please also realize that we do not have to follow laws to be kind - we can choose to be kind ourselves. Ramadan Mubarak!

For questions or queries, please email us at [info@fl-legal.com](mailto:info@fl-legal.com).

## Felony suspicion in woman's death

**KUWAIT:** Detectives are investigating an Egyptian woman's death to determine if it was of natural causes or as a result of foul play. Her husband told them that she died at home, but the forensics report said she was exposed to a highly toxic substance. A police source said the husband told police his wife had died at home, so authorities went there. The body was taken to the coroner, where it was found the woman died after being exposed to a highly toxic insecticide, so the public prosecution took over the case due to a felony suspicion. Investigations are ongoing.

### Child smoking shisha

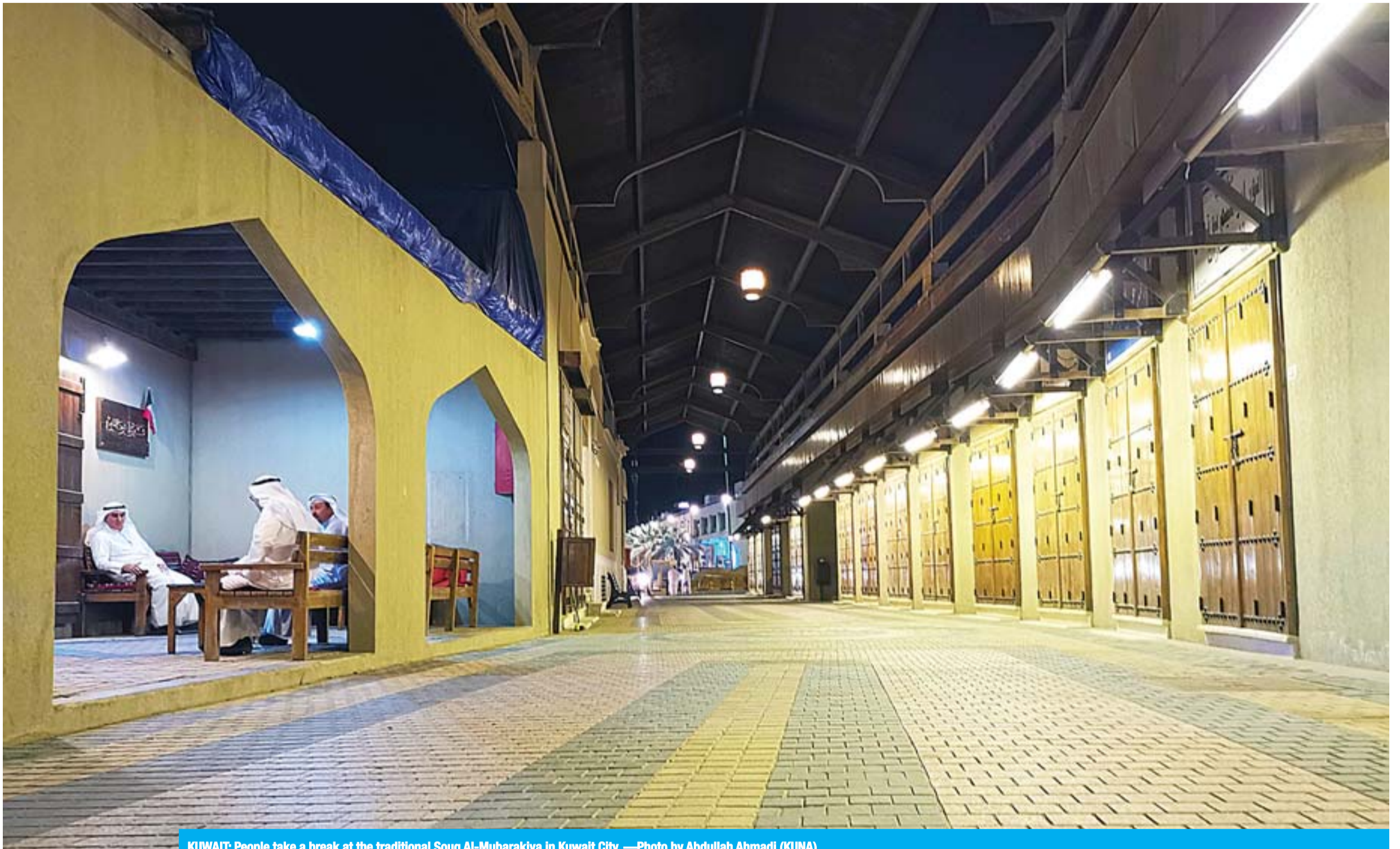
Police are looking for a girl who made a video clip of a child smoking shisha. The clip was seen by senior interior ministry officials, so they gave instructions to concerned authorities to find and arrest her for violating the child protection law.

### Harasser charged

A man who was harassing a woman attacked two detectives, injuring both in the eyes and face. Police received a call about a man harassing a Kuwaiti woman and making indecent moves, even as she ignored him. Policemen responded and asked for his ID, but he claimed not to carry any, so he was taken to the police station. The suspect started smoking while waiting for his family to bring his civil ID. Police told him to stop smoking, but he refused and also refused to enter the station. When policemen attempted to restrain him, he attacked them and injured two of them, besides shouting indecent words at them. Policemen then controlled and handcuffed him, and he was charged accordingly. — Translated by Kuwait Times from Al-Rai

## Local

## Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: People take a break at the traditional Souq Al-Mubarakiya in Kuwait City. —Photo by Abdullah Ahmadi (KUNA)

# Young Arabs call for religious reform, expect govts to deliver on economy

## Findings from the region's largest independent study of its kind

**DUBAI:** Young Arabs say religion plays too big a role in the Middle East and believe that religious institutions should be reformed, according to findings from the 11th annual ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey, released yesterday. The survey findings are based on 3,300 face-to-face interviews conducted by PSB between January 6 and January 29, 2019 with young Arab nationals aged 18 to 24 in 15 states in the Middle East and North Africa, with a 50:50 male female split.

The survey, the largest independent study of its kind into the region's largest demographic, finds that two-in-three (66 percent) young Arabs say religion plays too big a role in the region - an increase of 16 percentage points since 2015 - while even more (79 percent) say the region needs to reform its religious institutions. This call for reform can likely be explained by the fact that half (50 percent) say the Arab world's religious values are holding the region back.

The 2019 Survey also reveals that young people across the Arab world want to see an end to regional conflicts, such as the Syrian civil war with 73 percent saying the conflict should end regardless, whether Bashar Al-Assad stays in power or not. Instead of the regional conflicts, the survey data suggest that young Arabs want their governments to focus more on the economic issues, namely jobs and rising cost of living, the two issues seen as the largest obstacles facing the region.

### Economic matters

Young Arabs have high expectations for their governments to deliver on the economic matters, as 78 percent say it is their government's responsibility to provide jobs to all citizens; 78 percent say they expect energy subsidies; 60 percent say their government must provide housing to all; and one in three (33 percent) even say it is their government's duty to provide financial debt repayment to all citizens. In the eyes of many young Arabs, their governments are currently falling short of meeting their expectations as nearly two in three (65 percent) say their country is not doing enough to help young families (83 percent in the Levant, 74 percent in North Africa, and 39 percent in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries).

"The Arab Youth Survey once again provides tremendous insight into the thoughts of young people living in one of the most complex regions in the world," said Donna Imperato, Global CEO, BCW (Burson Cohn & Wolfe). "The information surfaced by the study provides important context for busi-

ness leaders and policy makers as they work to understand and connect with this next generation of leaders."

The 2019 survey also explores how young Arabs perceive other countries in the region and outside the Middle East. For the eighth year running, the United Arab Emirates is seen as the top country to live in and for other countries to emulate. More than nine in 10 (93 percent) young Arabs also say the UAE is an ally of their country. Nearly as many young Arabs view Egypt (84 percent) and Saudi Arabia (80 percent) as allies to their country. Meanwhile, a strong majority say the United States is an adversary (59 percent) rather than an ally (41 percent). In fact, the views of the US among Arab youth are nearly as polarizing as the views of Iran (67 percent adversary vs. 32 percent ally); and when asked whether US or Russia is a stronger ally of their country, young Arabs are just as likely to select Russia (37 percent) as the US (38 percent), with another 25 percent saying that neither of the two global

three (31 percent) say they know someone suffering from mental health issues.

"At BCW, we are committed to using data, insights and analysis to fulfil our purpose of moving people, providing new perspectives on issues that are important to all of us," said Donna Imperato, CEO, BCW. "The ASDA'A BCW Arab Youth Survey is a perfect example of putting this into practice. Over 11 years it has established itself as a valuable research project that provides business leaders and policymakers with powerful insights into a critical demographic."

"For 11 years, the survey has provided insights into the hopes, fears and aspirations of the region's youth," said Sunil John, President, ASDA'A BCW. "This year's findings show that youth are looking at their governments to reshuffle their priorities, especially when it comes to the role played by religion and seemingly endless conflicts - and they want to see change."

"Young Arabs who have grown up against a backdrop of extremism and geopolitical conflicts are tired of the region being defined by war and conflict," John continued. "They say they want their leaders to focus on the economy and providing better services such as quality education and healthcare, and respondents, particularly in North Africa and the Levant, expect their governments to do much more to address these core concerns."

With 65 percent of the Arab population under the age of 30, the survey presents evidence-based insights into the attitudes of Arab youth, providing public and private sector organizations with data and analysis to inform their decision-making and policy creation.

### Other key findings from this year's survey include:

- Three in four young Arabs are concerned about the quality of education in their country, and two in three say they would prefer to pursue higher education outside their country.
- Arab youth view Saudi Arabia and the US as the two nations increasing their influence in the region more than any other countries.
- Young Arabs are driving the region's e-commerce boom and are beginning to prefer paying by card rather than cash when shopping online.
- Among Arab youth, social media is more popular and seen as more trustworthy than traditional media.

### YOUNG ARABS SAY RELIGION PLAYS TOO BIG OF A ROLE IN THE MIDDLE EAST AND RELIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS NEED TO BE REFORMED

#### HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT?

"Religion plays too big of a role in the Middle East"

"The Arab world needs to reform its religious institutions"



FINDING 01A

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### PERCEPTION THAT RELIGION IS TOO INFLUENTIAL IN THE REGION IS ON THE RISE

#### HOW STRONGLY DO YOU AGREE OR DISAGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT?

Religion plays too big of a role in "the Middle East"



FINDING 01B

©ASDAA BCW ARAB YOUTH SURVEY 2019



3,300 young Arabs surveyed

powers are an ally.

### Drug usage and mental health

For the first time in the history of the survey, Arab youth's attitudes towards such issues as drug usage and mental health were explored. More than half (57 percent) of young Arabs say that drug usage among young people in their country is on the rise, and 57 percent also say that drugs are easy to obtain in their country. The perceived rise of drug use among youth is particularly prevalent in the Levant (76 percent) and North Africa (59 percent).

When asked about mental health issues, a majority (54 percent) say accessing quality medical care for mental health issues is difficult in their country, for some likely made even more difficult by the fact that half (50 percent) of Arab youth say there is a stigma around seeking medical care for mental health issues, such as anxiety or depression. The survey reveals that mental health is not an issue on the margins, as nearly one in

Local

# Kuwait determined to defuse any tension in region and enjoy peace: Official

## Kuwait Deputy FM underlines importance of Asia cooperation dialogue

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is determined to defuse any tension in the region and enjoy peace, a senior government official said, commenting on threats of blocking of navigation of Strait of Hormuz. "Kuwait is counting on wisdom to address any sticky issues," Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah told reporters on the sidelines of a reception held on Monday at the Italian Embassy marking Italy's national day.

Meanwhile, Jarallah affirmed Kuwait's keenness toward the Asia cooperation dialogue, saying he would participate in the 16th ACD meeting in Doha, Qatar. Jarallah added that Kuwait called for a summit to members of the Asia Cooperation Dialogue, and was keen to implement its results. Regarding the issues that will be discussed in the meeting, Jarallah said partici-

pants will focus on various ways to bolster cooperation in the economic, investment, and energy sectors, and a portion on political issues in this regard.

### Jarallah highlights strong ties with Italy

In the meantime, Jarallah stressed the importance of bilateral relations between Kuwait and Italy, pointing out that there are common interests with visits' exchange at all levels. Furthermore, Jarallah expressed happiness to join the Italians on their national day, stressing Kuwait's aspiration to further enhance cooperation with friends in Italy in various

fields. He pointed out that large number of Kuwaitis visiting Italian cities during the summer period, and affirm the keenness of the Italian authorities to provide comfort and security to visitors. — KUNA



**KUWAIT:** Italian Ambassador to Kuwait Giuseppe Scognamiglio (left) and Kuwait's Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah cut the cake during a ceremony marking Italy's national day. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



**Diplomats and other dignitaries pose for a group photo.**



**Other dignitaries in attendance.**

## Cabinet discuss recent state visits, approves deals with Jordan, Egypt

**KUWAIT:** Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah briefed the Cabinet on Monday about a recent visit of Mauritanian President Mohammad Ould Abdulaziz, who held summit talks with His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah over challenges in Middle East. The Cabinet, in a meeting chaired by His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, welcomed positive outcome of the visit and hoped relations with Mauritanian would further develop to new levels. Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Anas Al-Saleh said in a statement.

Sheikh Sabah Al-Khaled also briefed the Cabinet about recent higher committee meeting with Bahrain which resulted in signature of memoranda of understanding and executive programs on custom, e-trade, culture and art, environment protection and agriculture, in addition to an MoU between state news agencies and chambers of commerce and industry.

The Cabinet, meanwhile, approved amendments to a 1991 decree to ban possession of hunting air-rifles, changes to criminal law over bribes. They agreed to change the name of Society College to the American International College (AIC). The Cabinet, said Saleh, approved cooperation cultural cooperation agreement with Jordan, and manpower accord with Egypt.

In the meantime, the Cabinet expressed sorrow over the earthquakes that hit several cities in the Philippines, which killed and injured a number of people, and damaged public facilities. At least eight people were killed when a magnitude 6.1 earthquake struck the Philippines' main



**KUWAIT:** His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah chairs the Cabinet's weekly meeting on Monday. — KUNA

island of Luzon last week. The quake hit 60 kms (37 miles) northwest of the capital, Manila, disrupting air, rail and road transport and causing some damage to buildings and infrastructure.

The Cabinet also expressed sincere grief over the cyclone and torrential rains that hit the Republic of South Africa, the Republic of the Comoros, the Republic of Mozambique, which claimed many lives and caused great damage. At least 38 people died after Cyclone (Kenneth) hit Mozambique, according to the country's disaster management institute. The Cabinet expressed sympathy with these friendly countries over these tragic circumstances and keenness to work towards alleviating the consequences of these humanitarian tragedies. — KUNA

## Kuwait proud of PIFSS former directors

**KUWAIT:** Kuwait is proud of former Public Institution for Social Security's (PIFSS) Director-General Hamad Al-Humaidhi, former Deputy General Manager for Information Technology Ahmad Al-Turki and Deputy General Manager for Investment and Operations Sheikh Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, said Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf Monday. This came in a speech delivered by Minister Al-Hajraf during the ceremony held by PIFSS under his patronage in honor of the former directors after a long service with many achievements of the institution. He affirmed that their dedicated work has become a strategic cornerstone for the stability of Kuwaiti society, ensuring that all its citizens have a decent, stable and economically secure life.



**KUWAIT:** Finance Minister Dr Nayef Al-Hajraf honors Hamad Al-Humaidhi during the ceremony. — KUNA

Hajraf noted that the honored worked amid great challenges and difficulties in order to achieve the ultimate goal of any social security institution is to maintain the financial sustainability of the organization.

Meanwhile, the Director-General of PIFSS Mishaal Al-Othman said that the honoring came to express all appreciation and gratitude for these who worked hard for the service of the Kuwaiti people. — KUNA

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Jihadists head to Afghanistan after caliphate collapse

## In borderless Europe, security chiefs unite against jihadist threat



JISR ASH SHUGHUR, Syria: People watch as members of the Syrian Civil Defense, also known as the 'White Helmets', search the rubble of a collapsed building following an explosion in the town of Jisr al-Shughur, in the west of the mostly rebel-held Syrian province of Idlib. — AFP

# IS remains a potent threat

## Al-Baghdadi believed to be hiding out in isolated area of Iraq or Syria

**BAGHDAD:** Islamic State remains a potent threat around the world despite reduced capabilities, Iraqi Prime Minister Adel Abdul Mahdi said yesterday, adding its leader Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi had made his latest video appearance in a "remote area". Abdul Mahdi did not say which country that area was in. A video released late on Monday by Islamic State's media network showed a man it said was Baghdadi in what would be his first appearance since he declared the jihadists' now-defunct "caliphate" five years ago.

The authenticity and date of the recording could not be independently verified, Abdul Mahdi said

Baghdadi's appearance was an attempt to boost militants and that Islamic State would attempt to carry out more attacks. "Regarding the location of Baghdadi, we can't give intelligence information right now but it's clear from the video that he's in a remote area," Abdul Mahdi said at a news conference on a visit to Berlin. Baghdadi, an Iraqi, is believed to be hiding out in an isolated area of either Iraq or Syria, part of vast desert regions Islamic State once held and from where it is thought the jihadists are now waging regular insurgent-style attacks against security forces in both countries.

Hisham al-Hashemi, a security adviser to the Iraqi government, said officials had narrowed his whereabouts from 17 to a possible four locations. "These are in the desert of Iraq's Anbar (province) or in the (eastern) desert of Homs in Syria," he said. Abdul Mahdi said Islamic State's capabilities had "greatly reduced" but that the group still posed a threat. "Daesh (Islamic State) is not just a small organization, it's widespread and will try to put confidence back in its militants and carry out acts such as those in Sri Lanka," he said, referring to the Easter Sunday attacks claimed by the group which killed more than 250 people.

In the 18-minute video from the Al Furqan network, a bearded man with Baghdadi's appearance says the bombings in Sri Lanka were Islamic State's response to losses in its last territorial stronghold of Baghouz in Syria. The video would be the first from Baghdadi since he was filmed in the Iraqi city of Mosul in 2014. More recent speeches have been released as audio recordings. A US-backed campaign ended Islamic State's control of territory in Iraq in late 2017 and in Syria last month, nearly five years after the group took over vast areas in both countries. — Reuters

## Baghdadi, the Islamic State's elusive leader

**BAGHDAD:** Islamic State group chief Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi, who purportedly appeared for the first time in five years in an IS propaganda video released Monday, remains the world's most wanted man, despite the jihadists' "caliphate" imploding weeks ago. After declaring himself caliph in 2014, Baghdadi held sway over seven million people across swathes of Syria and Iraq, where IS implemented its brutal version of Islamic law. But that land has been whittled down to disjointed sleeper cells by years of fighting, including a ferocious bombing campaign by a US-led coalition.

It is unclear when the footage was filmed, but the man said to be Baghdadi referred to last week's deadly attack in Sri Lanka and to the months-long fight for IS's final bastion Baghouz, which ended in late March. "The battle for Baghouz is over," he said, sitting cross-legged on a cushion and addressing three men whose faces have been blurred. "God ordered us to wage 'jihad.' He did not order us to win," he said. Reclusive even when IS was at the peak of its power, the 47-year-old Iraqi, who suffers from diabetes, was rumored to have been wounded or killed several times.

His whereabouts have never been confirmed. "He only has three companions: his older brother Jumaa, his driver and bodyguard Abdullatif al-Jubury, whom he has known since childhood, and his courier Saud Al-Kurdi," said Hisham Al-Hashemi, an Iraqi specialist on IS. Hashemi said the quartet is likely laying low somewhere in Syria's vast Badia desert, which stretches from the eastern border with Iraq to the sweeping province of Homs. That is where his son Hudhayfa al-Badri was reportedly killed in July by three Russian guided missiles, Hashemi added.



In this undated TV grab, the chief of the Islamic State group Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi purportedly appears for the first time in five years in a propaganda video in an undisclosed location. — AFP

### 'The Ghost'

Nicknamed "The Ghost", he had made no public appearances since he delivered a sermon at Mosul's famed Al-Nuri mosque in 2014, when he declared himself "caliph". His last voice recording to his supporters was released in August, eight months after Iraq announced it had defeated IS and as US-backed forces closed in next door in Syria.

But even as the Kurdish-led Syrian Democratic Forces pressed the "final battle" against IS's last sliver of territory earlier this year, a spokesman for the US-backed group said the elusive leader was likely not there. "We do not think he is in Syria," Mustafa Bali told AFP as the fall of Baghouz neared, without elaborating. Some of those who fled the final holdout in the dying days of the caliphate claimed they had been ordered to leave by Baghdadi.

"Had the caliph not ordered it, we would not have left," one woman told AFP in late

February, referring to Baghdadi, who was not believed to have been in Baghouz as the "caliphate" crumbled. Keeping a low profile-in contrast to slain Al-Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden-has helped Baghdadi survive for years. Born Ibrahim Awad Al-Badri in 1971, the passionate football fan came from modest beginnings in Samarra, north of Baghdad.

His high school results were not good enough for law school and his poor eyesight prevented him from joining the army, so he moved to the Baghdad district of Tobchi to study Islam. "He had a vision, early on, of where he wanted to go and what kind of organization he wanted to create," said Sofia Amara, author of a 2017 documentary that unveiled exclusive documents on Baghdadi. After US-led forces invaded Iraq in 2003, he founded his own insurgent organization but it never carried out major attacks.

When he was arrested and held in a US detention facility in southern Iraq in February 2004, he was still very much a second- or third-tier jihadist. But it was Camp Bucca-later dubbed "the University of Jihad"-where Baghdadi came of age as a jihadist. "People there realised that this nobody, this shy guy was an astute strategist," Amara said. He was released at the end of 2004 for lack of evidence. Iraqi security services arrested him twice subsequently, in 2007 and 2012, but let him go because they did not know who he was.

### Brutal strategist

In 2005, the father of five pledged allegiance to Abu Musab Al-Zarqawi, the brutal leader of Iraq's Al-Qaeda franchise. Zarqawi was killed by an American drone strike in 2006, and after his successor was also eliminated, Baghdadi took the helm in 2010. He revived the Islamic State of Iraq (ISI), expanded into Syria in 2013 and declared independence from Al-Qaeda. In the following years, Baghdadi's Islamic State group captured swathes of territory, set up a brutal system of government, and inspired thousands to join the "caliphate" from abroad. — AFP

## Why has IS chief appeared after a 5-year absence?

**BEIRUT:** An Islamic State group video purporting to show supreme Abu Bakr Al-Baghdadi for the first time in five years may herald a new chapter for the jihadists, according to experts. The release of the video Monday addresses key issues for IS, analysts said, as the jihadists look ahead following the collapse of their so-called caliphate.

### Why now?

Baghdadi has been laying low for years-earning him the nickname "The Ghost"-and his whereabouts have never been confirmed. His last voice recording to his supporters was released in August, eight months after Iraq announced it had defeated IS and as the US-backed Syrian Democratic Forces closed in on the jihadists in neighboring Syria. Monday's video, released one month after the IS proto-state was declared defeated, "comes at a crucially important time," said Charles Lister, senior fellow at the Middle East Institute in the United States.

IS is emerging from a "territorial defeat in its Syria-Iraq heartlands, and (is) attempting to re-assert itself as a global movement capable of conducting major attacks around the world," he said. Pieter Nanninga, from the University of Groningen in the Netherlands, said the difficulties facing IS explains the timing. Baghdadi wants "to boost morale of his supporters by showing that IS is still a powerful group."

### A new era?

In the video released by IS's Al-Furqan media arm, the man said to be Baghdadi acknowledged "the battle for Baghouz is over". The fight for IS's final redoubt in the Syrian village of Baghouz ended in March. In a segment in which the man is not on camera, his voice describes the April 21 attacks in Sri Lanka, which killed 253 people and wounded nearly 500, as "vengeance for their brothers in Baghouz." He insisted IS's operations against the West were part of a "long battle," and that IS would continue to "take revenge" for members who had been killed. Amarnath Amarasingam, from the Institute for Strategic Dialogue, said Baghdadi's speech served to "contextualise... or make sense of the defeat," of the IS proto-state.

"That was largely the point of the speech-to show that they are going through a transition period, (and that) the defeat is real, that there is focus on places outside of Syria and Iraq in the next few months," he said. Charlie Winter, a researcher at King's College London, said that Baghdadi wants to demonstrate that the influence of the group's extremist ideology remains dangerously intact even after the collapse of its so-called caliphate. "Baghdadi wants to show that if the territory has been lost, it doesn't matter," he said. "The ideology has been globalised in a manner that was never possible before."

At the peak of its military success, IS claimed a string of attacks around the world, from the November 2015 coordinated attacks in Paris to the deadly rampage of a gunman at an Istanbul nightclub minutes into 2017. The latest video demonstrates that the risk of attacks anywhere in the world remains just as high, even after the territorial defeat of the group. — AFP

## International

# 'Anti-Jewish hate' consuming Europe, America: Nazi hunter

## 'There is no safe place on earth right now for Jews'

WASHINGTON: France's most famous Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld has slammed the resurgence of "anti-Jewish hate," days after a teenage gunman's deadly attack on a synagogue in California. "There is no safe place on earth right now for Jews," the 83-year-old told AFP in an interview in Washington. John Earnest, 19, posted a virulently anti-Semitic letter on right-wing internet forums and armed himself with an assault rifle before carrying out the attack on the Chabad of Poway synagogue, near San Diego, on Saturday.

He killed a 60-year-old woman and wounded three others, including the rabbi and a young child - and would have likely claimed more lives had his weapon not jammed. It came exactly six months after a similar shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue left 11 dead, the worst attack against Jews in the history of the United States.



### Trump 'fails to see the danger'

award given out by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

Klarsfeld, who like the late Wiesel was born in Romania, said he was disturbed by the sometimes ambiguous stance of President Donald Trump on the rising tide of white supremacy in the US. "I have not heard President Trump take a strong position against the far right here, whereas in France, in Germany and elsewhere in Europe, leaders of states always have a firmer response," he said. "Either he fails to see the danger, or he doesn't believe it is dangerous," added Klarsfeld.

"I think that the Jews of the United States, who are very grateful to him for what he did for the Jewish state, that is to say Israel, expect him to react against those who threaten the wellbeing of American Jews," added the historian, referring to the recognition by the Republican billionaire of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel. The New York Times on Saturday apologized for publishing a cartoon that showed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu as a guide dog, wearing a collar with the Star of David, leading a blind Donald Trump who wore a kippah. Klarsfeld said the cartoon was "insulting" for Trump as much as for Netanyahu who was "treated like a dog."

"It is an anti-Semitic cartoon, that is to say that Jews are guiding the world and that corresponds to a stereo-



WASHINGTON: Former Nazi hunters Serge and Beate Klarsfeld speak during an interview with AFP in Washington, DC. Historian and former Nazi hunter Serge Klarsfeld deplored a resurgence of 'anti-Jewish hatred', two days after a deadly attack on a California synagogue. — AFP

type very common among the far right, which one also finds on the far left," he said. Klarsfeld, who spent decades working to commemorate the victims of the Holocaust, is worried about the future of Europe and called on centrists

to mobilize ahead of the next European elections. "Never has a far-right or far-left regime made its people happy and prosperous, inevitably the extremes of power lead to misery and barbed wire." — AFP

## US veteran arrested for plotting attack

LOS ANGELES: A US Army veteran who was allegedly plotting a large-scale terror attack near Los Angeles as revenge for the recent mass shootings in New Zealand has been arrested, authorities said Monday. Mark Steven Domingo, 26, who had combat experience in Afghanistan and recently converted to Islam, faces federal terror-related charges for plotting mass casualties via a home-made bomb at a white nationalist rally in Long Beach this past weekend, officials said.

"This was a case in which law enforcement was able to identify a man consumed with hate and bent on mass murder, and stop him before he could carry out his attack," US Attorney Nick Hanna told reporters. "Nevertheless, the criminal case outlines a chilling terrorism plot that developed over the past two months and targeted innocent Americans that he expected to gather this past weekend," he added.

Domingo was arrested Friday after receiving what he thought was a live bomb packed with nails that was delivered by an undercover agent. According to court documents, Domingo expressed support in online posts and conversations with an FBI source for violent jihad and aspired to become a martyr by seeking retribution for attacks against Muslims. After considering various options - including targeting Jews, churches, and police



LOS ANGELES: These two handout photographs show Mark Steven Domingo, 26, a US Army veteran who was allegedly plotting a large-scale terror attack near Los Angeles as revenge for the recent mass shootings in Christchurch, New Zealand. — AFP

officers - Domingo decided to detonate an IED at the Long Beach rally, which ended up not taking place, authorities said.

### 'The taste of terror'

"At times Mr Domingo said that he wanted to kill Jews as they walked to synagogue," Hanna said. "At other times he said he wanted to kill and target police officers, attack a military facility or attack crowds at the Santa Monica pier." He added that Domingo, of Reseda, a neighborhood in the San Fernando Valley in Los Angeles, even considered killing a neighbor as a prelude to a much larger attack. Domingo, who served in Afghanistan between September 2012 and January 2013, apparently began mulling carrying out a terror attack in early March and decided to

move forward after the March 13 mass shootings at two mosques in Christchurch, New Zealand, that left 50 people dead.

One message he posted to a private group online in early March referred to another mass shooting in Las Vegas in 2017 that left 58 dead. "America needs another Vegas event... that would give them the taste of terror they gladly spread all over the world," he said. In another posting on March 14, a day after the New Zealand attacks, he wrote: "There were mosque shootings in New Zealand. There must be retribution." Hanna said Domingo repeatedly spoke about becoming a martyr and vowed to pledge allegiance to the Islamic State terror group if it managed to set up a presence in the United States. — AFP

## Virulent anti-Semitism emerges from US white supremacists

WASHINGTON: The deadly shootings targeting synagogues in California and Pittsburgh have raised concerns that anti-Semitic hatred is increasingly a rallying point for America's resurgent white supremacists. On Saturday a teenage gunman who wrote a hate-filled manifesto online opened fire at a synagogue in Poway, California, leaving one woman dead and three others injured, including a rabbi.

The latest assault came exactly six months after another man spouting anti-Semitic vitriol shot dead 11 and injured six others at a synagogue in Pittsburgh. And it ignited questions over whether American white supremacists, long overlooked by US law enforcement, are turning their focus on the Jewish community over other targets. In both incidents, the attackers were part of a broader, internet-based far-right community that espouses hate against Muslims, blacks, immigrants and Jews, and advocate for a Caucasian, Christian society based on European culture.

Analysts say certain websites, particularly the Schan and Gab messaging platforms, have become breeding grounds for white extremists, encouraging hate and violence against a range of targets including Jews, tapping into age-old anti-Semitic stereotypes. "The alleged attacker's disturbing letter is

more than just a hateful tirade," Rita Katz, who researches violent extremism, said of the Poway attack. "It is a product of white nationalist ideology, using specific jargon, points of argument, online meme references, etc. Further proof of how dangerous far-right rhetoric is in inspiring attacks," she wrote on Twitter.

### Rising number of incidents

Research by the Southern Poverty Law Center and other groups shows that in recent years the number of US incidents involving far right extremists and white nationalists have easily surpassed those of Muslim extremists. "Once again, a young white male has apparently been influenced by dangerous online white supremacist propaganda. And once again, we see how this propaganda can lead to terrorist acts," said Heidi Beirich, Intelligence Project Director at the SPLC.

White supremacists have gotten tacit encouragement from President Donald Trump, who has been accused of failing to unequivocally condemn their ideology, and whose own anti-immigration policies have targeted most heavily Muslims, Africans and Latinos. Daryl Johnson, a former senior domestic terrorism analyst at the Department of Homeland Security, explains that the white supremacist movement involves many individuals and factions. — AFP

## Libya rivals move to financial war with frontline stuck

TRIPOLI: With the frontlines around Libya's contested capital Tripoli stalemated, the two rival factions are bringing oil and money supplies into the firing line of their battle for power. Khalifa Haftar, chief of the eastern-based forces which are attacking the city, is putting pressure on state oil firm NOC and its operations in his fiefdom, diplomats and analysts say.

In response, the internationally-recognized government in Tripoli is limiting his access to hard currency, the sources said. The moves mark a new turn in a war which started in early April when Haftar, who is allied to a parallel administration in eastern Libya, mounted a campaign to capture Tripoli. His Libyan National Army (LNA) fighters have been unable to advance into the city centre and costs are piling up as ammunition and other supplies need to be brought in from their home base in Benghazi 1,000 km (600 miles) away.

This has prompted Haftar to use oil as a strategic asset. The LNA controls areas surrounding most of Libya's oil infrastructure but it does not benefit directly from oil and gas sales, which go through NOC in Tripoli managing the day-to-day operations. NOC has tried to stay out of the conflict but it distributes energy revenues to the Tripoli-based central bank, which only works with Tripoli-based Prime Minister Fayez al-Serraj.

In recent days, Haftar has met with two



ASBIAH, Libya: A fighter loyal to the internationally-recognized Government of National Accord (GNA) carries a bullet belt as he and fellow fighters hold a position during clashes with forces loyal to strongman Khalifa Haftar, in Espiaa. — AFP

executives working for NOC in the east in his base outside Benghazi. The first was the chairman of NOC subsidiary AGOCO, which produces a third of Libya's output. Then Haftar met NOC board member Jadallah al-Awakli. His office released pictures of the meetings showing the general dressed in military uniform. Asked by Reuters about his meeting, Awakli said oil operations were benefiting from security provided by the LNA. "I congratulate the LNA on its victories," he said.

Another NOC unit in east Libya, Sirte Oil firm, also expressed support for the Tripoli offensive on its website. The meetings took place days after the LNA sent a warship to Ras Lanuf port - 600 km (400 miles) from the frontlines. At the same time NOC said soldiers had entered Es Sider port and

seized its air strip. It condemned what it called a "militarization" of oil facilities but did not name the LNA, which controls the area. LNA officials denied this and said oil ports work normally.

Diplomats and analysts saw the move as a sign that Haftar wants to remind Tripoli he can stop oil exports as a way to pressure Serraj into a deal to share oil revenues should he not win on the battlefield. The LNA last year tried to export oil bypassing NOC via a parallel NOC entity which has some 500 staff on duty. "NOC is concerned by renewed attempts to divide the corporation," a spokesman for NOC Tripoli said. "It is particularly alarmed by evidence of staff coercion and is attempting to clarify the circumstances behind recent statements in support of the armed assault on Tripoli." — Reuters

## Nigeria deploys satellite tech to track smugglers

LONDON: From algorithms to track "dark" ships smuggling stolen crude oil to an online licensing system to undercut corruption, one Nigerian government agency hopes it can use new technology to tackle theft which has cost the country billions. But the initiative by the Department of Petroleum Resources (DPR) may be too late to stem the migration of energy majors to the relative safety of drilling at sea, driven offshore by an illegal trade that Nigeria's sprawling bureaucracy has for decades proved unable or unwilling to tackle. Deep in the maze of creeks in the oil-rich Niger Delta region, thieves tap pipelines and siphon the crude via rubber hoses up to 2 kilometers long into barrels aboard small craft.

They then sail alongside larger vessels, allowing the contraband to be pumped ship-to-ship into oil tankers bound for export, usually to Asia-mixed imperceptibly in a ratio as small as 10 percent with the legitimate product. Africa's top oil exporter has turned to French data firm Kpler, just six years old and staffed by a hundred mostly young employees, to help it ferret out the smugglers from the thousands of ships plying Nigerian waters.

The DPR began its collaboration with Kpler in December and unveiled it this month, among other tech-focused plans to detect what it calls "rogue" or "dark" ships. Kpler and the DPR declined to

specify the value of their contract. They could face an uphill battle to mollify investors in Nigeria's oil sector. "The frustration with the level of sabotage and environmental damage caused by the theft is high and a major factor pushing business interest to the offshore," said a source working for an international firm operating in Nigeria.

### CCTV

From Kpler's shared WeWork office space far away in London, the head of its partnership with Nigeria, Antoine Pillet, zooms in on a lonely vessel deep in the Delta's river system using satellite data and the firm's own software. Sitting above the Forcados crude pipeline and away from a crowded main shipping channel, the ship is surrounded by swamps stained black by spills and forests hollowed out in places by wildcat construction-tell-tale signs of theft and refining. "In some ways, we're the CCTV of what's going on in Nigerian waters," Pillet joked. "We provide the data, but don't really give opinions on what may be going on."

Kpler's platform monitors 24/7, logging erratic journeys like this and changes to ships' drafts which indicate on or off-loading of cargoes into an algorithm it is training the DPR to interpret. "This technology is a way of improving the way we do things. Of course there are problems here and there, but we don't have inherent problems," Paul Osu, the DPR's head of public affairs, told Reuters. "Technology is the way to boost transparency of operations and improve investor confidence," he added. Asked how a mooted "inter-agency forensic team" cited by the DPR would stop any illicit trade, Osu did not elaborate. — Reuters

## International

# Game on for EU vote, but real fight comes after the election

## 'Grand coalition' set to lose majority, seek allies

**BRUSSELS:** On posters, hustings and social media, a battle for Europe is being fought, as contenders seek votes for an EU parliamentary election in late May - but the real battle for power will come only once the count is in. More than 400 million voters will deal the hands that leaders, of parties, nations and rival EU institutions, must play; but it will be after the May 23-26 ballot that the high-stakes poker will begin that will shape the European Union for years to come.

Then comes the real suspense: how pro-Union groups may build a majority coalition to work with the EU executive and member states to make law; how a growing eurosceptic bloc may disrupt it; how lawmakers will clash with national leaders over who runs Brussels; and whether British members might end up staying.

"The campaign determines the strength of people's bargaining positions," a senior official in the European Parliament said. "But the real game will start after the count." The sheer scale of elections for the 751 lawmakers who will convene in the European Parliament in Strasbourg on July 2 limits scope for surprises of the kind voters have delivered in national ballots as they lose confidence in established elites.

Second only to India as an exercise in democracy but beset by low turnouts that hamstringing the legislature's ambitions to legitimacy, proportional representation, a plethora of parties and a tendency for 28 national campaigns to even out shocks mean that poll data tend to be a fair guide to the overall outcome. That points to policy continuity as the European Union tries to prove its use in defending common interests in global struggles over power, trade and the environment against nationalist critics.

### Brexit party time

A survey commissioned by the parliament, whose projections were on the money in the 2014 election,

shows the centre-right EPP and centre-left S&D losing 37 seats each and hence the majority they enjoy in an informal "grand coalition".

That, many lawmakers expect, will mean a broader reaching out after the vote to the likes of the ALDE liberals, who are hoping for a major boost from President Emmanuel Macron's mould-breaking French party, and also possibly to the Greens. With Italy's populist ruling League and, at times, France's far-right National Rally and Britain's new Brexit Party topping national opinion rankings, polls show a surge for eurosceptics. But talk of a blocking minority, with allies in more mainstream groups such as the Polish and Hungarian ruling parties, comes up against the nationalists' persistent divisions.

The uncertainties around how the parliament will line up in July are compounded this year by a number of new parties - most obviously Macron's En Marche - keeping options open on whom to sit with, but also by Brexit, since the delay to Britain leaving the EU has led to London holding a vote for 73 British MEPs. That potentially brief presence means some officials suggest key decisions, notably parliamentary votes on who should succeed Jean-Claude Juncker and his team at the European Commission, be put off until the British have left.

### Jobs row

Even without Brexit, this year may be tricky, as lawmakers and national leaders face off over the legislature's demand that a lead "Spitzenkandidat" from a winning party succeed Juncker. Leaders would normally agree on a successor in late June so that parliament can endorse the appointment in July. But a row with parliament could also delay the handover beyond Nov 1. Key appointments, including that of European Central Bank president after Mario Draghi leaves in October, will see fierce bargaining, among big states and small, the north, south, east and west of Europe, left and right,



**LONDON:** Anna Soubry (second right) and Mike Gapes (right), independent MPs of the new pro-EU political party, Change UK, take part in a European election rally yesterday in London. —AFP



### Brexit, nationalist surge complicate that task

men and women, and so on.

The European Council of national leaders, which must also choose its own next president in succession to Donald Tusk, is reluctant to be tied to a choice of Manfred Weber, a conservative German MEP, or Juncker's Dutch deputy, Frans Timmermans of the Socialists. Macron is a loud opponent of parliament's Spitzenkandidat push and Brussels is abuzz with talk that he favors others - notably Frenchman Michel Barnier, the EU's Brexit negotiator, or centrist Danish EU antitrust commissioner Margrethe Vestager.

Weber and his parliamentary allies will argue

strongly that it is that kind of backroom carve-up which is turning Europeans off the EU. In reply, national leaders may argue that they have stronger democratic mandates to govern than a parliament for which in 2014 only 43 percent of voters cast a ballot. Polling data suggests somewhat more people intend to vote than last time, parliamentary officials say. But there are huge variations in engagement with campaigns largely fought on domestic issues. In Belgium, where voting is compulsory and a national election is held the same day, turnout was 90 percent in 2014. But in Slovakia, it was 13 percent. —Reuters

### News in brief

#### Boko Haram kill 21

**KANO:** Boko Haram fighters killed 21 people when they stormed into a village in northeastern Nigeria and set it on fire, residents said yesterday. The militants, packed into four trucks and flanked by gunmen on motorbikes, swept into the village of Kuda in northeast Nigeria's Adamawa state late on Monday afternoon, firing as they came. Villagers fled the attack, but returned on Tuesday to bury the dead left amid the charred wreckage of their homes. "They opened fire on residents, killing 21 people," said community leader Maina Ularumu. "They burnt several homes." Ularumu lost three brothers-in-law in the attack. "Two-thirds of the village has been burnt," said resident Paul Waramulu, speaking to AFP by telephone from the village, giving the same toll of those killed. Waramulu said the fighters had looted food supplies before setting fire to buildings. —AFP

#### US measles cases rises

**WASHINGTON:** The number of measles cases in the United States reached a record-setting 704 for the year last week, the greatest number of cases in 25 years, health officials said yesterday. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention said that as of April 29, 704 measles cases have been confirmed in 22 US states since the start of the year. That was a jump of 78 cases from the previous week, it said. Measles were declared eliminated in the US in 2000 but this year has seen the greatest number of confirmed cases since 1994. Three percent of the measles cases developed pneumonia, while nine percent were serious enough to require hospitalization, said CDC director Robert Redfield. "At this time, there has been no death," Redfield said. There were 17 measles outbreaks in 2018, but most of the cases were from outbreaks in New York state, New York City, and New Jersey—mainly among unvaccinated members of Orthodox Jewish communities, the CDC said. —AFP

#### UK probe hospital deaths

**LONDON:** British police opened an investigation yesterday into a hospital where hundreds of patients are believed to have died prematurely after being given powerful painkillers. Police are examining the care provided to patients who died at Gosport War Memorial Hospital in southern England between 1987 and 2001, police said in a statement. A review last year found that more than 450 people had their lives shortened at the hospital while another 200 were "probably" also given strong opioids. "This is a highly complex and emotive case that some family members have been living with for more than 30 years," said Nick Downing, the police officer who has been reviewing the findings of the review. "I hope the news that we will now be carrying out a full investigation is of some comfort to them," he said. —AFP

#### Congo landslides kills 13

**GOMA:** Seven people died in a landslide in eastern DR Congo, bringing the death toll to 13 over the past three days, as torrential rain lashes the region, local officials said yesterday. Already on Friday, six people had been killed in Mahanga in the province of North Kivu, according to a local NGO for indigenous peoples. Then on Monday, seven more people were killed in a second landslide in the same area, the administrator for the Masisi territory, Cosmas Tangakolo, told AFP. Among the material damage, six bridges, eight schools and 90 homes were swept away in the heavy rain, NGO workers said. The mountainous and densely-wooded region in the east of DR Congo is frequently hit by killer floods. —AFP

## How EU will vote and why it matters

**BRUSSELS:** In three weeks, Europeans will vote for a new European Parliament but the real struggle for power over the bloc will begin only after votes are counted. Here's why?

### Who's voting and for what?

More than 400 million people in the European Union's 28 member states can vote from May 23 to 26, including nearly 50 million Britons who were due to leave the bloc in March. Their votes for 73 lawmakers who may have to quit within weeks has upset some calculations after a delay to Brexit agreed in April. By proportional representation, Europeans will elect 751 members to the European Parliament, which divides its time between Brussels and Strasbourg. Ranging from Luxembourg, Malta and Cyprus with six seats each to Germany with 96, for five years Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) will pass laws proposed by the European Commission, subject to approval by national governments in the EU Council.

## In borderless Europe, security chiefs unite against jihadist threat

**THE HAGUE:** With the jihadists behind the bloodshed in Paris and Brussels able to criss-cross European borders at will, anti-terror chiefs have been forced to come together to seek a common response to a global threat. Experts say the deeper security cooperation was a watershed moment of the European Parliament term that winds up in May, when new elections for the legislative body will be held. The transformation is most evident at the Dutch headquarters of Europol, where the patchwork of information exchanges between individual EU states has been replaced with a more streamlined multilateral sharing system.

"If there's one area where Europe works, it's this," said Jean-Dominique Nollet, a French gendarmerie colonel who spent 11 years with the agency in The Hague. "Europol allows us to bring together

### What's at stake?

Issues range from spending - though the EU budget is just 1 percent of members' gross domestic product - to climate change and labor rights. But some who want the EU broken up see it as a Brexit-style referendum on the EU's survival, pitting advocates of historic, ethnic-based nations against the idea of pooling sovereignty to defend Europe's wealth and values in a world of rising authoritarian powers and global corporations.

Caught up in this centre-versus-states debate are refugees. Nationalists blame the EU for a surge in arrivals in 2015. Federalists say only cooperation can control migration. Leaders of some eastern states such as Hungary and Poland criticize Brussels over migrants and its complaints that they are undermining EU rules on democracy in Warsaw and Budapest; some westerners speak of cutting their EU subsidies in retaliation. The election in Britain is seen by some as a new referendum on Brexit, one that could help block withdrawal - or accelerate it - as Britons go on debating how, and whether, to leave.

our data and analysis in a huge data base," he told AFP. In January 2016, the agency created its European Counter-Terrorism Centre (ECTC), spurred by the killing of 12 people at the offices of the satirical magazine Charlie Hebdo in Paris a year earlier.

That attack heralded a wave of bloody jihadist strikes in Europe, including the massacre at the Bataclan concert hall in Paris in November 2015, and the suicide bombings at the Brussels airport and a metro station four months later. "After the 2015 attacks, we received the request from France and Belgium to help them on the analytical work on these cases," said Manuel Navarrete, a Spanish Guardia Civil general who directs the ECTC.

"It was difficult to deal with this case because of the international connections of the terrorists - some of them came from Iraq and Syria through Turkey, Greece, gathering in Hungary, in Germany, and then went to France and back," he said. In the days following the Charlie Hebdo attack Europol sent specialists in criminal financing, drug trafficking, social network moni-



**COPENHAGEN:** Denmark's Prime Minister Lars Lokke Rasmussen (left) serves a drink to EU chief Brexit negotiator Michel Barnier in the Prime Minister's Office in Copenhagen, Denmark yesterday. —AFP

### Are there EU political parties?

Yes. And no. Eight party groups sit in the chamber. The centre-right European People's Party (EPP) has 217 seats and ensures an establishment majority by often cooperating with the centre-left Socialists and Democrats (S&D - 186) and ALDE liberals (68). Two right-wing, anti-EU groups led by Britain's UKIP and France's National Rally share 78 seats. But all the groups are unruly and EU elections are mainly contested by national parties on issues familiar to voters.

### Is Britain a problem?

Some EU officials suggest a delay in approving key post-election appointments until after British MEPs leave, to avoid accusations parliament's decisions will lack legitimacy. The British vote will favor eurosceptics, Socialists and Greens but hurt the EPP, which has no members in Britain since the ruling Conservatives quit the group to form their own bloc. By taking part, Britain has forced the EU to postpone the redistribution of 27 of 73 UK seats to other countries. —Reuters



**THE HAGUE:** Photo shows an employee at the EU police agency Europol headquarters in The Hague. —AFP

toring and database analysis to assist local police forces. "It was the pilot we used to create the European Counter-Terrorism

Centre," Navarrete said. "One single point doing analytical work, working online, everything together." —AFP

## American students pledge future salary to avoid debt

**NEW YORK:** American college students are turning to a new strategy to avoid the debt trap that has captured millions, pledging a share of their future earnings to pay for their education rather than borrowing. And they are protected since they do not have to

make payments if they cannot find a job after graduation, and for as long as their salary remains below a certain threshold. These "Income Share Agreements" or ISAs so far are only offered by a few universities and training centers, such as computer coding schools. But they are drawing more attention as the student debt crisis worsens.

That debt load, which now tops \$1.5 trillion nationwide, means many Americans must delay or give up on dreams of home ownership and other large purchases, that in turn put a damper on the economy more broadly. It is thanks to an ISA that Paul Laurora will graduate on May 11 from Purdue University, Indiana

as a chemical engineer. Despite state-subsidized loans, his own savings, and a contribution from his parents, the 22-year-old ran out of money after only two years of studies, with tuition and fees costing \$40,000 a year for students from outside of Indiana.

When a bank refused to give him a new loan, he started selling some possessions on eBay and even considered dropping out of school to take a job for a semester, or use his parents' retirement savings. But then he heard about the ISA option. "I did not want to stop halfway just because I could not afford it. That would have been the worst reason," he told AFP. —AFP



International

# Fearful and fenced in: IS foreign kids face indefinite stay in Iraq

## More than 700 foreign children held in Baghdad prison

**BAGHDAD:** The children ran along the narrow enclosure, screaming, fighting and crying for the attention of the prison worker distributing sweets and balloons. Bug-bitten toddlers, too small to walk, clung to the sides of the chain link fence, staring blankly. Through the fence of their makeshift playground, the older children held out dirt-covered hands for the balloons: two of them said they were the only toys they have at the Rusafa women's prison in central Baghdad. "Please, I want to go home, please help us. This is not a good place for us," one Azeri girl said through the chain link fence, surrounded by about 100 other children.

A handful have been prosecuted for carrying out attacks but most are tried for crossing the border illegally, including some as young as nine. In either case it is not clear how much say they would have had. The other children stay in Rusafa with their mothers, who are either already serving long jail terms or awaiting trial. Having held them for two years with limited resources, Baghdad is keen for those who cannot be prosecuted to be sent home, but the issue is legally complicated and politically toxic, and many nations have so far refused to take them.

The visit by Reuters was one of very few times the prison has allowed media access. The jail is at the heart of the issue of what to do with captured women and children of Islamic State. The ultra-hardline group carried out mass killings, torture, sexual enslavement and indoctrination in areas it captured in Syria and Iraq in 2014 and staged attacks around the world, meaning captives pose a security risk and are also vulnerable to reprisals.

"At first, trust was very difficult for us and them," said the prison director, requesting that her name not be used. "Many even tried to kill themselves and their children." The prison holds 1,241 foreign women and children of suspected IS fighters from more than a dozen countries, 774 of them aged from nine months and 15 years old, the director said. Brought here in November 2017, two months after being captured while fleeing Tal Afar in northern Iraq, most of the children who qualified for possible prosecution in Iraq have been moved to a juvenile detention facility.



### Many mothers convicted for IS links

**Hungry, bored and sick**  
Dynamics at the prison, located within the interior ministry's heavily-guarded compound, have improved since the early days, the prison director said during the April 11 visit. No access was granted to the cells in which groups of women and children spend close to 20 hours a day and no photography was allowed. This reporter was accompanied by at least three government officials for most of the time, but spoke briefly to four of the children in the enclosure unsupervised. "Did you bring us clothes or medicine?" the Azeri girl, wearing a blue hijab, asked. "We really need medicine."

She was among a group identified by the prison director as having mothers sentenced to life in prison, serving at least 20 years for their membership of IS and illegally entering Iraq, a common fate for the women held at the jail. The girl is too young to be prosecuted under Iraqi law. It is unclear how long she will remain behind bars. Azerbaijan is one of the countries with the highest number of citizens imprisoned in Iraq, along with Russia and Turkey. Others come from Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan,



**HAMA:** Syrians who fled the western countryside of Hama are pictured in a makeshift camp in Sher Maghar in the Hama province not far from positions of Turkish troops. — AFP

Uzbekistan, Jordan, Syria, France, Germany, Sweden and Trinidad and Tobago.

The Azeri Foreign Ministry did not respond to requests for comment on its policy on repatriating children linked to IS.

The children are allowed into the enclosure for about two hours a day, but otherwise spend their days in cramped cells or watching cartoons on television. They sleep on thin mattresses, bored, hungry and often sick, with little medical attention, according to some 20 sources familiar with the prison and their cases who were interviewed by Reuters before the visit.

Half a dozen of the sources said poor conditions had led to the deaths of at least seven children. Diplomatic

and intelligence sources also said several women had died. The director, interviewed with four other officials in the room, declined to comment beyond saying that inmates were well looked after under her care. Iraqi government officials declined to comment.

Three female detainees selected by the prison director said they had consented to be interviewed. They spoke in front of five officials - from the prison, the interior ministry, the justice ministry and national security service. "For me, prison is prison, whether in Tajikistan or Iraq," said a 28-year-old Tajik woman who was sentenced to life in prison for belonging to IS and has her two children in jail with her. "But I want my kids to go home and live with my mother." — Reuters

## Billionaire who shook up Thai politics defiant as enemies circle

**BANGKOK:** The billionaire leader of the newest and most dynamic force in Thai politics says he is "prepared" for jail as legal cases besiege his youth-focused party just weeks after it scooped up millions of votes in a general election. Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit, the charismatic political newcomer whose radical agenda of social and economic reform captured millennial hearts and rattled the ruling junta, appeared at the Election Commission Tuesday to explain a disputed share transfer.

It is the latest of a battery of moves against Thanathorn and his Future Forward Party, which secured over six million votes in March 24 elections but is now hemmed in by 16 separate legal cases. "I knew from the day we launched the party that the threats would come sooner or later," he told AFP on Monday from his mansion in a Bangkok suburb. "It is sooner than we thought." The commission poses a real and immediate challenge. It is expected to rule over the coming days on an allegation that Thanathorn breached election rules by owning shares in a media company.

The 40-year-old insists the shares were divested weeks before he registered to run, rubbishing the charge as a political hatchet job. The commission can suspend Thanathorn from political activity—a potential gut punch to his nascent movement, which relies heavily on his star power and the social media conversation he has started with younger voters. It could also forward his case to higher courts that can hand down heavy jail sentences for breaching election rules and can ultimately disband the party.

He also faces a sedition charge with a potential seven-year jail sentence. But



**BANGKOK:** Future Forward Party leader Thanathorn Juangroongruangkit smiles during a press conference in Bangkok after Thailand's general election. — AFP

Thanathorn struck a defiant note as his powerful political enemies close in. "I'm prepared mentally and physically for whatever comes," the scion of an auto-parts fortune said. He emerged from a meeting with Election Commissioners about the complaint late Tuesday, telling reporters the atmosphere was "tense". "No one can explain to me what I am meant to be guilty of," he said, adding he would consider countersuits if the actions continued. "My patience has its limits."

### 'Time is with us'

Future Forward has shaken up the Thai political landscape-long framed by loyalty to the royalist, conservative establishment or the populist and self-exiled ex-premier Thaksin Shinawatra. March's poll was the first since Thailand's junta seized power in 2014. But a new government has yet to be declared amid allegations of vote-rigging and other political chicanery by the junta-allied party, which is desperate to return to power with a majority of Lower House seats. "The military government will do whatever it takes to stay in power. They are willing to rig the election and use legal threats," Thanathorn said Monday.

The junta and its political allies deny the accusations. The pro- and anti-military camps are striving to form a coalition to reach the magic mark of 250 lower house seats—a majority to form a government. Neither bloc had a commanding lead after preliminary results. The Election Commission has said it will announce near-complete results on May 9. Critics say the inexplicable delay in announcing full results is allowing political loyalties to be traded and seats to be chipped away.

Future Forward, now Thailand's third largest party, says several of its candidates have been approached in recent weeks with cash inducements of over \$1 million to defect. While the legal assaults have put a pin in the elation that followed their shock poll showing, Thanathorn remains confident of the long game against an ageing out-of-touch junta and its establishment allies. "These people (the junta) don't want to see the future. But time is with us." — AFP



**US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo**

said the US could "change paths" if Kim did not bring "real conversations" on abandoning North Korea's nuclear arsenal to the negotiation table.

Yesterday, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui said Pompeo's comments were "foolish and dangerous ideas that imply overthrowing our system with military means". "Our resolution on denuclearization

remains intact and we will do so when time is right," she said, in comments cited by North Korea's official KCNA news service. "But it will only be possible when the US revises and reshapes its current calculation." And if the US did not change its stance by the end of this year, it will "face (an) unwanted outcome," she said, without elaborating further.

Washington has blamed the collapse of the Hanoi summit in February on the North's demands for sanctions relief in return for limited nuclear disarmament-but Pyongyang has denied this, saying it had wanted only some of the measures eased. Last week, North Korea also slammed John Bolton, the White House National Security Advisor, saying he had a "lack of understanding about the intentions" of Kim and President Donald Trump in an escalation of rhetoric against US officials.

In a speech to the rubber-stamp parliament earlier this month, Kim said he would wait until the end of the year "for the US to make a courageous decision" to change its approach and smooth the path to another meeting. Meanwhile, Kim and Russian President Vladimir Putin met last week in Vladivostok for their first summit-squarred aimed at countering US influence-where Kim accused Washington of acting in "bad faith". — AFP

## Jihadists head to Afghanistan after caliphate collapse

**KABUL:** Islamic State fighters who waged a bloody campaign in Syria and Iraq are heading to Afghanistan to continue their jihad and help plot "spectacular" attacks against America, a US official has said. The warning comes as IS seeks to assert a regional influence after the loss of its self-proclaimed Middle East "caliphate", and as South Asia reels from a series of devastating attacks.

"We know some have already made their way back here and are trying to transfer the knowledge, skills and experience they learned over there," a senior US intelligence official in Kabul told AFP in a recent interview. "If we don't continue counterterrorism pressure against (IS in Afghanistan), there will be an attack in our homeland - and a spectacular attack - probably within the year," added the official, who asked not to be named for security reasons.

The official did not describe the nature of any plot, but IS has been linked to or inspired several big attacks in America, including a 2016 mass shooting in Florida. The gunman, who had sworn allegiance to IS, killed 49 people in an Orlando nightclub. A recent UN report said IS in Afghanistan has between

2,500 and 4,000 members - about the same number the Pentagon was citing two years ago, even though officials say thousands of jihadists have been killed.

US Senator Jack Reed, the top Democrat on the Senate Armed Services Committee, said after a recent visit to Afghanistan that IS in the Khorasan, or IS-K as the local affiliate is known, had grown in both numbers and capabilities. In 2017, the Pentagon offered a rosy assessment that IS-K could be wiped out by the end of that year. But Resolute Support, the NATO mission in Afghanistan, underestimated the group's tenacity.

"Resolute Support realised that this was bigger than a little problem in southern Nangarhar and instead would take something more to address it," the official said, referring to IS-K's bastion in eastern Afghanistan. The official and a team of experts arrived in Kabul over the past year to help General Scott Miller - the four-star general in charge of US and NATO forces - tackle IS-K. He did not say how many former "caliphate" fighters are in Afghanistan, but argued "any number is significant".

Europeans - including from Britain and France - are among those who have joined IS-K, he added. Their presence could complicate any peace deal with the Taleban, who have pledged to prevent terrorists using Afghanistan as a haven to plot foreign attacks. "Unless or until we get the Taleban to work and address this problem as well, they will never be able to keep this land free from outwardly facing organizations," the official said. — AFP

## Making of a monarch: King's image peppers Thailand

**BANGKOK:** It took \$6,400 and a 12-hour drive for the local mayor to pick up the shrine and towering portrait of Thailand's king which will stand in the centre of town - a small part of a massive palace publicity campaign for this weekend's coronation. "Every government office across the country will do the same," said Aunchalee Chamchang, the mayor of Thungkhunan, a clutch of villages east of the capital. Portraits of King Maha Vajiralongkorn often dressed in a golden robe and staring inscrutably forward have been in place at many state offices since he ascended the throne in 2016.

But imposing new images, some several-metres high, and decorations are mandatory at every state office ahead of his three-day coronation, which begins Saturday. The most elaborate set-ups include the gilded-framed portrait, a large pedestal, flags, cone-shaped "pan phum" floral tributes and bunting in various shades of yellow - the color of Thailand's monarchy. They can cost thousands of dollars, paid for through local budgets and subsidies, and will remain in place for at least the rest of the year.

Roads in Bangkok and across the kingdom are now flanked by the projection of royal power, intended to reflect the country's devotion, loyalty and respect to the

monarch. But with Thais never far from the gaze of the king's portraits, it also serves as a reminder of the apex position enjoyed by the royal institution. Critics of the monarchy are rarely heard inside the country where the immediate royal family is protected by harsh lese majeste laws, which carry up to 15 years in jail. The law is often broadly interpreted and includes the misuse of royal images. Media based inside Thailand must self-censor.

### Films, money and stamps

For the majority of Thais Maha Vajiralongkorn's elaborate three-day coronation will be the first they have witnessed and curiosity is mounting. His father Bhumibol Adulyadej died in 2016 after a reign spanning seven tumultuous decades. Bhumibol was revered as a unity figure in a politically divided nation and his image remains omnipresent in many Thai homes and shops. Thais wore black or subdued colors for a year of official mourning after his death. But Bhumibol's 66-year-old heir is not as well-known by his subjects and spends much of his time abroad. To address that gap, the new king's image has slowly seeped into everyday life - on buildings, banknotes and stamps - since his father's death. — AFP

## North Korea slams 'foolish, dangerous' US' Mike Pompeo

**SEOUL:** A senior North Korean yesterday accused US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo of having "foolish and dangerous ideas", and warned Washington of an "unwanted outcome" if it does not adjust its stance on economic sanctions. Pyongyang and Washington have been at loggerheads since the collapse of a summit between North Korean leader Kim Jong Un and US President Donald Trump in February with no deal reached on the North's denuclearization.

Since then tensions have mounted, and yesterday's comments marked the second time Pyongyang has criticized the top US diplomat this month. The reclusive state has previously demanded the removal of Pompeo from future talks, labelling him as "reckless". In an interview with CBS last week, Pompeo

## Analysis

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## China frees 'lost' Uighur wives but at a price

Their Uighur wives vanished in 2017, swept up in a Chinese dragnet tackling Islamic extremism, now they've been released - but the Pakistani husbands left behind say freedom has come at a price: The women must prove their "adaptability to Chinese society", and publicly sacrifice their religious ideals. The group of around 40 women - all from the western Chinese province of Xinjiang and married to traders from neighboring Pakistan - were among some one million people believed to be held in a network of internment camps that authorities downplay as "vocational education centers".

But the men say their partners were forced into acts that are haram, or forbidden, to followers of Islam - both in the camps and now they've been freed. "She said they had to eat pork and drink alcohol, something she still has to do," one merchant, who recently visited his wife at her parents' house in Xinjiang told AFP, on condition of anonymity. "She was told that she had to satisfy the authorities that she no longer possesses radical thoughts if she does not want to go back," he explained, adding that she had given up praying and the Quran had been replaced by books on China at his in-laws home.

Some of the traders, who traditionally leave their wives in Xinjiang for weeks or months at a time when they return home to conduct business, believe the women were taken to the camps because of their connection to Pakistan, which is an Islamic republic. Former detainees have said they were held simply for following Islamic traditions, such as having a long beard or wearing a veil.

But with the detention centers, part of a security clamp-down targeting Muslims including ethnic Uighurs, facing growing international condemnation and China pushing its economic relationship with Pakistan, authorities began slowly releasing the women two months ago. Faiz Ullah Faraq, a spokesman for the government of Gilgit-Baltistan, the Pakistani region which borders Xinjiang, confirmed the "majority" have now been released.

### Surveillance and repercussions

AFP interviewed nine of the women's husbands, who confirm their wives are free but cannot leave Xinjiang for three months, during which time they will be closely monitored. "They will observe her adaptability to Chinese society and if they deem her to be unfit she will be sent back," a gemstone trader said of the rules of release. Their initial joy at the release of much-loved wives and mothers has faded because the women who've returned are like strangers.

"My wife said she was forced to dance, wear revealing clothes, eat pork and drink alcohol in the camp," he revealed, adding that she now carries with her a book of guidelines, which features illustrations such as a mosque marked with a red cross, and a Chinese flag with a green tick. "She used to pray regularly but now it's gone, and she has started occasionally drinking (alcohol) which she does in the restaurants," he explained, adding that he believed officials required such acts from the women. He too declined to give his name for fear of repercussions from authorities, who make surprise visits to his wife's home in Xinjiang every week.

James Leibold, an expert on Chinese security at Australia's La Trobe University, told AFP that stepped-up surveillance policies in Xinjiang gave authorities "increased confidence" in their ability to closely monitor those released from the camps. Since their release, the families of many of the women say they have become paranoid and fear of being reported on. "The worst thing was her silence," the merchant explained, adding: "She suspects everyone, her parents, her family, even me." The seven other traders interviewed by AFP, anonymously, have been in contact with their wives only by telephone and gave similar testimonies.

### 'Serious abuses'

The Chinese foreign ministry in Beijing declined to comment on the releases, and a Pakistani foreign ministry spokesman did not respond to requests. Maya Wang, Human Rights Watch's senior researcher on China, said the activist group has heard stories of people being released from the camps and subjected to house arrests or severe restrictions on movement. "These releases may indicate that the Chinese government is increasingly sensitive to heightening international pressure over its serious abuses in Xinjiang," she said.

Last month US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo renewed demands China end its widespread detention of Uighur Muslims as he met with Mihrigul Tursun, who claims to be a former detainee, and has spoken publicly about what she said was widespread torture in the camps. Beijing "cannot afford international criticism of its policies in Xinjiang to spread throughout the Muslim world, especially in Pakistan", China security expert Leibold explained.

In recent years, China has strongly pushed its relationship with Pakistan, investing heavily in infrastructure projects under the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor. For its part, Pakistan has been reluctant to publicly join global condemnation of Beijing's crackdown on Muslims in Xinjiang. When pressed on the subject in a recent interview with the Financial Times, Prime Minister Imran Khan said: "Frankly, I don't know much about that." —AFP

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A Kashmiri fisherman casts his net from his boat on Dal Lake in Srinagar on April 28, 2019. —AFP

## The night the army arrived in a Kashmir village

Hundreds of Indian soldiers descended on the picturesque village of Pinglan, which is surrounded by south Kashmir's apple and apricot orchards, just before midnight on Feb 17. By the time they left 18 hours later, one civilian, three armed militants, and five members of the security forces were dead, a row of houses was reduced to rubble, an unexploded missile had been planted in a rice paddy, and more than 120 villagers had sought treatment for exposure to tear gas, alleged beatings, and in some cases mental trauma.

Reuters spent two days in Pinglan, which has a population of about 6,400, about a month after the crackdown to piece together what happened during those hours. Interviews with more than 60 eyewitnesses indicate that soldiers forced at least four villagers to act as human shields. That meant sending them first into a building where armed militants might be hiding, often using a phone to take video could be viewed by nearby soldiers.

Human rights lawyers say such tactics - which are meant to deter militants from firing on soldiers carrying out the raids - are highly questionable and could even be a war crime under international law. But they would not be illegal under Indian law. "(The) Indian army has never used civilians as human-shields," said military spokesman Lieutenant Colonel Mohit Vaishnava, in response to requests for comment. However, he said that during encounters, local people are sometimes asked to mediate between the army and militants.

The armed insurgency in the Indian-ruled portion of Kashmir is one of the world's longest-running. Nearly 50,000 have died as a result of the conflict in the last three decades, according to official figures. The number of active militants had dwindled to a few dozen a few years ago. But after a 2016 uprising following the killing of a militant leader, growing numbers of young men, predominantly Kashmiris, are joining their ranks. India blames its arch-rival Pakistan for funding these groups, a claim Islamabad denies.

### Paradise lost

Both countries claim Kashmir in full but rule it in part, and have fought three wars - two over the territory. Now nuclear powers, they came close to another war when a suicide car bomber, a local Kashmiri, killed 40 Indian paramilitary police on February 14 on a highway near Pinglan. The Pakistan-based Islamist militant group Jaish-e-Mohammed (JeM) claimed responsibility.

That attack sparked a huge crackdown by Indian forces as India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi gave troops a "free hand" to respond. Since the suicide attack, hundreds of separatists have been arrested, and dozens of militants and civilians killed in what the authorities term "encounters". On Feb 17, from about 11:30 pm, three days after the suicide attack, security forces cordoned off all the roads leading into Pinglan and began going house-to-house.

An army informant in the village had heard of the presence of militants, according to an army officer Reuters interviewed who is familiar with some operational details of the encounter. Fifteen-year-old Muminah Amin said the army knocked on her door, telling her family their house

was to be searched. When Amin protested, she said an army major told her to be quiet. "You should become a sarpanch (village head), you talk so much," he said, pointing his gun at her.

Troops from the 55th Battalion of the Rashtriya Rifles demanded her father, Mushtaq Ahmad Bhat, come out to help them, Amin said. They were surrounding a separate small building on the family's property and needed Bhat to search it for them. Gunfire from an unknown source strafed their house, breaking upstairs windows, and the remaining family members hid on the ground floor. By the time they were moved by the army into the house of a neighbor, Bhat was dead, a soldier informed them. "They only told us he died in crossfire," said Amin, whose account of the evening was corroborated by her mother, Nusrat.

### Hostile to India

The army is yet to provide any further information on how he died, Amin said. "We asked for information but they did not give it to us," she said. "They hid what happened." Vaishnava said the army did all it could to minimize civilian casualties, but the militants often hid in populated areas in order to increase the civilian death toll. Residents interviewed in Pinglan were almost all openly hostile to India and its soldiers. Still, many people said the village had not seen armed confrontation between militants and troops for decades.

Amin's account of Bhat being taken by the army to search a building was consistent with testimony of three other people, all of whom told Reuters they were forced to perform similar tasks. A teenager, who said he was 17 and gave his name as Jibrin, said he was one of a dozen mainly young men, who were taken from their homes to an armored personnel carrier where they were held and then sent out to search houses. His account was corroborated by his grandfather and aunt. "They gave me a shield and they said you have to move forward to search the houses," he said. "I felt in danger."

Bhat's brother, Shafiq Ahmad Bhat, said he was also held by the army and sent to search a house and film it on a mobile phone near the end of the encounter. Shafiq, along with half a dozen other villagers, said they were beaten by troops using rifle butts, sticks and other weapons. "They put a stone in my mouth to keep me quiet because I was screaming so much," Shafiq said.

While many of the injuries sustained by those who said they had been attacked were minor, Bhat family neighbor Shahzada Akhtar said she was repeatedly struck on the face with a shoe by a soldier and needed medical treatment. Her account was corroborated by Rayees Ul-Hamid, a medical officer at Pinglan's health center. Vaishnava said the allegations of disproportionate use of force by the army were "baseless, bereft of evidence and likely to have been made by terrorized people under duress from the perpetrators."

### The militant

Of the three militants killed in the encounter, two were Pakistani. The other, Hilal Ahmad Naikoo, was a local. He

ran a successful medical laboratory and was well-liked in the village, according to interviews with his family and others. His brother, Bilal, said Hilal joined JeM after the rape and murder of an eight-year-old Muslim girl in Jammu & Kashmir state in Jan 2018. Six people, including two policemen, are standing trial for the rape and murder while two other policemen have been accused of destroying evidence.

In October, Hilal returned for a visit home carrying a gun and accompanied by Rashid Bhai, a Pakistani believed by security forces to be one of Jaish's top commanders, said Bilal. Bhai was also killed in the Pinglan encounter, security forces said. Bilal was in the village that night, and heard the sound of gunfire from his house. But the first he knew of Hilal's involvement was when his death was announced on TV.

Hilal and Bhat were buried next to each other in an ancient village graveyard that is now reserved for those killed by Indian troops. The JeM flag is draped over the railings. The wider hostility of the villagers to Indian forces was on display the morning after their arrival in Pinglan. Dozens of people threw stones at security services, eyewitnesses said. Troops responded with a volley of tear gas and stun grenades. "The air was thick with smoke, it was like a fog," said Abdul Rahman, sifting through discarded gas shells that litter the side of the road near his house.

At 3 pm, soldiers moved a group of local journalists who had managed to enter the encounter site to the edge of the village. Shortly after, several eyewitnesses said they saw plumes of smoke coming from the courtyard where most of the fighting had taken place. "The Indian forces destroyed our house without any reason," Mushtaq Ahmed, a shopkeeper, told Reuters, standing among heaps of rubble and charred timber where his house used to stand. "No house was deliberately set on fire by security forces," said Vaishnava, the military spokesman, blaming it on the militants.

### The aftermath

The encounter was over and the soldiers were starting to move out of the village, but at about 6 pm troops had one last job for Shafiq Ahmad Bhat. "They asked me to pick up an unexploded shell, dig a hole in the ground and bury it there," he said. He led Reuters to a nearby rice paddy and pointed to a waterlogged crater where he said he buried the unexploded mortar used in the army operation.

After visiting the site on March 21, a Reuters journalist told the authorities about the mortar. A day later, bomb disposal experts from the army and police got rid of the rocket in a controlled explosion, a local official and witnesses said. "There was a huge explosion. The earth shook," said Bilal Ahmed, an eyewitness. Vaishnava denied the soldiers had forced a civilian to bury unexploded ordnance.

A fragile peace has returned to the village. The first apricot blossom of the season is beginning to bloom, while mynah birds chirp overhead. But the trauma from the encounter has lingered. Wuli Mohammed Naik, the grandfather of Jibrin, the boy made to search houses, was one of many who said he was afraid to go out after dark. "A man who is bitten by a snake is afraid of rope," he said. —Reuters

## Cheese fans raise stink over plans for pasteurized camembert

Surrounded by mottled brown-and-white cows basking in the Normandy spring sunshine, Patrick Mercier admits his prized raw-milk camembert doesn't come cheap, but suggests not everyone should have to make the cheese this way. Few foods are more emblematic of France than the pungent white pucks of camembert. But camembert lovers and producers are currently embroiled in a conflict over what constitutes the real thing. "Other cheeses can be made with pasteurization, so after all, why not camembert as well?" asked Mercier.

A bid to update the rules governing camembert's production by allowing the use of pasteurized milk has opened a rift in France, which this year celebrates the 100th anniversary of its strict food and beverage denomination rules - originally created for wines but later extended to other foodstuffs. Starting in 2021, cheesemakers hoping to secure the coveted "Camembert of Normandy" label won't have to use only raw milk, as they have been required to do since their rules were introduced in the early 1980s.

Instead, they will have the option of pasteurizing - the process of mildly heating a product to remove pathogens and make it last longer. It would be the first appellation d'origine protegee (AOP) - France's badge of quality for a special product rooted in its region - to create a two-tier labelling system: One for raw milk camembert, and another for pasteurized versions.

Mercier, the AOP Camembert president, who is one of just two remaining producers of raw-milk camembert from his own cows, backed the concession, arguing that it will end decades of declining dairy farming in Normandy. The changes will also require camembert producers to use more of the fat- and protein-rich milk from grass-fed Normande cows, which have steadily been replaced by more productive Holsteins over the years. "We had to reverse this trend of Normande cows disap-

pearing," Mercier said at his Champ Secret (Secret Field) farm outside Flers, on the western edge of France.

### 'Battle against standardization'

Mercier has invested tens of thousands of euros in state-of-the-art equipment that keeps his organic raw milk safe on its way to becoming his daily output of 750 wheels of for early camemberts, but said this outlay is not for everyone. "We're restoring the values of camembert, in terms of quality and quantity, in a way that is going to let everyone - farmer, big companies and artisans - exist," he said.

But purists are crying foul, saying the rules are being watered down for industry giants like Lactalis, which for years have touted their generic camembert as "Made in Normandy" - a confusing approximation French officials say has to stop. Top chefs have assailed the changes as well, warning that consumers will find their rich and creamy cheese replaced by chalky bland discs.

"At its heart, it's a battle against standardization, since it's only going to benefit industrial producers that will now have the label," said Veronique Richez-Lerouge, a traditional cheese advocate who has spearheaded efforts to scupper the planned change. "It's not just about camembert," she added. "It's about champagne, or idiazabal cheese in Spain: All the AOPs are going to say, if they can do it, why can't we?"

### 'Don't call it camembert'

The famous soft cheese is said to have been created in 1791 when Marie Harel, who lived in the village of Camembert, adapted a recipe for brie she learned from a priest hiding out from the French revolution. Adding a distinctive wooden box made it easy to transport the cheese, and its ubiquitous presence in the trenches of World War I made it "the" French cheese for Americans, Britons and other Allied soldiers who fought in France.

Only in 1982 did the government codify its production - including at least five scoops of curd in a round 11-cm mold, one turn only to drain the whey, and at least three weeks of ageing to promote the snowy growth of Penicillium camemberti mold for the rind. But crucially, officials failed to specify that less stringent versions couldn't use the generic camembert name. The result is



A file picture taken on April 11, 2013 shows camembert cheeses stored to ripen at a cheese farm in the French northwestern village of Camembert in Normandy, where the cheese originated. —AFP

that dairy giants have flooded the market, crowding out traditional players - the AOP now has fewer than 10 producers making just 5,500 tons a year, compared to 60,000 tons of generics that cost half as much or less.

### 'Future generations'

"Not everyone can afford a camembert that costs 3.50 euros or more," said Nathalie Goulet, a senator from Normandy's Orne region, who says the changes will benefit the entire dairy industry. Opponents say that's wishful thinking. "How can you expect someone working on a tiny scale, all by hand with no corners cut, to make a living - that cheese has to cost way more in order to be sustainable," said Bronwen Percival, the cheese buyer at Neal's Yard dairy in London and co-author of "Reinventing the Wheel: Milk, Microbes and the Fight for Real Cheese". "It's not to say there's not a place in the world for a pasteurized camembert, absolutely there is," she says. "Just don't call it camembert." —AFP

## Business

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KUWAIT: URC Chairman Tareq AbdulSalam (center), Acting CEO Ahmad Kasem (second left), Group Chief Financial Officer Ravi Veeraraghavan (second right) and external representatives during the annual general assembly meeting yesterday.

## URC holds AGM for financial year 2018

**KUWAIT:** United Real Estate Company K.S.C.P (URC), one of the leading real estate developers in the MENA region, announced holding its Annual General Assembly Meeting for the financial year ended 31 December 2018 on Monday (29th April 2019) at the Public Authority for Industry in South Surra, attended by Tariq Mohammed AbdulSalam, Chairman of URC alongside the Executive Management Team and representatives from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, the Kuwait Clearing Company and the Company's external auditor.

Tariq Mohammed AbdulSalam discussed significant financial highlights from the annual report for the year ended 31 December 2018, which provided an overview of the Company's major achievements over the past year. The report demonstrated the Company's resilience in adapting to different economic conditions and challenges to achieve both balanced financial results and substantial project milestones.

The Company recorded KD 103 million in operating revenues as compared to KD 87 million in 2017 and a decrease in operating profit from KD 21 million in 2017 to reach KD 9 million during 2018. The decrease in the company's profits was due to several factors mainly from a 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 Company recorded a net loss of KD 9 million in 2018 as compared to net profit of KD 2.2 million for the year end 2017. The Company recorded a 2.39 percent increase in total assets reaching a value of KD 617 million in 2018 as compared to KD 602 million in 2017.

Commenting on the results, AbdulSalam, said that despite the announced losses, the Company has achieved numerous positive and promising achievements for the future, the most important of which is maintaining the same operational performance (before provisions) and the con-

tinued growth in its services arms and construction sectors in line with the Company's recent diversification strategy.

AbdulSalam added that the Company in 2018 successfully issued KD 60 million worth of bonds with a maturity of five years with strong demand from high net worth individuals and institutions, reflecting investor confidence in the strategy put in place by the Company.

In pursuing these strategies, AbdulSalam asserted that the Company will continue to seek and exploit all possible opportunities to improve the performance of its operating assets with the objective of improving returns to its shareholders. This will be supplemented by the strategy to exit from non-performing assets, which in return, will improve the cash flows of the Company.

Furthermore, the Company realized several significant achievements in its ongoing projects during 2018. In the Kingdom of Morocco, the Company launched the second phase of the 2 million square meters "Assoufid" project. The development of the project's infrastructure continues to progress.

The project's first phase consists of an award winning, first-class golf course, while the second phase will comprise a five-star hotel and residential components, including branded villas and high-end apartments. In this context, the Company successfully signed a hotel management agreement with Marriott International which will introduce the "St. Regis" brand.

In Kuwait, the Company made significant progress in the "Hessah Towers" development, one of the largest ongoing projects located at Hessah Al-Mubarak District. The District comprises of a variety of components, which include residential, retail, commercial, clinics, and serviced apartments. In collaboration with world-renowned international design firms and consultants, the detailed design of Hessah Al-Mubarak development that includes other residential, recreational and business centers is underway.

In December 2018, the Company launched the con-

Asam, told a press conference yesterday. "We now have to watch what is happening in the political environment and how we deal with the customer", he said.

### Production ramp-up

Airbus yesterday also blamed falling profits on "83 million euros relating to the dollar pre-delivery payment mismatch and balance sheet revaluation" and "a negative 61 million euros related to A380 program cost". Airbus announced in February that it would stop building the A380, a double-decker jet which earned plaudits from passengers but failed to win over enough airlines to justify its massive costs.

The program's future had been in doubt for years as Airbus slowed production, and the company acknowledged last year that the A380 would be scrapped if no new orders came in.

Consolidated revenues increased 24 percent to 12.5 billion euros "reflecting the higher commercial aircraft deliveries as the production ramp-up continued", it said in a statement. "The first quarter underlying financials mainly reflect our commercial aircraft ramp-up and delivery phasing," said CEO Guillaume Faury. "The com-

mercial aircraft market remains robust and we continue to see good prospects in the helicopters and defense and space businesses. The new management team is in place and focused on delivering on our commitments."

Faury took over earlier this month, replacing Tom Enders, who stepped down after five years. Earnings before interest (EBIT) were down nine percent at 181 million euros. In the first quarter, Airbus recorded 62 gross commercial aircraft orders compared with 68 during the same period in 2018. These included 38 A350 XWBs, the latest of its large aircraft. Airbus said it plans to deliver between 880 and 890 commercial aircraft in 2019.

It added that it is ramping up production of its A320 planes, which are a direct competitor to the 737 MAX planes made by Airbus's rival aerospace giant Boeing.

The 737 MAX planes have been grounded worldwide as Boeing comes under huge scrutiny after a total of 346 passengers and crew were killed when two of the jets crashed. When asked at a press conference about the troubles of Airbus's American rival, Faury said that the company had not yet seen any change in its supply chain. —AFP



KUWAIT: Attendees during the general assembly meeting.

struction of the first package of "Hessah Towers". Expected to be completed in 2022, the "Hessah Towers" project covers a total built up area of more than 63,000 square meters. Each tower consists of 40 floors that include apartments, duplexes, and townhouses characterized by their unique views of the Arabian Gulf and Kuwait City, in addition, to other amenities such as a health club, children's recreation areas, private gardens for the residents, a swimming pool and multi-level parking.

On another note, Ahmad Kasem, Acting Chief Executive

Officer of URC, said that the Company achieved a significant increase of 19 percent in total revenues from its contracting and services arms, and the profit from these sectors increased by 73 percent. Kasem added that this is in line with the Company's strategy to diversify sources of income generated from these sectors.

In addition to the above, the present shareholders at the General Assembly Meeting approved the items of the agenda and elected a new board of directors for the Company for the upcoming three years.

## Airbus profits plunge on A380 scrapping

**PARIS:** European aerospace giant Airbus yesterday reported a slump in first-quarter net profit, hit by Germany's freeze on weapons exports to Saudi Arabia and its own decision to stop building the loss-making A380 super-jumbo.

It said profits were down 86 percent from the same period in 2018 at 40 million euros (\$45 million). It blamed "adjustments" including "a negative 190 million euros as a consequence of the prolonged suspension of defense export licenses to Saudi Arabia by the German government".

But Berlin has since faced protests by EU partners because the ban has impacted joint defense projects such as the Eurofighter and Tornado jets. Airbus is affected by the freeze under a contract for "border security" equipment, the group's chief financial officer, Dominik



SAN FRANCISCO, California: A United Airlines Boeing 737 (top) lands next to an Interjet Airbus A320 at San Francisco International Airport in San Francisco, California. — AFP

## Recognized as one of the best GMC Distributors in the Middle East, MSRY Behbehani Company awarded the "Grandmasters Award 2018" from General Motors Middle East



Mr. Adel Behbehani



Mr. John Roth

**K**uwait: In an extraordinary ceremony held by Mohammad Saleh & Reza Yousuf Behbehani company in Kuwait, General Motors presented its prestigious annual Grandmasters Award to the Behbehani team in recognition of their excellent after Sales service and outstanding customer ownership experience as well as exceeding the 2018 annual sales target. This ceremony also coincides with the celebrations of the 56th Years of partnership with GMC.

The ceremony was led by the Vice President of Behbehani Co. Jassim Behbehani and GMC Sales Director Adel Behbehani and the Directors Abdul Ghani Behbehani and Talal Behbehani. From General Motors side John Roth -

the President and Managing Director for North Africa and the Middle East, Luay Al Shurafa - Managing Director Commercial Operations Middle East - and key Sales Managers Hussein Mahmoud and Rakesh Kaul from General Motors attended the ceremony as well.

The attendees were welcomed by Mr. Adel Behbehani in this elite ceremony attended by more than 400 staff members and managers from General Motors and his speech stated: "We are honored today to gather and celebrate this great achievement while stressing on our strive to deliver the best service and shopping experience to our customers". He added: "It was a small bright idea from a small showroom in Al Safat in Kuwait City where

we started this operation with a number of limited employees whom together took long steps towards growing this company and pursuing our dream and vision of being one of the leading automotive companies in Kuwait." "Today we operate in modern strategic locations with more than 600 employees".

During this high ambient celebration, Mr. Jassim and Mr. Adel Behbehani presented the "Boom" which is the traditional Kuwaiti Ship miniature to General Motors president emphasize on the strong ties between both companies and to celebrate the 56th years of partnerships between Behbehani and General Motors Middle East.

Our partnership with General Motors is one of its kind in the region, and this year we celebrate 56 years of excellence and prosperity and we vow to offer the best when it comes to our customers and guarantee the highest levels of service at our branches. This partnership goes back 1963, after obtaining Beaumont and Acadian vehicles dealership in 1963. In 1967, the company acquired the right to distribute GMC vehicles in Kuwait. Since then, it has been a continuous success, as it was one of the first companies to receive recognition and appreciation for its outstanding performances and leading achievements in sales, Service and customer satisfaction.



## Business

# KFH makes cheque deposit simple with a snapshot; safe and secure

## Bank signs agreement with ProgressSoft to offer digital solutions

**KUWAIT:** Continuing to pave the way as the market reference in mobile solutions to everyday banking needs, Kuwait Finance House (KFH) has signed an agreement with renowned ProgressSoft corporation, a leading international IT Solutions provider to introduce the first ever Mobile Deposit of Cheques.

This service to be made available soon to its customers will enable quick deposit of cheques in a fast and efficient way to their accounts - simply by using a screenshot of the original document through KFH Online. KFH customers can simply log into their KFH



Waleed Khaled Mandani

mobile app, go to the cheque deposit menu and take a picture of both sides of the cheques using their smart phone camera. The funds will then be deposited directly into their accounts through KFH Online app. This provides customers with a mobile capability that enables faster availability of funds and convenience.

Group Chief Retail and Private Banking Officer at KFH, Waleed Khaled Mandani said that "the new digital feature, under the overarching pipeline of digital solutions recently launched, will save KFH customers the time and effort to visit a branch to deposit

cheques, while maintaining highest safety and security levels. Through this innovative service, KFH strengthens its leadership as advanced financial solutions provider and keeps abreast of the technological developments in the banking industry, in a way that serves the needs and immediate requirements of the customers".

Mandani added that KFH hugely invests in advanced digital solutions that enables its customers to use the latest innovative banking solutions to execute their transactions and achieve their long-term goals. By its continued expansion of easy-to-use solutions, KFH succeeded in empowering its customers with high-standard products and services, unblocking new business opportunities.

He continued: "KFH is keeping up with the digital trans-

formation, implementing Fintech and AI, achieving highest standards of efficiency and best utilization of resources as well as promoting the values of entrepreneurship, innovation, partnership and responsibility." He added that KFH had made long strides along the digital transformation journey, drawing attention to its services, modern and innovative financial products. This includes instant financial transfers service using RippleNet network, Skiplino service for booking appointments electronically in bank branches, opening two KFH-Go branches in Ishbiliya and Al Jabriya, cash withdrawals using QR code, Civil ID or mobile number, the fast cross-border money transfer service "KFH Xpress", KFH Pay service for electronic payments, robot service, Chatbot and many other digital services.

## Strong US growth, weak inflation leave Fed stuck happily on hold

**WASHINGTON:** The Federal Reserve is expected to hold interest rates steady at its policy meeting this week as policymakers balance recent stronger-than-expected US economic growth against sluggish inflation.

Officials have given no signal in recent weeks of any change to the US central bank's benchmark overnight lending rate, currently set in a range of 2.25 percent to 2.50 percent. Markets have bet heavily the Fed's "patient" approach means just that - with rates on hold until a run of good or bad news about the economy provides a compelling reason to move.

Data compiled by CME Group put the odds the Fed leaves rates unchanged this week at 97 percent.

"We do not expect a big change in tone," compared to the Fed's mid-March policy statement, with policymakers likely to be "more upbeat on growth, though with a more

cautious reading of recent inflation developments," JP Morgan economist Michael Feroli wrote in a preview of this week's meeting. The policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee is due to release its latest statement at 2 pm EDT (1800 GMT) today after the end of a two-day meeting. Fed Chairman Jerome Powell will hold a press conference shortly after. In the weeks since the Fed's March meeting, most of the incoming US data has surprised in a positive way, diminishing the likelihood officials might be compelled to cut rates as President Donald Trump has demanded. The gap in interest rates between different types of bonds, which narrowed in late March in what could be construed as a growing concern about recession, has since become larger as recession concerns eased.

Gross domestic product grew at an annualized rate of 3.2 percent for the first three months of the year, comparable to last year's pace. The 3 percent growth achieved in 2018 surprised many at the central bank, and in their March statement officials said they thought the economy had slowed in the first weeks of this year. After adding a meager 33,000 jobs in February, US employers added nearly 200,000 in March. The S&P 500 index also hit a new record high and US retail sales rebounded in March after a lull. "The GDP figures - along with the strong rebound in retail sales and durable goods orders in March - are a testament to the economy's resilience," analysts at Oxford Economics wrote last week. It is the type of data,

in fact, that until a few weeks ago might have set the stage for an interest rate increase.

But a round of volatility in stock and bond markets late last year, coupled with weak inflation and signs of a global economic slowdown, prompted the Fed to change its plans for further hikes and shift to a strategy of staying on hold until something changes. The Fed raised rates four times last year, and as late as December envisioned more increases this year.

### Inflation concerns

Inflation in particular continues to fall short of the Fed's 2 percent goal, and was just 1.5 percent on an annualized basis in the most recent report. Some officials, most notably Fed Vice Chairman Richard Clarida, have said they also feel inflation expectations are nearing uncomfortably low levels. Fed officials watch different measures of inflation expectations almost as closely as the actual inflation numbers, and view them as central to the future rate of price increases.

That's a strong reason, analysts say, for the Fed to hold off on rate hikes until it's clear inflation is moving higher. Faced with the "dichotomy" of continuing economic growth and below-target inflation, "the Fed should keep policy on hold at its May FOMC meeting as it navigates the tug-of-war," between the two, analysts at Deutsche Bank wrote. — Reuters

tomers," CEO Rickard Gustafson said in a statement. "The unions have not yet indicated that they are ready to release their ultimate demands and return to the negotiating table, which means that we remain in a deadlock," he added.

Pilots are demanding better pay and work conditions and the Swedish Air Line Pilots Association, which initiated the strike, has said that months of talks had failed to result in a solution to pilots' "deteriorating work conditions, unpredictable work schedules and job insecurity".

As the strike commenced negotiations between the parties broke down and around lunchtime on Tuesday the parties were still not in direct contact. "The mediators are in contact with the parties, but no negotiations are going on," Bosse Andersson, head of communications for the Swedish National Mediation Office, said. — AFP

## SAS cancels more flights as pilot strike continues

**STOCKHOLM:** Scandinavian air carrier (SAS) said yesterday it had to cancel another 504 flights today, affecting 47,000 passengers, as a pilot strike continued into its fifth day. Since the start of the strike on Friday some 3,300 departures have been cancelled, affecting a total of almost 327,000 passengers, according to the company. "I am deeply concerned that the pilot strike hasn't been resolved and that it is continuing to affect our cus-



OSLO: Passengers wait at the Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) counter at Oslo Airport in Gardermoen, as SAS pilots' strike caused more than 600 flights to be cancelled on Monday. — AFP

## GM reports lower sales in China, North America

**NEW YORK:** US automaker General Motors saw profits more than double in the first quarter, but said yesterday that lower sales in China and North America ate into total revenues.

The news undercut the company's share price, despite posting net income of \$2.2 billion, twice that of the same period of last year, a gain boosted by the one-time impact of a favorable tax court ruling in Brazil. But revenues fell 3.4 percent to \$3.9 billion, and excluding special items, operating earnings dropped 11.5 percent, the company said.

GM has been projecting auto sales in China to hold steady in 2019 compared to 2018, despite an economic slowdown that has dented auto demand. But first quarter sales in the country fell 17.5 percent to 813,973 compared to a year earlier.

While there are expectations that government stimulus will help spur a recovery in the Chinese market, "we have yet to see that translate into auto demand," said Chief Financial Officer Dhivya Suryadevara. "There's still not enough specifics around what the stimulus is going to be," she said, adding that GM has a slate of new vehicle launches in China in the second half of the year. Auto sales

also declined in North America, due in part to planned downtime at the company's sport-utility vehicle factories, offset somewhat by strong demand for new pickup trucks.

GM became a political punching bag last year after announcing plans to cut thousands of jobs and shutter seven plants worldwide, including five in North America. Suryadevara said the company has no plans for additional cutbacks. Shares of GM fell 2.5 percent to \$39.00 as trading opened. — AFP



DETROIT: In this file photo, US flags wave outside the General Motors world headquarters building in Detroit, Michigan. — AFP

## Turkey central bank promises to stay firm against inflation

**ISTANBUL:** Turkey's central bank chief yesterday pledged to maintain a firm stance against inflation, currently close to 20 percent, and sought to reassure the markets over the fall of its foreign currency reserves. Observers raised concerns last week that the central bank had withdrawn its commitment that it was ready to tighten its monetary policy if necessary to control inflation.

But central bank governor Murat Cetinkaya promised yesterday to take stringent measures if the situation required during a presentation of the bank's quarterly inflation report. "If the inflation curve deviates from our forecasts, then we want it to come back on the right track," he said in Istanbul, adding that the central bank would use "all the tools at its disposal" to achieve its targets.

Markets fear that the central bank will lower its main policy interest rate, currently at 24 percent. President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has been putting pressure on the nominally independent central bank to cut interest rates in order to promote growth, even though this risks stoking inflation. It struck a 15-year peak in October at 25.24 percent before falling below 20 percent in February. Food prices have been hit particularly hard.

Cetinkaya indicated that the central bank forecasts inflation will fall under 15 percent by the end of the year and hit 8.2 percent in 2020 — which matches the forecasts made in the previous quarterly inflation report. As well as high inflation, the Turkish economy is going through a difficult period with its first recession in a decade and unemployment hitting the highest level since 2010 in December at 13.5 percent.

Meanwhile the Turkish lira has been sliding against foreign currencies. The currency has lost 11 percent of its value against the US dollar since the start of 2019. The lira lost nearly 30 percent of its value against the greenback last year. For weeks, markets were worried over the volatility of the central bank's foreign reserves—which inexplicably plunged last month and alarmed investors.

But Cetinkaya sought to reassure by saying that the recent fluctuations were "neither exceptional nor abnormal", adding that the bank intends to strengthen its reserves. — AFP

## High fuel costs drive Lufthansa deeper into red

**FRANKFURT:** German airline group Lufthansa plunged deeper into the red in the first quarter, it said yesterday, blaming the rising price of fuel and intense competition in Europe but sticking to annual targets. Between January and March, the Frankfurt-based group lost 342 million euros (\$382 million), almost nine times worse than in the first quarter of 2018.

Lufthansa had warned earlier in April of the looming negative bottom line, suggesting an operating, or underlying loss of 336 million euros was in the offing—a figure confirmed yesterday. Meanwhile revenues were up three percent year-on-year, at 7.9 billion euros. "The first quarter is traditionally a difficult one for airlines," the group said, with seasonal effects worsened by a 202-million-euro rise in fuel costs compared with last year.

Looking ahead to the full year, Lufthansa now expects spending on jet fuel to rise by 700 million euros to 6.8 billion euros. Last year's bill was already up 850 million euros on the previous year.

"A continued reduction of unit costs could only partially offset the decline" in earnings caused by higher fuel costs and competition squeezing ticket prices in Europe, the group said.

Finance director Ulrik Svensson said he was "confident" for the remainder of 2019, highlighting "favorable booking levels for the months ahead". Lufthansa expects to achieve an operating margin of between 6.5 and 8.0 percent, compared with 7.9 percent in 2018.

But capacity growth will slow to 1.9 percent as the group faces a "bottleneck in infrastructure" with airports struggling to deal with rising passenger numbers. Shares in Lufthansa had shed 0.4 percent around 1:00 pm in Frankfurt (1100 GMT) against a flat DAX index of blue-chip shares, to trade at 22.12 euros.

In a conference call later yesterday, finance chief Svensson acknowledged that the worldwide grounding of Boeing's 737 MAX planes after two deadly crashes could have affected passengers' confidence in the US manufacturer's flagship aircraft. Lufthansa does not currently operate any 737 MAX planes. But while Lufthansa is "not excluding any options" for upcoming plane purchases, the fall in trust would be "really a discussion and a question for next year," he said. Carrier Virgin Australia said yesterday it would delay orders for 48 Boeing planes over security concerns. — AFP

## Eurozone growth beats expectations as Italy exits recession

**BRUSSELS:** The eurozone economy expanded by a better than forecast 0.4 percent in the first quarter of 2019, official data showed yesterday, with Italy breaking free of a recession.

The reassuring announcement was a break from a series of worrying economic figures for Europe that showed a lackluster economy beset by looming political risks such as Brexit and weaker global growth. The figure slightly exceeded the expectations of analysts interviewed by data company Factset, who had forecast 0.3 percent growth. At an annual rate, growth in the 19 countries that use the euro was 1.2 percent, the same result as in the previous quarter, according to the first estimate of the European statistics agency.

Analysts warned, however, that the uptick in eurozone growth would not last. "The continued weakening of the timelier survey indicators suggests that the pick-up in eurozone GDP growth will not be sustained," said Jack Allen of Capital Economics. "We still think that the economy will grow more slowly in the second quarter and expand by less than most forecasters expect in 2019 as a whole," he added.

The good news was dominated by Italy, where the economy returned to growth in the first quarter after a half-year of contraction. The data should bring some relief to Italy's populist-led government, which is struggling to hit ambitious growth targets necessary to deliver cost-cutting commitments to Brussels.

### Eurozone recession

The Italian economy expanded by 0.2 percent in the three months to March, escaping from two quarters of recession, the Istat agency said. That contraction had put pressure on the government in the eurozone's third largest economy, which took power in June on the back of big-spending electoral promises. "The bottom line is that we should cheer today's quite decent growth numbers, although we should not be carried away. It is still early days," said Marco Valli of Unicredit in Milan.

And, while Germany's growth report will not be issued for a couple of weeks, analysts said yesterday's data indicated that recovery was in store for Europe's biggest economy. "By and large, the necessary conditions for an industrial turnaround later this year are falling into place," said Florian Hense of Berenberg bank in Germany. "Over the past few weeks, US-China trade tensions have eased, news from China have suggested the Chinese stimulus may have started to work and the risk of an immediate hard Brexit has receded," he said.

Eurozone unemployment meanwhile dropped to 7.7 percent in March, down from 7.8 percent in February and from 8.5 percent in March 2018. This is the lowest rate recorded in the euro area since September 2008. "Paraphrasing Mark Twain who said reports of his death were greatly exaggerated, we can say that calls for a eurozone recession were certainly premature," said Peter Vanden Houte, Chief Economist at ING.

"Declining unemployment and gradually rising wages are supporting household consumption, while easy financing conditions remain in place," he said.

Unemployment in the euro area has fallen steadily since September 2016, when it dropped below the symbolic threshold of 10 percent. It is now close to the average rate before the 2007 to 2008 financial crisis, when it stood at 7.5 percent. At the worst of the debt crisis, eurozone unemployment reached a record high of 12.1 percent in 2013. — AFP

## Business

# Warba Bank initial lead arranger and bookrunner of a Murabaha facility

## \$250m facility arranged for Ziraat Participation Bank with a consortium of banks

**KUWAIT:** Warba Bank stated that it has successfully participated, along with a consortium of regional and international banks, as initial lead arranger and bookrunner of a one-year \$250 million syndicated dual currency Murabaha financing facility for Ziraat Participation Bank; the facility was successfully oversubscribed in April 2019.

Initially, the facility was launched at \$150 million, but due to the significant oversubscription by 17 regional and international participants, Ziraat Participation Bank increased the facility size to \$250 million (equivalent).

The facility was structured as a sharia-compliant commodity Murabaha facility and has given Ziraat Participation Bank the opportunity to widen and diversify its funding base and develop new banking relationships. The proceeds will be used to expand its financing business in Turkey.

Acting Chief Investment Officer at Warba Bank Thuwaini Khaled Al-Thuwaini, said: "Warba Bank is committed to its expansion strategy which aims at supporting the Islamic Financing as well as the business sector locally, regionally and globally by carefully selecting best investment opportunities in line with the rules of Islamic Sharia".

"The Turkish economy is full of opportunities, therefore Warba Bank is proud to participate alongside regional and global leading banks to play a vital role in promoting this economy, whereas Ziraat Participation Bank contributes to the financing of the agricultural sector, which is one of the pillars of the Turkish economy",



Thuwaini Khaled Al-Thuwaini

he added. Al-Thuwaini stressed that Warba Bank participation in such financing facilities is part of its strategic plan to expand its financing operations, particularly following the Bank's share capital increase last year, by financing major projects in key economic sectors in Kuwait and overseas.

It is worth mentioning that this is Warba Bank's third participation in financing deals for the Turkish Ziraat Participation Bank. In 2017, it contributed to a multi-currency syndicated financing facility amounting \$236 million while in 2016, it contributed to a \$155 million multi-currency syndicated financing facility for the same bank.

## Gulf Bank announces winners of Al-Danah weekly draw

**KUWAIT:** Gulf Bank held its weekly draw on 28th April 2019 announcing the names of the winners for the week of 21st April until 25th April 2019. The weekly draw consists of five winners who receive KD 1,000 each, every week.

The winners this week are:

- Laila Mubarak Mohammad Alfaqaan
- Eid Ayed Faza Al-Shemmiri
- Ali Hussain Abdullah Mohammed
- Ashraf Abdulrahman Abdoh Mostafa
- Sameera Mahmoud Ali Osta Ahmad Behbehani

Gulf Bank's second Al-Danah quarterly draw for the prize of KD 250,000 will be held on 26 June 2019, and the third quarterly draw for the prize of KD500,000 will be held 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.

Gulf Bank encourages customers to 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 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 KD 2 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.

## Celebrate special Ramadan offers on Nissan Patrol

**KUWAIT:** In celebrations of the Holy month of Ramadan, Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co (AABC), the sole authorized dealer of Nissan in the State of Kuwait, is pleased to announce its latest offers on Nissan Patrol. The much-awaited Ramadan campaign, presents a limited-time opportunity to enjoy incredible package deals on its vehicles this blessed season.

Nissan Patrol customers receive free registration and third party insurance followed by complementary window tinting and paint protection in addition to the customer's choice of service package of up to 7 years or Trade-in Value up to KD 1200 KD or gift vouchers up to KD 1200.

Those opting for the Nissan Patrol will be rewarded with the highest trade in values. The most powerful in its class, Nissan Patrol V8 is backed by a power of 400 hp, and torque of 560 Nm comes with the direct fuel injection system and the variable valve shift control technology. Patrol will give you maximum power with the lowest percentage of emissions while the new V6 has a 275 horsepower and 394 Nm of torque. The Patrol V6 offers 12 percent more torque while driving than competing cars. Strength, luxury, and flexibility await any customer to embark on any adventure. Nissan Al Babtain wishes its customers a joyous Ramadan and invites customers to seize the opportunity to enjoy the best deals and great performance vehicles this season.

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## Burgan Bank renews its exclusive partnership with Grand Cinemas

**KUWAIT:** Burgan Bank announced yesterday its renewed partnership with Grand Cinemas commencing for another two years. The recent signing is part of the Bank's continued commitment to accommodate its varied segment of customers with the latest and most fulfilling lifestyle benefits.

As part of the strategic partnership tie up, the bank will be offering additional benefits to its customers, which includes discounted cinema rates all week long for all customers and all account holders as well as free latest blockbuster screenings throughout the year. The discounted cinema tickets can be booked via the Grand Cinemas website - kw.grandcinemasme.com, its designated mobile app or through the theatres box office.

Nasser Al-Qaisi, Chief Retail Banking officer at Burgan Bank said, "As a progressive bank, we are always on the hunt for new ways to enhance customer experiences with tailor-made requirements and in line with popular trends. Constantly driven to surpass customer expectations with a wide range of innovative deals, we pride ourselves in being the only Bank in Kuwait

to hold an exclusive collaboration with Grand Cinemas, the region's leading movie entertainment destination."

The popular chain is a subsidiary of Gulf Films and houses state-of-the-art facilities aimed at elevating every cinema-goer's experience. The recent partnership also coincides with the opening of its new location in Al-Khairan Mall.

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

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

## Renault Al-Babtain: Explore charismatic SUV - Renault Koleos

**KUWAIT:** Abdulmohsen Abdulaziz Al-Babtain Co, the authorized agent of Renault in the State of Kuwait welcomes its customers to purchase and discover the powerful and refined SUV model at its Renault Store Al-Rai.

In keeping with Renault's design strategy, the Koleos exterior holds a taste for adventure all that is expected of a D-segment SUV. It's robust and muscular features amplifies the athletic exterior design with door protective moldings, large diameter two-tone alloy wheels, alloy roof rails, shark antenna, fender chrome lines and silver front skid. The four wheel drive technology, all-terrain ability, engine and transmission line-up has been tailored to meet the needs and expectations of the Kuwaiti

market. The 2.5-litre petrol engine is also an atmospheric, four-cylinder, power is 170hp (126kW) at 6,000rpm, with peak torque of 233Nm at 4,000rpm.

Ensuring equal appeal internally, it is embedded with comfortable seats including technology and design amongst the very best in its category, class-leading cabin space, including 289mm of rear knee room, 8.7" touchscreen tablet with R-LINK 2 multimedia & navigation system. Koleos drivers can indulge in the Advanced Driver Assistance Systems (ADAS) such as Easy Park Assist and Blind Spot Warning.

Renault Al-Babtain encourages Renault fans to stop by the showroom situated in Al-Rai to view the dynamic model for themselves.



## Lincoln sales up nearly 50% across GCC in first quarter of 2019

**KUWAIT:** Lincoln is in the midst of a sales spike in the region, thanks to continuously growing brand awareness, new regional distributor engagement, continued investments in facilities, and an unmistakable lineup of luxury vehicles and services.

In just the first quarter of the year, Lincoln can already boast a stellar performance in the region, with a 47 per cent climb on 2018's Middle East-wide Q1 figures. In the UAE, a 33 per cent increase in new Lincoln vehicle sales may be attributed to the growing popularity of the lineup and introduction of new models including the Navigator and MKC.

In 2018, Lincoln sales grew by 50 per cent in the UAE, the region's largest market for the luxury segment. And with the brand new stand-alone Lincoln facility recently inaugurated by Al-Tayer Motors, Lincoln's UAE distributor, Lincoln clients are sure to receive a world-class personalized Lincoln ownership experience that complements the brand's aspirational range of sedans and SUVs.

Kuwait recorded the sharpest spike in sales of Lincoln vehicles for Q1, with an 82 per cent surge over the same period last year. Buoyed by the welcoming of Alghanim Auto to Lincoln's regional distributor network, the sustained popularity of the flagship Navigator full-size SUV and

Continental sedan, and the launch of new nameplates such as the MKC and Nautilus, Lincoln continues to go from strength to strength in the Middle East. Alghanim Auto continues to invest in delivering unmistakable Lincoln personalized services through its dealership, with two more Lincoln outlets underway before the end of 2019, signaling a strong commitment to the brand.

"We are fortunate to be working with some of the most engaged partners in the region, with their commitment to providing best-in-class customer experience helping us grow our customer base exponentially," said Sarah Rae, director, Lincoln Middle East. "Working hand-in-hand with them, Lincoln is able to bring the facilities, services, and products that discerning luxury customers throughout the Middle East both desire and deserve.

"Today the Lincoln brand has a strong lineup with the MKZ, Continental and the expanding utility lineup which features the new MKC, Nautilus and Navigator," she added. "And with the upcoming launch of the much anticipated all-new Aviator in the next few months, Lincoln clients will see the culmination of true luxury that Lincoln promises its clients. We are thrilled that our brand continues to resonate with our clientele in the region as evidenced by the growth Lincoln continues to experience."



## BP quarterly profits leap by a fifth

**LONDON:** British energy giant BP said yesterday that first-quarter net profits jumped by almost a fifth, as rising production and lower costs eclipsed the impact of weaker oil and gas prices.

Profit after tax rallied 19 percent to \$2.9 billion (2.6 billion euros) in the three months to the end of March, BP said in a results statement. That compared with \$2.5 billion during the same period last year. Energy production rose about 2.4 percent to 3.8 million barrels of oil equivalent per day.

Output was lifted by last year's vast purchase of US shale oil and gas operations from mining titan BHP, as well as new projects in Egypt, Trinidad and Tobago and the Gulf of Mexico. However, underlying replacement cost profit—a widely-watched measure which excludes fluctuations in the value of crude oil inventories—slid eight percent to \$2.4 billion, although slightly above analysts' forecasts. In the first quarter, BP paid another \$600 million for costs arising from the 2010 Gulf of Mexico oil spill catastrophe, but that was sharply lower than the \$1.6 billion spent a year earlier.

### 'Volatile period'

Despite the weak market conditions, chief executive Bob Dudley said BP had enjoyed "solid" performances in both its downstream operations—which comprises refining, marketing and distribution—and upstream activities that cover exploration and production. "BP's performance this quarter demonstrates the strength of our strategy," said Dudley in the state-



The logo of BP plc is seen at a BP petrol station in Liverpool. — AFP

ment. "With solid upstream and downstream delivery and strong trading results, we produced resilient earnings and cash flow through a volatile period that began with weak market conditions and included significant turnarounds. "Moving through the year, we will keep our focus on disciplined growth, with efficient project execution and safe and reliable operations," Dudley added.

BP is in the midst of selling \$10 billion of assets to finance the \$10.4-billion BHP transaction. The group sold \$600 million of assets in the first quarter.

In late morning deals on Tuesday, BP shares rose 0.49 percent to 555.20 pence, bucking the downwards trend on the London stock market. "BP may not have repeated its immense performance from the full year numbers in February, but nonetheless remains on track to deliver on its strategic promises," said Interactive Investor analyst Richard Hunter.

The company's annual profits surged in 2018 as oil prices soared over most of the year. However, Brent oil prices then tumbled to an 18-month low in late December after producers' cartel OPEC and non-OPEC members agreed to trim output, sending shockwaves through the energy sector. — AFP

What's On



# Sabah Al-Ahmad Center holds Madhallah Exhibition



Sabah Al-Ahmad Center for Giftedness and Creativity held the sixth edition of Madhallah Exhibition at the Avenues on April 26 and 27, 2019. Madhallah Exhibition is one of the most important entertainment scientific platforms held in Kuwait for children, youth and those of special needs in order to develop their abilities and skills and give them scientific and technological knowledge.



## Experience Ramadan at Hilton Kuwait resort

Hilton Kuwait Resort invites guests to enjoy an exclusive range of delicious iftar, ghabqa and sohour offerings with loved ones throughout the holy month of Ramadan. Family and friends will savour an extra special selection of Arabic and International cuisines, including a delightful variety of traditional sweets and desserts, guaranteed to provide an unforgettable experience during this very special time.

The talented culinary team at Teatro Restaurant has created an exquisite array of gourmet Arabic and

International delicacies and gastronomic delights especially for the holy season. Interactive cooking stations will also add an element of culinary theatre to the experience. Iftar will be served from sunset until 09.00pm, while ghabqa and sohour buffets are available from 10.00 pm to 2.00 am.

Located at the spacious garden overlooking the picturesque Arabian Gulf, Palm Court hosts 30 private tents for memorable Ramadan gatherings with family and friends. Each comfy tent provides relief and entertainment with air-conditioning facility and TV screens airing the latest Ramadan shows and series. To add to the occasion, guests can also enjoy iftar, ghabqa and sohour or Arabic sweet set menu along with a selection of flavorful shisha. Palm Court is open daily from sunset to 2.00 am during the holy month of Ramadan.

During the holy month Hilton Kuwait is offering exclusive Ramadan prices for rooms, -providing a five-star home-



from-home experience. Starting from KD 68,000per night including sohour Buffet, guests are invited to enjoy the unique beach facilities, swimming pools,

spa, and playing courts, amenities for kid's activities and many more. Ask about the Chalets and Villas special prices for families.



General Manager and Board member Mohammad Khorshid of Aqua Park said tickets to the park are reduced to KD 2,750, and that it honored its patrons with 6000 scratch and win prizes at the main gate on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan. The prizes included scooters, mobile phones, tickets from future kid and many other surprises. He said it coordinated with Public Authority for Sports to organize a tournament for soap football and beach volleyball from May 16 to 19, 2019 and any team can participate with four players and two substitutes.

## NBK extends gold sponsorship for AUM career fair

As part of the ongoing support it provides to newly graduated students in the first steps of their career, National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) has taken part as a gold sponsor in the Career Fair held at the American University of the Middle East (AUM) from April 29 to 30, 2019. The bank aims to engage with students and encourage them to join the workforce and discuss opportunities with employers directly.

NBK believes in the importance of supporting students and graduates by providing them with the opportunities that will enable them to grow their talents within important sectors such as the banking and financial sector, and therefore makes sure it participates and supports career fairs and events that target these young Kuwaiti talents. Speaking of the participation at AUM's Career Fair,

Abdullah Al-Jassim, Head of Recruitment at the National Bank of Kuwait, said, "The Bank maintains its leading position in the private sector, recruiting and training Kuwaiti talents to qualify them to work in the banking industry."

Al-Jassim highlighted that the Career Fair is a unique opportunity to share its work culture among students and graduates. He encouraged them to join the private sector and the banking sector in particular, showcasing the training programs that the Bank invests in to help them grow in their respective fields. He said, "Career fairs are the ideal platforms to interact with ambitious students, and NBK is their ideal choice of employment for a promising career in the sector as they will find at our Bank the resources and programs that will develop their skills at par with international standards and competencies."



He added that the process of recruitment of young professionals and their appointments to specific divisions in the Bank takes into consideration their skill set so as to ensure that their abilities are invested in properly, helping them become more productive and passionate at work. NBK is committed to providing

training programs for graduates and students to nurture their skills, familiarize them about professionalism at work, give them hands-on practical knowledge and training to enter the workforce market. NBK is one of the largest organizations in the private sector in Kuwait in supporting the youth segment.

## KMRM organizes Rajathotsav 2019

As part of its Silver Jubilee Celebrations, KMRM-Malankara Catholic faithful in Kuwait hosted a Mega Socio Cultural Event - Rajathotsav (Harvest Festival & Mega Carnival) on April 26, 2019 at Al Jawahara Tent, Ardiya. The event was inaugurated by Prof Dr Shamir Ally, Ambassador of the Republic of Guyana, South America to Kuwait. Rev Fr Binoy Kochukarikkathil, the spiritual director of KMRM delivered the Keynote address. KMRM President Jacob Thomas presided over the meeting. Babuji Bathery, Silver Jubilee General Convener briefed on the Jubilee celebrations of KMRM. Nitesh Dey, Operational Manager - ONCOST Hyper Market, was the guest of honor.

Advisory Board Chairman gave the Jubilee message. Rajathotsav Convener Shibu P Cherian, Binu K John, Jubilee Cultural Convener, Alex Varghese-Jubilee Social and Educational Convener, Joseph K

Daniel- Jubilee Ecumenical Convener were present. Liju Parakkal, General Secretary welcomed the gathering and Treasurer Santhosh P Antony gave the vote of thanks. A souvenir to commemorate the occasion was released by Dr Maryann Beebe-Ally, the First Lady of the Embassy of the Republic of Guyana.

The program began with the Adyaphala rally, a traditional showcase of the harvest festival where people walked in carrying the nature's harvests. The major attraction of the event was musical performance by Pooja Prem, (URF World Record and Limca Book of Record Holder) who has sang more than 800 songs in 63 different languages. Also we had outdoor fun rides and games for children and elders. There will be lucky draws and competitions to win prizes. More of all there were variety food counters and outlets for shopping too. The day will be reminiscent in the history of KMRM.



Commercial Bank of Kuwait marketing and sales employees spent three days at the Grand Avenues mall in order to inform patrons on details and features of Najma account, as well as the draw's programs of this account which the bank marketed through the advertisement with Najma account you become a millionaire and a half. The activity was held to inform customers and Grand Avenues patrons about the opportunity to open an account or increase their balances to qualify for the semiannual draw of KD 500,000 and benefit from creative banking services.



Science

# China's rocket start-ups go small in age of 'shoebox' satellites

## Chinese companies approach inexpensive launches

LONGKOU, China: During initial tests of their 8.1-metre tall reusable rocket, Chinese engineers from LinkSpace, a start-up led by China's youngest space entrepreneur, used a Kevlar tether to ensure its safe return. Just in case. But when the Beijing-based company's prototype, called NewLine Baby, successfully took off and landed last week for the second time in two months, no tether was needed. The 1.5-tonne rocket hovered 40 meters above the ground before descending back to its concrete launch pad after 30 seconds, to the relief of 26-year-old chief executive Hu Zhenyu and his engineers - one of whom cart wheeled his way to the launch pad in delight.

LinkSpace, one of China's 15-plus private rocket manufacturers, sees these short hops as the first steps towards a new business model: sending tiny, inexpensive satellites into orbit at affordable prices. Demand for these so-called nanosatellites - which weigh less than 10 kilograms and are in some cases as small as a shoebox - is expected to explode in the next few years. And China's rocket entrepreneurs reckon there is no better place to develop inexpensive launch vehicles than their home coun-

try. "For suborbital clients, their focus will be on scientific research and some commercial uses. After entering orbit, the near-term focus (of clients) will certainly be on satellites," Hu said. In the near term, China envisions massive constellations of commercial satellites that can offer services ranging from high-speed internet for aircraft to tracking coal shipments. Universities conducting experiments and companies looking to offer remote-sensing and communication services are among the potential domestic customers for nanosatellites.

A handful of US small-rocket companies are also developing launchers ahead of the expected boom. One of the biggest, Rocket Lab, has already put 25 satellites in orbit. No private company in China has done that yet. Since October, two - LandSpace and OneSpace - have tried but failed, illustrating the difficulties facing space start-ups everywhere.

The Chinese companies are approaching inexpensive launches in different ways. Some, like OneSpace, are designing cheap, disposable boosters. LinkSpace's Hu aspires to build reusable rockets that return to Earth after delivering their payload,

much like the Falcon 9 rockets of Elon Musk's SpaceX. "If you're a small company and you can only build a very, very small rocket because that's all you have money for, then your profit margins are going to be narrower," said Macro Caceres, analyst at US aerospace consultancy Teal Group.

"But if you can take that small rocket and make it reusable, and you can launch it once a week, four times a month, 50 times a year, then with more volume, your profit increases," Caceres added. Eventually LinkSpace hopes to charge no more than 30 million yuan (\$4.48 million) per launch, Hu said. That is a fraction of the \$25 million to \$30 million needed for a launch on a Northrop Grumman Innovation Systems Pegasus, a commonly used small rocket. The Pegasus is launched from a high-flying aircraft and is not reusable. LinkSpace plans to conduct suborbital launch tests using a bigger recoverable rocket in the first half of 2020, reaching altitudes of at least 100 kilometers, then an orbital launch in 2021, Hu told Reuters. The company is in its third round of fundraising and wants to raise up to 100 million yuan, Hu said. It had secured tens of millions of yuan in previous rounds. — Reuters



LONGKOU, China: LinkSpace's reusable rocket RLV-T5, also known as NewLine Baby, blasts off during a test launch on a vacant plot of land near the company's development site in Longkou, Shandong province, China. — Reuters

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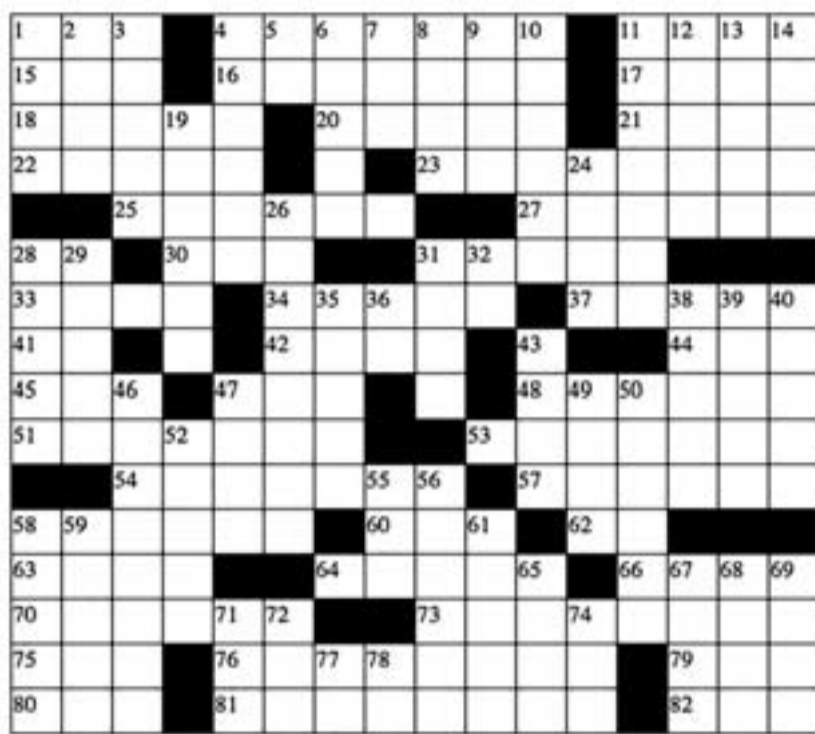
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2197



ACROSS

1. Alternative names for the body of a human being.
4. A state in the southeastern United States on the Gulf of Mexico.
11. King of Saudi Arabia since 1982 (born in 1922).
15. A metal-bearing mineral valuable enough to be mined.
16. A beta-adrenergic blocking agent (trade name Corgard) that is used to treat hypertension and angina.
17. American novelist (1909-1955).
18. Large evergreen tropical tree cultivated for its large oval smooth-skinned fruit.
20. Think moodily or anxiously about something.
21. A very young child (birth to 1 year) who has not yet begun to walk or talk.
22. Tired to the point of exhaustion.
23. Called forth from a latent or potential state by stimulation.
25. Expletives used informally as intensifiers.
27. Oil palms.
28. An honorary degree in science.
30. A Kwa language spoken by the Yoruba people in southwestern Nigeria.
33. Being nine more than sixty.
34. Not tense or taut.
37. A sheet or band of fibrous connective tissue separating or binding together muscles and organs etc.
41. An artificial language for international use that rejects all existing words and is based instead on an abstract analysis of ideas.
42. (classical architecture) A molding for a cornice.
44. The part of the nervous system of vertebrates that controls involuntary actions of the smooth muscles and heart and glands.
45. The sign language used in the United States.
48. A governor of a province in ancient Persia.
51. A composition that imitates somebody's style in a humorous way.
53. The main good female character in a work of fiction.
54. Ask for or request earnestly.
57. A slight convexity (as of the surface of a road).
58. Foul with waste matter.
60. A workplace for the conduct of scientific research.
62. A small pellet fired from an air rifle or BB gun.
63. Leaf or strip from a leaf of the talipot palm used in India for writing paper.
64. Distinguish oneself.
66. Little known Kamarupan languages.
70. A high-crowned black cap (usually made of felt or sheepskin) worn by men in Turkey and Iran and the Caucasus.
73. (Polynesian) An alcoholic drink made from the aromatic roots of the kava shrub.
75. Goddess of criminal rashness and its punishment.
76. A cut of pork ribs with much of the meat trimmed off.
79. A woolen cap of Scottish origin.
80. Having leadership guidance.
81. Small genus of shrubs and subshrubs of western United States having flowers that change color as they mature.
82. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.

DOWN

1. An explosive device fused to detonate under specific conditions.
2. Using speech rather than writing.
3. The brightest star in Cygnus.
4. A kind of heavy jacket ('windcheater' is a British term).
5. A white soft metallic element that tarnishes readily.
6. Mix up or confuse.
7. Pertaining to the forward part of a vessel.
8. On or toward the lee.
9. The girl friend of a gangster.
10. An alliance of nations joining together to fight a common enemy.
11. Genus of South and Central American heathlike evergreen shrubs.
12. An impure form of quartz consisting of banded chalcidony.
13. A populous province in northeastern China.
14. Performance of moral or religious acts.
19. A splendid assemblage (especially of famous people).
24. A musical notation written on a staff indicating the pitch of the notes following it.
26. Wine from muscat grapes.
29. Make a splashing sound.
31. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
32. A radioactive transuranic element.
35. A school for students intermediate between elementary school and college.
36. Before noon.
38. A member of an American Indian peoples of NE South America and the Lesser Antilles.
39. Complacently or inane foolish.
40. 20 aspers equal 1 kuru.
43. One thousandth of a second.
46. Bearing or marked with a label or tag.
47. An independent group of closely related Chadic languages spoken in the area between the Biu-Mandara and East Chadic languages.
49. An Arabic speaking person who lives in Arabia or North Africa.
50. An alloy of copper and zinc (and sometimes arsenic) used to imitate gold in cheap jewelry and for gilding.
52. A summary that repeats the substance of a longer discussion.
55. Being ten more than one hundred fifty.
56. Someone who plays golf poorly.
59. Having winglike extensions.
61. The hair growing on the lower part of a man's face.
65. Being seven more than fifty.
67. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
68. Rounded like an egg.
69. Avatar of Vishnu.
71. The residue that remains when something is burned.
72. An accountant certified by the state.
74. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
77. The azimuth of a celestial body is the angle between the vertical plane containing it and the plane of the meridian.
78. An intensely radioactive metallic element that occurs in minute amounts in uranium ores.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

At work higher ups find you worth looking at today. Enjoy the attention you're getting. It should be pats on the back. You're thinking your life over discerning who you really are. You almost feel as if you're a forensic archaeologist while examining your past. Your past is the basis for your present and consequently for your future. You realize this. A little time thinking can offer great results. A good book on conspiracy theories might be your entertainment tonight. On this last day of the month, you've been working to get ready to make tomorrow better. Aries. March on.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

This could be a very difficult day. You've been thinking about the problem of work, your ideas and ethics being morally different. Working in that situation can cause all kinds of trouble for you including it can make you ill. Disease is the opposite of ease. You're already feeling ill at ease there. You may love some of the people but you're not sure you want to slay. There could be ways to improve the situation but wait until tomorrow to decide. Things may change some by then. Enjoy this day now.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Well, it's the end of the month and you want to be out on the town. That's great for later but for now you've got things to do. Understand that you're not in the mood for work but do what you need in order to function until quitting time. Daydreaming isn't a bad thing but doing it while working can lead to some misunderstandings. You may find yourself seeking out someone in control for a nice talk. The talk may turn serious and you may be unappreciative. Keep to yourself as much as possible and go out tonight for fun.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Choosing between your career and your sense of enjoyment can be a heartbreaking task. Think bigger than what's in front of you. Your intelligent mind can make a way for you to get the job of your dreams and enjoy it too. Just because you don't believe as someone else does, doesn't mean you're wrong. You've got a gift of gab. Make it work for you in convincing the powers that be you can make a profit from work that helps others. You've got a way of looking at the most minute things with a critical eye that can make others see what you find intriguing. Cancer. Work on.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

You're in the mood for disciplined work. That's great until you try to make coworkers be in that same mood. Tone it down and lead by example. You'll find some followers because of your hard-working-problem-remedying example. Problems you've had before seem to resolve themselves easily today because of your keen mind-set. Clear judgments help at work but they also give you a leg up in the romance department. Now is the time to discuss that trivial little problem you and your lover have argued over and can't seem to resolve.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You're full of empathy and understanding. Others come to you for help both at work and at home. The only problem with this is you can hug and hold them, sit still and listen but you feel as if two words won't come together in an intelligent way to assist in their issue. That's a horrible place to be. It's like walking in water and getting nowhere fast. The good thing about this is the person your hugging and holding feels as if your job is the best they've ever been privy to. Virgo. Keep up the good work.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

You're going to love this day. It's a time of the best energy you can receive right now and it perpetuates situations that allow you the best fortune you've created in a while. You seem to be able to do anything with great results. Perhaps you should even ask for a raise now. It's almost like you're a chicken farmer and the biddies just keep on hatching. Eggs are plentiful now for you, Libra, and they will turn into financial success. Love is there and it is steady. It's all in asking for what you want.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

Don't be too hard on yourself now. You're doing well but obviously, not doing as well as you'd like. Decisions of a massive nature shouldn't be made now. Wait until a couple of days have passed. You've got good practical job-related ideas and you can talk to your bosses on any subject knowledgeably. Being around those you love and who love you is the best place to be tonight. You need to feel the love from friends and family in order to see yourself in a better light.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

There may be a ray of sun light somewhere in your workplace today but don't spend too much time looking for it. The best thing you can do is to put your nose to the grindstone and work without calling too much attention to yourself now. There are those not in a great mood around you who don't mind giving you advice you don't want to hear or take today. Try to ignore the ignorant ones happy to push you. If you happen to get into an argument with them, Sagittarius, others in the office won't know which uninformed one they're rooting for now. Keep showing your intelligence. Don't let someone control your actions.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

This could be just the day to take off with friends and have some real fun. That doesn't mean watching your phone to see what's happening at work either. Taking a day occasionally to enjoy with people for whom you care gives you a small vacation. This gives you appreciation for going back to work and working hard, which is generally your choice for each day. Capricorn. Go to the movies with your lover so that you can escape from everyday life in fantasy on this vacation day. Not only are you taking the day off but in reality, you may get an idea for broadening your work habits in a logical way. Believe it or not.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

You may find you care too much about what others, not your family or lover, thinks of you. You can't live to please others which you well know. If they are pleased by your actions, then that's just a plus in your life. This show, however, could make you realize that you don't really care for their assumptions about you and express that sentiment, Aquarius. Be careful here. You don't need to apologize nor to be callous in your defense. After work take special time with your lover enjoying the niceties of life and the closeness.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Today, you may say things in a forceful manner. Right now, you're in the mood for changing your home and surroundings. Also, you're enjoying your closest friends, one of which will need you for help today. You don't mind because he or she is always there for you when you need help as well. Pisces. Intuitive gifts give you the kick in the bottom you need to make more money now and the friend you're helping helps in that too. Your lover is receiving more attention all day long because you two seem to be in each other's path now and you're going in the same direction. It's a nice day.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Fantasy 1 - Word Search

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

ALE  
ARMOR  
ARROWS  
AXE  
BLACKSMITH  
CRYSTAL BALL  
DRAGON  
DWARF

EVIL  
FAIRY  
GOOD  
KING  
KNIGHT  
MAGIC  
POTION  
PRINCESS

SWORD  
TROLL  
UNICORN  
WAND  
WIZARD

Yesterday's Solution

European Countries 2 - Solution

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

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Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

# Lifestyle

WEDNESDAY, MAY 1, 2019



A girl stands in front of a mural painting in Cantarranas, 20 km northeast of Tegucigalpa during a street art event in which 55 artists from seven countries took part. — AFP

## Historical threads: Morocco's last brocade master



Abdelkader Ouazzani, the last of Morocco's brocade master weavers, works on a tapestry at his workshop in the old city of Fes. — AFP photos



Abdelkader Ouazzani, the last of Morocco's brocade master weavers, displays tapestry at his workshop.

Abdelkader Ouazzani, the last of Morocco's brocade master weavers, has been repeating the same gestures for 63 years in his dilapidated workshop in the heart of the old city of Fes. "This profession is vanishing... There were many craftsmen in Fes, but they all died and only memories remain," says the 79-year-old weaver, the last witness of a bygone era. His skillful hands intricately create shimmering silk fabrics, enhanced with gold or silver thread, for bridal jewelry, designer creations or high-end furnishings. His entire body engages in the delicate job, using a complex draw loom mechanism made up of a large wooden frame topped with beams, rafters, blades, pulleys and counterweights.

His feet rest on the wooden pedals, his shoulders are bent forward, his arms move apart with each launch of the wooden shuttle. "It's all a question of calculation, each thread takes its path: it's like mathematics," says the old man. He is secretive about the "rules of the art" which he learnt long ago in his youth, when, he says, "there were no industrial machines" to do the job.

### Ancestral know-how

His work is both physical and meticulous: it takes an entire day to weave a meter (three feet) of brocade. "Not everybody is allowed to see that, it's very special, he is the last man working like that," explains a tour guide who has led a group of Thai tourists here. They are visiting on the recommendation of the wife of the head of a major Moroccan bank, herself a client of the workshop. An article in the historical journal "Hesperis", published in 1950 by the Institute of Higher Moroccan Studies, described the weaving of brocades from Fes as

a tradition that "disappeared everywhere else in North Africa".

It said that the ancestral know-how had its roots in the era of the Merinid sultans of the 13th century. "In the 1950s, there were still four or five workshops left," says Mohamed Akhda, the guide in charge of the Thai guests. "You are now in the last one left in the country." Ouazzani says he can't find a young apprentice to take over his workshop.

"People no longer want to learn this profession," he says. "No-one cares." "The future of this refined craft is now threatened," confirms a new panel affixed by the tourist office outside the workshop, hailing Ouazzani as an "undisputed master of the craft".

### 'Elite of the elite'

As fashions have changed, the wide, colorful belts that for centuries were the pride of the master weavers of Fes gradually stopped selling. In the age of globalization, the final blow came with industrial-scale competition. In Fes as elsewhere, some souvenir shops now sell low-end products that are machine woven in China. Ouazzani, on the other hand, works on commission for a clientele he describes as "the elite of the elite". His rare fabrics cost up to 5,000 dirhams per meter (about 500 euros, \$560), depending on the complexity of the patterns.

A digital tablet he uses to show pictures of his most beautiful pieces—and of his grandchildren—is the only modern object in his workshop that is otherwise crammed with ancient furniture. On the high walls of the dark room hang framed diplomas and faded pages from fashion magazines. The master hides his most cherished "treasures" in a small wooden cupboard protected by a dusty tablecloth.



Abdelkader Ouazzani works on a tapestry.

With an expansive gesture, he unfolds his "catalogue", a 16-metre-long roll of fabric with motifs that range from the Hispanic-Moorish tradition to Oriental art or European designs. "This one I made for Colette," says the weaver, showing a photo of a caftan with a purple geometric pattern on a black background. His pride and joy, the exquisite work was displayed in the window of the famous French boutique which until its closure in 2017 was one of the most popular addresses in chic Paris. — AFP



Abdelkader Ouazzani displays tapestry at his workshop.



Abdelkader Ouazzani works on tapestry at his workshop.





A view of an art work featuring houses made of cardboards on display at De La Salle university museum in Manila. — AFP photos

## Intricate cardboard city rises in Manila art show

A twisting maze of tiny buildings crafted from discarded cardboard boxes is the heart of an eye-catching art piece in the Philippines highlighting the humble material's value to millions of people. In a nation where nearly a quarter of the population lives on less than \$2 per day, cardboard is a cheap and abundant material used for shelter, bedding and furniture. While the installation was originally made in and patterned on the southwestern Chinese city of Chengdu, the Filipino artists behind the work told AFP the use of card-

board packs more meaning in Manila. "The cardboard is very much important in the Philippines. In other places, it's discarded, it's garbage," said Isabel Aquilizan, who conceived of the piece along with her husband Alfredo. "Here, we use it for everything. We construct with it, it becomes your bed, it becomes your house, it becomes everything," she added.

A hole at the center of the mixed-media installation allows visitors to stand at eye-level with details of the cardboard metropolis like roof-mounted satellite dishes,

street signs and trees. "I was very much overwhelmed with the details and the simple use of the material," said architecture student Ebi Villa during a visit to the exhibition at De La Salle-College of Saint Benilde in Manila. The work, called "Here, There, Everywhere: Project Another Country," is the latest piece from the Aquilizans and it probes questions of migration and dislocation.

Millions of Filipinos live and work abroad, including the Australia-based Aquilizans, and remittances from the nation's overseas workers are a pillar of the economy.

The piece, commissioned by a Chinese organization, was created through the help of volunteers in China who underwent workshops by the artists on cardboard art-making. "Cardboard is a strategy for us to, in a way, connect, because it's an ordinary material," Alfredo Aquilizan told AFP. "It's unassuming, wherein when you give someone a cardboard in a workshop, they start making it (art)," he added. — AFP



Ramses Younan (Egyptian, 1913-1966) 'Contre le mur'

## Egyptian artworks in the spotlight at Christie's London and Middle East

Underscoring the vital role that Egyptian art plays in the regional and global landscape, both Christie's London and Christie's Middle East are reaffirming the continued appeal of artworks from Egypt to private and institutional collectors around the globe. Next month, Christie's will host a panel discussion on Egypt's Creative Journey: Ancient, Modern & Contemporary, featuring Nadine Abdel Ghaffar, founder of Art D'Egypte; Omniya el Barr, researcher at the V&A; and Ramzy Dalloul, collector and founder of Dalloul Art Foundation. Supported by the British Council, the presentation is taking place on Tuesday, 7 May at Christie's, King Street, London.

Following the success of Christie's Dubai sale in March, its art specialists are presently consigning works for the next auction of art from the Middle East, including works from Egypt's masters. The most recent sale season highlighted the demand for Egyptian art through a number of key works. Ramses Younan (Egyptian, 1913-1966) 'Contre le mur', from the private collection of the family of the late artist, fetched \$387,500 from a pre-sale estimate of \$100,000 - 150,000.

A leading figure and founding member of the 'Art and Freedom' society, noted as a painter, essayist, critic and translator, whose motto 'Long Live Degenerate Art' was defined in his ground-breaking manifesto in 1938, Younan's 'Contre le Mur' stands out as a unique and important Surrealist work of the artist.

Also, Abdel Hadi El-Gazzar's rare preparatory yet very complete charcoal sketch 'world of love', 1952, was sold for \$112,500 in the March 2019 Dubai auction. El-Gazzar's work personified the universal subject of love to its Egyptian context with the inclusion of symbols and additional details to place the scene in a purely local Egyptian narrative.

Since 2010, six works sold from Egyptian artists achieved world sales records and international acclaim.

Other noteworthy global records for Egyptian artworks sold at auction in the last decade include Hamed Nada's 'Henna Eve', which sold for \$602,500 in 2010. In the same year, Mahmoud Said's 'The Whirling Dervishes' sold for \$2,546,500, setting a world record for Middle Eastern art. 2014 and 2015 witnessed the sale of Abdul Hadi El Gazzar's 'Construction of the Suez Canal' for \$1,023,750 and Tahia Halim's 'Farhat Al Nuba' for \$749,000, respectively. Hamed Ewais's 'Al Aabour' sold at Christie's for \$605,000 in 2016, significantly exceeding expectations.

"Egyptian artists have been consistently fetching record prices at Christie's, highlighting the continued demand for works by these modern masters. The forthcoming discussion at Christie's London on the evolution of Egypt's art landscape demonstrates the increasing global interest in artworks from this vibrant market, from antiquities to contemporary pieces," said Hala Khayat, Christie's Director and Head of Sale in the Middle East.

## Netflix, makers of 'Crazy Rich Asians', team up for Thai cave rescue production

Netflix agreed yesterday to team up with the makers of "Crazy Rich Asians" for a production based on the gripping real-life rescue of the "Wild Boars" football team from a flooded Thai cave. But the streaming giant would not immediately be drawn on whether it would give the saga its high-end mini-series treatment or be made into a film. The 12 boys and their coach became trapped in a flooded Tham Luang cave in northern Thailand during the monsoon season on June 23 last year after finishing football training.

The twists and turns of their dramatic 18-day rescue dominated international headlines, as dive experts worked round the clock to extract them from the bowels of the cave with waters rising and food running out. The Wild Boars, several of them from poor and marginalized ethnic hill tribes, have since been catapulted to global fame, reveling in invites from professional football clubs and television appearances including on Ellen Degeneres' headlining US daytime show. A lucrative mini-industry in retelling their story has spun out, with local and international film companies and publishing houses queuing up to squeeze out books, films and documentaries.

"There is a universality to storytelling and this incredible tale is no exception," said Erika North, director of international originals for Netflix at a ceremony attended by SK Global-producers of "Crazy Rich Asians"-the Wild Boars team and their coach. "We are looking to tell the most authentic story possible," she said, adding it would not be finished this year but refused to confirm the format it would take. The 12 boys and their coach, dressed in suits with yellow shirts-royal colors to commemorate this weekend's coronation of the Thai king-beamed for photographers.

Coach Ekkapol Chantawong is president of the newly-minted 13 Thumluang Company - which is the bridging point between the production houses, the boys and their families. "Netflix will be able to bring out the whole story and portray it correctly," he told reporters. Also present was army Lieutenant-General Werachon Sukondhapatipak, an advisor to the 13 Thumluang Company and former spokesman for the ruling junta. No financial details were given at Tuesday's press conference amid rumors of life-changing payouts to the team and their families in exchange for helping with the project.

Werachon said the team planned to give around 20 percent of any earnings to charity "because the families and the boys recognize they have been helped and supported by so many people," though he acknowledged this was "voluntary" for the youngsters. Thai authorities want to keep a close hand on international productions of the saga, aware of the potential for disagreements over rights and retellings that veer from their portrayal of events. The boys-who were sedated for the arduous hours-long rescue-were eventually extracted from the cave by teams of expert divers.

"Crazy Rich Asians" director Jon M. Chu will also join the project as director, along with Thai director Nattawat Poonpiriya, whose 2017 heist thriller "Bad Genius" earned critical acclaim. A separate project due out later this year is feature-length film "The Cave" from Thai-born director Tom Waller, who enlisted real rescuers as actors in the movie. — AFP



Members of the 'Wild Boars' football team (front row) pose for a photo with SK Global Entertainment/Ivanhoe Pictures president of international productions Michael Hogan (back second left), Netflix director of international originals Erika North (back third left), 'Wild Boars' coach Ekkapol Chantawong (back third right), army Lieutenant-General Werachon Sukondhapatipak (back second right) after a press conference in Bangkok on April 30, 2019 regarding a Netflix series about the rescue of the team from the Tham Luang cave.



(From Left to right) SK Global Entertainment/Ivanhoe Pictures president of international productions Michael Hogan, Netflix director of international originals Erika North, 'Wild Boars' football team coach Ekkapol Chantawong and Thai army Lieutenant-General Werachon Sukondhapatipak pose during a press conference in Bangkok on April 30, 2019 regarding a Netflix series about the rescue of the team from the Tham Luang cave. — AFP photos

## 'Boyz n the Hood' director John Singleton dead at 51

John Singleton, director of the groundbreaking 1991 movie about US inner city life "Boyz n the Hood," died Monday at the age of 51, his family announced, triggering a flood of tributes hailing him as an "inspiration." Singleton had been placed in a medically-induced coma after suffering a stroke several weeks ago, and his family had earlier made known their intention to take the filmmaker off life support. "John passed away peacefully, surrounded by his family and friends," they said in a statement quoted by media including USA Today and NBC News.

"Our hearts are heavier today... as we mourn this tremendous loss," said Directors Guild of America director Thomas Schlamme. Singleton directed "Boyz n the Hood"

as a 22-year-old fresh out of film school. The flick described youth and violence in South Central Los Angeles, the bleak, gang-ridden neighborhood of his childhood. The movie won Singleton Oscar nominations as best director and best original screenplay, making him the youngest writer-director and first African American to achieve the distinction.

"The youngest-ever Best Director nominee and an



In this file photo director John Singleton arrives for the world premiere of "Abduction" at Grauman's Chinese Theatre in Hollywood. — AFP

inspiration to us all. John Singleton, you will be greatly missed," tweeted the Academy. Starring the rapper Ice Cube and Cuba Gooding Jr., "Boyz n the Hood" was a breakthrough success that won special honors at Cannes and in 2002 was selected for preservation by the Library of Congress as a "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant" film.

### 'Rest In Power'

The movie, featuring tunes from Miami collective 2 Live Crew and west coast hip hop pioneer Too \$hort, helped to popularize the genre. Singleton went on to a prolific career as a film director, with credits that included the remake of "Shaft" (2000) and "2 Fast 2 Furious" (2003). His work on television included shows such as "Billions," "The People v OJ Simpson: American Crime Story" and "Empire." Singleton's death triggered an outpouring of tributes from across the entertainment industry. "Rest In Power, my friend. One of the greatest to ever do it," Regina King, who starred in "Boyz n the Hood," wrote on Instagram.—AFP

Lifestyle | Fashion

# In first, Sports Illustrated will feature burkini-clad model

Sports Illustrated's annual swimsuit issue, best known for its racy covers of scantily clad bikini models, will feature for the first time a Muslim model wearing a hijab and burkini, the magazine said Monday. Somali-American model Halima Aden's rookie spread will be set in Kenya, where she born in a refugee camp and lived until the age of seven. "Growing up in the States, I never really felt represented because I never could flip through a magazine and see a girl who was wearing a hijab," Aden said in a video tweeted by the magazine.

Sports Illustrated also posted a picture of her posing lying down in shallow water, wearing a turquoise hijab, long yellow earrings and a deep blue burkini—the full length swimsuit favored by some Muslim women. Halima, 21, made headlines at age 19 when she was the first woman to wear a hijab in the Miss Minnesota USA Pageant, where she made the semi-finals in 2016. She has previously featured on the cover of British Vogue and walked on the New York Fashion Week runway. — AFP



# DIOR LIGHTS UP MARRAKECH WITH FASHION SHOW AND FLOATING CANDLES



US actress Shailene Woodley (left) and Kenyan/Mexican actress Lupita Nyong'o.

Around an enormous outdoor runway lit with dozens of floating tealights, French label Christian Dior crisscrossed cultures and continents at its first fashion show in Morocco on Monday, with beaded dresses and patterned prints taking center stage. The "Cruise" Collection - hosted outside the usual fashion week calendar, but which is an important source of sales - drew stars including actresses Lupita Nyong'o and Shailene Woodley to Marrakech for the extravaganza.



Models present creations by Christian Dior during the Croisiere 2020 collection fashion show at Badi palace in the Moroccan city of Marrakech. — AFP photos

collection, she added. Designers Pathe Ouedraogo - or Pathe'O, from Burkina Faso, who is known for dressing Nelson Mandela - and Grace Wales Bonner, a British artist, also worked with Dior on pieces for the show, among other collaborators.

"It helps us to have a different point of view," Chiuri said, adding that fashion was shifting from a time when it only "spoke only with a small audience". "The way you can speak about the silhouette, the relationship between the dress and the body, and about how you represent yourself, if you see this argument only from one point of view, I don't think it's believable today."

LVMH-owned Dior and other luxury brands are increasingly turning to elaborate or far-flung catwalk displays to emphasize their Cruise ranges, which tend to have a longer shelf life in store than other collections. With the Marrakech show, Dior also paid homage to the late Yves Saint Laurent, who took on the brand's creative reigns in the late 1950s and was inspired by North Africa throughout his career. A museum dedicated to the designer, who went on to found his own label, opened in Marrakech in 2017. — Reuters



Models present creations by Christian Dior during the Croisiere 2020 collection fashion show at Badi palace in the Moroccan city of Marrakech.

As night fell over the city's 16th century El Badi Palace and its pool and gardens, models - some wearing bandanas - showcased flowing gowns in maroon or black alongside patterned styles in fabrics from Ivory Coast, fashioned into the brand's trademark synched suit jackets. Unusually for the French label, it commissioned an Abidjan-based firm to manufacture the cloth, which in its most elaborate form is printed on two sides, and which featured Toile de Jouy-style figures and landscapes Dior is known for.

"You're really speaking about the human touch here, like in couture," Dior's creative chief Maria Grazia Chiuri said in an interview in Paris ahead of the show. The fabrics, found across West Africa and showcasing symbols that are sometimes used as a form of language, had inspired the



# Egypt's rebounding tourism threatens Red Sea corals



Yachts moored at the marina of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

In serene turquoise waters off Egypt's Red Sea coast, scuba divers ease among delicate pink jellyfish and admire coral—yet a rebounding tourism sector threatens the fragile marine ecosystem. The Red Sea is a top scuba diving destination, but Egypt's tourism sector was buffeted by a wave of security shocks through much of this decade, before a partial recovery since 2017. A diving instructor in the town of Hurghada, a top resort, warned that the rebound brought dangers for the corals. Before the decline in visitors "there was way too much activity because it was so cheap" he said, asking to remain anonymous.

"In some areas, they've disappeared—although in others we see they're coming back". The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) says coral reefs are among "the most beautiful, biologically diverse and delicate ecosystems in the world". It describes these resources as vital to maintaining food supply and protecting the shorelines of low-lying island nations. Along the seafront in the town of Hurghada, bazaars and resorts offer unbeatable prices to attract budget-conscious European visitors to a country whose vital tourism sector was battered by a 2011 uprising and multiple jihadist attacks.



Divers swim off the coast of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

said he was partly attracted to Egypt by the low prices. "It's a lot cheaper than the Caribbean," he said as he tanned his pale skin on a private beach in Hurghada.

### 'Tourism revival good'

Flippers on their feet and air tanks on their backs, the mostly European tourists swim in tranquil waters just off Hurghada. Ten meters below the surface, clown and butterfly fish swim among green and purple corals. It's "very beautiful," said an Estonian tourist as she clambered back onto the boat, her blond wet hair protruding from her black wetsuit. UNEP estimates that about 20 per cent of the world's coral reefs have been destroyed and a further 60 per cent are under threat—from climate change, over-fishing and tourism.

Many people who live close to reefs depend on them for a living, and Egypt's resort towns are no exception. Scientists consider the Red Sea's reefs the most climate change-resilient corals but say they are still under threat. "The revival of tourism in Egypt is a good thing, but it has increased pressure" on the reefs, said Heba Shawky, managing director of the Hurghada Environmental Protection and Conservation Association. The campaign group was founded in 1992 by diving professionals who were worried about the potential impact of mass tourism in the region.

Around 1,700 tourist boats operate along Egypt's Red Sea coast, according to the Red Sea province, while the Suez Canal Authority says 18,174 commercial vessels passed through the Suez Canal last year. Shawky said the NGO has set up around 1,200 buoys on various dive sites to prevent the use of anchors, which damage corals.

But, she added, much remains to be done—such as

reducing the number and size of dive boats, which can be up to 50 meters (55 yards) long. "It's about limiting the number of users per day to tackle the problem of the growing number of boats," Shawky said. General Ahmed Abdallah, governor of Egypt's Red Sea province, agreed. "We are making every effort to preserve the marine environment and stop any pollution affecting the reefs," he told AFP. Abdallah pointed to the absence of highly polluting industries such as steel, cement or ceramics production in the region. He also noted the province's recent decision to ban single-use plastics, which are highly damaging to marine life.



Divers swim off the coast of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

### 'Need to do more'

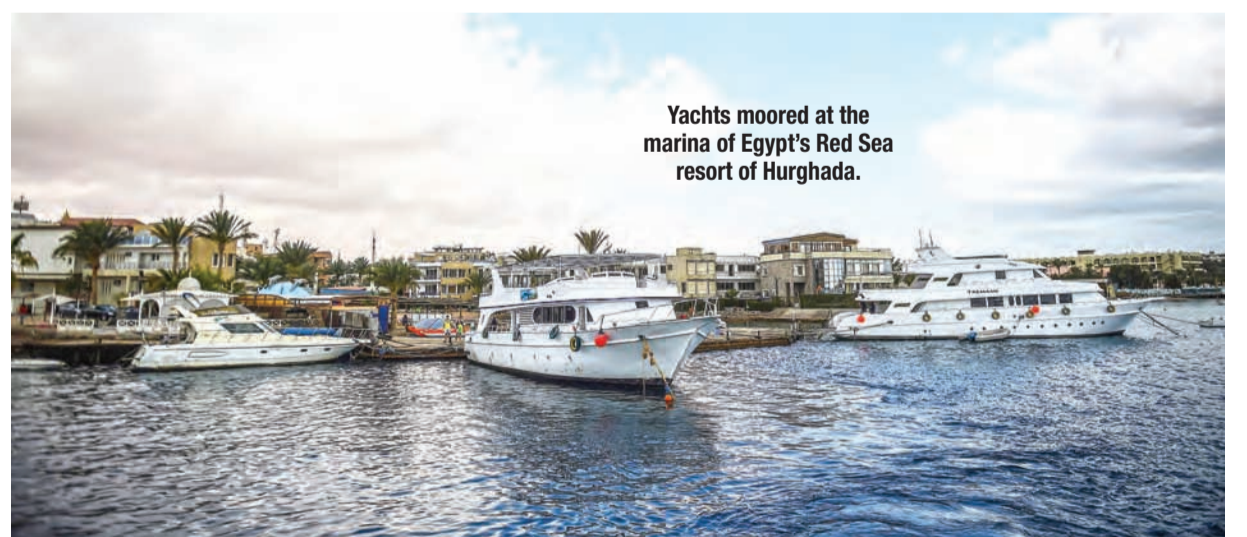
With up to 12 million tons of plastic entering our oceans every year, the UNEP believes marine plastic pollution is one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time. "We are making a lot of effort, but we need to do more," said Mahmoud Hanafy, a professor in marine biology at Suez Canal University and an advisor to Shawky's association. He urged authorities to declare some reefs protected sites to prevent them being "over-exploited". He also suggested following the lead of Australia and the Maldives by creating artificial reefs, sometimes with 3D printing, to ease the pressure on natural corals.

Shawky contended that there is no contradiction between protecting the environment and supporting tourism. Unlike other parts of Egypt, "we don't have pyramids or temples," she said. "We have living resources under water. So by preserving the environment, we support the tourism industry."—AFP



Fish swimming off the coast of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada. —AFP photos

Following the 2011 overthrow of longtime dictator Hosni Mubarak, tourist arrivals in Egypt plunged. The sector took a further beating in 2015, when jihadists blew up a Russian plane that took off from another major Red Sea resort, Sharm Al-Sheikh, killing 224 people. But the contribution of Egypt's tourism sector to GDP rose 16.5 percent last year to \$29.6 billion (26.5 billion euros), the highest level since 2010, according to the World Travel and Tourism Council. Egypt has not published its own official statistics for the year. German tourist Daniel, 29,



Fish swimming off the coast of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada.



Divers swim off the coast of Egypt's Red Sea resort of Hurghada.

# Classifieds

Wednesday, May 1, 2019

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DAY: Tuesday 30/04/2019 Valid From 7 AM To 7 PM

### Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

**BY DAY:** Relatively hot with light variable wind to light to moderate northerly wind, with speed of 06 - 26 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

**BY NIGHT:** Fair with light variable wind, with speed of 06 - 20 km/h and some high clouds will appear.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. EXP.	MIN. REC.	SFC. CHART 30/04/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	35 °C	24 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	36 °C	18 °C		
ABDALY	38 °C	18 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	37 °C	21 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	33 °C	21 °C		
SALMIYAH	33 °C	24 °C		
AHMADI	32 °C	25 °C		
NUWASIB	37 °C	21 °C		
WAFRA	37 °C	17 °C		
SALMY	38 °C	19 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Wednesday	05/01	Hot	38 °C	19 °C	VRB	06 - 22 km/h
Thursday	05/02	Hot and some scattered clouds will appear	40 °C	21 °C	SE-SW	06 - 28 km/h
Friday	05/03	Hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for scattered rain later on	39 °C	21 °C	VRB-SE	08 - 40 km/h
Saturday	05/04	Hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery	39 °C	23 °C	SE-NW	15 - 40 km/h

PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:41
Sunrise	05:07
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	15:21
Sunset	18:23
Isha	19:47

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	34 °C
MIN. Temp.	15 °C
MAX. RH	97 %
MIN. RH	15 %
MAX. Wind	SW 25 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UPO 2019/04/30 02:22 UTC V1.00 T2.4 ق.م.ع.ج.ا-2

## 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

## REQUIRED ACCOUNTANT SECRETARY

• Should have transferable visa (article 18)

Please contact us: mobile no/WhatsApp:

+965 66319310

Or you may send your CV by email:

superservice932@gmail.com

### CHANGE OF NAME

hereby change my daughter name from Husaina to Husaina Mustafa Virpurwala, with immediate effect. (C 5521)

I, Gayathri Vinodkrishnan D/o Vinod Krishnan Erath Unnikat holder of Indian passport No: S9918782 has changed my name from Gayathri Vinodkrishnan to Gayathri Vinod Krishnan hereinafter in all my dealings and documents, I will be known by name of Gayathri Vinod Krishnan. (C 5522)

I, Deepthi Thankachan passport holder No. T0309013 hereby change name as it appears in my passport from given name: Deepthi Thankachan to surname: Thankachan and given name: Deepthi for all future purposes. (C 5519)

I, Mustafa Sabbir Virpurwala father of Husaina, holder of Indian Passport No. M4642603, issued at Kuwait on 21/01/2015, permanent resident of Bhawani peth Vishal apts 3rd floor Pune, India and presently residing at Salmiya, block 10, building no. 13, Kuwait do

I, Sajan Rajasekharan Nair Indian Passport holder No. L1429316 issued in Kuwait hereby change name as it appears in my Passport from given name: Sajan Rajasekharan Nair to surname: Nair and given name: Sajan Rajasekharan for all future purposes. (5520)

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## DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Wednesday 1/5/2019				Departure Flights on Wednesday 1/5/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	123	Dubai	13:10
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	RBG	554	Alexandria	13:10
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	JZR	115	Doha	13:20
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	SAW	702	Damascus	13:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	KAC	521	Al Najaf	13:30
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	IAW	158C	Al Najaf	13:55
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	THY	767	Istanbul	14:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	UAE	872	Dubai	14:15
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	CLX	912	Hanoi	14:20
ETH	3717	LGG	02:00	RBG	218	Asyut	14:35
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	673	Dubai	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KNE	382	Taif	15:00
KAC	414	Bangkok	02:40	GFA	222	Bahrain	15:00
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	JZR	103	Bahrain	15:05
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:55	FDB	060	Dubai	15:05
JZR	502	Lahore	02:55	QTR	1079	Doha	15:15
RJA	648	Amman	03:05	JZR	125	Dubai	15:50
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	KAC	105	London	15:50
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KNE	530	Jeddah	15:55
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	563	Amman	16:00
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	JZR	405	Kochi	16:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	KAC	775	Riyadh	16:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	03:50	KAC	743	Dammam	16:05
PIA	239	Sialkot	04:00	JZR	301	Istanbul	16:10
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	ABY	128	Sharjah	16:15
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	KAC	785	Jeddah	16:20
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	ETD	304	Abu Dhabi	16:20
KAC	796	Madinah	04:25	OMA	646	Muscat	16:20
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	KAC	619	Doha	16:25
FDB	069	Dubai	05:05	SVA	505	Madinah	17:00
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	FDB	052	Dubai	17:10
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	QTR	1073	Doha	17:25
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	KAC	155	Istanbul	17:35
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	KAC	361	Colombo	17:35
KAC	1544	Cairo	05:45	KAC	503	Beirut	17:40
JZR	154	Mashhad	05:50	KAC	283	Dhaka	17:40
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	UAE	858	Dubai	17:40
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	343	Chennai	17:50
KAC	206	Lahore	06:15	KAC	381	Delhi	17:55
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	SAW	706	Damascus	18:00
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	KAC	615	Bahrain	18:00
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	721	Alexandria	18:15
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	SVA	511	Riyadh	18:15
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	JZR	127	Dubai	18:20
KAC	358	Kochi	07:10	GFA	216	Bahrain	18:20
FDB	053	Dubai	07:50	JZR	733	Cairo	18:35
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	JZR	253	Amman	19:10
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	QTR	1081	Doha	19:20
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	MSR	621	Cairo	19:30
UAE	855	Dubai	08:25	GFA	218	Bahrain	19:50
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	FDB	064	Dubai	19:50
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	331	Trivandrum	19:55
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	ABY	124	Sharjah	20:00
GFA	209	Bahrain	09:05	RJA	641	Amman	20:05
IRA	665	Shiraz	09:15	FDB	058	Dubai	20:30
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	JZR	401	Mumbai	20:30
FDB	055	Dubai	09:40	UAE	876	Dubai	20:35
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	351	Kochi	20:45
JZR	410	Delhi	09:50	KNE	232	Riyadh	20:50
IAW	157B	Al Najaf	10:00	KAC	353	Bengaluru	20:50
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	DLH	624	Dammam	20:55
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	OMA	648	Muscat	21:05
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	MEA	403	Beirut	21:15
JZR	216	Jeddah	10:55	KAC	301	Mumbai	21:25
JZR	708	Luxor	10:55	RBG	214	Sohag	21:35
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	QTR	1089	Doha	21:50
UAE	2541	Dubai	11:00	DHX	171	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	122	Dubai	11:45	KLM	445	Bahrain	22:10
IAW	157	Al Najaf	12:00	ETD	308	Abu Dhabi	22:15
AHY	119	Baku	12:05	ALK	230	Colombo	22:20
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	UAE	860	Dubai	22:35
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	KAC	383	Delhi	22:35
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	JZR	407	Ahmedabad	22:40
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	GFA	220	Bahrain	22:50
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	KAC	783	Jeddah	22:55
CLX	7912	Luxembourg	12:45	KAC	411	Bangkok	23:00
IAW	157C	Al Najaf	12:55	KAC	1543	Cairo	23:00
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	ETD	310	Abu Dhabi	23:05
				JAV	622	Amman	23:15
				QTR	1083	Doha	23:20
				SVA	515	Riyadh	23:30
				SVA	503	Jeddah	23:45

# Revamped Facebook bets on cozier connections, romance

**SAN JOSE:** Got a crush on another Facebook user? The social network will help you connect, as part of a revamp unveiled yesterday that aims to foster real-world relationships and make the platform a more intimate place for small groups of friends. Changes coming to the mobile application and eventually the website are part of the vision of co-founder and chief executive Mark Zuckerberg to have Facebook be a place for cozy online gatherings as well as more open public forums. "As the world gets bigger and more connected, we need that sense of intimacy more than ever," Zuckerberg said as he opened the F8 developer conference for the social networking giant. "That's why I believe the future is private."

The new design is in line with Facebook's aim to shift its focus to small-scale communication in response to criticism over failing to curb misinformation and manipulation of the platform used by 2.3 billion people. Changes announced yesterday put groups at the center of the experience and add dating, friend-making and events features intended to promote people getting together in real life, Facebook's new app head Fidi

Simo told AFP. The redesign is meant to make it easier for users to take part in communities, whether based on friendships, family ties or common interests, according to Simo. "It's definitely part of Mark's bigger vision," she said. The new design, released as Facebook opened its annual developers conference, will give users more options for private and group connections.

## Dogs and politics

While counterintuitive, Facebook sees the change as potentially bringing people with opposing political viewpoints together rather than separating them in "filter bubbles". "We are seeing that groups can bridge people across dividing lines," Simo said. "If you are a dog lover, you will find people who are dog lovers across all divides: political or otherwise," she added as an example. Facebook is adding tools intended to make engaging with groups easier, including improved recommendations of online communities that might be of interest.

A "Meet New Friends" feature being gradually rolled out will let users opt in to getting acquainted with oth-

ers interested in fresh connections in shared communities. An "Events" tab will expedite making real world, local plans with online friends. The changes are in line with Zuckerberg's vision outlined earlier this year to make Facebook more like "a digital equivalent of the living room" than a digital "town square." This shift, according to Zuckerberg, will mean simple, intimate spaces online where "you have complete confidence that what you say is private."

## Hidden crushes

Facebook also announced it is expanding its dating feature to 14 more countries including the Philippines, Singapore, Brazil and Chile. A new feature called "Secret Crush" will let people signal which friends they are interested in romantically, but only letting the object of their fancy know it if that person makes similar interest known on a private crush list. "We think there is a lot of potential in developing these relationships," Simo said. "It's all built with privacy in mind, and with the goal of building meaningfully long-term relationships and not just hookups."

The ability for people in small groups to be able to communicate securely and privately is seen as essential to making the social network more intimate. There are tens of millions of active groups on Facebook, and more than 400 million people belong to groups at the social network.

## Leaner, faster Messenger

Separately, Facebook unveiled a Messenger app overhaul that makes the mobile software leaner, faster and more of an energy miser. "We rewrote practically all of the code from scratch," Facebook head of messaging product Stan Chudnovsky told AFP. "We made Messenger the fastest private communication hub on the planet."

Features built into the new Messenger app build on the social network's broader vision of small-group-sharing in "virtual living rooms", according to Chudnovsky. New features included friends being able to text one another on smartphones while using them to take part in group video chats. Some 1.3 billion people use Messenger monthly, according to Facebook. —AFP

## Trump seeks to label Brotherhood...

Continued from Page 1

But targeting the movement would be a major new impediment in US ties with NATO ally Turkey, where President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has pushed an Islamist foreign policy that includes support for the Muslim Brotherhood inside Egypt. Another US ally friendly toward the Muslim Brotherhood is Qatar, with the issue becoming a key source of friction with its neighbors Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates.

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo has been a longtime supporter of designating the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist group, co-sponsoring legislation with fellow conservatives to take the step when he was a member of Congress. The Muslim Brotherhood has emerged in recent years as a favorite bugbear for the US far-right, with numerous social media users on Tuesday hailing Trump's push by sharing unfounded conspiracy theories that the group had infiltrated former president Barack Obama's administration or was attempting to impose Islamic sharia law in the United States.

But the proposal has seen pushback from policymakers who say that it is inaccurate to lump together the Muslim Brotherhood, which includes more moderate and democrat-

ic strains, with groups set on apocalyptic violence such as the Islamic State movement and Al-Qaeda. Human Rights Watch has argued that a terrorist designation would "unfairly taint anyone alleged to be linked to the Muslim Brotherhood," meaning that people based in the United States could face prosecution - or, if not citizens, deportation - for backing charities or advocacy groups accused of ties to the movement.

Jonathan Schanzer, senior vice president for the Foundation for Defense of Democracies, which generally backs hawkish policies in the Middle East, doubted that the whole Muslim Brotherhood could be declared a terrorist group under normal processes. "There is near zero likelihood of the entire network, with all its disparate parts, meeting legal criteria," he tweeted. "But targeting the violent branches is certainly viable. That, in turn, can enable further designations based on financial ties."

The debate comes less than a month after the Trump administration took the sweeping decision to declare Iran's elite Revolutionary Guards a terrorist group, the first time it has designated a unit of a government. Egypt is one of the biggest US strategic partners - an Arab country that made peace with top US ally Israel 40 years ago and remains one of the largest recipients of US aid, at more than \$1 billion a year. Trump has all but ended criticism of Egypt's rights record. When Sisi took over in 2013, security forces killed some 700 protesters who had assembled in two Cairo squares - with courts then sentencing to death 75 people, including Muslim Brotherhood leaders, over the uprising. — AFP

had two feet. Others, were apparently more forgiving, though still tongue-in-cheek. "Congratulations, we are always proud of you. salutes to the #IndianArmy Mountaineering Expedition Team," wrote Tarun Vijay, a member of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party.

The army said the footprints measured 81 cm by 38 cm and were spotted by a team on April 9 close to the Makalu Base Camp. An army official told AFP the pictures were released to "excite a bit of a scientific temper". "We will share whatever we get with the domain experts to analyze. We will be contacting the team on the sathphone in the evening for more details about it. The idea is to find out more, to look for an answer," the official told AFP, speaking on condition of anonymity. The yeti is traditionally described as an ape-like creature, taller than a human, that lives variously in the Himalayas, Siberia and parts of Central and East Asia. The North American version is known as Bigfoot. Most scientists have written the creature off as a centuries-old myth originating in Tibet.

Forensic results of previous samples have proved to be from prehistoric bears and one purported piece of evidence turned out to be a gorilla suit made of rubber. "This is probably a footprint of a brown bear," Sathyakumar Sambandam, a professor at the Wildlife Institute of India, told AFP. "The footmarks get enlarged due to strong sun and winds in the heights and the overlapping of hind and front legs gives an impression of single giant mark," he said. —AFP

Naruhito will formally "inherit" the imperial symbols of an ancient sword and jewel at a formal ceremony at 10:30 am today. The third piece of the imperial regalia - a mirror - never leaves the palace. As Naruhito ascends the throne, he will find a very different Japan than his father took over in 1989. At the end of the 1980s, Japan ruled the world economically, its technology was the envy of every industrialized nation and its stock market at highs unlikely to be matched again.

But after a "lost decade" when the bubble burst, Japan is still locked in a battle against deflation and sluggish growth while its population ages rapidly and many rural areas suffer from depopulation to the major cities. Naruhito will also face the challenge of continuing his father's legacy while maintaining Japanese traditions that stretch back centuries. Akihito changed the role of emperor that remains sensitive in Japan after the country's militaristic past in the name of his father Hirohito. He was loved for his popular touch and he melted hearts when he bowed humbly before victims of the 2011 earthquake and tsunami, gently comforting them and listening to their tales of suffering. Waqas Adenwala, an analyst at the Economic Intelligence Unit, said: "Given the standards set by his father, Emperor Naruhito will be expected to maintain a similar approach and extend his outreach to the society through public appearances."

But the Oxford-educated Naruhito has also criticized the sometimes stifling constraints on the imperial family, especially as his wife Masako - a former diplomat - has struggled to adapt to life in the palace and has seen her health suffer.

"Masako may have difficulties fulfilling her duties but it will be good if she can participate in imperial tasks, so far as her health allows," Kumio Sudo, a 67-year-old pensioner, told AFP. The abdication has resulted in a 10-day holiday in Japan, although polls show many famously hard-working Japanese were opposed to such a long break. — AFP

## Awazem swiftly raise KD 10m in...

Continued from Page 1

The tribe's representative announced the fundraising campaign a few days ago, and on Monday, it succeeded in collecting the amount within a few hours through electronic payments to the Awazem Charity Foundation, supervised by the ministry. Not only the Azmi tribe, but

other people and even those from outside the country donated money. But an unidentified source at the ministry of social affairs said that the ministry is currently in conflict with the charity, as it refused to stop the campaign even after it completed its mission by raising the compensation amount.

Azmi (who was 40 at the time) was convicted of killing Hidayat Sultan Al-Salem, 66, a journalist and owner of Al-Majalis magazine, by shooting her with his pistol. According to reports, Azmi, who was a police lieutenant colonel, gave himself up and confessed to committing the murder after Sultan insulted the women of his tribe in articles published in her magazine.

## Cabinet, information ministers...

Continued from Page 1

He said the government failed to adopt the right fiscal policy to cut spending to face the growing budget deficit following the crash in oil prices in 2014 and instead resorted to the pocket of the citizens by increasing the cost and prices of some services and commodities. He charged that the government of the prime minister has failed to resolve unemployment among Kuwaiti citizens, and contrary to what was promised, the government continued to appoint expatriates in public sector jobs, depriving Kuwaitis.

The first grilling against Saleh ended without any no-confidence motion as only five MPs signed the motion, five short of the required number. The grilling did not even find lawmakers to speak for and against it, forcing the speaker to end the debate without any further action. Islamist MPs Mohammad Hayef and Mohammad Al-Mutair, the grillers, accused the minister of violating the law and being unfair in the appointment of hundreds of Kuwaitis at the government's legal department, which he supervises.

They also accused him of misusing his powers and squandering public funds in his ministry and in departments under his supervision. Saleh categorically denied the allegations and said that the law was applied to some 400 applicants for the legal and fatwa department and stressed there were no irregulari-

## Riots erupt in Venezuela amid...

Continued from Page 1

- was filmed outside the La Carlota air base, where he urged the armed forces inside to join him. Guaido claimed the move was the "beginning of the end" of Maduro's regime, and there was "no turning back".

But as the crowd swelled around the base, police fired tear gas to keep them away from the perimeter. Later troops in riot gear, backed by armored vehicles and water tankers, lined up against the demonstrators on a highway wreathed in tear-gas. Several of the vehicles ran into the crowd, injuring some of the protesters. Rioters later blocked the highway with a bus and set it on fire.

A pall of black smoke also rose from an area near a helicopter hangar on the base. Soldiers put out the fire and fired tear gas at demonstrators who were trying to dismantle the steel perimeter fence. "Today is the day Maduro resigns. Today is the day all the country's drug dealers resign. Today we have a Venezuela. Today we have a nation," said one protester amid the confusion.

As UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres appealed to all sides to avoid violence, Venezuela's army chief and defense minister, General Vladimir Padrino, issued a stark warning of possible "bloodshed" - adding that he would hold the opposition responsible. In a message on Twitter, Padrino said the situation in military barracks and bases in the country was "normal". He later said an army colonel had received a bullet wound to the neck during the clashes in Caracas. Communications Minister Jorge Rodriguez called on the army "to remain on maximum alert to - with our glorious National Bolivarian Armed Forces - defeat the attempted coup and preserve peace."

The US, meanwhile, threw its full support behind Guaido, with the White House calling on the military to protect the people and support the country's "legitimate institutions," including the opposition-controlled National Assembly. "The US Government fully supports the Venezuelan people in their quest for freedom and democracy. Democracy cannot be defeated," US

Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said on Twitter. Russia, Maduro's main backer and creditor with China, accused Guaido of "fueling conflict" in the oil-rich country. Maduro's leftist Latin American allies Cuba and Bolivia also condemned Guaido. President Ivan Duque of neighboring Colombia - home to more than a million refugees from Maduro's regime - called on Twitter for "soldiers and the people of Venezuela to place themselves on the right side of history, rejecting dictatorship and Maduro's usurpation". Internet observatory NetBlocks reported "multiple Internet services" were restricted in Venezuela following Guaido's appeal.

In his video, recorded outside the La Carlota base, Guaido said the "definitive phase" had begun in his attempt to oust Maduro - who has presided over a catastrophic economic implosion since taking over from his late mentor Hugo Chavez in 2013. "Brave soldiers, brave patriots, brave men supporting the constitution have answered our call," Guaido said. Guaido appeared alongside high-profile opposition politician Leopoldo Lopez who had been put under house arrest by Maduro's regime but who announced he had been "freed" by soldiers supporting Guaido.

Yesterday's call comes ahead of opposition plans to hold a massive Mayday protest in Caracas. Tensions in Venezuela have been ratcheted up to a critical level this year, after Guaido, who is head of the opposition-ruled National Assembly, announced January 23 that he was the acting president under the constitution. He said Maduro had been fraudulently re-elected last year. The United States and major Latin American powers including Brazil, Peru and Chile swiftly backed Guaido, followed later by EU nations.

Yet although US President Donald Trump has repeatedly said "all options" are on the table regarding Venezuela - including, implicitly, military action - there has been no noticeable US military mobilization. Instead, Washington has upped the economic pressure, through sanctions aimed at Maduro's regime and by cutting sales of Venezuelan oil - the South American country's main revenue earner. It also warned against any attempt to arrest Guaido, who has been left free to roam Venezuela and hold rallies. Maduro and his government have repeatedly accused the United States of trying to foment a coup, and blame the economic devastation in the country on the tightening US sanctions. — AFP

## Indian army mocked for yeti...

Continued from Page 1

It added the "elusive snowman has only been sighted at Makalu-Barun National Park in the past", referring to footprints reported by British explorer Eric Shipton in 1951 on the west side of Mount Everest.

Legend has it the "Yeti" or "Abominable Snowman" lives in the Himalayas - but no proof of the large creature has ever been produced. Social media users were quick to jump on the Indian military for its tweet, while scientists said the prints were probably made by a bear and elongated and misshapen by the elements.

"With all due respect, institutions such as yours should be more responsible and careful before going ahead and declaring the sighting of any footprints as 'Yeti's'", said Kushal Prajapati. "There's been lots of research done on Bigfoot/Yeti (including sighting/footprints) with none proving its existence," he added. "Seriously disappointing to see Army propagating such foolish myths into reality. Expected better from you guys," said another comment.

Several Twitter users asked why there was a series of only one footprint when the beast would probably have

## Japan rings in new era as Naruhito...

Continued from Page 1

and poignantly paused before exiting the room, bowing deeply to the 300 invited guests.

It was the first time in more than 200 years an emperor had stepped down in Japan and kicks off the "Reiwa" era - meaning "beautiful harmony" - that will last as long as Naruhito is on the throne. Constant rain dampened large-scale celebrations but a few hundred hardy souls gathered outside the palace as the ceremony unfolded while others watched on giant screens around Tokyo. "I feel overwhelmed emotionally," said a tearful Yayoi Iwasaki, a 50-year-old bank employee, standing outside the palace.

Bowing outside the palace, Miyuki Sakai, a 45-year-old housewife, told AFP: "It's sad I won't be able to see the familiar face on TV, but he's 85. I hope he'll have a quiet life with his wife." Outside Tokyo, locals wearing kimonos performed a traditional dance in Gifu, central Japan, to mark the imperial transition - planning to dance all night. Several couples held their wedding ceremonies at midnight at hotels to join the national celebration. And crowds braved torrential rain to see in the new era at Tokyo's famous Shibuya crossing.

"The emperor was a good person. He played an important role during the March 11 quake. He was the symbol of Japan. I hope the new emperor will carry on the kindness the old emperor had," said Rika Yamamoto, a 24-year-old company employee sheltering under an umbrella on the crossing. However, not everything was beautiful and harmonious as minor scuffles broke out near Shinjuku, the world's busiest station, with right-wingers briefly clashing with anti-monarchy protesters.



Sports

# Odorizzi outduels Verlander as Twins edge Houston Astros

## Alonso, Anderson go deep as White Sox top Orioles

**MINNEAPOLIS:** Ehre Adriaenza homered, and Jake Odorizzi pitched seven shutout innings to outduel Justin Verlander as the Minnesota Twins edged the Houston Astros 1-0 on Monday night in Minneapolis. It was the third consecutive win for Odorizzi (3-2), including two in a row over the Astros. He allowed four singles and a walk while striking out seven. Taylor Rogers pitched a scoreless eighth, and Blake Parker erased a leadoff single to Carlos Correa to start the ninth by inducing Yuli Gurriel to hit into a double play. Parker then got Josh Reddick to ground out to end the game for his sixth save. Verlander (4-1), who lost for just the third time in his past 21 starts (14-3) against Minnesota, gave up two hits, two walks and a run over six innings before departing after throwing 100 pitches, 66 of which were strikes. He struck out seven.

### GIANTS 3, DODGERS 2

Evan Longoria cleared the bases with a seventh-inning double, rallying San Francisco to a victory over visiting Los Angeles on a record-breaking night for Cody Bellinger. The outcome ended two streaks, with the Giants snapping a three-game skid while the Dodgers saw their four-game winning streak end. Los Angeles came up short despite Bellinger's 37th RBI of the season, the most in major league history before May 1. His sixth-inning single broke a three-way tie for the record that he temporarily shared with Mark McGwire and Juan Gonzalez.

### REDS 5, METS 4

Jesse Winker's homer with two outs in the top of the ninth inning lifted visiting Cincinnati past New York Mets in the opener of a four-game series. The Reds broke a two-game losing streak. The Mets have dropped four of five. The teams combined to strand nine runners without scoring between the fifth and the ninth innings before Winker homered well beyond the right field fence off Mets closer Edwin Diaz (0-1), who was scored upon for just the second time in 13 appearances this season. The homer made a winner out of Raisel Iglesias (1-3), who tossed two scoreless innings.

### CARDINALS 6, NATIONALS 3

Marcell Ozuna had two hits, including a key two-

run single in a six-run, fifth-inning rally, and St. Louis won at Washington. Cardinals starter Michael Wacha (2-0) allowed three runs on four hits in five innings for the win after coming off the injured list earlier in the day. He missed one start due to a knee problem. Washington's Patrick Corbin (2-1) had his worst start of the season, allowing six runs on six hits with four walks in five innings. It was his shortest outing in six games this year, and his ERA rose from 2.48 to 3.58.

### RED SOX 9, ATHLETICS 4

Rookie Michael Chavis drove in a career-high three runs as host Boston overcame an early four-run deficit to beat Oakland. After the A's erupted for four runs in the second, Boston was aided by errors from second baseman Jurickson Profar and starting pitcher Frankie Montas (4-2) to put the wheels in motion on its own big inning, six runs in the third. Six Boston relievers combined to allow one hit over 4 1/3 innings to seal the win as the Red Sox improved to 3-4 on their homestand. Ryan Brasier (1-0) tossed 1 1/3 perfect innings and was credited with the win.

### RAYS 8, ROYALS 5

Yandy Diaz had a pair of RBI singles as Tampa Bay defeated host Kansas City for its 11th victory in the past 12 matchups against the Royals. Yonny Chirinos (4-0) pitched 5 2/3 innings, allowing four runs (two earned) on just two hits. He struck out four and walked one. Brad Keller (2-3) took his second loss to the Rays in as many outings. He struggled with his control all evening and lasted only five innings. Keller gave up five runs on six hits while walking three and striking out one.

### BREWERS 5, ROCKIES 1

Jesus Aguilar hit his first two home runs of the season and Zach Davies (3-0) was effective into the sixth inning as Milwaukee defeated visiting Colorado in the opener of a four-game series. The Brewers have won four consecutive games against the Rockies, counting the three-game sweep in last fall's National League Division Series, and have won 11 of their last 13 against Colorado. Milwaukee won without Christian Yelich, who was kept out of the lineup with a strained



**MINNEAPOLIS:** Yuli Gurriel #10 of the Houston Astros is out at first base as C.J. Cron #24 of the Minnesota Twins fields the ball to complete a double play during the ninth inning of the game on April 29, 2019 at Target Field in Minneapolis, Minnesota. The Twins defeated the Astros 1-0. —AFP

lower back and is listed as day-to-day. Aguilar, who hit 35 home runs last season, had gone 80 consecutive at-bats without a homer before going deep in the first and third innings.

### WHITE SOX 5, ORIOLES 3

Yonder Alonso and Tim Anderson both smacked two-run home runs, and Manny Banuelos pitched 5 2/3 strong innings to lead host Chicago past Baltimore. Banuelos (2-0) led the White Sox to their third straight victory, limiting the Orioles to two runs on five hits with three walks and six strikeouts. Alex Colome pitched a perfect ninth for his sixth save. After struggling to solve Orioles left-hander John Means (3-3) when the clubs met in Baltimore last Wednesday, Chicago struck for early success against Means on

Monday. The leadoff man reached base in both the second and third innings to set up the home runs from Alonso and Anderson, respectively.

### BRAVES 3, PADRES 1

Ozzie Albies hit his sixth home run, and rookie Mike Soroka posted another strong outing to lead Atlanta over visiting San Diego. Albies went 2-for-4 — he's now hitting .406 (13-for-32) from the right side—with a pair of RBIs to help the Braves win their second straight. Soroka (2-1) pitched six strong innings and allowed one run on four hits with a career-high eight strikeouts. San Diego starter Nick Margerivius (2-3) pitched 5 2/3 innings and allowed three runs, one earned, on four hits and three walks. — Reuters



## Kuwait mega sports project wins praise

**KUWAIT:** Iraq's Minister of Youth and Sports, Dr Ahmed Riyadh Al-Obeidi and the President of the International Handball Federation, Dr Hassan Mustafa, have toured Kuwait's Sheikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Sabah International Tennis Complex, the Middle East's first multi-purpose and multi-service facility dedicated to tennis which will house the region's largest international tennis academy.

Supported by the Kuwait Public Authority for Sport (PAS) and co-ordinated by its Director General Hamoud Fulaiteh, the VIPs were briefed on the facility, the largest public-private partnership in Kuwait, by Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, President of the Kuwait Tennis Federation (KTF) and Mr. Mohammed Jassim Al Marzouq, Chairman, Tamdeen Group.

Kuwait's leading mixed-use property developer, which is financing, developing and building the complex in partnership with PAS.

After the briefing, the VIPs praised the advanced design of the complex and its outstanding facilities which are expected to boost the profile of tennis and encourage Kuwaiti youths to take up the sport. Dr Al-Obeidi said he believed the complex would help take tennis to new horizons, for Kuwait, Arab countries, and the rest of the world. "We take pride in such prestigious Kuwaiti projects that introduce new concepts matching the standards of international mega-projects," he commented. "I wish the project total success: as it will add another milestone to Kuwait's list of achievements. We eagerly await the inauguration and hope to see more projects serving Kuwaiti youth."

Thanking the delegation, Mohammed Jassim Al Marzouq, Chairman, Tamdeen Group, reiterated the Group's commitment to making the complex a resounding success. He said: "Thanks to the cooperation of the Public Authority for Sport and the Kuwait

Tennis Federation, we were able to take on a project of this scale, which mirrors the group's ability to realize leadership and prosperity in developing projects that serve the country. We promise that the Sheikh Jaber Al Abdullah Al Sabah International Tennis Complex will foster Kuwait's position on the regional and global tennis scene."

The 263,430 sq m complex is one of the most expensive sports facility in Kuwait. It will host the KTF's headquarters and 18 tennis courts furnished with the latest 'ProCushion' acrylic surfaces, state-of-the-art soundproofing technology as well as fixed and versatile seating tailored by award-winning architect Sir Norman Foster and manufactured by Figueras International.

The complex will seat 5,000 in a covered multi-purpose arena, a 1,500-seat open court, eight covered courts, eight open-air courts, a 5-star hotel and a selection of retail and dining venues. Around 11 million visitors a year are expected at the complex which will be directly connected to 360 Mall, Kuwait's favourite shopping destination.

## Uncapped Cardiff duo in Wales' World Cup training squad

**LONDON:** The uncapped Cardiff duo of Owen Lane and Rhys Carre were included in a 42-man Wales training squad for this year's World Cup in Japan announced yesterday. Prop Carre, who will join reigning English champions Saracens later this year, was one of 23 forwards and wing Lane among 19 backs.

Wales coach Warren Gatland included 36 of the players selected for this season's Six Nations, which saw his title-winning side complete a Grand Slam. Taulupe Faletau, a No 8 for both Wales and the British and Irish Lions, was also included despite missing much of this season through injury and there was also a placed for experienced Ospreys lock Bradley Davies.

"It is exciting to name our training squad and to get the RWC ball rolling," said Gatland. "We've named a 42-man squad, packed with experience. A good number of the Grand Slam-winning squad are in there, plus some players who have returned from injury," the New Zealander added.

"We have been really impressed with Rhys and with Owen. They have both been on our succession plan for a while, and it will be good to have them in camp with us and to see what they are able to do."

The World Cup will be Gatland's last tournament in charge of Wales before he stands down as coach. Former Ireland coach Gatland guided Wales to a 2011 semi-final defeat by France before overseeing their quarter-final loss to South Africa four years ago.

Wales will warm-up with home and away fixtures against England and Ireland, starting at Twickenham on August 11 before heading to Japan. Gatland is set to name his final World Cup squad during the week of the second Ireland game on September 7.

Before then, Wales will have training camp trips to Switzerland and Turkey in July and August. They will replicate their build-up to the 2015 World Cup in England by again basing themselves at altitude in Fiesch in the Swiss Alps for two weeks.

On August 18, they will depart for warm-weather training at the Gloria Sports Arena next to the Mediterranean in Turkey before heading to Japan just over three weeks later for an additional training camp in Kitakyushu.

Wales begin their World Cup campaign against Georgia on September 23 before playing further pool phase fixtures with Australia, Fiji and Uruguay. — AFP

## Los Angeles Olympics to cost \$6.9 billion

**LOS ANGELES:** Los Angeles 2028 Olympics chiefs yesterday unveiled details of the \$6.9 billion budget for the Games, vowing to deliver the spectacle without cost overruns that have dogged recent editions of the extravaganza.

A statement from LA 2028 said the city's Olympic plan, which relies entirely on pre-existing venues and infrastructure, included a 10 percent contingency fund of \$615.9 million.

The \$6.9 billion price tag is higher than the previous figure of \$5.3 billion quoted during the bid process in 2017, which was calculated in 2016 dollar values. The higher figure cited on Tuesday takes into account likely inflation over the next decade.

LA 2028 said the budget had been independently evaluated by accounting giants KPMG and had been computed

in "real dollars to offer a clear picture of financial health over time."

"Adjusted for inflation, LA 2028's real dollar budget is directly in line with the budget proposed for the 2024 Games bid," a statement said. The figure also factored in three percent, roughly \$200 million, the bulk of which will be invested in local youth sports and four additional years of operation.

"Our budget is privately funded, realistic and fiscally conservative," said LA 2028 chairman Casey Wasserman.

"We are redefining what it means to host a successful Games and look forward to planning and hosting an amazing experience that will make our community proud." Los Angeles was awarded the 2028 Olympics in 2017 after an unprecedented joint bid announcement by the International Olympic Committee in Lima. — AFP

## KAC holds festival of horse racing



**KUWAIT:** Kuwait Airways Corporation (KAC) organized the festival of horse racing for 2018/2019 season at Hunting and Equestrian Club, by presenting a cup carrying the name of KAC in the seventh run for 1,000 meters for the mixed local production horses. 88 horses participated in cooperation with Mubarak Al-Kabeer Equestrian Club. KAC Director of Public Relations and Information Fayeze Al-Enezi presented the cup to the horse Shaqra Dasman for Dasman stable with rider Morgan.

## Sports

# Brazil mourns 'superhero' 25 years after his death

## Anniversary of Ayrton Senna's death dubbed 'Senna Day'

SAO PAULO: A master on the Formula One racing track, triple world champion Ayrton Senna was the pride of Brazil. Twenty-five years after his tragic death in the San Marino Grand Prix, he remains one of the country's biggest sporting legends.

The anniversary of Senna's death today—dubbed "Senna Day"—will revive the sense of loss and bewilderment that followed the shocking crash on the Imola circuit in Italy on May 1, 1994, that took the 34-year-old's life. It will also serve as a bitter reminder that since Senna's last title in 1991, there has never been a Brazilian world champion. "There were some successes after Ayrton Senna ... but the lack of an internal structure in Brazilian motorsport did not allow its development," said Alexander Grunwald, a Brazilian motorsports journalist.

Senna's death sparked an outpouring of grief around the world. But his loss was felt acutely in Brazil where the sight of Senna, easily identifiable by his distinctive yellow crash helmet, taking the chequered flag, had been a rare source of joy for ordinary people struggling to make ends meet.

"In the 1980s we were living with hyperinflation, the end of the military dictatorship—it didn't make sense to be proud of Brazil," explained Grunwald. "But Senna was carrying the Brazilian flag around the world like a symbol that made so many Brazilians proud."

Senna's legacy was to "transform" F1 racing, said Grunwald. Apart from his exceptional driving skills, his attention to other elements of the sport, such as physical and mental preparation, as well as understanding the vehicle and the technology that powered it, set him apart from other drivers.

Such was his popularity among Brazilians that 25 years after his death Senna's image continues to be used in advertising and social campaigns. A survey in 2014 showed 47 percent of people in Senna's home city of Sao Paulo ranked him as the biggest sporting name

in the country. Football great Pele was a distant second.

Pele, a three-time World Cup winner, played at "a time when people listened to football on the radio or read it in the newspaper—it wasn't the same intensity or emotion," explained Grunwald. "With Senna, it was Sundays with the family" in front of the television. Cultural and sporting events are planned for "Senna Day" at Sao Paulo's Interlagos track.

### RIVALRY

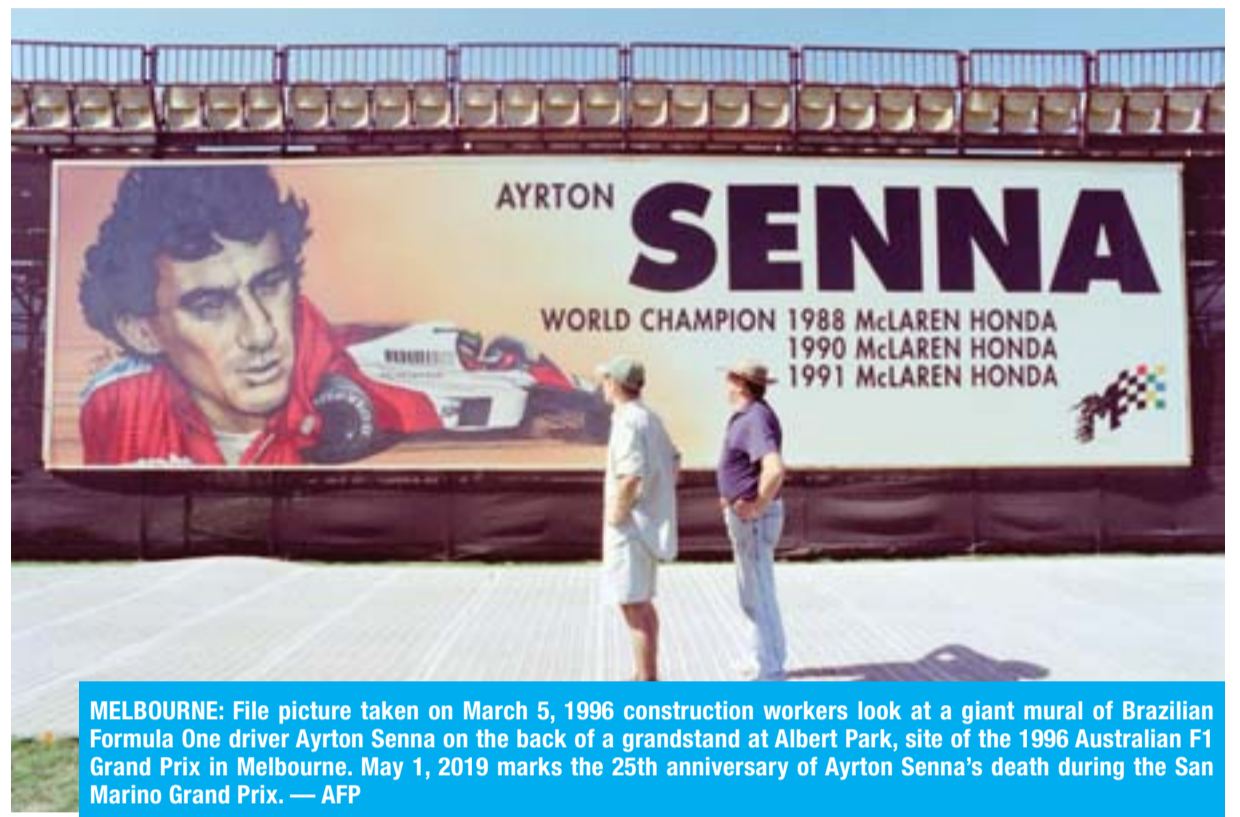
Charismatic and controversial, Senna was crowned the F1 world champion in 1988, 1990 and 1991 when he drove for McLaren. He had already switched to the Williams team when he was killed.

It was at McLaren that Senna's notorious rivalry with French driver Alain Prost began—a relationship that has been scrutinized over and over by F1 observers for years. "It's obvious that everything was not perfect ... there was rivalry on the track," said Brazilian F1 journalist Fred Sabino. However, "the positive aspects outweighed the negative," he added. After years of public bickering the two drivers appeared to resolve their differences before Senna's death.

Prost helped carry the coffin of his deceased teammate. "Determination" and "dedication" are the words often used to explain Senna's success on the track. They are also the values extolled by the Ayrton Senna Institute, which his sister Viviane founded in 1994 to offer opportunities for disadvantaged children.

Books and documentaries about Senna's life show a man focused on his career almost to a mystical level. In several interviews, Senna discussed his deep Catholic faith and praised the virtues of mental discipline—so strict that it sometimes allowed him, he claimed, to enter another dimension while driving.

Off the track, Senna's two great loves were Brazilian TV star Xuxa and the model Adriane Galisteu, with whom he shared his last moments.



MELBOURNE: File picture taken on March 5, 1996 construction workers look at a giant mural of Brazilian Formula One driver Ayrton Senna on the back of a grandstand at Albert Park, site of the 1996 Australian F1 Grand Prix in Melbourne. May 1, 2019 marks the 25th anniversary of Ayrton Senna's death during the San Marino Grand Prix. — AFP

### 'SUPERHERO'

Before Senna, two-time world champion Emerson Fittipaldi (1972 and 1974) and three-time world champion Nelson Piquet (1981, 1983 and 1987) put Brazil on the F1 map. In the past 25 years, Rubens Barrichello and Felipe Massa—eleven podiums each but without a world title—were the best Brazilian F1 drivers.

This year, there is not a single Brazilian on the grid.

"Senna was the third driver in a line of champions ... but in motorsport there is that cyclical thing," said Sabino. "The names that came later ended up suffering a bit with the complaints of fanatics used to victories."

Senna, he said, embodied the "Brazil that worked, the great idol, a superhero." "He ended up dying on the track, which also helped in the consolidation of the myth." — AFP

## Bikes, shortcuts, bibs for cash: China marathon cheats run rampant

SHANGHAI: Dozens have taken shortcuts while one hopped on a bike—cheating by Chinese marathon runners has become so rampant that there are warnings it is harming the country's reputation. Running has taken off in China with competitors wearing the latest trendy gear and boasting of their achievements on social media or on job applications to boost their employment prospects.

But race organisers are struggling to keep up with a growing number of attempts—some laughably audacious—to break the rules. The Chinese Athletic Association (CAA) issued lifetime bans to three runners who cheated at the prestigious Boston Marathon in April. Two of them presented forged certificates to fraudulently reach the strict entry standard while the third gave his bib to someone else to run for him. Their behaviour "had a negative impact on China in the (international) community", the CAA said in a statement. An official with the CAA's marathon department who spoke on condition of anonymity told AFP the association was investigating cases of cheating at other marathons in China. A Chinese sports travel agency charged runners 50,000 yuan (\$7,500) to register them for Boston, including allegedly arranging bogus certificates proving they had achieved fast enough times in other races to qualify. China National Radio reported. Some cheats have not been so subtle. In March a woman was filmed riding a green rental bike in the Xuzhou International Marathon in eastern China and at November's half-marathon in Shenzhen more than 250 runners cheated, including many who took shortcuts. Traffic cameras caught participants darting from one side of the road to the other.

### 'LACK OF MARATHON CULTURE'

The Beijing government is encouraging long-distance running as part of a broader fitness campaign. In 2011 there were just 22 marathons, half-marathons or



A marathon runner, who finished second in a half marathon event with a standout time of 1 hour 21 minutes, was later caught cheating and got herself disqualified after being betrayed by her own fitness tracker.

other running events in China, but that rocketed to about 1,500 last year, according to the CAA.

Chinese media says "marathon fever", especially among the middle class, means that some events are disorganised or unregulated—and vulnerable to cheating. The CAA, which in December issued regulations aimed at cleaning up the sport, declined to tell AFP how many Chinese runners have broken the rules. But Yu Hongchen, a CAA vice-president, told the China Daily: "Chinese marathon development has encountered many difficulties, the first of which is the lack of a marathon culture and awareness of the rules."

That "lack of a culture" means some people—eager to show off to friends or prospective bosses—are woefully underprepared for the gruelling demands of a marathon. The International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), the world governing body, endorsed January's Xiamen Marathon as one of its "Gold Label" road races. But that did not prevent at least five people cheating, one of whom sported a mocked-up bib. The IAAF declined to comment despite repeated requests.

Paco Borao, president of the Association of

team. We are the reigning champions and for us it is going out there backing our abilities and being at our best." Warner and former Australian captain Steve Smith served 12-month bans for cheating in a Cape Town Test in March last year along with teammate Cameron Bancroft, who missed nine months.

Warner and Smith both performed well in the IPL to boost their confidence ahead of joining Australia's World Cup training camp in Brisbane tomorrow. Smith was made Rajasthan Royals captain midway into the league despite not being eligible to lead the national side.

Warner said the break away from cricket had given him time to reflect on his game. "I have had time off to work harder at my game. I put the bat down for 16-18 weeks and tried to be the best man I can be, the best husband I can be and that's worked for me."

Warner is keen to build on his IPL success when Australia start the World Cup against Afghanistan on June 1 in Bristol. He said his job as opening batsman was to "put runs on the board."

"I am looking forward to that and this (IPL) is a great stepping stone," he added. Warner's Hyderabad team meanwhile, led by New Zealander Kane Williamson, is still fighting to make the play-offs as the T20 tournament reaches its climax. — AFP

## Warner sees run-packed World Cup

HYDERABAD: Australia batsman David Warner yesterday predicted a high-scoring World Cup in the uncertain English conditions. Warner headed off to the Australian camp after ending his Indian Premier League with a 56-ball 81 to help Sunrisers Hyderabad thrash Kings XI Punjab by 45 runs on Monday.

His knock, laced with seven fours and two sixes, capped off a successful return to top-level competitive cricket from a ball-tampering scandal. The 32-year-old left the IPL on top of the batting rankings with 692 runs from 12 innings, including eight fifties and a century.

Warner predicted the World Cup, where Australia are defending champions, will be more IPL style high-octane cricket. "This World Cup, you'll see some high scores," Warner said.

"For the batter, hopefully the ball isn't swinging too much." "We are playing in England, they are a fantastic

## Smith plays down elbow scare ahead of World Cup

MUMBAI: Steve Smith said his elbow was fine after landing on it heavily despite still recovering from surgery, as he prepares for his final Indian Premier League (IPL) game of the season before joining Australia's World Cup squad.

Rajasthan Royals captain Smith took a brilliant diving catch to dismiss compatriot David Warner, but in the process gave the Australian camp a scare when he appeared to injure his elbow again.

He received medical treatment and returned to bat as the Royals chased down the target to beat Sunrisers Hyderabad with five balls to spare. "I just landed on it quite heavily, more heavily than I had landed on it previously," Smith told reporters ahead of his side's game against the Royal Challengers Bangalore yesterday.

Former Australian captain Smith underwent an operation in January to repair a ligament in his right elbow while he was serving his 12-month international ban for ball tampering that ended last month. "From the surgery I have still got some scar tissue and stuff in there, and just the impact of the landing affected it a little bit. But there is nothing wrong with it - all good." The 29-year-old has shown signs of returning to his best with two fifties in his last four innings for the Royals in the IPL.

"The start of the tournament did not go as well as I would have liked," he said. "But I think the more I have padded up, the better I have felt as the tournament has gone on. I've been able to contribute to a couple of wins in the last two matches and felt very good." Smith said he is not yet able to throw with full force and has had to take close fielding positions in the IPL this season, although that aspect of his game is fast improving. — Reuters

## Cricketer gets five-year rape sentence

LONDON: An Australian-born cricketer who raped a woman he found "dozing" in his teammate's bedroom was jailed for five years by an English court yesterday.

Alex Hepburn, 23, was convicted following an attack that took place during the first night of a sexual conquest "game" he helped set up on a WhatsApp group.

Prosecutors said the former Worcestershire all-rounder had been "fired up" by a contest to sleep with the most women, before carrying out the rape at his flat in Worcester, central England, in April 2017.

Judge Jim Tindal, jailing Hepburn at Hereford Crown Court, said the "immature" cricketer and a former teammate had agreed a "pathetic sexist game to collect as many sexual encounters as possible".

He added: "You probably thought it was laddish behaviour at the time. In truth it was foul sexism."

"It demeaned women and trivialised rape—a word you personally threw around lightly. Only now do you realise how serious rape is." Hepburn's lawyer, Michelle Healey, said her client had expressed remorse. In what the judge said was a "brave" victim impact statement, the woman Hepburn attacked described her ordeal as "evil" and a "heinous crime". A jury had found Hepburn guilty of oral rape at a retrial earlier this month, but cleared him of a further count of rape relating to the same victim.—AFP



David Warner

Sports

# Liverpool's flying full-backs ready for Barcelona test

## Klopp's bold system has reaped rich rewards

LONDON: Neither Trent Alexander-Arnold nor Andrew Robertson have Lionel Messi's star power, but the buccaneering Liverpool defenders could play just as vital a role as the Barcelona captain in their mouth-watering Champions League semi-final.

Virgil van Dijk has hogged the spotlight among Liverpool's defenders with a superb campaign that earned the Dutch centre-back the Professional Footballers' Association player of the year award.

Ahead of today's first leg against Messi's Barca, Robertson and Alexander-Arnold have emerged as essential contributors to Liverpool's bid for Champions League glory. With 24 assists between them in all competitions, England right-back Alexander-Arnold and Scotland left-back Robertson are pivotal figures in Jurgen Klopp's game-plan.

Robertson's 11 assists have equalled the Premier League record for a defender and Alexander-Arnold is not far behind, with nine, making Liverpool's full-backs are as much wingers as defenders. It has become the most demanding, tactically significant position in the Liverpool team. Without Robertson, 25, doing the job of two players with his lung-bursting runs up and down the flanks, Senegal winger Sadio Mane would not have the freedom to move infield, from where he has scored 24 goals this term.

Mohamed Salah's licence to roam from the wing is only possible because there is less need to track back defensively while Alexander-Arnold, 20, tirelessly covers every blade of grass on the right. Klopp's bold system has reaped rich rewards as rivals struggle to find a way to turn off the supply line fuelled by Robertson and Alexander-Arnold.

In producing perfectly weighted crosses for Mane's double and a Van Dijk goal, Alexander-Arnold became the youngest Premier League player to create three

goals in a single fixture when Liverpool thrashed Watford in February.

Then, when Robertson supplied Roberto Firmino with Liverpool's opening goal against Tottenham recently, Alexander-Arnold matched him by crossing for Salah's header that led to Toby Alderweireld's decisive late own goal.

### UNLIKELY HEROES

They are the kind of key contributions that have become commonplace this season and Robertson admits the pair's friendly rivalry is spurring them to ever greater heights. "I always try and go forward. Sometimes my passes don't find people. But I do try and create. If I get two assists, I expect Trent to get three," Robertson said with a smile. "We all need to chip in with goals and assists. It's not just the front three. It's not just the defence that keeps clean sheets, either. It's a team game." Liverpool's unlikely heroes have taken contrasting routes to the top.

Liverpool-born Alexander-Arnold is the soft-spoken prodigy who still lived with his mum at the start of this season, such has been the rapid nature of his rise from the club's academy. Robertson started his career in obscurity at Queen's Park and Dundee United before joining Liverpool from Hull for £8 million (\$10.3 million) in 2017 — a deal that Klopp says came at a time when "there weren't 500 clubs asking about him".

Now comes the acid test of the duo against Barcelona in the Camp Nou. Inspired by the sublime Messi, Barca have scored more than 130 goals in all competitions already this term and wrapped up the Spanish title at the weekend.

But, while he acknowledges the threat posed by Messi, Luis Suarez and company, Robertson believes Liverpool should stick to their guns. "We know we'll



BARCELONA: Barcelona's Uruguayan forward Luis Suarez and Barcelona's Spanish defender Jordi Alba (R) take part in a training session at the Joan Gamper Sports City training ground in Barcelona yesterday on the eve of the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between Barcelona and Liverpool. —AFP

have our hands full defensively but we all defend as a team and we attack as a team. If me and Trent have time to go forward, we will do it. It's not going to stop us," Robertson said.

"We know that we can create goals and chances, so why change that? But look, we will learn from the game and move from that and see how it pans out. "It's a challenge we all look forward to." —AFP

## Maroon, Blues grab 2-1 series lead over Dallas Stars

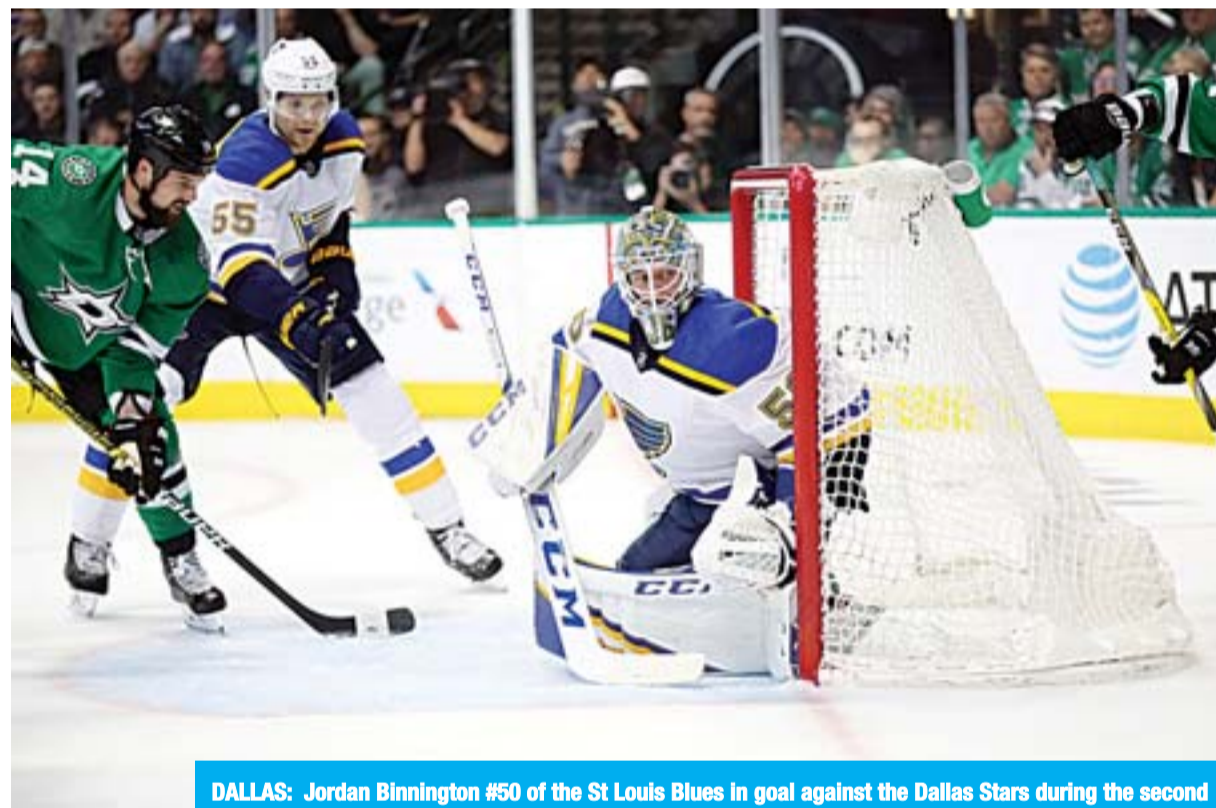
DALLAS: Patrick Maroon scored the tiebreaking goal with 1:38 left in the third period, and the visiting St. Louis Blues regained home-ice advantage with a 4-3 win against the Dallas Stars in Game 3 of their Western Conference semifinal series on Monday night.

Jaden Schwartz and Tyler Bozak each had a goal and an assist, Jay Bouwmeester had two assists, and Alex Pietrangolo scored his first goal of the playoffs for the Blues, who took a 2-1 lead in the best-of-seven series while improving to 4-0 on the road this postseason. Jordan Binnington made 28 saves for St. Louis. Alexander Radulov, Andrew Coglian and Tyler Seguin scored for the Stars, and Ben Bishop made 29 saves. Maroon scored up high on Bishop from in close at a tough angle to give St. Louis its fourth one-goal lead of the game.

Dallas came back from its third deficit to tie the score at 3-3 on Seguin's goal with 4:08 left in the third period. Coglian scored short-handed with 6:54 left in the third to tie the score at 2-2, but Pietrangolo scored 78 seconds later to move St. Louis back in front, 3-2.

Bozak gave St. Louis a 2-1 lead at 8:30 of the second period. Vince Dunn opened up space by drawing two defenders as he skated through the right circle. He passed the puck back to a trailing Robert Thomas, who took a wrist shot from the faceoff dot. Bishop slowed the shot, but the puck was behind him and sliding toward the goal line when Bozak shoved it across.

Schwartz gave the Blues a 1-0 lead at 1:27 of the first period. Schwartz started the play by chasing



DALLAS: Jordan Binnington #50 of the St. Louis Blues in goal against the Dallas Stars during the second period of Game Three of the Western Conference Second Round of the 2019 NHL Stanley Cup Playoffs at American Airlines Center in Dallas, Texas. —AFP

down a dump-in and tapping it back to a trailing Ryan O'Reilly in the corner. O'Reilly passed the puck back to defenseman Colton Parayko at the right point, and his slap shot was deflected into the net by Schwartz, who had moved into the slot closely defended by Taylor Fedun.

The Stars went on their first power play at 15:36 of

the first period, and Radulov scored with 24 seconds left on the man advantage to tie the game at 1-1. With 44 seconds left in the game, Dallas got another power play when Parayko was penalized for delay of game. The goalie was pulled, so the Stars had a six-on-four skater advantage, but they couldn't find an equalizing goal. —Reuters

## Solskjaer must show authority by dropping De Gea-Wright

LONDON: Manchester United boss Ole Gunnar Solskjaer must show he is not afraid to make big decisions and drop error-prone goalkeeper David de Gea for the final two games of the Premier League season, former England striker Ian Wright has said.

De Gea has made a number of uncharacteristic mistakes in recent games, including one that allowed Chelsea to equalise in Sunday's 1-1 draw that dented sixth-placed United's chances of finishing in the top four.

Solskjaer backed De Gea to shake off his poor form in their final two games against Huddersfield Town and Cardiff City but Wright believes the Norwegian has to take a different approach.

## For Simon Yates atonement in the Giro 'is my season'

PARIS: For Simon Yates the Giro d'Italia, which starts in Bologna on May 11, is unfinished business. "I'm going back to try to finish it," the British rider told AFP yesterday from Andorra where he lives and works.

Last season finished with a breakthrough victory in the Tour of Spain in September. But that followed a spectacular collapse in the Giro in May. Yates had built a lead of almost a minute with four days to go. Then the race returned to the mountains for three stages.

"If he (Solskjaer) really wants to stamp his mark and let people know he isn't afraid to make decisions, he should take him out," Wright said on BBC Radio 5 Live.

"If the manager explains everything and tells him face to face why he's leaving him out and giving him a break, that's man-management and that's what Solskjaer has to do."

De Gea's contract was due to expire this year before United activated a one-year extension but that has not stopped media reports from linking him with a move away from Old Trafford.

Wright said an early end to De Gea's season would help the struggling Spaniard sort out his future at the club, while back-up Sergio Romero fills in.

"He (De Gea) needs to go on holiday and sort his contract out," Wright added. "Sometimes you have to take someone out the firing line. He's one of the best goalkeepers in the world and he needs a break."

"There's a lot going on and he's under a lot of pressure. When you look at how United are playing at the moment, putting him in that situation is putting him under more pressure." —Reuters

He faltered on the first, crumbled on the second and faded on the third to finish 21st, more than an hour-and-a quarter behind winner Chris Froome. "I felt I was close last year but ran out of gas," he said.

In the run-up to this year's race, his Mitchelton-Scott team tweeted a photo of Yates on the ground still wearing the leader's pink jersey at the close of one of the stages that ended his Giro hopes.

"I've been working towards this all year," Yates said. Yates and Mitchelton-Scott did not falter in Spain.

"It came together beautifully," Yates said. We had perfect tactics." He said that winning his first grand tour was one of his long-term objectives. "I've been targeting races." The Giro could be his second. This week Bradley Wiggins, a former Tour de France winner, joined the chorus tipping his fellow Englishman to win it. —AFP

## Boxing must end controversies to end Olympic threat

NEW DELHI: Boxing must quickly fix "controversies" surrounding the sport to keep its Olympic place when a decision is made next month, leading international coach Santiago Nieva said yesterday.

The International Olympic Committee is to deliver its verdict on May 22 on whether to keep boxing at the 2020 Tokyo Games.

Nieva, director of the Indian men's and women's teams and a senior member of the AIBA international federation coaches commission, said he was "worried" about the looming decision.

"I think they will find a way but... in boxing we tend to exaggerate our importance for the Olympic movement," the Swedish coach told AFP. "We think that we are so pure, one of the oldest, but for other people who are not into boxing, they see it more from a commercial and political standpoint."

"They don't want controversies, they don't want scandals at the Olympics and boxing is giving controversies over and over again," said Nieva. The IOC froze boxing's preparations for next year's Games to give the sport time to clean up its image after allegations of bout-fixing tainted the 2016 Rio Olympics.

An inquiry into AIBA governance and its anti-doping programme is also being held. In response, the "right to protest" a referee's decision is to be re-introduced at the world championships in September.

Nieva said India had been on the receiving end of judging blunders, and highlighted the 49kg final at the Asian Championships in Bangkok when Deepak Singh lost his final to Nodirjon Mirzahmedov of Uzbekistan. "We felt it was very clear," Nieva said. India was certain Singh had won, and the coach said this is an example which showed the rules are "meaningless". "It's tough because it is not black and white. It is a grey area when it comes to close bouts."

At the 2014 Asian Games, India's Sarita Devi refused to accept her bronze medal and tried to hang it on her Korean rival instead, who won the women's semi-final on a unanimous decision. Devi, who dumped the medal on the podium and stormed away in tears—was later banned for a year.

But the 37-year-old, who won bronze at the Asian Championships in Bangkok, feels the experience changed her. "I have matured a lot in all these years. But I have sacrificed a lot to be still relevant in Indian boxing," said Devi, who insisted she would try to reach the Olympics if it is still in the contest.

Nieva said that if boxing keeps its place, he was confident that India—the land of the legendary Mary Kom—has a fast-improving pool of boxers with a chance of winning a medal. India finished the Asian championships with two gold medals, four silver and seven bronze. —AFP

## West Ham join PSG, Juve on cryptocurrency platform

LONDON: English Premier League club West Ham United have joined Italian giants Juventus and French champions Paris Saint-Germain in bringing cryptocurrency opportunities to their fans worldwide by partnering with Malta-based Socios.com.

The move will "give fans the best experience possible, whether they live within a mile of the stadium or thousands of miles away," said Karim Virani, digital and commercial director at the London-based club.

The blockchain company's mobile app allows fans to vote on club matters by buying, earning or hunting for digital tokens. "This is the first partnership between a Premier League club and Socios.com, joining the likes of European clubs Paris Saint-Germain and Juventus," a joint statement said.

Other top European football clubs have established similar partnerships—tapping the potential of blockchain technology to deal with longstanding issues such as ticket scalping, fan engagement and the payment of players' salaries.

The West Ham United Fan Token will be available from the start of the Premier League season in August. Blockchains, or decentralised registry systems, have been used most prominently as the tool behind cryptocurrency Bitcoin, but many other possible uses from medical records to banking—and now sports—are emerging. —AFP

**Live**

**Matches on TV**  
(Local Timings)

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**UEFA CHAMPIONS LEAGUE**

Barcelona v Liverpool  
beIN SPORTS HD 1

22:00

**25** Odorizzi outduels Verlander as Twins edge Houston Astros



**26** Brazil mourns 'superhero' 25 years after his death



**27** Liverpool's flying full-backs ready for Barcelona test



TORONTO: Kawhi Leonard #2 of the Toronto Raptors shoots the ball against Ben Simmons #25 of the Philadelphia 76ers during Game Two of the Eastern Conference Semifinals of the 2019 NBA Playoffs at the Scotiabank Arena in Toronto, Ontario, Canada. —AFP

## Sixers down Raptors to level series

### Jokic leads Nuggets to beat Blazers

LOS ANGELES: Jimmy Butler scored 30 points as the Philadelphia 76ers turned the tables on the Raptors in Toronto on Monday with a 94-89 victory that knotted their NBA playoff series at one game each. The 76ers, beaten 108-95 in the Eastern Conference second-round series opener, thwarted the Raptors' second-half comeback bid, notching their first win in Toronto since November 2012 to head home for game three tomorrow all square.

Butler added 11 rebounds and handed out five assists for the Sixers, who led 51-38 at halftime despite 13 first-half turnovers. The Raptors, who trailed by as many as 19 in the first half, closed the deficit to 61-60 late in the third quarter.

But they missed six of their first seven shots in the final period and the 76ers held on for the win. Butler scored 12 of his 30 points in the fourth quarter. That included a three-pointer off an assist from center Joel Embiid that put the Sixers up 88-81 with 2:14 to play.

"My team had a lot of faith in me tonight," said Butler, who scored just 10 points in game one. "I told them I had to come out and redeem myself. 'More than anything we got back, we guarded,'" Butler added, saying defense would be key going forward in the series.

"When we let our defense dictate our offense we're such a great team," he said. "We can't let it be the other way around." Sixers coach Brett Brown praised Butler as the team's "rock." "That was James Butler," Brown said. "That was the adult in the gym."

Embiid, battling a stomach ailment as well as the nagging knee pain that troubled him in the first round, scored just two baskets. The second couldn't have been better timed as he drove to bank in a shot that put the 76ers up 92-89 with 24.3 seconds remaining.

Toronto's Danny Green then missed a potential game-tying three-pointer and Philadelphia's Tobias Harris grabbed the rebound. Harris was fouled and sealed the win with two free throws.

Toronto's Kawhi Leonard led all scorers with 35 points. Pascal Siakam added 21 and Kyle Lowry scored 20. But the five total points for Toronto's reserves were dwarfed by the production of Philadelphia's bench: 13 points from James Ennis, 10 from Greg Monroe and three from Jonah Bolden.

The Denver Nuggets, two days removed from their first-round, game-seven victory over the San Antonio Spurs, opened their Western Conference second-round series with a 121-113 home victory over the Portland Trail Blazers.

Serbian center Nikola Jokic scored 37 points, pulled down nine rebounds, handed out six assists and blocked two shots. Both teams came out firing, the Trail Blazers connecting on 63.6 percent of their first-quarter shots and Denver making 61.9 percent of their shots as the first period ended tied 32-32.

Denver, up 58-55 at halftime, pulled away after the break, taking a 93-84 lead into the final period.

Portland, led by 39 points from All-Star guard Damian Lillard, trimmed a 12-point deficit to 101-96 with 8:02 left in the game.

Denver responded with an 8-0 scoring run, ignited by Mason Plumlee's dunk. Portland's CJ McCollum was then whistled for a flagrant foul when he caught a driving Jokic in the face, and the Serbian made both free throws.

Plumlee then slammed home a miss by teammate Malik Beasley and Beasley rebounded another miss and made a layup as the Nuggets seized a 109-96 lead with 6:11 left to play. Denver were in control from there, although Jokic and coach Mike Malone said they had plenty of room for improvement before they host game two today.

"We kind of went into the game a little sloppy, slow, we didn't play a lot of defense," Jokic said. Malone also felt the Nuggets were lacking defensively, especially in the early going. "We got the win, and when you know you haven't played your best basketball that's a good feeling," Malone said. —AFP

### Stephens to wed US soccer player Altidore

NEW YORK: Former US Open tennis champion Sloane Stephens and Toronto FC's United States striker Jozy Altidore are to be married. The 26-year old Stephens and Altidore, 29, announced their engagement on Monday with joint posts on social media saying, "Forever starts now" and "Forever yes."

Stephens is currently ranked No. 8 in the world and has won six WTA titles, including the 2017 U.S. Open. Altidore, who signed a new contract with MLS side Toronto FC in February, has scored 41 goals in 110 games for his country.

Meanwhile, Wimbledon chiefs have suggested they may extend the deadline for Andy Murray to apply for a wildcard to compete at this year's championships as the two-time winner battles to regain fitness. The British former world number one, currently ranked 218th in the world, is recovering from hip surgery and has yet to set a date for a potential return.

Murray, Wimbledon champion in 2013 and 2016, has an official deadline of June 18 to apply for a wildcard for

this year's event, which begins on July 1. If he is fit enough, the 31-year-old Scot could use his protected ranking to enter the tournament but he might apply for a wildcard in order to use that ranking for future events.

"There have been no discussions with Andy yet," said All England Club chairman Philip Brook on Tuesday. "It's too soon to know the answer to that one. 'Should he wish to apply he would do so in the normal way. We have a scheduled meeting on June 18 ahead of the championships to decide on wildcards."

"We have a process which applies to all players." As to whether that deadline could be extended for Murray, chief executive Richard Lewis said: "If Andy came forward with a strong case I am sure we would work with him."

Murray has not played competitively since the Australian Open in January, where he lost in five sets to Roberto Bautista Agut in the first round. He said before the tournament that he planned to retire after this year's Wimbledon, but also revealed the Australian Open could prove to be his last event.

Murray had a hip resurfacing operation in London in late January and says he is now pain-free, although he has only been hitting balls from a stationary position so far. At its spring press conference, the All England Club also announced an 11.8 percent increase in prize money for 2019. The men's and women's singles champions will each receive £2.35 million (\$3.06 million), an increase of £100,000 on last year. —Agencies



Sloane Stephens (right) and Jozy Altidore