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Amir inaugurates landmark Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway

Bridge linking Kuwait City with Silk City to help establish Kuwait as an international trade hub



KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, visiting South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and other senior officials are seen during the inauguration ceremony of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway yesterday. — Photos by Amiri Diwan and Yasser Al-Zayyat

KUWAIT: HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah attended and patronized the inauguration ceremony of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway yesterday. The ceremony was attended by HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, visiting South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon, President of the French Senate Gerard Larcher and a host of senior state officials.

Addressing the event, Lee congratulated HH the Amir on the inauguration of Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway,

expressing gratitude for supporting the execution of this project since 2013. "It is a great pleasure for South Korean companies to participate in the largest national project in the history of Kuwait," he said, extending his thanks to Hyundai Engineering and Construction Company for its utmost efforts throughout the work period on the bridge project. Lee further expressed confidence that the 2035 vision of HH the Amir will have "remarkable achievements".

"The project uses the latest methods of civil engineering and environmentally-friendly technologies," he noted,

adding that the causeway will be managed and operated through an intelligent transport system. He said the causeway will play a pivotal role in linking the southern and northern regions and reduce commuting time between Kuwait City and Subbiya to around 20 minutes instead of one hour. "The late Amir Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah had instilled democracy and economic development. Therefore, I trust that the causeway will enhance Kuwait's reputation in the international community," Lee said.

Deputy Director General of the Public Authority for

Roads and Transportation Saud Al-Naqi told KUNA that Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway is part of Kuwait integrated development plan. He stressed that the project is the new development "gateway" for the country, branding the causeway the "artery" that will link Kuwait City with Silk City, which is considered the future financial and commercial center. The project begins from the intersection of Jamal Abdunnasser St and Ghazali Highway to the new Subbiya area. It crosses two artificial islands of 280,000 sq m each, in addition to government buildings, green spaces and areas for future investment projects. — KUNA

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News in brief

Iran frees detained Kuwaitis

KUWAIT: Diplomatic sources said Iranian authorities released Kuwaiti citizens Adnan Al-Kharafi and Fahd Al-Alyan after interrogating them for entering Iran's territorial waters by mistake. The sources said the citizens are in good condition and were handed over to the Kuwaiti Embassy in Tehran. They are expected to return to Kuwait today. — Meshaal Al-Enezi

Expat remittance bill shelved

KUWAIT: Well-informed sources said that the parliament has excluded the bill on taxing expat remittances from its agenda for the current parliamentary term ending in June. The sources said the government's strong rejection reflects the opinion of the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry. — A Saleh

Rain damage claims studied

KUWAIT: The ministerial team authorized by the Cabinet to follow up and handle compensating those affected by the rains last year issued a statement with details. According to the statement, the team studied 3,931 claims including 2,251 for vehicle damage and 780 for property damage, while 900 personal damage claims are still being studied. The statement also noted that the compensations will be paid once the 2019-2020 fiscal year budget is approved. — A Saleh

Selfie-crazy teens crushed by train

NEW DELHI: Three teenagers were killed while taking selfies on a railway track in India. A fourth youth managed to jump to safety before the accident in Panipat in the northern state of Haryana. "The victims were busy taking selfies and when they saw a train approaching they jumped to a second track without realizing another train was coming on that," police officer M S Dabas said. — AFP

Indian group calls for niqab ban

NEW DELHI: An Indian Hindu nationalist group allied with Prime Minister Narendra Modi called yesterday for a ban on veils after Sri Lanka prohibited the garments worn by some Muslim women following militant bomb attacks there. "We welcome this decision and demand Prime Minister Narendra Modi follows in Sri Lanka's footsteps and bans the burqa and niqab in India," the Mumbai-based Shiv Sena party wrote in an editorial in the Saamana newspaper. — Reuters

Protests erupt at May Day rallies

PARIS: Celebrating May Day was once to participate in the ancient ritual of reveling in the return of spring. In more modern times the date has become an international holiday to honor the labor movement and, hopefully, enjoy a little early sunshine. But increasingly the occasion takes the form of protest against the authorities - and this year was no exception, with public ire plainly on view from Paris to Saint Petersburg, via Algiers, Athens and Istanbul.

In Paris, police fired tear gas to disperse anti-capitalist protesters as thousands of people gathered for a May Day

march which ended up being barely any more festive than the "gilets jaunes" protests which have plagued France in recent months. In a nod to the festival's ancient origins - the return of sunshine and flowers after a long European winter - street traders across France rushed to sell lily of the valley bouquets as traditional seasonal offerings.

Istanbul police made dozens of arrests of people at an unauthorized rally at Taksim Square, the city's traditional focal point of protest. A nearby officially-approved event to mark the day drew several thousand people, including members of workers' unions and opposition political parties. In Saint Petersburg, home city of Vladimir Putin, officials allowed pro-Kremlin marchers to rally freely.

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PARIS: A cameraman reacts as he is hit by a tear gas canister as a protester goes to help him during clashes with police on the sidelines of the annual May Day rally yesterday. — AFP

Assange jailed for 50 weeks for UK bail breach

LONDON: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange was sentenced yesterday to 50 weeks in jail for breaching a British court order seven years ago, when he took refuge in Ecuador's London embassy to avoid extradition to Sweden. The Australian whistleblower, who was arrested on April 11 after Ecuador gave him up, will serve the nearly one-year sentence while fighting a separate attempt to transfer him to the United States. The 47-year-old, his shaggy beard neatly trimmed, raised his fist to supporters in the public gallery at London's Southwark Crown Court as he was taken down to the cells.

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LONDON: WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange gestures from the window of a prison van as he is driven into Southwark Crown Court yesterday. — AFP

US AG grilled over handling of Russia report

WASHINGTON: The US Justice Department head defended his handling of the Russia interference report yesterday after it emerged that lead investigator Robert Mueller had questioned his decision to declare that it cleared President Donald Trump. Facing allegations that he "whitewashed" the Mueller report, Attorney General Bill Barr told the Senate Judiciary Committee that after receiving it in March, it was his "baby" and therefore his prerogative to sum up its conclusions.

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WASHINGTON: US Attorney General William Barr testifies before the Senate Judiciary Committee yesterday. — AFP

Indian Maoists kill 16; Amir sends condolences

MUMBAI: A bomb attack by suspected Maoist rebels killed 15 Indian elite commandos and their driver yesterday, police said, in the latest incident of election-time violence in a decades-long insurgency. Tens of thousands of people have been killed since the 1960s in several areas of India in clashes between security forces and guerrillas first inspired by Chinese revolutionary leader Mao Zedong. In the latest incident, "Maoists attacked a team of commandos travelling in a private vehicle to inspect an earlier attack. So far 16 men have died," an official at police headquarters in the western state of Maharashtra told AFP.

The attack, the deadliest carried out by the Maoists since 2017, happened in the densely forested Gadchiroli region of Maharashtra, deep in the Indian interior. Gadchiroli police official Prashant Dute told AFP that the police commandos had been on their way to the scene of the earlier attack in the same area in which more than 30 vehicles were torched. The Maoists insurgents are believed to be present in at least 20 Indian states but are most active in Maharashtra, Chhattisgarh, Odisha, Bihar and Jharkhand.

HH the Amir of Kuwait Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday sent a cable of condolences to Indian President Ram Nath Kovind. In the cable, the Amir expressed sincere sentiments over the victims.

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Local



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with French Senate President Gerard Larcher and his accompanying delegation, with the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem. — Amiri Diwan photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Vice President of the Libyan Presidential Council Ahmad Maiteeq.

Amir meets French Senate President, South Korean PM, Libyan delegation

Amir congratulates Japan's Emperor Naruhito on ascending to throne

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace yesterday His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. His Highness also received, with the attendance of His Highness the Crown Prince, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, who was escorting French Senate President Gerard Larcher and his accompanying delegation on the occasion of their visit to the country. During the reception, Larcher conveyed greetings and best wishes of wellbeing and prosperity of President Emmanuel Macron to His Highness and the Kuwaiti people. In turn, His Highness the Amir extended similar greetings to President Macron and the friendly French people.

Later, His Highness the Amir received His

Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who was escorting visiting South Korean Premier Lee Nak-yeon and his accompanying delegation. During the reception, Premier Lee conveyed warm greetings of President Moon Jae-in to His Highness the Amir and the Kuwaiti people. In turn, His Highness extended to President Moon; via Premier Lee, similar greetings. Also, His Highness received Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, who was escorting Vice

President of the Libyan Presidential Council Ahmad Maiteeq and Foreign Minister Mohammad Siala on the occasion of their visit to the country. All receptions were attended by Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah.

In other news, His Highness the Amir sent



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with the visiting South Korean Premier Lee Nak-yeon.

a cable of congratulations to Emperor Naruhito Akihito on the occasion of ascending to the throne. In the cable, His Highness the Amir lauded distinguished relations with Japan, reaffirming shared anticipation to further such ties, as well as wishing Emperor Naruhito and the friendly people of Japan utmost success and pros-

perity. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to the Emperor.

Separately, His Highness the Amir sent a cable of condolences Wednesday to US President Donald Trump over the victims of a recent shooting at the University of North Carolina at Charlotte. In the cable,

His Highness the Amir voiced Kuwait's condemnation of the criminal horrible act that targeted innocents and he wished mercy for the deceased and a swift recovery of those injured. His Highness the Crown Prince and His Highness the Prime Minister sent similar cables to US President Donald Trump. — KUNA

Prime Minister holds official talks with Korean counterpart

KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah held official talks with the visiting Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea Lee Nak-yeon at Bayan Palace yesterday. Bilateral ties and ways of strengthening them on all levels were discussed during the talks, as well as recent regional and international issues of common interest. His Highness the Premier expressed satisfaction at the great development of bilateral relations in recent years, especially on political and economic levels, stressing the two nations' keenness to enhance prospects of cooperation in the fields of health, transportation, housing, energy and smart technology.

His Highness said the Republic of Korea and Korean companies that implemented projects in Kuwait between 2012 and 2019 at a cost of about \$30 billion, are important partners to the State of Kuwait, noting that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries reached \$14 billion this year. He welcomed the agreement of the Korean authorities to approve establishing direct flights between the two countries, as well as the establishment of a Kuwaiti-Korean committee on Kuwait 2035 vision, as well as support efforts aimed at implementing Kuwait's development plans and projects related to the vision. He also expressed Kuwait's support for the Korean leadership to achieve stability and peace on the Korean Peninsula through the implementation of relevant Security Council resolutions, pointing out to the South



KUWAIT: His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah holds official talks with the visiting Prime Minister of the Republic of Korea Lee Nak-yeon. — KUNA

Korean support for Kuwait's efforts led by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Agreements signed

Following the meeting, the two sides signed several agreements and Memoranda of Understanding, including the following: First: A Cooperation Agreement in the field of culture and arts between the Government of the State of Kuwait and the Government of the Republic of Korea. Second: A MoU for cooperation between Saud Al-Nasser Al-Sabah Kuwaiti Diplomatic Institute and Korea National Diplomatic Academy. Third: A MoU between the Government of the State of Kuwait represented by the Direct Investment Promotion Authority and the Government of the Republic of Korea represented by Incheon Free Economic Zone. Fourth: A MoU on Investment Promotion between the Government of Kuwait and the Korean Government. Fifth: A letter of intent between Kuwait Ministry of Health and the Korean Ministry of Health and Welfare. Sixth: MoU in the field of mutual assistance and cooperation

on customs issues between the Government of Kuwait and the Republic of Korea. Seventh: A MoU on bilateral cooperation in preventing and combating corruption between the government of Kuwait and the Republic of Korea. Eighth: A MoU in the field of guard and protection between the Amiri Guard and the Korean Presidential Security Service.

The talks were attended, on behalf of the Kuwaiti side, by Kuwait's Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Premier and State Minister for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh, Undersecretary at His Highness the Prime Minister Diwan Sheikh Etimad Khaled Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Capital Governor Sheikh Talal Khaled Al-Ahmed Al-Sabah, Director General of Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA) Sheikh Dr Meshaal Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and Kuwaiti Ambassador to South Korea Bader Al-Awadhi, in addition to a number of high ranking officials. On behalf of the Korean side, the delegation accompanying the Korean Prime Minister attended the official talks. — KUNA

Kuwait continues efforts to resolve Gulf crisis: Jarallah

DOHA: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah stressed yesterday continuous Kuwaiti efforts to resolve the Gulf crisis. "We hope the crisis could be contained thanks to efforts spent by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah in this regard," Jarallah said on the sidelines of the 16th Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) meeting held in Doha, Qatar.

"Such notable participation of Gulf countries in ACD meeting is a positive sign that we are heading in the right direction," Jarallah pointed out. The meeting reflects the host's (Qatar) faith and realization to enhance the Asian dialogue and joined action, he noted. He described the speech delivered by the Qatari Foreign Minister at the opening session of the meeting as a "road map" that would direct the cooperative work among Asian countries to higher levels.

Jarallah stressed that Kuwait depends strongly on such cooperation in order to meet aspirations of Asian peoples and their efforts to achieve sustainable development and construction, appreciating at the same time the Qatari initiative to host the next meeting in 2020 in Doha. The Kuwaiti delegation includes Assistant Foreign Minister for Asian Affairs Ambassador Ali Al-Saeed, Assistant Foreign Minister and Director of the Office of Deputy Minister Ambassador Ayyam Al-Omar and Kuwaiti Ambassador to Qatar Hafeeth Al-Ajmi.

Jarallah had stated earlier that the ACD meeting is an opportunity to address challenges. Addressing the meeting, Jarallah said Kuwait had supported the ACD forum out of belief in the fact that the states

should get integrated and interact in an economic bloc able to fulfill people's hopes and expectations. He added that Kuwait was aware of the significance of this mechanism which is deemed the only forum that brings together representatives from the countries of the largest and most populated continent in the world.

Kuwait hosted the ACD headquarters where the first meeting was held upon request from His Highness the Amir, he said. "We are living in a world that is experiencing many conflicts. Regrettably, the Asian continent bears the brunt of these conflicts that have triggered complicated calculations and impeded our planned genuine partnership in all fields," Jarallah added. He called for sharing experience among Asian countries in order to create real partnerships in all domains, given that the continent is seeing mixed development levels.

In this context, the State of Kuwait organized a second workshop for sustainable development in March 2018 with the participation of officials from member states and international organizations, he said, hailing the gathering as a chance for exchanging experience and considering cooperation among countries. "We are required to work for promoting the mechanism of our meetings and the meeting of our senior officials for setting out regulations in this regard, including a mechanism for choosing secretary-general, would undoubtedly promote the performance of this forum in various fields," he added. The senior Kuwaiti official concluded by voicing appreciation to Qatar for hosting this ministerial meeting. — KUNA

Hospitality sector continuously growing: Anjari

KUWAIT: The head of Horeca Kuwait organizing committee and Leaders Group for Consulting and Development General Manager Nabila Al-Anjari said the recent ads about new hotels, restaurants and hospitality investment projects is a good sign that the sector is continuously progressing and growing. In a statement, Anjari focused on major projects in hospitality and recre-



Nabila Al-Anjari

ation recently completed or about to be completed by either the private sector or the government. "This confirms our vision that this sector is going to grow in the near future," she stressed.

Anjari added that Horeca Kuwait is constantly monitoring such projects, as along with the sponsoring companies, it has always been the main umbrella for such projects and the main supporter for developing and promoting the entire tourism sector with projects such as the Capital Project due to be opened next

year by Al-Salhiya Real Estate Company with a total cost of around \$1 billion, the Crystal Tower project, the Kuwait Mall, the Seven Ballroom at the fairgrounds, The Avenues and 360 hotels and new partnerships in the food industry with leading Kuwaiti companies.

Anjari said that these investments will boost local tourism and recreation environments if they are well-managed and developed, adding that this will consequently lead to reducing the number of citizens seeking tourism abroad. She added that establishing new restaurant projects will mean that only the best will survive, and that promoting these projects regionally will help the demand on them grow, thanks to the efforts exerted by the private sector instead of the government.



DOHA: Deputy Foreign Minister Khaled Al-Jarallah attends the 16th Asian Cooperation Dialogue (ACD) meeting in Doha, Qatar. — KUNA

Local

Kuwait inaugurates massive causeway to free trade zone



KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and senior officials attend the inauguration of the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway. — Photos by Amiri Diwan and Yasser Al-Zayyat



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's motorcade drives along the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway.

KUWAIT: Kuwait yesterday inaugurated one of the world's longest causeways, linking the oil-rich Gulf state's capital to an uninhabited border region set to become a major free trade hub. The 36-kilometre (22-mile) bridge connects Kuwait City to the northern desert area of Subbiya, where Kuwait aims to create the 'Silk City' project linking the Gulf to central Asia and Europe.

The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway, named after late ruler Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, spans 36 kilometers (22 miles), three-quarters of it over water. It cuts the driving time between Kuwait City and Subbiya, close to both Iraq and Iran, from 90 minutes to less than half an hour. Investment in the Silk City project is expected to top \$100 billion, and a 5,000-megawatt power plant has already been built in Subbiya.

The \$3.6 billion causeway, designed by Paris-based engineering and consulting group Systra, took five years to build. The work was carried out by a consortium led by South Korea's Hyundai Engineering and Construction Company along with Kuwait's Combined Group Contracting Company.

The opening ceremony was attended by His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah along with South Korean Prime Minister Lee Nak-yeon, and the leader of the French Senate Gerard Larcher. Lee Nak-yeon said the causeway would establish Kuwait as an international trade center. — AFP



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's motorcade drives along the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah's motorcade drives along the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway.



(From left) His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and National Assembly Speaker Marzuq Al-Ghanem attend the ceremony.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah officially inaugurates the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway.



Vehicles drive along the Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway following its inauguration yesterday.



The Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway seen after its inauguration yesterday.

Local

Kuwait plan for northern mega city faces political hurdles

'Silk City' project to help diversify revenue away from oil exports

KUWAIT: A 'Silk City' rising from Kuwait's northern sandy plains will help diversify the Gulf Arab state's economy away from oil, draw foreign investment and galvanize trade links with Iraq, Iran and China - or at least that's the plan.

When First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah presented an outline of the project to lawmakers in March, he faced stiff resistance. MPs criticized draft legislation that appeared to place the proposed zone beyond parliamentary oversight and raised concerns alcohol could be allowed in the Muslim country. "It was a creation of a state within the state. It is the most dangerous law I have ever seen," MP Safa Al-Hashem told reporters after Sheikh Nasser met her and other members of a parliamentary committee.

The plan for an economic free zone and deep sea port, to be built in phases over 25 years, is meant to prevent Kuwait from falling further behind its neighbors which have opened up to foreign investment and are vying to be regional business hubs. But unlike its Gulf Arab peers, Kuwait has a powerful elected assembly whose members have pushed back against unpopular measures such as welfare cuts and a new sales tax designed to improve the country's finances.

"There is increasing resistance toward reforms," Kuwait's central bank governor, Mohammad Al-Hashel, told a banking roundtable in March. "It is a case of a sick body that is not willing to take the medicine. But without addressing our structural imbalances, we can't make much progress."

Silk City's proponents say the project is

central to diversifying revenue away from oil exports, which account for around 90 percent of state income, and developing the private sector to help reduce spending on salaries and subsidies, which eat up around 70 percent of the budget.

The project encompasses five islands and a northern territory linked to the capital by the \$2.3 billion Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway that opened yesterday. In addition to a free zone and port, it envisions an airport, an Olympic stadium, a tower taller than Dubai's Burj Khalifa, currently the world's highest, and housing for up to 700,000 people.

The project aims to create at least 200,000 jobs, according to comments by Nasser reported in local media last year, vital in a country where more than half the Kuwaiti population is under 25 and an over-staffed public sector cannot keep absorbing new entrants to the labor market.

Light on detail

Plans for an economic zone in Kuwait's sparsely-populated north have been knocking around since the 1970s. Per capita, Kuwait is one of the richest countries in the world due to its small population and large crude reserves. But it experienced its first budget deficit in nearly 20 years in 2016 due to a falling oil price. In the meantime, similarly oil-dependent neighbors including Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and the UAE have taken greater strides to diversify.

The Silk City plan is light on detail, particularly on who will fund it. When the project was presented in state media in July 2018 its estimated cost was put at \$86 billion but officials have not given a break

down for this figure.

When asked about the funding in March, the secretary-general of the state planning council, Khaled Mahdi, told reporters the financial model was "still under discussion" but that the bulk would come from the private sector, without giving any details. Kuwaiti authorities did not respond to a request for comment.

Adding to the questions swirling around the plan, Nasser dismissed the board of trustees responsible for running the project last week, a decree published in Kuwait's official gazette said on Sunday, without giving a reason. A new board was not named.

A hard sell

The plan bets on Iraq's recovery from years of war and on Iran eventually emerging from US sanctions, a longer-term view which has attracted China's interest as part of its own so-called 'Belt and Road Initiative' to rebuild the old Silk Roads tying China to Asia, Europe and beyond. A Kuwaiti source familiar with the plan said China could manage the port for a fee and share management of the economic zone.

Kuwaiti state media reported this week that a Kuwaiti envoy, on behalf of Nasser, signed a memorandum of understanding with China's Development Bank on "development, construction and consultative cooperation" at a Belt and Road summit in Beijing.

A Chinese foreign ministry statement said the agreement referred to Silk City and the Five Islands development, but gave no details. A foreign ministry spokesman said Kuwait was an "important cooperation partner" in Beijing's Belt and Road initiative.



KUWAIT: An archive photo showing an artist's rendition of the proposed Silk City project.

A draft law, published in a main Kuwaiti newspaper Al-Qabas, called for the zone to have administrative, legal and financial independence in a model similar to the Dubai International Financial Centre, which offers tax exemptions and its own judicial system.

MPs fear this will place the zone beyond their scrutiny. Lawmakers often question ministers, leading to cabinet reshuffles or parliament dissolutions to avoid no-confidence votes, including against royals holding ministerial posts. "It will be a very hard sell," said Kristin

Diwan, senior resident scholar at the Arab Gulf States Institute in Washington. "Right now the project has a bit of everything, it's like a Dubai in miniature."

Some MPs have cautioned against emulating "new" cities like Dubai, the Gulf's freewheeling business and tourism hub, and bypassing a constitution where Islamic law is the main source of legislation.

"In its nature and identity, Kuwait is Arab, Islamic and predominantly conservative," Islamist MP Mohammed Al-Dallal said. "There must be no irresponsible openness." —Reuters

ABK sponsors AUM's career fair

KUWAIT: Committed to nurturing Kuwaiti talent, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) joined the American University of the Middle East (AUM) for its career fair, which was held on 29th and 30th April on AUM's Campus. The event aimed at bridging the gap between students and the professional world, by providing an easily accessible platform for networking and recruitment.

AUM is a leading higher education institution in Kuwait that provides world-class academic curriculum to intellectually challenge and engage its students, while putting them at the center of all their initiatives. Established in 2008, it has succeeded in attracting students from the entire region. The University regularly holds employment fairs to connect students and potential employers to gain greater understanding of today's market expectations in terms of technical proficiencies and soft skills.

In a statement, Ali Akbar, AGM - Human Resources at ABK affirmed: "ABK has always been keen to show its support to the younger talent in Kuwait. To us, it represents a chance to identify high caliber graduates, who can join the ABK family and concurrently bring along fresh and innovative ideas to the Bank. We believe that their success contributes to our societies' realization and prosperity." During the event, ABK representatives introduced the students to the banking sector working model as well as to professional opportunities within the organization.



Private sector plays major role in implementing development projects

By Faten Omar

KUWAIT: Nouf Expo organized the 2nd Consulting Services for Development Plan Forum (ENCON2) entitled "Role of the Private Sector in Execution and Automated Integration among Related Agencies to Boost Productivity and Combat Corruption" on Tuesday at the Sheraton Hotel under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Former Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State of Cabinet Affairs and Chairman of the Financial Supervisory Authority Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, on behalf of Health Minister Sheikh Dr Basel Al-Sabah, the representative of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad, said that the private sector has a major role to play in the implementation of development projects, with the concerned government departments playing only a supervisory role.

He added that government agencies are required to harness their potential to develop effective regulatory bodies on scientific bases and recognized international standards, where they contribute to enhancing the capacities of both the public and private sectors. Dakheel stressed the need to develop laws and work procedures that can reduce corruption. He pointed out the importance of adopting a comprehensive plan for the automation of business related to the implementation of projects, including advisory services, adding to the need to adopt and apply the laws and methods of strategic scientific planning in the permanent review and continuous development of the

ing role in contributing to elevation of the efficiency of the execution of the Kuwait National Development Plan (New Kuwait), being a leading national company in the Kuwaiti private sector, which is considered a strategic partner in the country's developmental goals and one of its main pillars.

ENCON2 featured the presence of many entities from both the public and private sectors, which added a great value to the forum's program on multiple levels. NoufEXPO organized the event in collaboration with the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses, with a participation from the Supreme Council for Planning and Development, Central Agency for Public Tenders, Central Agency for Information Technology, and Kuwait Municipality, the Apparatus for Developing Silk City (Al-Sabbaya) and Boubyan Island, Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA), Kuwait Fire Service Directorate, Ministry of Electricity and Water, Environment Public Authority, Ministry of Public Works, Ministry of Health, Kuwait University, Ministry of Education and Higher Education, and Kuwait Petroleum Corporation (KPC). The forum also featured the presence of several supervisory bodies, including the State Audit Bureau of Kuwait, Department for Legal Advice and Legislation, Kuwait Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha), the Financial Supervisory Commission, and the Government Performance Follow-Up Agency.

Zain affirmed its commitment in being present at the various projects and activities that contribute to pushing the national economy wheel and achieving the various developmental objectives of the country, further reflecting its role as a leading national private sector company that engages with planning initiatives that achieve Kuwait's prosperity on all levels.

The 2nd Consulting Services for Development Plan Forum (ENCON2) mainly aimed at boosting the efficiency by which the phases of Kuwait's 2035 Development Plan are executed. It also aimed at ensuring that projects are executed accurately according to specifications and within their budgets. Shortening the documentary cycle and significantly limiting

2035 vision to complete what is missing and improve what is possible.

On the activities of the forum, he said that it is held in a timely manner to address the issues and challenges, pointing out: "We are in the early stages of implementing the development plan projects (of New Kuwait 2035 vision). Consulting services are the infrastructure by which the specifications, which determine the executive and monitoring procedures, accompany the implementation."

General Manager of Nouf EXPO Nouf Khaled Al-Marzouq said the directives of Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad had a significant impact in defining the themes of the forum, which aims to build the way to success to implement the 2035 development plan.

The forum discussed four important topics, specifically, the safety of the implementation of development projects within the specifications, budgets and deadlines, and improve the working environment in order to achieve it: to raise the level of transparency and anti-corruption measures; the implementation of mechanization policies and automatic linking between government agencies involved in the implementation of projects in all stages; and the government's tendency to give the private sector a greater role in the implementation of projects, with the responsibility of government agencies to be limited to supervision.

Marzouq explained that these topics are a clear path to success and achievements, pointing out the private sector is invited to meet the direction of the government to work together, provide all possibilities, and follow the sustainable policies of self-development to be able to carry the additional burden.

ENCON2 features the presence of many entities from both the public and private sectors, which will add a great value to the forum's program on multiple levels. NoufEXPO organizes the event in collaboration with the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses. It aims at boosting the efficiency by which the phases of Kuwait's 2035 development plan are executed. It also aims at ensuring that projects are executed accurately according to specifications.

Shortening the documentary cycle and significantly limiting variation orders to boost transparency and combat corruption are also among the main topics of the



KUWAIT: Zain's Waleed Al-Khashti is recognized for Zain's support to the event.

variation orders to boost transparency and combat corruption were also among the main topics of the event. In addition, the forum focused on increasing the level of cooperation and coordination among all agencies mandated with the delivery of consulting services. As a first step, ENCON2 discussed the requirements for developing a healthy administrative and technological environment among the executive and supervisory government agencies to automate the issuance of approvals and permissions related to consulting services. The target is the development of a web portal to be the unified gateway for issuing all approvals and permissions related to delivering consulting services for government and private sector projects in general, and especially for projects of the Development Plan.

ENCON2 also discussed the best approach to implement Kuwait's government vision of empowering the private consulting sector to assume the roles of approvals and permissions issuance and execution of projects of the Development Plan, and the best approach to empower the government agencies to carry out an accompanying effective supervisory role only. This conforms to Kuwait's strategy of mandating the private sector with a more significant economic role.



KUWAIT: Chairman of the Financial Supervisory Authority Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel delivers his speech. —Photo by Yasser Al-Zayyat

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Basima Al-Enezi during the panel discussion.



Officials with Zain's B2B team at the company's booth.

Zain contributes to Kuwait National Development Plan

KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, concluded its platinum sponsorship of the 2nd Consulting Services for Development Plan Forum (ENCON2) entitled "Role of the Private Sector in Execution and Automated Integration among Related Agencies to Boost Productivity and Combat Corruption." The event, held at Sheraton Kuwait Hotel from 30 April - 2 May, came under the patronage of First Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defense, and Chairman of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

Zain took part in the forum's opening ceremony, which witnessed the presence of Director of the Financial Supervisory Commission Dr Abdulaziz Al-Dakheel, Director of the Federation of Kuwaiti Engineering Offices and Consultant Houses Bader Al Salman, and General Manager of the forum's organizer NoufEXPO Nouf Al-Marzouq, who all took part in recognizing Zain Kuwait's Chief Corporate Communications and Relations Officer Waleed Al-Khashti for Zain's support to the event.

During the forum, Zain participated in the first panel discussion entitled "Role of the Private Sector in Executing Development Plans" represented by Zain Kuwait's Government and Large Segment Director Basima Al-Enezi. The panel discussion also featured the Secretary-General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Dr Khalid Mahdi, CEO of the Arab Office for Engineering Consultancy Tareq Shuaib, General Manager of Molden Technical and Consulting Projects Company Abdulaziz Al-Saadoun. During the discussion, Enezi showcased Zain's lead-

Local

Conflict of interest 'unconstitutional,' authority says respects verdict

Constitutional court says law fails to explain where conflict of interest occurs

By Meshaal Al-Enezi and A Saleh

KUWAIT: Kuwait's Public Anti-Corruption Authority (Nazaha) said it followed the ruling of the constitutional court issued yesterday in appeal no. 7 for 2018, which said law 13/2018 with regards to banning conflict of interest is unconstitutional, saying that it totally respects and appreciates the ruling. The constitutional court had yesterday ruled unconstitutional a law that bans conflict of interest, which the parliament had passed in March 2018. The court explained that the law's executive regulations, which Nazaha had released in October the same year, fails to provide a clear explanation of where conflict of interest occurs to warrant the ban, which renders the law unconstitutional.

Nazaha said its interest in following this ruling comes out of its specialization in looking into all affairs of fighting corruption, especially with regards to reviewing and improving

legislations related to fighting corruption, of which the law banning conflicts of interest was part of its components. Meanwhile, Nazaha said the issue of banning conflict of interest is one of the legislative requirements in the field of fighting corruption, according to the UN treaty to fight corruption, which represents the general framework organizing all efforts of fighting corruption, both procedural and legislative. Nazaha said it will study the constitutional court ruling to find the reasons that led to the ruling, and will work towards a speedy issuance of a new law that organizes the issue of conflicts of interest.

Health violations

The supplies department at the commerce and industry ministry said dispensing ration items at Andalus and Riggae and Naeem co-ops has been stopped. The supplies in Andalus and Reiggae Co-op were stopped because of health

violations and not complying with general hygiene and safety. It also stopped supplies from Naeem co-op branch at the request of the co-op administration in order to renovate the branch for better service.

Water bottle caps

Head of technicians at the prostheses center Khalid Al-Kandari denied rumors that the center planned to receive water bottle caps in order to recycle and use them in making prostheses, noting that the health ministry does not spare any effort to supply all raw materials for the manufacturing of artificial limbs.

Comprehensive plan

Secretary general of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development Khaled Mahdi stressed that Kuwait's 2035 vision is a deep one with comprehensive objectives that will help achieve turning Kuwait into an international financial

and commercial hub. Speaking at a workshop held at the Kuwait Economic Society, Mahdi explained that Kuwait's vision that was launched by HH the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah aims at turning the government from an operator to only a monitor of the economy, as well as having the private sector play a major role in the process.

Mutlaa project

The Chinese contractor building the infrastructure of 12,177 units in the first phase of the Mutlaa project recently asked to extend its contract due to end by October, said informed sources at the housing authority. The sources added that the housing authority is currently studying the request but no decision has been yet made. However, the sources excluded the possibility of withdrawing the project despite the delay and the fact that the contractor had received a warning notice in January.

US, Kuwait committed to improving IP protections

KUWAIT: The United States of America's embassy in Kuwait released the following statement yesterday on protecting intellectual property:

"Countries around the world recently marked World Intellectual Property Day for a very good reason: protecting intellectual property is essential for the development of all modern economies. All those - Americans, Kuwaitis or others - need to have confidence that their creative products will be protected in the marketplace if they are to innovate and contribute to a more diversified economy.

"That is why we at the US Embassy have been working with the Government of Kuwait to improve intellectual property protections here in Kuwait. This year, the US Embassy in Kuwait highlighted this important subject with a series of workshops in partnership with LOYAC featuring our Intellectual Property Attache, Peter Mehravari, and visiting American oud player and

singer-songwriter Aliya Cycon.

"We are pleased that we have made some progress, but more needs to be done so that protection of intellectual property in Kuwait will meet international standards. Kuwait's Vision 2035 is premised on economic diversification, innovation and foreign investment. In order to motivate innovators and creators to make Kuwait economically strong and to attract greater investment, the country needs to strengthen intellectual property rights and enforce laws against counterfeit and pirated goods.

"Strong laws and effective enforcement of those laws will also protect Kuwaiti consumers from being sold products, including medicine, that are not up to standards their producers claim. The problem is not just about counterfeit apparel or luxury items, which may be made from harmful materials or contain hazardous chemicals. It is also about counterfeit auto parts, including airbags, brakes, and windshields, as well as electrical switches that end up in homes and offices that can short circuit and cause fires, healthcare products that we apply directly to our skin and even pirated software that can create cyber security vulnerabilities.

"Kuwait does recognize the importance of intellectual property rights and is taking steps to bring its system in line with international standards. The Customs Department seized 343 shipments of counterfeit and pirated goods this

year, but counterfeit and pirated goods still flood market places throughout the country. Kuwait needs to remove and destroy counterfeits already in the market. Stiff penalties against those manufacturing, relabeling, importing, and selling counterfeit and pirated goods will deter criminals from bringing illicit goods into Kuwait.

"Legislative and enforcement efforts will move Kuwait closer to meeting its international obligations, and help the Kuwaiti creative, innovative and entrepreneurial communities protect their work in the digital and global marketplace. We also look forward to the establishment of entities that can assist artists, musicians, filmmakers, and software developers in receiving fair compensation for their work. Kuwait is home to many creative people and industries. For example, much of the television and film content in the Gulf originates here in Kuwait. Protecting creators in Kuwait will encourage innovation, send a very valuable signal to domestic and foreign investors alike, and enhance Kuwait's prosperity.

"We should all share the mission to increase confidence in intellectual property rights in Kuwait, to ensure that these rights are reliable, predictable and enforceable. Kuwait's intellectual property laws and enforcement efforts should meet international standards, and effective enforcement of such laws will make Kuwait attractive to further creative and innovative industries."

Stab murder reported in Mangaf

By A Saleh and agencies

KUWAIT: A Nepalese man was killed in Mangaf, said security sources, noting that detectives received a report about the man who had been stabbed in the chest. A case was filed and further investigations are in progress.

Policeman jailed

The criminal court yesterday sentenced a police officer, a criminal investigator, to four years in jail plus dismissal from his post over charges of forging documents related to liquor smuggling at the airport.

Restriction of freedom

A Kuwaiti woman wanted by the civil sentences implementation department accused four persons working for the interior ministry of restricting her free-

dom, being harsh and urging her to commit immoral acts, Al-Rai reported yesterday. The citizen went through legal procedures with the policemen, but was released. She then went to Zour police station where she claimed that she was stopped at a checkpoint near a park south of the country, then when they found out she is wanted, they wanted her to commit immoral acts and restricted her freedom. A police source said the investigator was informed of her claims, so charges were made against the four and they were summoned for questioning. In a separate case, a Kuwaiti woman lodged a complaint against a compatriot who harassed her in the parking lot of a private hospital. The woman made a phone call to police, who arrived to the scene and arrested him.

Cafe fight

Policemen broke up a fight between three girls in a cafe, and all those involved were taken to the police station, where it was found the reason behind the fight was gossiping, reported Al-Rai. Policemen responded to a call about the fight that included insults and threats. The three were sent to concerned authorities for further legal action.

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Female lorry drivers change gears in Ghana

Indian politician charged after donkey ride to file papers

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CHARLOTTE: Police keeps the campus on lockdown after a shooting at the University of North Carolina Charlotte in University City, Charlotte. Six people were shot, two of them died on the University of North Carolina Charlotte campus. — AFP

Two dead in US campus shooting

'Run, Hide, Fight. Secure yourself immediately'

CHARLOTTE: Two people were killed and four were wounded in a shooting Tuesday at the University of North Carolina's Charlotte campus. The university's office of emergency management tweeted an alert warning that shots had been reported on campus shortly before 6:00 pm, on what was students' last day of classes this academic year. "Run, Hide, Fight. Secure yourself immediately," it said.

Local emergency services said two people had been killed, while another two sustained life-threatening injuries and two more were being treated for less serious wounds. The Charlotte-Mecklenburg Police Department identified the shooter as 22-year-old Trystan Andrew Terrell. The University of North Carolina Charlotte (UNCC) campus police chief Jeff Baker told a press conference that his team "disarmed" and took custody of the

suspect after receiving a call around 4:40 pm that someone was "armed with a pistol."

He declined to share details about the victims. A local Fox television affiliate identified the dead as male teenagers aged 17 and 18. Video footage posted on social media showed anxious students fleeing away from the school with their hands raised. It was not immediately clear which part of the school the shooter targeted. "It was a really scary experience to hear the shots and have to run... I didn't think I would have to experience something like that," one student told NBC News.

Charlotte Mayor Vi Lyles said she was "in shock" after hearing of the rampage. "My thoughts are with the families of those who lost their lives, those injured, the entire UNCC community and the courageous first responders who sprang into action to help others," she

wrote on Twitter. The university said on Twitter that final exams have been canceled through Sunday.

The shooting comes just days after a teenage gunman opened fire on a synagogue in Poway, California, killing one person and injuring three others: the latest in a string of mass shootings across the US. According to government figures, 40,000 people were killed by firearms in the United States in 2017 — two thirds of them suicides—the highest annual toll in five decades.

The perennial debate over gun control in America kicks up again at each shooting, a far too frequent occurrence. Yet no solution has been found over the decades that satisfies both those seeking stricter gun controls to reduce such tragedies and those supportive of constitutional guarantees to the right to bear arms. Efforts have always proved divisive, and

Republican lawmakers have been highly successful at preventing what they describe as an assault on their right to bear arms under the Second Amendment of the US Constitution.

The number of firearms in circulation has continued to grow (now at 393 million in a nation of 326 million people), and mass shootings have become a disturbingly regular part of American life. The worst school shootings to date were those at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newton, Connecticut in 2012 (20 young children and six adults were killed) and at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida last year (17 dead). But the power of an influential gun lobby and a long tradition of gun ownership have meant that little has been done to improve gun safety. — AFP

Leave my country alone, Sri Lankan president tells IS

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena said a foreign mastermind may have planned the Easter Sunday bombings, claimed by Islamic State, telling the militant group to "leave my country alone". Sirisena also warned it may be possible Islamic State had launched a "new strategy" by targeting smaller countries, Sky News said yesterday. A government source told Reuters on Tuesday police and other security forces across the Buddhist-majority country had been ordered to remain on high alert because the militants were expected to try to strike again, before the holy month of Ramadan which starts on Monday.

Sirisena said authorities were aware of "a small group" of Sri Lankans who had travelled abroad to receive training from Islamic State over the past decade. Investigations revealed the bombs used in the Easter attacks were made locally, the president said in the interview. The suicide bombings on hotels and churches killed more than 250 people, including 40 foreign nationals. Police suspect members of two previously little-known groups - National Thawheedh Jamaath and Jamiyyathul Millathu Ibrahim -



COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's President Maithripala Sirisena (right) and Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe attend a commemoration ceremony to mark the 26th anniversary of the assassination of Sri Lanka's then-president Ranasinghe Premadasa in Colombo yesterday. — AFP

of carrying out the attacks.

On Monday, Islamic State's media network published a video message purporting to come from its leader, Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi, which would be his first appearance since declaring the jihadists' now-defunct "caliphate" five years ago. In the video, a bearded man with Baghdadi's appearance says the Sri Lanka bombings were Islamic State's response to losses in its last territorial stronghold of Baghouz in Syria. In the Sky News interview, Sirisena said he had a message for Islamic State: "Leave my country alone."

Sri Lanka authorities have previously said that they suspect the attackers had international links, although the precise nature of those connections aren't known. The US Federal Bureau of Investigation and Interpol, as well as other undisclosed foreign agencies, are helping Sri Lanka with the probe. Local intelligence officials believe that Zahran Hashim, a Tamil-speaking preacher from the east of the Indian Ocean island country, may have been a key player in plotting the Easter bombings. Officials believe he was one of nine suicide bombers. — Reuters

Heathrow expansion clears latest hurdle

LONDON: The expansion of London's Heathrow Airport inched closer yesterday when a High Court judge rejected legal challenges from environmental campaigners opposed to the building of a third runway. Judge Gary Hickinbottom said he did not accept the arguments made by environmentalists and did not believe the government's transport minister acted unlawfully when he approved the expansion of Europe's biggest airport.

"The court held that none of the climate change grounds was arguable," a summary of the judgment said. The campaigners can apply for permission to appeal the rulings. Britain has spent almost half a century trying to decide whether or where to build a new runway in the densely populated southeast of England. If finally opened, it will be the first full-length runway built in the London area for 70 years.

Prime Minister Theresa May's government has argued that an expansion will show Britain is open for business and able to develop stronger trading ties

with Asia after it leaves the European Union - although Brexit has been delayed by a parliamentary deadlock over the terms of departure. But the expansion plan is still opposed by London Mayor Sadiq Khan, and a lengthy legal wrangle still lies ahead if the campaigners decide to launch another appeal in the next seven days.

The No 2 man in the opposition Labour party, finance spokesman John McDonnell, described the court ruling as "bizarre" after he attended the hearing in London. "This is just the first stage in defeating 3rd runway and protecting our environment," McDonnell said on Twitter. The airport, which is jointly owned by Spain's Ferrovial, the Qatar Investment Authority, China Investment Corporation and other investment companies, is in McDonnell's constituency. The expansion plan, endorsed by parliament last year, is forecast to cost around 14 billion pounds (\$18 billion).

Under the current plan, the third runway is expected to become operational by 2026. "We are delighted with today's ruling which is a further demonstration that the debate on Heathrow expansion has been had and won, not only in parliament, but in the courts also," a spokesman for Heathrow said. Environmental groups say the expansion will damage the quality of air and increase noise levels. They had argued the plan was inconsistent with pledges made as part of the 2015 Paris Agreement on climate change. — Reuters

International

Istanbul election results divide Erdogan and nationalist allies

AKP's alliance with nationalists failed to deliver main cities

ANKARA: A month after local elections which saw it lose control of Turkey's two largest cities, officials in President Tayyip Erdogan's AK Party are questioning an alliance with nationalists which some blame for one of its biggest electoral setbacks. Under a deal between Erdogan's Islamist-rooted party and the smaller Nationalist Movement Party (MHP), the nationalists fielded no mayoral candidate in the capital Ankara or Istanbul in the March 31 vote, and the AKP stood aside in other regions.

But the deal failed to prevent the secularist Republican People's Party (CHP), which had a similar pact with other smaller opposition parties, winning the mayoralty in both cities, ending a quarter century of control by the AKP and its Islamist predecessors. The AKP is still challenging its narrow loss in Istanbul, Turkey's largest city and business hub where Erdogan himself served as mayor before the party swept to power nationally in 2002. It has dominated Turkish politics ever since.

While the Istanbul appeal drags on, the rare defeat has prompted questions within the party over campaign strategy. Although the alliance helped them win a majority of votes nationwide, AKP officials say it has delivered limited benefits. "The MHP gained a lot from this

alliance, more than us," a senior official at the AKP headquarters in Ankara told Reuters. Another AKP official said the MHP's 71-year-old leader Devlet Bahçeli, once a staunch critic of Erdogan, was an unpredictable ally. The AKP relies on the MHP for its parliamentary majority, meaning any break in the pact would leave it looking for new partners - a significant challenge after Erdogan's blistering criticism of his opponents during the campaign.

Fracture

But that has not stopped talk of a split. The senior official said that if Turkey's electoral board rules against a re-run of the Istanbul vote requested by the AKP, there was little incentive to maintain the alliance. "Depending on the decision, the fate of the alliance will be determined. It is not possible to say where the alliance will go in the short-term, but the fracture has become noticeable now," he said. An MHP official said that while differences with the AKP were emerging in public, the nationalists would not be the side to end what the parties have called their "People's Alliance". Bahçeli said he remained committed to the pact. "This is our basic choice, our national and strategic goal," he said in a statement yesterday.

"There is undoubtedly no need to search for other alliances."

The stunning setbacks for the AKP in Ankara and Istanbul prompted sharp public criticism last week from a politician once at the heart of Erdogan's administration. Former AKP prime minister Ahmet Davutoglu condemned his party's alliance with the nationalists, saying it was damaging "both in terms of voter levels and the party's identity". Davutoglu, who served as premier between 2014 and 2016, also slammed the AKP's economic policies, media restrictions and the damage he said it had done to the separation of powers and Turkey's institutions.

Since the election, Erdogan has appeared to downplay the significance of the MHP pointing to its 7 percent share of the vote. Bahçeli said the remarks were "unfair and unjust", given that his party had chosen not to stand in Turkey's three largest cities. After CHP leader Kemal Kilicdaroglu was physically attacked at a soldier's funeral last month, Erdogan struck a more conciliatory tone with a call for unity. "On matters that concern the survival of our country, we must move all together with 82 million as the TURKEY ALLIANCE, putting aside our political differences," he tweeted. — Reuters

Cyclone batters Mozambique holiday isle

IBO, Mozambique: From the air, Ibo island on the Quirimbas Archipelago off Mozambique's northeast coast, was speckled with flattened homes and water-logged farmland, testament to the destructive force of Cyclone Kenneth. The popular tourist destination had gone without large-scale food aid since the cyclone struck six days ago, and the human cost of the disaster was only now being revealed. "On the day, it was a terrible thing to live through because it was so strong," said 50-year-old islander Armando Watela, as he cleared up the damage. The storm tore off his roof and punched a door-sized hole in his front wall.

"We couldn't have imagined it

would be so strong," he added. "Some people stayed at home, others went to stay at the fort for shelter, others went around looking for a safe place. Almost everybody lost their belongings. My pregnant daughter was in a room when the walls started to fall in, so we took the whole family to the fort." His daughter gave birth two days after the cyclone struck and is now recovering in a clinic on the island. But 7,000 people were trapped in an increasingly desperate situation until World Food Program helicopters reached the island yesterday.

The UN had described the challenges of reaching areas like Ibo after the cyclone - the first to hit Mozambique's north in the modern era - as "incredibly difficult". The island can only be reached by air or boat - a sometimes perilous sea crossing as it is also vulnerable to the elements. And according to initial estimates, 90 percent of structures there have been damaged. — AFP

Syria's lost heritage stands out in Aleppo broken minarets

ALEPPO: The pencil minaret of the Ottoman Adliyah mosque in Syria's Aleppo lists to one side and is scored by an ugly gash running down its flank, the result of bombing in the war. The sorry state of Aleppo's Old City, a labyrinthine World Heritage Site and a battlefield from 2012-16, is obvious from a glance across the skyline at its shell-beaten minarets.

They look down on an area that suffered massive damage in a conflict that brought down the medieval covered souk, smashed mosque domes and burnt churches. The UN cultural agency UNESCO in December said 10 percent of Aleppo's historic buildings were destroyed and more than half the buildings they assessed showed severe to moderate damage.

But restoration work in Syria is controversial. With the exception of Islamic State, which deliberately targeted ancient ruins, all sides in the war have portrayed themselves as guardians of historical sites and their enemies as vandals. A huge image of President Bashar al-Assad dangles from the monumental gateway of the ancient citadel in central Aleppo. Western countries that have imposed sanctions on Assad's government oppose any reconstruction work until there is a political solution to the conflict, arguing it would reward him for war crimes they say he has committed but which he denies.

But that has cut off most funding from the nations that are normally top donors for cultural work - prompting state media to accuse them of complicity in destroying Syrian heritage. A few of the most famous monuments are slowly recovering. At the Umayyad Mosque, bullet-scarred walls are being refaced and the stones of the fallen minaret are piled ready to be rebuilt under a yellow crane. One of the tallest, loveliest stretches of the souk has already been restored, its collapsed domes rising again high above the cobbled floor using original materials and techniques.

Minarets, domes, souks

But these sites represent only a fraction of the Old City's myriad historical streets and buildings and, without fresh funding, the others risk falling into yet grimmer ruin. "If there are funds I am optimistic that it will all be restored. We only need the money," said Bassil al-Zaher, an engineer who is restoring part of the souk. At the Halawiya Madrasa, part of the dome has already caved in.

It was once a Byzantine cathedral, built on the site of a Roman temple, and was converted to a mosque by a Muslim ruler during the Christian Crusades. With more rain, the rest of the dome will fall, an engineer there said. From the roof of the restored Saqatiyeh section of the souk, damaged minarets can be seen punctuating the Old City's skyline.

The 18th-century Kemaliyah mosque, the Mamlouk-era Siffahiyyeh mosque and the 14th-century Tawashi mosque have all suffered considerable damage. Viewed from close up, it is hard to see how the 16th-century Adliyah mosque's minaret is still standing. The hollow interior and tightly wound spiral stairs inside are clearly visible through a monstrous shell hole on its west side. "The best solution is to rebuild it because it is not straight. Even if there's a small earthquake, it would collapse," said Zaher.

Lack of money

Work on mosques is the domain of the Ministry of Awqaf or Islamic endowments, and it lacks the money for major repairs. At the medieval Mehindar Mosque, the minaret above the door is now a stump. In the courtyard two men, the imam and a friend, were hauling large stones to one side to clear the floor. The mosque's dome is also shattered, with only a corner left. They have spent three months clearing and sorting the stones and have no idea when or if the minaret will be rebuilt.

Each covered street in the Old City seems to harbor a dozen alleys, each alleyway hidden stone courtyards ringed by mosques or shops, with olive and lemon trees growing in the centre. Down one street, under a high vaulted ceiling, most shops were empty, their floors covered in debris and their walls scorched. But a man sat at a table in one, singing Koranic verses, his melodic voice echoing softly through the souk. — Reuters



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International

Conservatives want bishops to declare Pope Francis 'a heretic'

Letter blames Pope for 'one of worst crises' of the Church

VATICAN CITY: A group of 19 Catholic priests and academics have appealed to bishops to declare Pope Francis a heretic, in the latest ultra-conservative broadside against the pontiff over a range of topics from communion for the divorced to religious diversity. The most prominent of the group is Father Aidan Nichols, a 70-year-old British priest of the Dominican order who has written many books and is one of most recognized theologians in the English-speaking world. The others are less well known.

"We take this measure as a last resort to respond to the accumulating harm caused by Pope Francis's words and actions over several years, which have given rise to one of the worst crises in the history of the Catholic Church," they said in a 20-page open letter. The letter attacks Francis for allegedly softening the Church's stance on a range of subjects. They say he has not been outspoken enough against abortion and has been too welcoming to homosexuals and too accommodating to Protestants and Muslims.

It was published on Tuesday by LifeSiteNews, a conservative Catholic website that often is a platform for attacks on the pope. Last year, it ran a document by the Vatican's former ambassador to Washington, Archbishop Carlo Maria Vigano, calling on the pope to resign. A Vatican spokesman had no comment on the letter, which includes dozens of footnotes, Bible verses, pronouncements by previous popes, and a separate bibliography. The letter invites people to join an on-line signature drive.

Addressing the bishops, the letter says "We therefore request that your Lordships urgently address the situation of Pope Francis's public adherence to heresy." It asks them to "publicly admonish Pope Francis to abjure the heresies that he has professed". A significant part of the letter concentrates on "Amoris Laetitia" (The Joy of Love), a 2016 papal document that is a cornerstone of Francis' attempt to make the 1.3 billion-member Church more inclusive and less condemning.



Film on priests using nuns as 'sex slaves' pulled

Ultra conservatives take aim

In it, Francis called for a Church that is less strict and more compassionate towards any "imperfect" members, such as those who divorced and later remarry in civil ceremonies. Under Church law they cannot receive communion unless they abstain from sex with their new partner, because their first marriage is still valid in the eyes of the Church, unless they have received an annulment. The Church does not allow divorce.

Francis has opened the door to some exceptions, allowing the decision whether the person can be fully reintegrated and receive communion to be made by a priest or bishop jointly with the individual on a case-by-case basis. After Amoris Laetitia was published, four conservative publicly challenged the pope, accusing him of sowing confusion on important moral issues. He has thus far not responded to their demands that he clear up their doubts.

The new letter lists pages of what it calls "Evidence for Pope Francis being guilty of the delict (crime) of heresy". It attacks him for having once said that the intentions of Martin Luther, the father of the Protestant Reformation, "were not mistaken". It says he has not condemned abortion strongly enough and is too lenient with homosexual Catholics. The letter criticized Francis for signing a joint statement with Lutherans in 2016 in which the pope said Catholics were grateful for the "theological gifts" of the Reformation.

It also attacked the pope for a common statement with a prominent Muslim leader in Abu Dhabi in February which said that the pluralism and diversity of religions was "willed by God". Conservatives say the Roman Catholic Church is the only true one and that members are called to convert others to it. The letter launches personal attacks on 22 people, nearly all of them current or past Church figures, asserting that their association with the pope supports their accusation of heresy.



VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis greets faithful during his weekly general audience on St Peter's square at the Vatican yesterday. —AFP

Film on Catholic priests

In another development, a hit documentary about how some Catholic priests allegedly abused nuns in different parts of the world has been pulled from the Franco-German television channel Arte after a priest complained to a German court. The big-budget media investigation, "Sex Slaves in the Catholic Church", was broadcast in March and has been sold widely internationally since.

Its broadcast came weeks after Pope Francis admitted that some rogue priests had used nuns as "sexual slaves" and that the Vatican had to dissolve a French order because its founder was preying on its sisters. The Vatican's women's magazine, Women Church World, also reported that some nuns had been

forced into having abortions.

Arte told AFP Tuesday that it was forced to pull the documentary from its replay site earlier this month after a press tribunal in Hamburg slapped a temporary injunction on the film following a complaint from a priest. The tribunal told AFP the priest complained that, while he was not shown in the documentary, he was "recognizable" from an interview given by a nun. In the interview, the nun "gave the impression that the priest had forced a nun into sex against her will". The priest was not identified in publication of the complaint. The channel said it was challenging the decision. The film has been the most-watched documentary of the year so far on the French arm of the channel, seen by 1.5 million people live and a further 1.7 million on replay. —Agencies

News in brief

Boko Haram kill 14 loggers

KANO: Boko Haram jihadists have killed 14 loggers as they collected firewood in northeast Nigeria, residents and anti-Boko Haram militia have said. The bodies of the men were found at Duwabayi village near the garrison town of Monguno in Borno state late Tuesday by other loggers. "The bodies of the 14 men were evacuated to the police station in Monguno after some people reported seeing the bodies," a militia leader in the town said. Duwabayi village was deserted last year after residents fled into camps in Monguno due to Boko Haram attacks. Fighters loyal to an IS-backed faction of the jihadists are known to operate in the area. "Fourteen dead bodies were brought this evening to Monguno and people have been going to the police station to see if they could identify them," Monguno resident Kulo Gana said. —AFP

Brotherhood tycoon jailed

CAIRO: An Egyptian court sentenced Muslim Brotherhood business tycoon Hassan Malek to life in prison on terrorism charges and for "harming the national economy", a court official said. He said the state security court handed down the same sentence to his son, Hamza Malek, another prominent businessman, Abdul Rahman Al-Seoudi, and to four others. Three defendants were sentenced to 10 years in jail and 14 others were acquitted. Tuesday's rulings can be appealed. "The prosecution found organizational material of the Muslim Brotherhood with plans to harm the national economy by creating a continuous demand for US dollars to devalue the Egyptian pound against foreign currencies," said the official. The court also found the main defendants guilty of "plotting terror acts targeting military and police forces as well as the tourism sector, including European and Russian visitors". —AFP

Libya detains 113 migrants

TRIPOLI: The Libyan coast guard has stopped 113 migrants trying to reach Italy over the past two days, the United Nations said yesterday, as boat departures resume following a lull in fighting between rival forces in Libya. The western Libyan coast is a major departure point for mainly African migrants fleeing conflict and poverty and trying to reach Italy across the Mediterranean Sea with the help of human traffickers. Smuggling activity had slowed when forces loyal to military commander Khalifa Haftar launched an offensive to take the Libyan capital Tripoli, home to the internationally recognized government. But clashes eased on Tuesday after a massive push by Haftar's Libyan National Army (LNA) force with artillery failed to make inroads towards the centre. Shelling audible in central Tripoli was less yesterday than on previous days. —Reuters

Cyprus probes serial killing

NICOSIA: Cypriot investigators yesterday examined electronic data linked to a suspected serial killer as police intensified a search for the bodies of three of seven foreign women and girls he confessed to murdering. The search is focused on two lakes southwest of Nicosia where the suspect - identified in Cypriot media as 35-year-old army officer Nicos Metaxas - said he dumped the bodies in a crime that went undetected for nearly three years. So far four bodies have been recovered: two Filipinas retrieved from an abandoned mineshaft, a suspected Nepalese woman found at an army firing range, and an unidentified woman found stuffed inside a suitcase at the bottom of a toxic man-made lake. —AFP

Female lorry drivers change gears in Ghana

TAKORADI: Rumbling along the rutted roads of Ghana at the wheel of her giant truck, Abigail Asumadu-Amoah turns heads but keeps her focus. She is one of 21 drivers working for Ladybird Logistics, a company that claims to be "the first company globally to employ only female drivers." In a tough industry dominated by men, the women are changing attitudes. "What men can do, women can also do," said Asumadu-Amoah, who hopes other women will be inspired by their achievement. "It's a (question of) determination."

Ladybird's all-women team drive 47,000-litre trucks, delivering fuel to Ghana's gold mines. But for Asumadu-Amoah, 44, the biggest challenges she faces are the state of the pot-holed roads in the West African country. "Drive defensively and carefully," Asumadu-Amoah said, of her approach to her work, as she waited for her tanker to fill with fuel from a depot in the coastal port of Takoradi, some 225 kilometers (140 miles) west of Ghana's capital, Accra. The transport sec-

tor is a big employer in Ghana but is dominated by men.

Fuel thieves

Nearly eight percent of men in Ghana work in the transport and storage sector, according to government figures, compared to only 0.3 percent of women. But there was a problem, said William Tewiah, managing director of Ghana's Zen Petroleum, a major fuel transport company delivering supplies to industry across the region. Drivers would fill up their tankers with fuel in Takoradi before driving to mining sites across Ghana.

On the way however, they would syphon off supplies for themselves on a grand scale. Some months, the company could lose as much as 50,000 dollars (44,000 euros) in stolen fuel, Tewiah said. Looking for a solution, he said he realized that something new was needed and that hiring women could be the answer. Since women would be coming in fresh to the industry, they would have a "completely different mind-set", he added.

Extra training

In late 2017, Tewiah approached independent management consultant Payin Marfo to turn his dream of having an all-female truck driving company into a reality, making her Ladybird's managing director. In October the following year, Ladybird



TAKORADI, Ghana: Female truck drivers stand at the Ladybird Logistics meeting point before the start of the workday in Takoradi, western Ghana. —AFP

began delivering fuel on behalf of Zen Petroleum to supply one of the gold mines. Based in Takoradi, Ladybird, which is owned by a group of shareholders, covers three routes currently, the longest of which takes about seven hours.

"I sleep a lot better at night not having nightmares about fuel disappearing," Tewiah said. The drivers, aged between 28 and 45,

were all experienced and licensed to drive heavy goods vehicles, many as bus drivers. Ladybird gave them extra training, including with support from the Swedish truck manufacturers Scania, and Ghana's army transport corps. The military trucker training included physical drills with the army instructors, defensive driving lessons, as well as tips on handling the fuel trucks. —AFP

US cop who shot dead Australian convicted of murder

MINNEAPOLIS: A US police officer who shot dead an Australian woman in 2017 was found guilty of murder Tuesday by a Minneapolis jury, ending a case that has shocked the Midwestern city and sparked outrage in her native country. Mohamed Noor, 33, who was fired from the city's police force, was convicted of third-degree murder and second-degree manslaughter.

The jury, which began deliberating on Monday after three weeks of testimony from dozens of witnesses, acquitted the former officer of the most serious charge of second-degree murder with intent to kill. Noor was taken out of the courtroom in handcuffs and into custody, according to US media reports. He testified that he shot Justine Damond, an Australian who had moved to the US, to protect his partner, because he had feared an ambush when responding to an emergency call she had made.

But prosecutors insisted that the shooting was unreasonable and contrary to police department training policy. Noor targeted Damond from the passenger seat of the

police cruiser he was in with his partner, Matthew HARRY. The 40-year-old victim, a yoga instructor, had approached the cruiser after calling 911 twice to report a possible rape in the dark alley behind her home. No such assault was ever found to have occurred.

'Sad and tragic' case

Defense attorney Peter Wold told jurors the former officer was heartbroken over the shooting. Noor testified that he believed there was an imminent threat after he saw a cyclist stop near the police cruiser, heard a loud bang and saw HARRY's "reaction to the person on the driver's side raising her right arm."

Noor added that when he reached from the cruiser's passenger seat and shot Damond through the driver's side window, it was because he thought his partner "would have been killed." Damond was wounded in the abdomen and died at the scene. Her last words were: "I'm dying," according to authorities. Damond had moved to the Midwestern city to marry her American fiancée Don Damond. She had changed her name from her maiden name, Ruszczyk.

Her death caused outrage back home and her Australian family was in the courtroom for the trial. At a press conference, Damond's father, John Ruszczyk, said he believed Noor's conviction was reached despite the "active resistance" of many police officers and institutions. The shooting also enraged many of the victim's neighbors, who



MINNEAPOLIS: These mugshot photos show Mohamed Noor, a police officer in the US state of Minnesota who shot dead an unarmed Australian woman last July. —AFP

mounted a campaign for police reforms. The city's police chief at the time was forced to resign within days.

"I want to extend my sincere apologies to the family and friends of Justine Damond Ruszczyk," Minneapolis Police Chief Medaria Arradondo said in a statement after the verdict. The chief called the incident "sad and tragic" and acknowledged that it had had an impact "around the world, most significantly in her home country of Australia." "I will ensure that the (department) learns from this case," Arradondo said. —AFP

Putin fast tracks Russia citizenship for Ukrainians

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has signed a new decree fast-tracking Russian citizenship for some

Ukrainians despite concerns the move will exacerbate the crisis between the countries. Under a decree published yesterday, several categories of Ukrainian nationals will have the right to a simplified nationality process including those who already have Russian residence permits.

Other categories include Ukrainian citizens who were born in Crimea but left the peninsula before Russia annexed it in March, 2014. The fast-track procedure is

implemented to protect "rights and human and civil freedoms", said the decree which Putin signed on Monday. The move comes after a comedian with no political experience, Volodymyr Zelensky, won a landslide victory in presidential elections in Ukraine last month.

The Kremlin has not congratulated Zelensky while Putin said Moscow was thinking of making it easier for all Ukrainians to obtain Russian citizenship.

Putin had already signed a decree on April 24 allowing people living in breakaway regions of eastern Ukraine to receive a Russian passport within three months of applying for one. President-elect Zelensky, in response, pledged to grant Ukrainian citizenship to Russians who "suffer" under Kremlin rule. There were hopes bilateral ties might improve under a Zelensky presidency but that is now looking unlikely, analysts say. —AFP

International

As Trump prepares Mideast plan, Palestinians face financial crisis

Palestinian leadership suffers series of financial blows

RAMALLAH: Israel and the United States are putting the financial squeeze on the Palestinian Authority, where opposition to a long-awaited US peace plan and anger over Israeli sanctions remain strong. Analysts see steep cuts in US aid to the Palestinians over the past year as an attempt to draw them towards a blueprint that Washington promises will have economic benefits but which the PA predicts will fall short of endorsing Palestinian statehood.

And during Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's successful re-election campaign, his right-wing government imposed sanctions that have pushed the Authority towards financial crisis. In February, Israel announced it would cut by 5 percent the approximately \$190 million in tax revenues it transfers to the Palestinian Authority each month from imports that reach the occupied West Bank and Hamas-run Gaza Strip via Israeli ports.

The deducted sum represents the amount of money paid by the Authority, which exercises limited self-rule in the West Bank, to families of Palestinians convicted and jailed by Israel for security offences, including lethal attacks on Israelis. Israel calls the stipends a "pay for slay" policy. Palestinians hail their jailed brethren as heroes in a struggle for an independent state and their families as deserving of support.

Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has refused to accept the partial tax remittances from Israel, saying the PA is entitled to all the money under interim peace deals. Unless the issue is resolved, the World Bank says, the Palestinians' financing gap could exceed \$1 billion in 2019, putting further strain on an economy grappling with a 52 percent unemployment rate. Already facing international donor fatigue, the Palestinians were dealt a heavy blow by the Trump administration's cut last year of hundreds of millions of dollars of aid.

In February, the US Agency for International Development announced it had ceased all assistance to the West Bank and Gaza. While the United States and Israel are applying financial pressure to the Palestinian Authority for different reasons, it is happening just as the PA is being lean

to accept the US peace plan. Palestinian suspicions over the still-secret US proposals, due to be announced in June, and defiance of Israeli sanctions continue to run deep despite the arm-twisting.

Salary cuts

Khalid al-Asili, the Authority's economy minister, told Reuters in an interview last week that it has been struggling to manage on just 36 percent of budgeted revenues. The Authority slashed the salaries of government employees in February, March and April to weather the budget crisis, with some Palestinian public servants' wages cut in half.

"Unless they find a solution ... it will be a disaster for the Palestinian economy," Asili said. With Trump's "deal of the century" about to be unveiled, Tareq Baconi, an analyst with the International Crisis Group, questioned the wisdom of Washington's financial pressure on the Palestinians. Such a strategy, he said, stemmed from the "misguided belief that economic benefits could be sufficiently compelling for Palestinians to relinquish their political demands".

One of the architects of the Trump plan, the president's adviser and son-in-law Jared Kushner, declined to say in public remarks in Washington last week whether it called for a two-state solution, a goal of past efforts to end the Israeli-Palestinian dispute. Abbas and his officials have refused to deal at a political level with the Trump administration since the US president's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital in 2017 and his move of the US embassy to the holy city last May.

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammed Shtayeh has rejected out of hand "any political initiative that does not call for ending Israeli occupation and establishing an independent and sovereign Palestinian state with Jerusalem as its capital". The Palestinians have long sought to set up a state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, territory Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East War. Netanyahu further clouded the statehood issue when he said during the election race that he would annex Israeli settlements in the West Bank if he



BRUSSELS: High Representative Federica Mogherini (right) arrives with Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayeh before their annual spring meeting of the International donor group for Palestine at the EU headquarters in Brussels. —AFP

wins, a move that Palestinian leaders said would kill any prospects of peace.

Risks for both sides

While both sides await the US proposals, the financial sanctions on the Palestinian Authority could be a double-edged sword, posing risks to its stability and for Israel as well. "Given that the PA's main source of legitimacy is its capacity to employ a considerable proportion of the Palestinian workforce, internal discontent could challenge its ability to govern effectively," Baconi said. For Israel, weakening the Palestinian Authority could have an impact on

Palestinian security forces that cooperate with the Israeli military in the West Bank.

"Israel takes it for granted that it has not experienced any major terrorist attack for years now," said Avraham Sela, professor emeritus of international relations at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. "Coordination with the PA is invaluable for Israel's security," he said. Economy Minister Eli Cohen, a member of Netanyahu's security cabinet, said on Monday that Israel has "no interest" in the Authority's collapse. But, he said on Israel's Reshet TV, withholding tax revenues equivalent to the sums of "stipends and pensions being paid to terrorists" is justifiable. —Reuters



US aid cuts, tax dispute fuel crisis

Politician charged after donkey ride to file papers

NEW DELHI: Indian police charged a would-be election candidate with animal cruelty yesterday after he rode a donkey to file his application for the national ballot. Mani Bhushan Sharma, a perennial long-shot candidate, filed his nomination papers on Monday followed by a short donkey ride outside the local election office in Jehanabad town, eastern Bihar state. "We have filed a case under prevention of cruelty to animals against the politician," Shree Maneesh, Jehanabad police chief, told AFP. Maneesh did not elaborate on the exact charges against Sharma, and donkey and mules rides are legal and common in India.

Convictions under the animal cruelty law - that mostly deal with physical harm, violence or abandonment of animals - can result in fines or prison terms up to seven years. Sharma defended his actions, saying it was symbolic to show the plight of common people that are taken for a ride by politicians. "Common people are dedicated towards building a better society and nation like donkeys (and) unlike politicians who only work for themselves. We are beautiful and hard working, like donkeys," he told AFP.

Sharma has unsuccessfully contested four elections in the past, and his application on Monday was rejected due to discrepancies in his documents. India last month began mammoth national elections for the lower house of the parliament that stretches for six weeks, with results expected on May 23. Nearly 900 people are eligible to vote in the elections that sees thousands of candidates, including many perennial no-hopers, join the electoral fray. —AFP



JAHANABAD: Independent candidate Mani Bhushan Sharma arrives on a donkey to file his nomination documents at a local election office in Jehanabad, in the Indian state of Bihar. —AFP

New round of US-Taliban talks start in Doha

KABUL: A new round of peace talks between the Taliban and the US got underway in Qatar yesterday, as the foes continue to seek a way out of America's longest war. The latest negotiations between the two sides come as pressure builds for some sort of breakthrough in Afghanistan's gruelling conflict, with Washington jostling for a resolution.

Taliban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said the "sixth round of talks between (the Taliban) and the US will start in Doha today". The US embassy in Kabul confirmed the talks "are occurring". US peace envoy Zalmay Khalilzad, a former US ambassador to Afghanistan, tweeted that he was in Doha and had met with the Indonesian foreign minister, who offered support for the talks.

The Afghan-born US envoy has spent several months shuttling between Asian capitals and Washington in a bid to build consensus for a deal. On Sunday, he said Washington was "a bit impatient" to end the war, given its \$45 billion annual cost to the US taxpayer and the continued toll on US forces, some 2,400 of whom have been killed since the US-led invasion in response to the September 11, 2001 attacks. US President Donald Trump provided additional momentum when in December he told advisors he wanted to pull about half of America's 14,000 troops from Afghanistan.

Mega meeting in Kabul

Khalilzad has repeatedly stressed "there is no final agreement until everything is agreed" but the basic framework for a deal would see the US agree to pull its forces from Afghanistan in return for the Taliban vowing to stop terror groups ever again using the country as a safe haven. None of the talks thus far have included the Afghan government, which the Taliban views as a puppet regime.

That means that even if the US and the Taliban can agree a deal to end the war and a timetable for an eventual troop withdrawal, the insurgents must still forge some kind of accord with Afghan politicians and tribal elders before an enduring ceasefire could kick in. An initial attempt for an "intra-Afghan dialogue" - due to take place last month in Doha - collapsed in disarray at the last minute amid bickering over the lengthy list of delegates Afghan President Ashraf Ghani wanted to send.

Separately, thousands of Afghan politicians and representatives from various groups are meeting in Kabul this week at a "loya jirga" peace summit to discuss conditions under which they might envision some sort of deal with the Taliban. Among top concerns are that the militant Islamist extremists would try to undo advances in women's rights, media freedoms and legal protections. Mohammad Omar Daudzai, Ghani's special envoy for peace, welcomed the fresh US-Taliban talks and described how the jirga could feed into overall peace talks.

"The jirga sets a logical beginning for the peace process," Daudzai told reporters. "The people in the jirga will decide and set boundaries and the framework of talks." Khalilzad went to Moscow last week, where Russia and China voiced support for the US plan for a peace deal and stressed the need for intra-Afghan dialogue that would see all sides in Afghanistan at a negotiating table. Violence across Afghanistan meanwhile continues apace, and the Taliban last month announced the start of their annual spring offensive. —AFP

Jumbo commotion; Elephant lumbers into an Indian city

GUWAHATI: A wild bull elephant caused a major stir in an Indian city, wandering along the busy streets and crowds of photo-snapping onlookers before being tranquilized, officials said. Potentially dangerous incidents of wild animals including elephants and leopards entering towns and cities are on the rise in India as urban expansion encroaches into the countryside. In the latest incident, the male elephant from a nearby wildlife reserve lolloped down the main road into the city of Guwahati in the northeastern state of Assam on Tuesday.

It reached the downtown Ganeshguri and Bhangagarh areas, pushing some vehicles but causing no major damage as forest and police officials followed at a

safe distance. Major traffic congestion ensued as onlookers stopped their cars to take photos of the tusker, weighing several tons and thought to be around 11 years old, on their phones. "I thought it was someone's pet elephant," local resident Avantika Bora said. "However, later someone told me that it is a wild elephant. What is shocking is the fact that the elephant did not harm anyone," Bora told AFP.

"It was difficult to tranquilize as the city streets were filled with traffic and there was lots of commotion with the onlookers," Assam's chief forest official A M Singh said. "However, we took utmost care not to make the elephant panic and that is the reason there is no damage," he said. "We finally tranquilized the elephant around 10:30 pm last night and we moved it to the Assam State Zoo in Guwahati. This morning, we have taken the elephant to the Amsang Wildlife sanctuary near Guwahati and released it," said zoo official Tejas Mariswamy. —AFP



GUWAHATI: A tranquilized wild Indian elephant is lifted up with a crane as it is transported to the Amchang Wildlife Sanctuary after it wandered into a residential area in Sonapur, in Kamrup district in India's northeastern state of Assam yesterday. —AFP

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Food firms globally whip up wacky ways to battle bad diets

Indian health worker Chhaya Sunil Jadhav banned snack food at home after her daughter, 11, fell sick from eating cheap, salty chips after school every day. "She howled in pain and clutched her stomach. So we rushed her to the hospital," said the mother-of-three. An ultrasound scan revealed "a giant ball of glue" in the girl's gut, which doctors blamed on too much junk food. Now, US food giant Mars Inc and Mumbai-based charitable foundation Tata Trusts are marketing an alternative in western India: Bite-sized squares made from yellow peas, which they say are packed with iron, protein, vitamins and micro-nutrients.

"If it is nutritious, I will buy this," said Jadhav, trying a pack of GoMo Dal Crunchies, which costs 10 rupees (\$0.15), at a product demo in her village of Masur in Maharashtra state. Around the globe, worries about human health, animal welfare and the environment are driving food firms to find wacky ways to keep people's weight down and diseases at bay. For poor diet has overtaken smoking as the world's biggest killer, according to the latest Global Burden of Disease study, causing 20 percent of deaths globally in 2017.

Launched in November, the pea-based snack is the first joint product from Mars and Tata Trusts - which owns two-thirds of India's salt-to-software conglomerate Tata Sons - after they agreed in 2016 to boost nutrition and food safety in Asia's third-largest economy. The aim, said Tata Trusts advisor Mansharan Seth, is to offer an "affordable, accessible, nutritious" snack in rural India, where poverty and a lack of education mean many children suffer from health problems due to their diet. "We are (often) talking to someone who is probably hearing the words 'protein', 'minerals', 'vitamins' for the first time," she said at the new \$75-million factory making the product. "This is not an overnight solution."

Corporate baby steps

Recent data shows the problem is not only about getting enough food, but the right, healthy kind like whole grains, nuts, seeds, fresh fruits and vegetables. The Global Burden of Disease study, led by the US-based Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation, found people were eating food high in sugar and salt that contributed to heart disease, cancer and diabetes. Globally, diabetes affects 422 million people, killing about 1.6 million in 2016, according to the World Health Organization.

Rita Teatota, head of the Food Safety and Standards Authority of India, said Indians accounted for the second-largest group of diabetics globally. Nutritionists and activists have long accused big food and beverage companies of courting poor consumers with drinks and snacks high in salt, sugar and fat, while doing too little to stem rising obesity and diet-related illnesses.

Shweta Khandelwal, a nutritionist at the Public Health Foundation of India, said some firms tried to confuse consumers with misleading product descriptions and nutrition labels and too few were "really trying to make a difference". But not all is doom and gloom, said Teatota. More than 20 corporations - including Mars, US cereal maker Kellogg Company and food and beverage firm Nestle - have pledged to reformulate recipes by 2022 as part of the "Eat Right India" campaign.

Kellogg said it had cut more than 1,000 tonnes of sugar - the weight of 10 blue whales - and 200 tonnes of salt from its foods in Asia-Pacific, and had stopped using artificial colours, preservatives and flavours in its products globally. Nestle said it had reduced sugar in its products by 34 percent since 2000 and hoped to chop 5 percent more by 2020. To help tackle the problem, Asia-based companies like Alchemy Foodtech and Nutrition Innovation are trying to lower the glycemic index (GI) of food, a measure of how quickly it can raise blood sugar levels.

In response to family problems, Singaporean couple Alan Phua and Verleen Goh have spent three years designing a plant-based product, 5ibrePlus, to add to common foods to reduce their GI. Both of Phua's grandmothers died of diabetes complications, while five of his mother's siblings are type-2 diabetic, he said at the Alchemy Food Tech office in a leafy Singapore suburb. "I wanted a kind of technology or solution that can be practical (and) fits everyday life, so that I can see my loved ones being protected," he explained.

Adding 5ibrePlus to jasmine rice can lower its GI to that of brown rice without changing the taste or texture, Phua said. Alchemy's founders are working with bread and noodle producers and rice distributors to make the product available later this year. Nutrition Innovation, another Singapore-based firm, recently raised \$5 million from investors for its technology that can be used by mills to produce low-GI sugar on an industrial scale.

Meanwhile, alternative meat companies are eyeing health and environmentally-conscious consumers in Asia. Life3 Biotech's plant-based protein, Veego, is slated to start production this year, said company founder Ricky Lin. "From yucky to yummy - it took about three years," laughed Lin. Veego, he said, has a similar texture and protein level to chicken but without its usual fats and cholesterol. —Reuters

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A graffiti depicting Indian National Congress (INC) party leader Rahul Gandhi (left) and Prime Minister Narendra Modi of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) in a tug of war over India is seen in Mumbai on April 28, 2019. —AFP

Modi's war chest leaves rivals in the dust

Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) is flush with cash, giving his Hindu nationalist bloc a massive advantage over the main opposition Congress party as he seeks to win a second term in India's general election. Opaque campaign financing in the world's largest democracy makes it tricky to get a full picture of money in politics here. But current and former BJP supporters, opposition politicians, businessmen and activists interviewed by Reuters say Modi has an unprecedented advantage, thanks to support from businesses and expectations he will be the winner.

Staggered voting in the general election is currently in progress across India, with results to be declared on May 23. The BJP war chest has allowed it to unleash a massive amount of advertising on social media and send Modi and party officials crisscrossing India to campaign. The ruling party has showered money on Facebook and Google advertisements, spending six times more than Congress since February, according to data from the two firms. Modi merchandise abounds, as do Modi marketing sites.

The money puts the BJP in an extraordinarily powerful position, even over logistical issues like how to get its leaders to election rallies. A Congress official said the BJP had the funds to reserve most of India's fleet of helicopters for hire for 90 days, making it difficult for opponents to get hold of them. "We have never ever seen an election with such disparity. Financially, we cannot compete with them," said another veteran Congress politician, who asked to remain anonymous. He and another high-ranking Congress official said they expected the BJP to outspend them by a factor of ten. A third Congress source estimated the disparity at twice that.

Two BJP officials declined to provide an estimate of spending, but one said the "BJP definitely has a big war chest and has more funds at its disposal than the Congress." Congress has received far fewer funds because of a perception it is unlikely to win the election, political strategists said. The opposition party has been hampered by its inability to forge a national alliance to take on Modi and has struggled to capitalize on discontent against the BJP over a lack of jobs and dis-

tressed farm incomes. Modi has been topping polls as India's most popular politician, well ahead of Congress President Rahul Gandhi.

Long election

Money has become critical in elections given the country's 1.3 billion population, its voting over 39 days and the sheer complexity of the electorate, in terms of region, religion, language, and caste. A tradition of doling out freebies to sway voters only adds to costs. Authorities say they have seized goods and cash worth about \$456 million since March 26. "This war chest gives the BJP significant advantages," said Milan Vaishnav, director of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace's South Asia programme. "Money is useful for wooing voters but also for keeping networks of party workers and influencers well lubricated."

Parliamentary candidates' expenditure is capped at up to 7 million Indian rupees (about \$100,000), but the limit is widely flouted, and political parties are allowed to spend freely. The New Delhi-based Centre for Media Studies (CMS) estimates almost \$8.6 billion will be spent on this year's vote, roughly twice the 2014 election. The figure would surpass OpenSecrets.org's estimate that \$6.5 billion was spent in the 2016 US presidential and congressional elections.

Recent reforms under Modi may have fueled the spending spree: Companies can fund parties anonymously through new 'electoral bonds' and they no longer face a donations cap. Activists say that gives corporations too much sway and obscures ties between politicians and businessmen. About 95 percent of electoral bonds snapped up in a first tranche offering last year went to the BJP, according to data reviewed by Reuters through a Right To Information request and BJP filings.

When asked whether the BJP had a financial advantage, party spokesman Anil Baluni said "it is not an unfair advantage". "I guess maybe the BJP does believe in taking maximum donations by cheque or through bonds... We are the largest political party in the country," Baluni added. He said he did not have information on the provenance of funds or the uses. Pawan Khera, a

Congress spokesman, said this was "turning out to be the most unequal election," but did not provide specifics.

Modi retains backers

Modi was elected in 2014 as a darling of the business community. His star has dimmed somewhat, in part due to fallout from a shock 2016 decision to scrap then circulating high-value banknotes, but with some businesses wary of a fragile opposition coalition coming to power, Modi retains backers. "Modi has made business easier," said businessman Sunil Alagh, who heads consulting firm SKA Advisors and sits on several boards. Still, business titans tend to give to several parties to hedge their bets, politicians and executives say.

Mukesh Ambani, Asia's richest man and the boss of the Reliance Industries conglomerate, hails from Modi's home state of Gujarat and his family has praised the prime minister publicly. Ambani even splashed Modi's face on advertisements for the Reliance Jio telecoms launch in 2016. But last month, Mumbai-based Ambani endorsed Congress candidate Milind Deora, appearing in a video saying "Milind is the man for South Bombay." Deora's politician father was a close friend of the Ambanis.

Bind over bonds

Under the electoral bond scheme announced by Finance Minister Arun Jaitley last year, individuals and companies can anonymously buy as many bonds as they wish to in denominations ranging from 1,000 rupees to 10 million rupees and deposit them in a party account at the State Bank of India (SBI). "The electoral bond scheme envisages total clean money and substantial transparency," Jaitley said in a Facebook post.

Activists say the opposite is true. "If you do not know the donor and you do not know who the money is given to, where is the transparency? Dubious donations are now legitimized," said Jagdeep Chhokar, a founder of the Delhi-based Association for Democratic Reforms. When Reuters reporters visited SBI branches during bond sales in Delhi and Mumbai this year, a handful of men who described themselves as politicians or company representatives were waiting to open bank accounts or buy bonds. SBI officials declined to provide details on the sales. —Reuters

Lebanon start-ups brewing change

Farah Ballout's big, infectious smile is the first thing that greets you at her workplace, a cafe in Lebanon with a mission to do more than just brew coffee. Before she was hired the 29-year-old, who suffers from Angelman Syndrome, a genetic disorder that means she has developmental disabilities, had struggled to find work in a country with high unemployment. "I feel like it is a dream that I started here," Ballout said as tears rolled down her face. "It feels like you are walking into your home - it doesn't feel like you are going to work."

Almost all the 14 staff at the Agonist coffee shop near Beirut where Ballout has worked for the past five months have special needs, from autism to Down's Syndrome. Wassim El Hage set up the business in December to help people with disabilities, who are typically excluded from the workforce in Lebanon. As a social enterprise - a business that aims to do good as well as make profit - it faces even more of a challenge than most start-ups in a country whose economy has been badly hit by years of political instability and a mass influx of refugees.

The country is grappling with an unemployment rate of 30 percent and last year, nearly 2,200 businesses closed, according to Lebanon's chamber of commerce. For Hage, that was part of the motivation - Lebanon, he said, desperately needs organizations

prepared to hire people who would otherwise struggle to find jobs. "It is not my target to make money or to make profit for my own self. My target is to give them back this money [for them] to be integrated, to be independent, to have a real life," he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "We need it in Lebanon."

The tiny country is home to more than a million refugees, mostly from its war-ravaged neighbor Syria. Since its own civil war ended in 1990, Lebanon has faced a raft of challenges, from electricity shortages to garbage mountains due to a lack of landfill sites - and now social enterprises are stepping in to help. These include Compost Baladi, which manages waste and compost and SunRay Energy, which helps rural communities in Lebanon adopt solar energy with a lease program and flexible payments. But social entrepreneurs say a lack of funding and government support are making it difficult for such ventures to thrive.

'Snowball of change'

Unlike many countries including Britain and Thailand, Lebanon offers no tax breaks or other incentives to help the sector. "There is no single governmental policy or strategy to manage the social enterprises field," said George Ghafary, head of a social enterprise that employs former substance abusers, prisoners and disadvantaged women to work on environmental projects. "Social enterprises can create a snowball of change, especially if the government offers incentives to existing companies ... thus

creating even bigger impact."

No one at the labor ministry was available for comment on the government's policy. Samer Sleir co-founded ProAble, which trains people in Lebanon with special needs to work and companies to hire them. He bemoaned a lack of funding for social enterprises and contrasted the government's approach with that of Britain, where the government actively seeks out such businesses to supply publicly funded goods and services.

"It is not difficult to start a social enterprise, but to scale it is hard ... everybody is focused on starting something new, not working on helping what already exists," he said. "Regular business already struggle in Lebanon's economy, but social enterprises have even a more difficult time, because it is more costly to run, and eventually your profit margin is less because you are giving back."

It is a problem Hage, 32, is familiar with. He started Agonist with his own money after failing to raise private investment due to skepticism the cafe would be a success. In fact, he said, Lebanese people have come from all over the country to get their caffeine fix with a side of banter from people they would not usually get to meet. As coffee and pastries are handed out, staff often sit and chat with customers. Before leaving, each customer is asked to put their hand in a basket and pick a positive proverb. "This big-time changes the way Lebanese see people with disabilities - to accept them exactly as they are," said one return customer, Vincent El Khoury. "Many people look at them as less than, and I hate this." —Reuters

Business

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2019

12 Huawei jumps ahead of Apple in tough smartphone market**13** Al-Mulla Automobiles launches full-range of services to Mercedes-Benz customers**14** Zain Group and EXFO jointly honored at 5G MENA awards

ABK posts 24% increase in net profit for first quarter 2019

Bank continues its positive growth momentum • Total assets reach KD 4.74 billion



Talal Mohammed
Reza Behbehani



Michel Accad

KUWAIT: Continuing its positive growth momentum, Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced yesterday a net profit increase of 24 per cent in the first quarter of 2019 climbing to KD 12.4 million, from KD 10 million in the same period last year. Operating Income was up 12 percent, an increase from KD 24.4 million to KD 27.3 million compared to the same period last year, with growth recorded across almost all business lines.

Total assets increased by 4 per cent in the first quarter, to reach KD 4.74 billion. Customer deposits stood at KD 3.13 billion, while shareholders' equity was KD 576.5 million. Asset quality remained solid with the non-performing loan (NPL) ratio at 1.57 per cent, and NPL coverage ratio at 420 per cent. ABK continued to sustain high levels of capital with Capital Adequacy Ratio reaching 18.99 percent, exceeding the minimum regulatory requirements. Earnings per Share remained at 6 fils per share.

Commenting on the results, Talal Mohammed Reza Behbehani, Chairman of ABK, said: "These positive results build on our success in 2018, where ABK

achieved an operating profit in excess of KD 100 million for the first time in the Bank's history. Our prudent strategy has enabled us to maintain a steady growth trajectory and has positioned us as one of the region's leading banks. We look forward to continuing this success and to delivering lasting value to our customers and shareholders."

Michel Accad, Group Chief Executive Officer at ABK stated, "This positive start to 2019 reflects the strength of ABK's customer-first approach and commitment to achieving excellence. Focusing on our clients will enable us to compete, grow and achieve success in all our chosen markets. Our consistent positive performance stands as reassurance of the effectiveness of our strategy, which will continue to steer our operations moving forward."

In the first quarter of 2019, ABK-Egypt operations contribution to total Group operating profits reached 13 percent. ABK-Egypt has recently expanded its branch network by two branches to reach a total of 41 branches strategically located across Egypt.

ABK- DIFC will continue to serve as an offshore booking office for corporates and regional corporates, regional loan syndications and large projects, and it has performed extremely well since opening in 2018. In closing, Accad said: "We are optimistic as the Kuwait economy is growing steadily. Thanks to our strong management team we continue to look to 2019 with confidence and optimism."

"In line with our digital transformation strategy, we will continue to evolve our digital banking proposition and provide new services that will meet our clients growing needs, while remaining focused on ensuring a 'simpler banking' experience."

ABK made a number of enhancements to its digital offerings in the quarter, including more services on its mobile banking app. The Bank also continues to receive international and local recognition, being awarded Best Retail Bank in Kuwait for the fourth consecutive year by Asian Banker as well as Bank of the Year for the fourth consecutive year by Arabian Business.

WB: Reforms, fiscal consolidation key to ease concerns over Oman's debt

ABU DHABI: Oman needs fiscal consolidation and better public expenditure alongside implementing reforms to mitigate its growing debt, the regional head of the World Bank said yesterday.

Oman's state coffers have been hit by a slump in oil prices over the past few years and the country has increasingly relied on external borrowing to levels that have created concerns among investors and pushed its credit rating into junk status. S&P Global Ratings estimates Oman's debt to have increased to 49 percent of GDP in 2018 from less than 5 percent in 2014, and it expects it will rise to about 64 percent by 2022.

"There's concern about the growing debt, debt has grown very fast, this is one area they need to pay special attention," Issam Abousleiman, World Bank regional director, GCC countries, told Reuters.

"Fiscal consolidation and improving public expenditure will be key ... these two are important and broader reforms will be very beneficial." Higher oil and gas

prices in recent months have helped Oman and if they press ahead with their economic diversification and reforms, the country should be out from where it is now, he said.

Oman's economy will see growth slowing to 1.2 percent in 2019 as the sultanate's commitment to the December 2018 Opec + output cut constrains oil production, a report released by the World Bank yesterday, said. S&P last month cut its outlook on Oman to negative from stable, saying the country's fiscal and external buffers will continue to erode in the absence of substantial fiscal measures to curtail the government deficit.

For 2019, the oil producer has projected a budget deficit of 2.8 billion Omani rials (\$7.3 billion) or 9 percent of gross domestic product, assuming an average oil price of \$58 per barrel. Growth in the Gulf Cooperation Countries (GCC) in 2019 is projected to be similar to 2018 at 2.1 percent before accelerating to 3.2 percent in 2020 and stabilizing at 2.7 percent in 2021, the report said.

Saudi Arabia, the largest Gulf economy, is expected to see growth moderating to 1.7 percent in 2019 as higher government spending offsets the impact of oil production cuts implemented in the first half of 2019. Saudi can reduce its fiscal deficit through efficient expenditure management, Abousleiman said. Saudi has forecast a fiscal deficit of 4.2 percent of GDP for 2019, down from an estimated 4.6 percent of GDP in 2018. — Reuters

Exports sag, UK factories report lower stockpile boost

LONDON: British factories lost some of the boost from pre-Brexit stockpiling last month while households slowed their borrowing ahead of the original deadline for the country's departure from the European Union, data showed yesterday.

The IHS Markit/CIPS manufacturing Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) dropped to 53.1 in April from March's 13-month high of 55.1, broadly in line with the average forecast in a Reuters poll of economists. Exports fell at one of their fastest rates in the past five years, reflecting a slowdown in the global economy.

Uncertainty around the terms of Britain's exit from the EU, originally scheduled for March 29, had previously prompted factories to load up on parts and materials at the fastest rate in the 27-year history of the PMI surveys. Bank of England data for March, also released yesterday, showed caution on the part of consumers whose spending has helped to offset weakness elsewhere in Britain's economy.

Lenders approved the fewest mortgages since December 2017 ahead of the expected Brexit date, and consumer credit growth slowed to its weakest in more than four years. However, there have been signs that the slowdown in Britain's housing market may have bottomed out. Nationwide Building Society said house price growth picked up to an annual 0.9 percent in April, its highest since November though much slower than growth of about 5 percent at the

time of the 2016 Brexit referendum. With the deadline for Brexit now pushed back to Oct. 31, the pace of factory stockpiling eased in April, though it continued to boost British output amid a broader downturn in European manufacturing.

"The slowdown is less severe than we had expected," economist Samuel Tombs of Pantheon Macroeconomics said. One in five manufacturers reported that Brexit-related stock-building had continued to boost output in April.

The survey's gauge of export orders fell to its lowest since August 2018, and its second-lowest reading since October 2014. Although global demand for goods has slowed markedly over the last six months, IHS Markit said Brexit uncertainty was the main factor for British factories in April.

"There were also reports of overseas clients acting now to re-route their supply chains away from the UK in advance of Brexit," said Rob Dobson, a director at IHS Markit, the firm which compiles the data.

Last week a quarterly survey of manufacturers by the Confederation of British Industry showed the biggest fall in export orders since the depths of the financial crisis in 2009.

Andrew Wishart of consultancy Capital Economics said he expected Britain's manufacturing PMI to fall further, coming closer into line with a weak euro zone manufacturing PMI.

"The upshot is that a hangover from Brexit preparations in the sector will weigh on GDP in Q2," he said. Officials at the Bank of England preparing new economic forecasts for publication on Thursday are likely to note cooling producer price pressures shown in the latest PMI, echoing European Commission business surveys published on Monday.

Factories raised selling prices at the slowest pace since July 2016, and their material and energy costs increased at the second-slowest pace May 2016, the PMI showed. — Reuters

ABK'S FINANCIAL RESULTS FOR THE FIRST QUARTER 2019

KD 12.4 Million | Net Profit



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Business

Huawei jumps ahead of Apple in tough smartphone market

Apple tops forecasts as pivot to services shows progress

SAN FRANCISCO: China-based Huawei outsold Apple's iPhones in the first quarter of this year, seizing the California company's second place spot in a tightening smartphone market dominated by Samsung, a tracker said on Tuesday.

A total of 310.8 million smartphones were shipped globally during the first three months of this year in a 6.6 percent decline from the same period in 2018, according to preliminary data from the Chinese-owned International Data Corporation.

It was the sixth consecutive quarter of decline for global smartphone shipments, the market tracker added. IDC saw the results as a sign that 2019 will be another down year overall for smartphone shipments, apart from strong growth by Huawei.

"It is becoming increasingly clear that Huawei is laser focused on growing its stature in the world of mobile devices, with smartphones being its lead horse," said IDC mobile device program director Ryan Reith.

"The overall smartphone market continues to be challenged in almost all areas, yet Huawei was able to grow shipments by 50 percent."

South Korean consumer electronics behemoth Samsung saw smartphone shipments drop 8.1 percent to 71.9 million in the first quarter.

Huawei, meanwhile, weighed in with 50.3 percent growth to ship 59.1 million smartphones and put it within "striking distance" of Samsung, according to IDC.

Apple had a challenging first quarter, with iPhone shipments dropping by a "staggering" 30.2 percent from a year earlier to 36.4 million units, IDC reported.

Price cuts in China along with favorable trade-in deals were not enough to coax people into upgrading to new iPhones, the market tracker said.

Apple delivered stronger-than-expected financial results for the past quarter as gains in services helped offset slumping iPhone sales, sparking a rally in shares of the technology giant.

An overall slowdown in the high-end smartphone market has been seen as a symptom of people waiting longer to upgrade to new models and a lack of the kind of captivating innovation that inspires them to do just

that. "Consumers continue to hold on to their phones longer than before as newer higher priced models offer little incentive to shell out top dollar to upgrade," said IDC research manager Anthony Scarsella.

"Moreover, the pending arrival of 5G handsets could have consumers waiting until both the networks and devices are ready for prime time in 2020."

Meanwhile, Apple delivered stronger-than-expected results Tuesday for the past quarter as gains in services helped offset slumping iPhone sales, sparking a rally in shares of the technology giant.

California-based Apple reported a 16 percent drop in profits in the just-ended quarter to \$11.6 billion, as overall revenues dipped five percent to \$58 billion. Apple shares rallied five percent in after-hours trade, with the results showing better-than-anticipated results from its new products and services in the fiscal second quarter to March 30.

"Our March quarter results show the continued strength of our installed base of over 1.4 billion active devices, as we set an all-time record for services, and the strong momentum of our wearables, home and accessories category, which set a new March quarter record," said chief executive Tim Cook.

"We delivered our strongest iPad growth in six years, and we are as excited as ever about our pipeline of innovative hardware, software and services."

Apple has been scrambling to develop new revenue streams amid stagnant growth and increased competition in the smartphone market, which has been the company's main profit driver.

The latest quarterly results showed revenue from iPhone sales slumped 17 percent to \$31 billion. Apple has stopped reporting iPhone unit sales. China-based Huawei outsold Apple's iPhones in the first quarter of this year, seizing the California company's second place spot in a tightening smartphone market dominated by Samsung, according to Chinese-owned market tracker IDC.

A total of 310.8 million smartphones were shipped globally during the first three months of this year in a 6.6 percent decline from the same period in 2018, pre-



LONDON: Pedestrians use their mobile phones near a Huawei advert at a bus stop in central London. —AFP

liminary IDC data showed.

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Apple had a challenging first quarter, with iPhone shipments dropping by a "staggering" 30.2 percent from a year earlier to 36.4 million units, IDC reported. Huawei, meanwhile, weighed in with 50.3 percent growth to ship 59.1 million smartphones and put it within "striking distance" of Samsung, according to IDC.

South Korean consumer electronics behemoth Samsung saw smartphone shipments drop 8.1 percent to

71.9 million in the first quarter. But the money Apple took in from services or digital content grew 16 percent to \$11 billion, reflecting growth in music, Apple Pay and other new offerings from the firm.

Apple also saw growth in its wearables—which include its Apple Watch and earbuds—and its smart HomePod speaker. The company also said it would spend an additional \$75 billion for share repurchases and boost its dividend, delivering more cash to its investors. It ended the quarter with some \$225 billion in cash. —AFP

VIVA gold sponsor of AUM Career Fair

KUWAIT: VIVA, Kuwait's fastest-growing and most developed telecom operator, announced its gold sponsorship of the American University of the Middle East (AUM) Career Fair 2019, which was held at the main campus in Egaila from 29 - 30 April, 2019. The event was organized by AUM's Tawteen Career Development and Recruitment Center.

VIVA is keen on supporting this career fair on an annual basis as it witnesses high turnouts by students and graduates. VIVA's HR team has interviewed at VIVA booth, many students wishing to join the VIVA family. On this occasion, Abdulrazaq Bader Al-Essa, Corporate Communications Director at VIVA said: "VIVA endeavors to offer young Kuwaitis suitable job opportunities that fit their specialties while maintaining our commitment to the government's Kuwaitization. VIVA's sponsorship for this significant annual fair reflects its continued commitment to support young Kuwaitis in various fields, in the frame of its CSR strategy and its human development plan."

He added: "VIVA is always proactive to embrace all social activities that help strengthen its position in the local market through supporting and training national



workforce that represents the pillars of the nation. VIVA is also committed to invest in community initiatives that encourage young Kuwaitis to join the telecom industry and provide them with the opportunity to sub-

mit their resumes and job applications to identify talented Kuwaitis who have the potential to join VIVA's team, and learn more about the needs and requirements of the job market."

trade more favorable to the United States from top trade partners China, Japan and the European Union. Trump said last week after one-to-one talks with Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe that he hoped he could clinch a deal with Japan by the time he visits Tokyo in May.

Trump is unhappy with Japan's trade surplus with the United States - much of it from auto exports - and wants a two-way agreement to address it. He pressed Abe to have Japanese automakers produce more vehicles in the United States, according to a readout of their meeting provided by the U.S. ambassador to Japan on Saturday.

Perdue said a narrow deal could be expanded later into a more comprehensive trade agreement.

"We want a quick resolution of our agricultural request here ... maybe temporarily that could then be fleshed out over longer period," Perdue told reporters. He said US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, who heads trade negotiations, would prefer to get a deal sooner rather than later.

"...one that seals down the agricultural issues that we are concerned about. I think we can get that done quickly," Perdue told reporters. Perdue said US farmers should get the same access to Japanese markets as countries that have signed up to the Pacific trade deal. Trump walked away from that deal early on in his presidency, claiming it was a bad deal for the US economy and workers. —Reuters

SEC commissioner decries agency's deal with Musk

WASHINGTON: A US Securities and Exchange commissioner on Tuesday criticized a settlement between the regulator and Tesla Inc CEO Elon Musk over his use of Twitter. The head of the electric car maker reached a deal with the SEC on Friday, agreeing to submit his public statements about the company's finances and other topics to vetting by its legal counsel. However, SEC commissioner Robert Jackson registered his dissent after the deal was approved by a federal judge earlier on Tuesday. "Given Mr. Musk's conduct, I cannot support a settlement in which he does not admit what is crystal clear to anyone who has followed this bizarre series of events," Jackson said in a statement.

"Musk breached the agreement he made last year with the Commission - and with American investors," he added. US District Judge Alison Nathan in Manhattan approved the deal worked out on Friday that settled the dispute in which the SEC had sought to find Musk in contempt of a securities fraud settlement last year. Earlier this month, Nathan had ordered the parties to work out an arrangement between themselves.

The new deal lays out in more detail what types of statements by Musk must be reviewed by Tesla's legal counsel before publication, such as financial statements, previously unreported production or delivery numbers, and other topics. Regulators had claimed that a February tweet by Musk about Tesla's production numbers violated the earlier settlement, as it had not been vetted by the company's attorneys. Musk countered that the tweet was not material.

The SEC sued Musk last year for making fraudulent statements after he tweeted on Aug. 7 that he had "funding secured" to take Tesla private at \$420 per share. The parties eventually settled, and the deal called for Tesla's lawyers to pre-approve written communications, including tweets with material information about the company. —Reuters

EXCHANGE RATES

Al-Muzaini Exchange Co.

EUROPEAN & AMERICAN COUNTRIES

US Dollar Transfer	305,000
Euro	345,110
Sterling Pound	398,480
Canadian dollar	229,240
Turkish Lira	52,630
Swiss Franc	303,630
US Dollar Buying	303,800

ASIAN COUNTRIES

Japanese Yen	2,729
Indian Rupees	4,379
Nepali Rupees	1,743
Sri Lankan Rupees	2,187
Nepali Rupees	1,743
Singapore Dollar	225,760
Hongkong Dollar	38,875
Bangladesh Taka	3,603
Philippine Peso	5,893
Thai Baht	9,616
Malaysian ringgit	78,005

GCC COUNTRIES

Saudi Riyal	81,388
Qatari Riyal	83,826
Omani Riyal	792,723
Bahraini Dinar	810,420
UAE Dirham	83,095

ARAB COUNTRIES

Egyptian Pound - Cash	20,850
Egyptian Pound - Transfer	17,726

Yemen Riyal/for 1000	1,225
Tunisian Dinar	105,170
Jordanian Dinar	430,670
Lebanese Lira/for 1000	2,033
Syrian Lira	0,000
Morocco Dirham	32,344

Dollarco Exchange Co. Ltd

Rate for Transfer	Selling Rate
US Dollar	304.840
Canadian Dollar	228.350
Sterling Pound	95.450
Euro	344.725
Swiss Frank	307.490
Bahrain Dinar	810.685
UAE Dirhams	83.400
Qatari Riyals	84.640
Saudi Riyals	82.185
Jordanian Dinar	431.245
Egyptian Pound	17.628
Sri Lankan Rupees	1.744
Indian Rupees	4.412
Pakistani Rupees	2.160
Bangladesh Taka	3.618
Philippines Peso	5.851
Cyprus pound	18.135
Japanese Yen	3.725
Syrian Pound	1.595
Nepalese Rupees	2.758
Malaysian Ringgit	75.435
Chinese Yuan Renminbi	45.805
Thai Bhat	10.550

Turkish Lira	54,575
Singapore dollars	225,511

BAHRAIN EXCHANGE COMPANY WLL

CURRENCY	BUY	SELL
Europe		
British Pound	0.388018	0.402918
Czech Korune	0.005256	0.014566
Danish Krone	0.041597	0.046597
Euro	0.333695	0.347395
Georgian Lari	0.132435	0.132435
Hungarian O.001151	0.001341	
Norwegian Krone	0.031208	0.036408
Romanian Leu	0.065474	0.082324
Russian ruble	0.004733	0.004733
Slovakia	0.009141	0.019141
Swedish Krona	0.028177	0.033177
Swiss Franc	0.293361	0.304361
Australasia		
Australian Dollar	0.207048	0.219048
New Zealand Dollar	0.197625	0.207125
America		
Canadian Dollar	0.221755	0.230755
US Dollars	0.301200	0.306500
US Dollars Mint	0.301700	0.306500
Asia		
Bangladesh Taka	0.003033	0.003834

Chinese Yuan	0.043895	0.047395
Hong Kong Dollar	0.037152	0.039902
Indian Rupee	0.003840	0.004612
Indonesian Rupiah	0.000017	0.000023
Japanese Yen	0.002654	0.002834
Korean Won	0.000252	0.000257
Malaysian Ringgit	0.070293	0.076293
Nepalese Rupee	0.002687	0.003027
Pakistan Rupee	0.001514	0.002284
Philippine Peso	0.005823	0.006123
Singapore Dollar	0.219069	0.229069
Sri Lankan Rupee	0.001404	0.001984
Taiwan	0.010191	0.010371
Thai Baht	0.009225	0.009775
Vietnamese Dong	0.000103	0.000103

Arab

Bahraini Dinar	0.795243	0.811743
Egyptian Pound	0.017782	0.020382
Iranian Riyal	0.000084	0.000086
Iraqi Dinar	0.000210	0.000270
Jordanian Dinar	0.425704	0.434704
Kuwaiti Dinar	1.000000	1.000000
Lebanese Pound	0.000157	0.000257
Moroccan Dirhams	0.021290	0.045290
Omani Riyal	0.786669	0.792349
Qatar Riyal	0.079568	0.084508
Saudi Riyal	0.080327	0.081627
Syrian Pound	0.001296	0.001515
Tunisian Dinar	0.097044	0.106044
Turkish Lira	0.045608	0.057108
UAE Dirhams	0.081697	0.083397
Yemeni Riyal	0.000993	0.001073

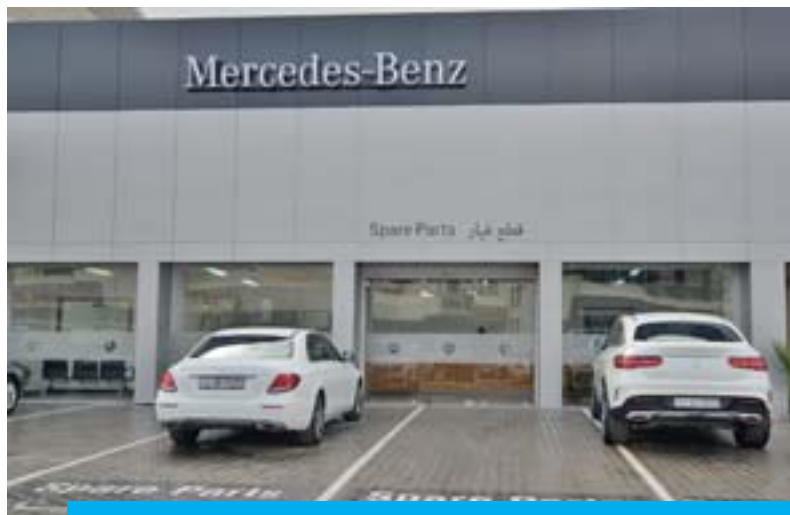
Business

Al-Mulla Automobiles launches full range of services to Mercedes-Benz customers

Services available at Kuwait's Al-Rai and Shuwaikh service centers



A customer is received at Al-Rai Service Center



Spare parts section at Shuwaikh Service Center



Mechanic checking out a vehicle at Shuwaikh Service Center

KUWAIT: Al-Mulla Automobiles Co, the authorized general distributor and exclusive Mercedes-Benz service and repair partner in Kuwait, is pleased to announce the launch of the full range of services for all Mercedes-Benz customers at its Al-Rai and Shuwaikh service centers. Services include general repair, body and paint, oil change, ExpressService and GenuineParts.

Michael Ruehle, Divisional General Manager, Mercedes-Benz Passenger Cars and Vans stated: "As part of Al-Mulla Automobiles Co.'s commitment to all Mercedes-Benz customers in Kuwait, including those who had purchased their vehicles before January 1st 2019, we would like to inform them that they are welcome to avail their current complimentary A and B services, in addition to their 3rd year warranty at Al-Mulla Automobiles Co's authorized service centers. Al-Mulla Automobiles Co is dedicated to providing all Mercedes-Benz customers in Kuwait with the highest level of service in the most seamless way."

New car customers who purchase their Mercedes-Benz from Al-Mulla Automobiles will receive a complimentary three-year warranty with unlimited mileage, with the option to extend it to five years or 200,000km. Owners of new Mercedes-Benz vehicles also receive complimentary Service A and Service B (15000 & 30,000km) for additional peace of mind.

Mercedes-Benz Kuwait also offers a number of service

packages that are catered to customers' respective requirements and budget, such as is Mercedes-Benz Service Select, which covers all scheduled maintenance costs specified by the manufacturer, including filters, operational liquids and labor, and it can be customized in terms of duration, mileage and coverage. Service Select Plus, on the other hand, includes all the items included in the Mercedes-Benz Service Select in addition to covering most important wear and tear parts of the vehicle such as wiper blades, V-belts, brake pads and brake discs.

Mercedes-Benz Kuwait Al-Rai Service Center, located in Al-Rai on the 4th Ring Road, is a fully operational general repair, ExpressService, spare parts and accessories facility; whereas the service center located in Shuwaikh Industrial Area on Street 13, includes general repair, body and paint, spare parts and ExpressService facilities. The body and paint shop located at Shuwaikh Service Center is one of the top-class facilities that fulfills all the special requirements for Mercedes Benz cars with water-based paint application. It is a double-combo setup with two spray areas in the center and a double oven for the drying process. This ensures that the booth can spray two cars and dry another two at the same time, which allows for higher productivity.

The service centers offer various options that suit different needs and guarantee customers' complete satisfaction. Whether the customer brings the vehicle in or

requests it to be picked up, the vehicle will be completely inspected to make sure that required jobs are properly handled. If customers choose to visit our centers, they can relax in the lobby while waiting for their vehicle to be serviced while enjoying a wide range of coffee, hot and cold beverages. The lobby waiting area also includes a section for Mercedes-Benz Lifestyle and Accessories, which showcases a wide range of Mercedes-Benz items that are sure to satisfy fans of the Mercedes-Benz brand.

Mercedes-Benz customers can rest assured over the quality of service provided as all personnel and technicians at Al-Mulla Automobiles Co are experienced specialists who use the latest technology and genuine Mercedes-Benz spare parts. Whether a customer's vehicle requires routine maintenance or unexpected repairs, a body repair or just a quick oil change, the service centers ensure all Mercedes-Benz vehicles are served by the best experts at the highest standards of quality.

Mercedes-Benz ExpressService, available in Al-Mulla Automobiles Co's facilities in Al-Rai and Shuwaikh, offers customers with the highest quality, precise and efficient service in the shortest amount of time. Services included in ExpressService are Maintenance Repair Service A and Service B, oil change, tire change, and brake service.

Mercedes-Benz Expert Repair, which is available in Al-Mulla Automobiles Co's Shuwaikh service center facility, provides Mercedes-Benz customers with first-class body

and paint repair at the highest level of cost efficiency. Al-Mulla Automobiles Co. provides customers with qualified Mercedes-Benz specialists who ensure their vehicles are repaired in the shortest possible time, using Mercedes-Benz GenuineParts to guarantee the best quality and safety, and make sure they maintain optimum value retention.

Mercedes-Benz GenuineParts, which are available in Al-Mulla Automobiles Co's Shuwaikh and Al-Rai Service and Parts Centers, provide customers with the highest quality and safety standards to ensure Mercedes-Benz customers and their vehicles enjoy ultimate and complete protection. Using Mercedes-Benz GenuineParts makes sure that the vehicle will continue to perform at the same level it was designed to.

Additionally, all original spare parts are sold with a Mercedes-Benz spare parts warranty that is valid for a year regardless of the number of miles driven, excluding wear and tear items. AlMulla Automobiles Co. has three additional dedicated spare parts facilities located in Shuwaikh Industrial area, Canada Dry street and its spare parts warehouse in Amghara.

As part of Al-Mulla Automobiles Company's commitment to transparency, it has adopted a pricing system that provides the customer with a detailed invoice and an overview of the services rendered. The company also updates the vehicle's maintenance records so that the customer is always aware of all of the services fulfilled.



Express service facility at Shuwaikh Service Center



Al-Rai Showroom and Service Center



Boutique and accessories

Planes grounded as thousands in Argentina strike against government

BUENOS AIRES: Tens of thousands of Argentines demonstrated Tuesday in a partial strike that grounded airplanes and shut banks and other businesses to protest the economic policies of President Mauricio Macri. "I came here to protest because I can't manage on my salary. The government has to go. It hasn't managed to sort out the economic situation," said Juan Arriague, a 32-year-old trucker demonstrating in Buenos Aires.

The truck drivers' union was one of the main groups calling for the protests that saw airplanes parked on the tarmac and transit buses lined up in rows at their terminal. Sea traffic was also suspended, most schools closed

and many shops as well as banks were shut. Macri's popularity has fallen in recent months, a disappointing sign for the president just six months out from elections in which he hopes to win a second term.

In an effort to reduce the state deficit, the government last year launched an austerity plan that has cut services to low-income Argentines. The measures came in exchange for a \$56 billion loan from the International Monetary Fund to help the South American country battle its currency crisis and soaring prices.

Inflation over the last 12 months was around 55 percent, while the spending power of ordinary citizens has been in freefall. "Take Macri, leave the dollars," read one banner in reference to the IMF loan repayments. The same slogan was also scrawled on the wall of a building next to that of the US bank JP Morgan.

Unemployment is increasing, poverty now affects 32 percent of the population and 41 percent of children, while businesses lay off workers and consumption drops. The partial strike followed a protest called by trade unions in early April which saw thousands of demonstrators march in Buenos Aires against Macri's economic policies. — AFP



BUENOS AIRES: Demonstrators march next to a closed bank with banners calling to a strike plastered on its walls during a partial strike against the economy policies of the government of Argentina's President Mauricio Macri in Buenos Aires, on Tuesday. — AFP

SAS cancels more flights as parties meet for talks

OSLO: Scandinavian airlines SAS said it would cancel more flights today as parties involved in a pilot strike held talks yesterday to try to resolve a six-day dispute that has left hundreds of thousands of passengers stranded.

More than 300,000 travellers have been hit by the stand-off over wages and other pilot demands which analysts estimate could cost SAS\$10.5 million a day, threatening to wipe out the airline's annual profit. The airline said it would cancel more flights today until 1200 GMT, grounding 280 flights and 20,000 passengers. More than 500 flights scheduled for yesterday, which is a public holiday in Sweden, have already been cancelled, affecting some 47,000 passengers.

A Norwegian mediator called the meeting where all the negotiating teams would be sitting down together, a spokeswoman for SAS in Sweden told Reuters.

"We are glad the parties have been able to meet again and we hope that it can lead to a constructive dialogue so that this strike can be brought to an end," she said. SAS' primary listing is on the Stockholm exchange, which was closed on May 1 but its Copenhagen-traded shares were up around 6 percent at 0939 GMT. Its Stockholm-traded shares are down around 10 percent since the strike was announced. Norwegian mediator Mats Wilhelm Rutland had earlier told Norwegian news agency NTB that work hours, shifts and salaries would be discussed at the meeting which was scheduled to start at 11am local time (0900 GMT) in Oslo. — Reuters



OSLO: Secretary General of The Norwegian Airline Pilots Association, Katinka Riksfjord Sporse, talks to the press. — AFP

China, US hold 'productive' trade talks in Beijing

BEIJING: China and the United States held "productive" trade talks in Beijing yesterday and will continue discussions in Washington next week, US Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin said, as the two try to end their trade war.

Mnuchin, along with US Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer, held a day of discussions, before Chinese Vice Premier Liu He goes to Washington next week for another round of talks in what could be the end game for negotiations. "Ambassador Lighthizer and I just concluded productive meetings with China's Vice Premier Liu He. We will continue our talks in Washington, D.C. next week," Mnuchin wrote on his Twitter account. He gave no details.

The three men appeared before cameras at the end of their talks at a state guest house in Beijing, chatting amiably amongst themselves but did not speak to reporters.

Liu had entertained his US guests on Tuesday night just after they arrived in the Chinese capital.

"We did. We had a nice working dinner, thank you," Mnuchin told reporters at his Beijing hotel earlier on Wednesday, when asked if he had met with Liu on



Tuesday. He did not elaborate. Beijing and Washington have cited progress on issues including intellectual property and forced technology transfer to help end a conflict marked by tit-for-tat tariffs that have cost both sides billions of dollars, disrupted supply chains and roiled financial markets. But US officials say privately that an enforcement mechanism for a deal and timelines for lifting tariffs are sticking points.

Chinese officials have also acknowledged that they view the enforcement mechanism as crucial, but say that it must work two ways and cannot put restraints only on China. In Washington, people familiar with the talks say

that the question of whether and when US tariffs on \$250 billion worth of Chinese goods will be removed will probably be among the last issues to be resolved. US President Donald Trump has said that he may keep some tariffs on Chinese goods for a "substantial period".

The United States has also been pressing China to further open up its market to US firms. China has repeatedly pledged to continue reforms and make it easier for foreign companies to operate in the country. In comments published yesterday, China's top banking and insurance regulator said the government will further open up its banking and insurance sectors. — Reuters

Business

Zain Group and EXFO jointly honored at 5G MENA awards

'Winning in the Digital Revolution' with Best Telecom Service Innovation

DUBAI: Zain Group, one of the region's leading mobile network operators with a presence in eight countries and EXFO Inc (NASDAQ: EXFO, TSX: EXF), the communications industry's test, monitoring and analytics experts, have been jointly recognized with the 5G MENA award for Best Telecom Service Innovation.

The award was presented at 5G MENA 2019, the largest event in the Middle East and North Africa region to focus on advancing and commercializing 5G networks. It recognizes the operator "winning in the Digital Revolution by utilizing existing technology capabilities or developing new ones to introduce new products and services for consumers and customers."

Highlights of the Zain Group-EXFO submission:

- Solution name: Nova
- Objective: Unlock the value of network data to enrich customer experience and boost data service revenues
- Support CEM not only for network and service operations but also for business teams
- EXFO and Zain collaborated on 40+ innovative use cases embedding AI and machine learning to improve end-user experience, raise customer satisfaction, fight against fraud and generate new revenue streams
- Successful modeling for churn prediction at a rate above 70 percent
- Data service adoption model helps Zain increase sub-

scriber access to data services; measure and deliver superior customer experience; and monitor the impact of network optimization and marketing campaigns as well as associated revenues

• The result of a partnership of more than 10 years spanning Zain's 2G, 3G, 4G and 5G journey with EXFO's test, monitoring and analytics portfolio

"Zain's innovative digital strategy is built on solid customer experience management and evolving the existing telco core to maximize value," said Khawla Al-Jaber, Zain Group's Technology Strategy and Performance Director. "The customer intelligence provided by EXFO is one of the crucial factors in achieving this goal and in helping Zain turn this data into service differentiation and efficiency improvements that impact our revenues."

"EXFO has been Zain's close partner for more than a decade, supporting their operations in technology and business transformations with our test, monitoring and analytics," said Abdelkrim Benamar, EXFO's Vice-President of Service Assurance, Systems and Services. "Using technologies such as AI and machine learning helps us take predictive analytics to the next level. Our customers get a deep understanding of an increasingly complex ecosystem: actionable insights to automate network operations; increased subscriber satisfaction; and the ability to monetize their investments. These are the foundations you need to do 5G right."



Zain Group and EXFO honored at 5G MENA awards

Flydubai: Celebrating 10 years of flying together

DUBAI: Dubai-based flydubai's participation at this year's Arabian Travel Market (ATM) coincided with the start of the celebrations for the carrier's 10th anniversary. The airline, which started operations on 01 June 2009, marked this occasion with the launch of a new website for passengers to share their memories.



Ghaith Al-Ghaith

Over the last decade, the airline has changed the way people travel. It enters a new chapter of its maturity cemented by steady growth, enhanced passenger experience and a renewed commitment to opening up previously underserved markets.

Ghaith Al-Ghaith, flydubai's Chief Executive Officer, commented on the occasion: "Flydubai has come a long way since its first flight in 2009. Our agility, our profound understanding of the evolving passenger needs and our commitment to open up previously underserved markets has enabled us to enhance our business model and product offering to become the airline we are today."

"We were established with a mandate to provide convenient, reliable and affordable travel services with the aim to remove barriers to travel, create free flows of trade and tourism and enhance connectivity between different cultures. We remain true to that mandate and today 71 of our destinations had no or very few direct air-links from the UAE. Serving these markets enables a population of 1.5 billion the opportunity for more convenient travel, access to an



Flydubai at Arabian Travel Market

international aviation hub as well as making their countries more accessible to the world," added Al-Ghaith.

In celebration of ten years of flydubai, the airline has launched a dedicated website www.comeflydubaiwithus.com which provides a platform for all passengers to share their favourite flydubai travel memories. This website showcases the experiences that flydubai has enabled over the past ten years: whether it was passengers visiting friends and family, travelling for business or simply enjoying a well-earned holiday somewhere on the flydubai network. The airline is inviting all passengers who have travelled with flydubai to get involved and share their favorite memories. Those who participate will have the opportunity to win one of 10 pairs of return Economy Class tickets within the flydubai network.

"As we are celebrate our 10th anniversary this year, I would like to look back at some of our key achievements and acknowledge the

hard work and efforts of our extremely committed and reliable team here at flydubai. The growth and success of our airline wouldn't have been possible without them," continued Al-Ghaith. Since commencing operations, flydubai has created a network of more than 90 destinations in 47 countries across Africa (12 points), Central Asia and the Caucasus (10 points), Europe (27 points), the GCC and the Middle East (26 points), and the Indian Subcontinent (18 points).

More than 70 million passengers have chosen to flydubai since it launched and there have been a number of milestones since its inception in 2009: from introducing inflight entertainment to its fleet in 2010 to Business Class in 2013, placing three aircraft orders and most recently announced an extensive codeshare partnership with Emirates. During ATM, flydubai hosted more than 500 travel agents from around its expanding network to thank them for their support over the years.



Fed likely to ignore Trump's call to cut interest rates

WASHINGTON: The US Federal Reserve, leaning back against pressure from President Donald Trump to slash interest rates, was expected to leave borrowing costs unchanged yesterday as it maintains a 'patient' monetary policy stance amid strong economic growth. Trump, who has accused the US central bank of undercutting his efforts to boost economic growth, said on Twitter on Tuesday the Fed should cut its key overnight lending rate by a full percentage point and renew the quantitative easing program that saw it pump trillions of dollars into the economy in response to the 2007-2009 financial crisis and recession.

Fed officials were in the middle of their latest two-day policy meeting when Trump made his

comments. The unorthodox advice - more in line with what economists on the far left of the political spectrum might advocate - is likely to go unheeded by a central bank that views its current target interest rate as roughly where it should be to keep the growing US economy on an even keel. The US government reported last week the economy grew at an annualized pace of 3.2 percent in the first three months of the year, surprising Fed officials who had expected the data to signal a slowdown.

US employers added nearly 200,000 jobs in March, evidence of continued strength in the labor market and a sign as well that the Fed's four rate hikes in 2018 had not constrained the economy. With no clear reason to cut or raise rates at this point, the focus on Wednesday will be on whether the policy-setting Federal Open Market Committee provides any new signal about its likely plans, said Cornerstone Macro analyst Roberto Perli.

"There will probably be discussions at this meeting as to what the threshold should be for bringing rates down," Perli wrote in a note on Tuesday. "But given the diversity of opinions and the lack of a clear need for an imminent decision, it seems unlikely that the (FOMC) will

agree to something specific now and be able to send a clear signal."

Inflation concerns

The Fed raised rates four times last year, lifting its policy rate to a range of 2.25 percent to 2.50 percent. After its last rate hike in December, the Fed faced particularly sharp criticism from Trump. Some central bank policymakers have cited ongoing weak inflation, still well below the Fed's 2 percent target, as a sign rates may be too high. The Fed is due to release its latest policy statement at 2 p.m. EDT (1800 GMT). It will not provide new economic or interest rate projections, but Chairman Jerome Powell is scheduled to hold a press conference shortly after.

One technical change officials may make is to trim the amount of interest paid to banks on excess reserves held on deposit at the Fed to 2.35 percent from 2.40 percent. The aim would be to keep the targeted federal funds rate from moving above its current range. The federal funds rate, which banks charge each other for overnight loans, rose to near the upper level of that range this week, as banks competed more aggressively to meet their reserve demands. — Reuters

US private sector surges in April: ADP

WASHINGTON: American firms hired at a blistering pace in April, the fastest in nine months, kicking off the second quarter of the year with a bang, according to a payroll data released yesterday. The private sector data comes on the day the Federal Reserve is due to make its latest pronouncement on interest rates, and adds to the conflicting dynamic facing central bankers with data showing the economy continues to grow but with few signs of accelerating wages or inflation.

US private hiring surged by 275,000 new positions-beating the consensus forecast by more than 100,000 — driven by a huge increase in the dominant services sector which posted the biggest gain since mid-2016, payroll services firm ADP reported. However, economists may take the increase with a grain of salt. The data show the "economic soft patch at the start of the year has not materially impacted hiring," said Mark Zandi, chief economist at Moody's Analytics, which jointly produces the report.

However, he cautioned that "April's job gains overstate the economy's strength." Still "they make the case that expansion continues on." The goods-producing sector rebounded as well, adding 52,000 employees after a slight decline in March-including 5,000 in manufacturing and 49,000 in construction-but it employs only about one-fifth the number of workers as services.

After weak economic data in the final months of 2018 helped send financial markets into turmoil, the Federal Reserve clearly signaled that it would not raise the benchmark lending rate for the foreseeable future, or until it sees a clear trend.

Since then indications are going in the other direction, with 3.2 percent growth in the first quarter and solid hiring, which normally would increase pressure on the Fed to raise rates. However, inflation has been sinking even further below the central bank's 2 percent target, which would tend to fuel the case for cutting rates-something President Donald Trump on Tuesday again urged the Fed to do. The ADP data come two days before the official government employment report for April, which economists currently predict will include a 180,000 gain in private jobs.

Inflation muted

US labor costs increased steadily in the first quarter as a jump in transportation and manufacturing wages was offset by small gains elsewhere, pointing to moderate inflation pressures even as the labor market tightens.

Other data on Tuesday showed a rebound in consumer confidence this month amid growing labor market optimism. While house prices increased at their slowest pace since 2012 in February, slowing house price inflation is stimulating demand for homes.

The signs of the economy's brightening prospects and benign price pressures came as Federal Reserve officials began a two-day policy meeting on Tuesday.

Citing cross-currents facing the economy, the US central bank in March dropped its forecasts for any rate increases this year, halting a three-year policy tightening campaign. The Fed raised borrowing costs four times in 2018. Inflation has retreated further from the Fed's 2 percent target, catching the attention of President Donald Trump, who has been critical of the central bank's past rate hikes. Trump tweeted on Tuesday that the economy could go "up like a rocket if we did some lowering of rates, like one point, and some quantitative easing."

While economists agree that inflation is low, most do not believe the Fed should be easing monetary policy. "Inflation really isn't an issue right now, it looks like the outlook for growth is strengthening," said Chris Rupkey, chief economist at MUFJ in New York. "At this stage, the Fed can stay on the sidelines and rate cuts at this juncture are

premature." The Employment Cost Index, the broadest measure of labor costs, rose 0.7 percent after advancing by the same margin in the fourth quarter, the Labor Department said. That lowered the year-on-year rate of increase in the ECI to 2.8 percent. Labor costs rose 2.9 percent in the fourth quarter, which was the largest gain since June 2008.

The first-quarter rise in the ECI was in line with economists' expectations. The ECI is widely viewed as one of the better measures of labor market slack. It is also considered a better predictor of core inflation.

The government reported on Monday that the personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index excluding the volatile food and energy components increased 1.6 percent in the 12 months through March, the smallest increase since January 2018 and down from 1.7 percent in February. The so-called core PCE index is the Fed's preferred inflation measure. The dollar fell against a basket of currencies, while prices of US Treasuries rose. Wall Street's main stock indexes were trading mixed after hitting record highs in the previous session.

Confidence perks up

In separate report on Tuesday, the Conference Board said its consumer confidence index rose to a reading of 129.2 this month from 124.2 in March. That jump strengthened the view that consumer spending will accelerate after growing at its slowest pace in a year in the first quarter.

"The Fed puts more store in consumer confidence as a predictor of consumer spending behavior, and from this perspective the Fed should be reassured that the second quarter looks strong on the consumer spending front," said John Ryding, chief economist at RDQ Economics in New York.

The survey's so-called labor market differential, derived from data about respondents saying jobs are scarce or plentiful, jumped to 33.5 percent from 28.7 percent in March. This measure closely correlates to the unemployment rate in the Labor Department's employment report. The rise in labor market differential together with dwindling numbers of people on unemployment rolls raises the possibility the jobless rate could drop in April from its current level of 3.8 percent. The government will publish its April employment report on Friday.

But consumers' inflation expectations fell this month. With the labor market continuing to tighten, there is optimism wage growth will pick up a notch this year. There is growing anecdotal evidence of companies struggling to find workers. In the first quarter, wages and salaries, which account for 70 percent of employment costs, increased 0.7 percent after rising 0.6 percent in the prior period. Wages and salaries were up 2.9 percent in the 12 months through March. That followed a 3.1 percent gain in the year through December. There were strong wage gains in the manufacturing, construction and transportation industries, but compensation slowed in the professional and business services, education and health services sectors as well as in the leisure and hospitality industry.

A third report on Tuesday showed the S&P CoreLogic Case-Shiller composite home price index of 20 US metropolitan areas rose 3.0 percent in February from a year ago. That was the smallest gain since September 2012 and followed a 3.5 percent increase in January.

Growth in house prices has slowed from as high as 6.8 percent in March 2018. The moderation in prices followed an ebb in demand after mortgage rates spiked last year. Mortgage rates have since declined. That, together with lower prices, is helping stimulate demand for homes, though supply remains tight. A fourth report from the National Association of Realtors showed contracts to buy previously owned homes rebounded 3.8 percent to an eight-month high in March after dropping 1.0 percent in February. "As long as mortgage rates remain near current levels, sales activity should trend higher this year, although low inventory levels will likely cap housing sector expansion to some degree," said Ben Ayers, senior economist at Nationwide in Columbus, Ohio. — Agencies

What's On



CBK announces social program, charitable activities during Ramadan

Commercial Bank of Kuwait (CBK) announced its Social Program in Ramadan which included many humanitarian and charity activities that will be unique to the bank. CBK has a distinguished program of social activities that will be launched during the holy month, which aims at supporting all initiatives of charity and humanitarian work, so to contribute to instilling the principle of social responsibility which the bank laid down long time ago.



Burgan Bank welcomes Ramadan with 'Graish'

In the spirit of Ramadan, Burgan Bank, one of the most dynamic banks in Kuwait, recently gathered to celebrate "Graish" its joyous occasion with its employees at the Safir Al Fintas Hotel. Set in a friendly atmosphere, the event showcased Burgan Bank's appreciation for its employees celebrating an age-old tradition of family values which also reflected in the solidarity and closeness among the team.

In addition, "Graish" is annual celebration to revive the Kuwaiti heritage. Driven by its strong-held belief that people



always come first, Burgan Bank continues to lead the way by honoring this principle within the Burgan family. The progressive bank nurtures an internal culture that respects and cherishes its most esteemed assets with rewarding and memorable experiences.

The pre-Ramadan tradition that was successfully led by the Internal Communication unit under the Human Resources and Development group was filled with entertainment, gifts and exciting prizes. The employees enjoyed participating in various games, fun trivia and received

many surprises. To honor its Kuwaiti heritage, the staff also enjoyed a special Graish meal to welcome the fasting season.

Joining in the spirit of Ramadan and addressing the importance of valuable team initiatives, Burgan Bank's Chairman Majed Eisa Al-Ajeel wished every

employee and their families a blessed Holy month. Burgan Bank carries out social and cultural initiatives to enrich local communities, starting with its employees first, constantly striving to build closer relations with all stakeholders and deliver positive and lasting change.



ICSK Khaitan organizes innovation camp

ICSK Khaitan organized an informative "Innovation Camp", in association with INJAZ Kuwait, for the commerce batch students of classes XI and XII. The workshop

commenced with a prayer followed by the national anthems of Kuwait and India. Manish introduced the members of INJAZ, who had come for the workshop. Principal K G Shirsath heartily welcomed all the facilitators and volunteers from INJAZ Kuwait and Gulf Bank with a token of appreciation.

Abdullah, the facilitators of the day, initiated conversation with the students and declared a brainstorming contest among the various groups of students with the motive of honing their entrepreneurship skills. The

top three groups with the most innovative ideas were presented with gold, silver and bronze medals respectively. Sharanya proposed the vote of thanks while the principal felicitated the mentors with roses. The workshop concluded with a group photo of all the students, mentors, the commerce department along with the principal and the vice principal. ICSK, Khaitan places on record heartfelt gratitude to the school management for arranging such productive workshops for the students.

Classical dance show

Shivadharm School of Dance will organize Sattva-2019, mega show of classical dances on Friday, May 3, 2019 (tomorrow) at Cambridge International School, Mangaf. The program will be inaugurated by P Sreeramakrishnan, Speaker of Kerala Legislative Assembly. Asha Sharath, a well-known Indian danseuse and versatile actress will be the chief guest of the event.

Sharath is well versed in Bharatanatyam, Mohiniyattam, Kuchippudi and Kathakali. She has won enormous awards, not only in dance but in films also. She has done popular characters in variety of films in South Indian languages.

The show will be a blend of classical dances and a treat to the eyes and ears of the audience. A wide variety of programs by the girls and women are planned. A dance with the theme, five elements of nature, earth, water, air, sky and fire, will be presented by the young dancers. A Bharatanatyam performance will be staged by the Arangetram batch students.

Notice

During the holy month of Ramadan, the South African Embassy will be open to the public, Sunday through Thursday from 9:00 am to 13:00 pm. Please note that the Consular Section operation hours will be from 9:30 am to 12:00 pm, Sunday through Thursday.

Health & Science

Sierra Leone tackles overfishing

Locals arrested for using illegal nets, exporting fish

FREETOWN: With a single deep-sea patrol boat, Sierra Leone was hard put to stop vessels looting its waters despite a month-long ban on industrial fishing. Dozens of large foreign trawlers are licensed to fish in Sierra Leonean waters and the aim of the ban, which expired Tuesday, was to help replenish species damaged by overfishing. But those arrested were local people charged with using illegal nets or trying to export fish.

"We have one offshore patrol vessel, two operational inflatable boats, and five inshore patrol craft," said Abdul Karim Dumbaya, operations chief for the west African country's Joint Maritime Commission (JMC) linking eight government agencies. About 100 visiting trawlers have fishing permits. More than half of them are Chinese boats, beyond the reach of inspection teams.

"If we had more than one offshore patrol vessel, then we would have the flexibility of tasking one vessel down south, and the other one up north, and one even in standby. But now we are talking about just one offshore patrol vessel. One. That is a challenge in itself," Dumbaya said. However, the JMC has introduced daily patrols, making a big difference from one outing per week.

During the ban, JMC agents apprehended three artisanal fishermen using illegal nets in Tombo, a fishing village east of the capital

Freetown. They picked up three others at Bonthe in the southwest, "trying to sell fish to exporters", Dumbaya said.

'They destroyed my properties'

The ban exclusively covered industrial fishing but all fish exports have been forbidden while in place. It also obliged industrial fishing firms to store fish of different species in cold rooms to prevent shortages and price increases. Fish accounts for 80 percent of the animal protein intake in the diet of Sierra Leoneans, according to official statistics. The fisheries sector employs 500,000 people, mainly working on traditional boats, out of a population of 7.5 million. It represents between 12 and 15 percent of gross domestic product.

But the fish caught by locals are becoming ever more rare and ever smaller, according to Andrew Baio, a lecturer at the Institute of Marine Biology and Oceanography. "There is evidence that the stocks are getting depleted and the situation is getting worse and worse," Baio said, basing his assessment "on the size and quantities of the fish per unit of effort". Local fishing families blame the trawlers offshore for wreaking havoc on fish supplies in Atlantic waters and believe the month-long ban has been far too short. "These trawlers don't give us a chance. They bankrupted my business. They

destroyed my properties," said Manferah Suma, a fisherwoman at the Goderich market in Freetown. "I'm left with nothing. Zero."

'Only God can help us'

Senior harbor master Momoh Bangura, a fisherman for 50 years, says the depletion of fish stocks has reached critical levels. "When the trawlers began arriving in large numbers in this country in 1980, the quantity of fish began dropping," he said. He spoke of zones where fish used to be abundant, but today "there is nothing left". "Where we fish now, only God can help us, because there are so many rocks," he added. Deputy Commander Philip Juana, a naval officer, told AFP the April ban had served as a "test" that could be followed by more, longer measures. "We need more capacity for our presence to be felt at sea," he concluded.

Paul Jackson, a fisherman for more than 25 years, said the doors of the ministry of fisheries were shut to him when he tried to denounce Chinese trawlers defying the ban. China is a big investor in the country. The ministry meanwhile did not respond to requests for an interview by AFP. Ian Rabby, a maritime expert with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, said the lack of means to monitor maritime activity went hand in hand with corruption and weak fines. — AFP



FREETOWN: Traditional fishermen carry fish nets to the Goderich Market in Sierra Leone's capital Freetown. — AFP

CLINIC

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CLINIC PAGE



Kuwait Times

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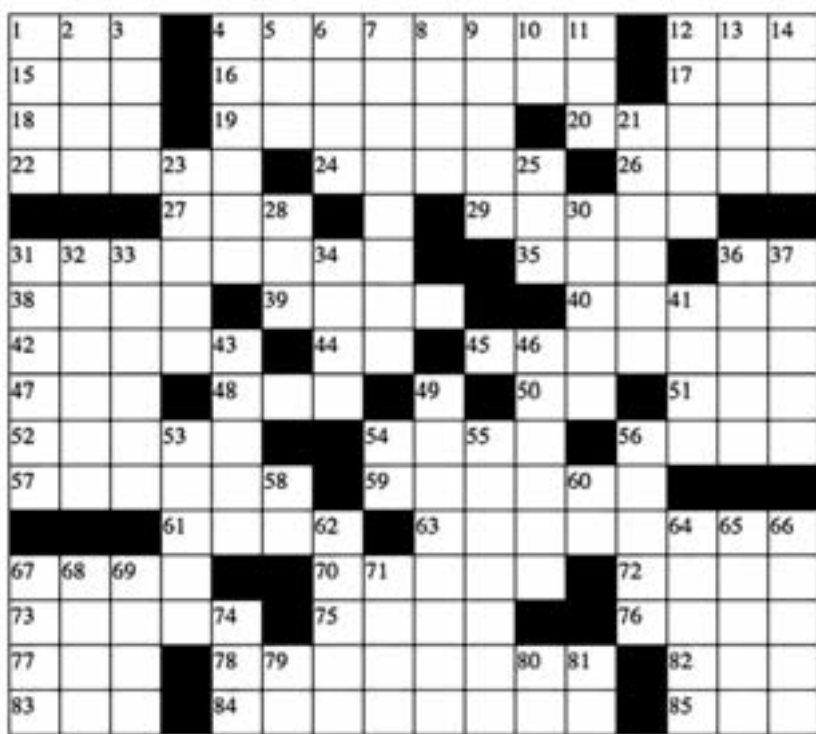
Scope of clinical Practice.

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Stars

CROSSWORD 2198



- ACROSS**
1. A health resort near a spring or at the seaside.
 4. Falling out of hair.
 12. Payment due by the recipient on delivery.
 15. A compartment in front of a motor vehicle where driver sits.
 16. A wild and exciting undertaking (not necessarily lawful).
 17. A Turkish unit of weight equal to about 2.75 pounds.
 18. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
 19. Equipped with or connected by gears or having gears engaged.
 20. (of complexion) Blemished by imperfections of the skin.
 22. (botany) Especially of leaves.
 24. English scholastic philosopher and assumed author of Occam's Razor (1285-1349).
 26. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
 27. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
 29. Formerly included in genus *Cedrela*.
 31. A long narrow sled without runners.
 35. A master's degree in fine arts.
 38. Relatively small fast-moving sloth.
 39. In bed.
 40. The capacitance of a capacitor that has an equal and opposite charge of 1 coulomb on each plate and a voltage difference of 1 volt between the plates.
 42. Pain resulting from rapid change in pressure.
 44. A nonmetallic largely pentavalent heavy volatile corrosive dark brown liquid element belonging to the halogens.
 45. Of or relating to or characteristic of Ghana or its people or language.
 47. An engineering university in Cambridge.
 48. Dish baked in pastry-lined pan often with a pastry top.
 50. A silvery ductile metallic element found primarily in bauxite.
 51. An associate degree in applied science.
 52. A condensed but memorable saying embodying some important fact of experience that is taken as true by many people.
 57. One of the most important fungi cultivated in Japan.
 59. A deep bow.
 61. A strip of land projecting into a body of water.
 63. A skullcap worn by religious Jews (especially at prayer).
 67. Formerly a large constellation in the southern hemisphere between Canis Major and the Southern Cross.
 70. The hole that an anchor rope passes through.
 72. A vehicle mounted on runners and pulled by horses or dogs.
 73. Obvious and dull.
 75. Any of various strong liquors distilled from the fermented sap of toddy palms or from fermented molasses.
 76. A Chadic language spoken south of Lake Chad.
 77. A period marked by distinctive character or reckoned from a fixed point or event.
 78. A consonant pronounced with aspiration v l.
 82. An adult male person (as opposed to a woman).
 83. A serve that strikes the net before falling into the receiver's court.
 84. The mental attitude that something is believable and should be accepted as true.
 85. A loose sleeveless outer garment made from aba cloth.
- DOWN**
1. Someone who works (or provides workers) during a strike.
 2. A metabolic acid found in yeast and liver cells.
 3. The elementary stages of any subject (usually plural).
 4. A prosthesis that replaces a missing leg.
 5. The compass point midway between south and southeast.
 6. The United Nations agency concerned with civil aviation.
 7. A person who commits larceny.
 8. An organization of countries formed in 1961 to agree on a common policy for the sale of petroleum.
 9. Egyptian statesman who (as President of Egypt) negotiated a peace treaty with Menachem Begin of Israel (1918-1981).
 10. A state in the Rocky Mountains.
 11. Relating to or characteristic of or occurring on the sea or ships.
 12. Music composed for dancing the conga.
 13. An endorsement.
 14. An informal term for a father.
 21. An ancient country is southwestern Asia on the east coast of the Mediterranean.
 23. Using the voice.
 25. Informal terms for a mother.
 28. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
 30. Viscera and trimmings of a butchered animal often considered inedible by humans.
 32. A member of the Iroquoian people formerly living east of Lake Ontario.
 33. Very small.
 34. A French abbot.
 36. A river of southwestern Africa that rises in central Angola and flows east and then north (forming part of the border between Angola and Congo) and continuing northwest through Congo to empty into the Congo River on the border between Congo and Republic of the Congo.
 37. A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
 41. A large quantity of written matter.
 43. English explorer who with Sir Richard Burton was the first European to explore Lake Tanganyika.
 46. The capital and largest city of Zimbabwe.
 49. Ceramic ware made from clay and baked in a kiln.
 53. A seaport in northwestern Italy.
 54. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.
 55. Relating to or characteristic of the state or people of Alaska.
 56. A doctor's degree in musical arts.
 58. A mouth or mouthlike opening.
 60. Before noon.
 62. Any spatial attribute (especially as defined by outline).
 64. Wild or domesticated South American cud-chewing animal related to camels but smaller and lacking a hump.
 65. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
 66. A city in southern Turkey on the Seyhan River.
 68. Not widely known.
 69. Any of various small biting flies.
 71. Lacking sufficient water or rainfall.
 74. Resinlike substance secreted by certain lac insects.
 79. A soft silver-white or yellowish metallic element of the alkali metal group.
 80. A crystalline metallic element not found in nature.
 81. The branch of engineering science that studies the uses of electricity and the equipment for power generation and distribution and the control of machines and communication.

STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

You may find yourself surrounded by adoring fans at the job. This gives you the oomph to be more responsible and happier at your place of work. Your conservative approach and mental aptitude could be the culprit for your being put into a supervision position on a special project or long-term job. Support for anything you need to accomplish your work is there for the asking. Others pitch right in to help. This is a fresh start you've worked towards for some time now. Make sure that your accomplishments continue to propel you in the right direction as you've done in the past.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

On this first day of the month, you'll learn a lesson that will help you throughout your life. That lesson is that you can't control others no matter how much you try. When someone is determined to do something that may hurt themselves all you can do is mention it. Control is all about the person seeking it. Others will do as they please even when it hurts them. You're also starting new behaviors. Make sure they're good ones. This issue creates the desire to be respected too. Just to let you know you're respected more than you think by everyone who knows you.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

This is a time you really need to let the stars move and hope that they move quickly, at work and at home. Try to be patient and let this one blow over because your emotions are involved. Most everything that happens seems like it's pointed at you and your ethics or how you do anything. This should be gone after tomorrow. Being sure of yourself and how you approach problems will be back in full force with your full confidence along with it. Saying what you think now will only be bad for you. Try to relax until this is over. Get closer to friends and keep them around you.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

If a coworker gets on your bad side today, Katy bar the door. The weapon at your disposal is your mouth and you can shred an individual with your words. These words are generally reserved for someone who hurts a person you love. Not today though, they've hurt you. A quick, sharp mind with an even more powerful tongue created by your new directed approach can bring the most influential individual to their knees now. This is a new you, who'll be around for some time to come. This will cause anyone close to you to walk more lightly. Take it easy on family when you go home. If not, arguments could ensue.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Career and family are the only things you have time for now. Friends may drop away from you but don't fret about it. If they do, just know they weren't meant to stay in your life anyway. Your life is changing in a manner you'll love later after the work is done and you've received what you want. Be confident in yourself. The only other thing you really need right now is love from your family, particularly your partner. Sex is something that can give you some good stress relief if she or he is willing to comply. Your life now is a special memory being made. Enjoy the making of it.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

You'll find yourself evaluating your life, how you've made money before, your career and if you want to continue your present work situation, your homelife and your emotional system. That includes family and friends. Nothing in your life is untouched by your scrutiny now. Finding, assimilating and using information you get from others helps you to make responsible and intelligent decisions. You'll also note that you speak in a more direct way about anything that comes across your mind and mouth. There's nothing to ease the blow when you find something that shouldn't have been done or wasn't done as you think it should have been. This is a time of you taking care of you. It's needed.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Today is a day for which you may have been longing. You get some good news about your career and where it's going. Everything seems to be pouring in with most of it being to your liking. Life's problems seem to find easy answers, and advice from someone older, perhaps a relative or authority figure, aids you more. There is a phase you're entering, which may be here for a while to come, where your impulsiveness is showing. You are full of forceful emotions which make you feel powerful as well. Watch out that you don't take issue with someone close for their impractical ways. No good can come of it.



Scorpio (October 23-November 21)

You've got plain good sense today but, and here's the rub, you're usual. "Tell it like it is," is amplified much, much more. You're not afraid to open your mouth and speak what you consider truth without thinking about the consequences first. Scorpio. At work you excel. Being kind hearted isn't in your repertoire today especially when the people you're working with act foolish. You can't tolerate any tomfoolery. That's because of the strong cycle that is entering your life now. Try to keep your calm. Anger won't do anything but hurt the situation. It can't be overlooked by others you need.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

New beginnings are happening today where you are speaking your mind in a very powerful manner. Others notice this because it's not like your normal jovial self. Saying what you think is generally done in a more sedate manner. Emotions are foremost in your mind for this reason. You recognize the change in your demeanor immediately when the shock wears off after a conversation. Habits are changing because of this new way of doing things. Make sure those activities are something that you can live with later. This transformation will be here for a while. A chore that is one you like right now is saying and writing with style. That makes your change easier for others and also for you.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Today is a great day for doing research or just reading a book for comfort. Your career is causing you to feel that your life is in opposition to it. Look over both and see what you can do to change that fact without having to get rid of what you thought you wanted. If you can't resolve the issue, then think of what type career you really desire. Think of the manner in which you can attain it while keeping up a good living situation. After all, you want to live a happy life which generally includes a great work condition. Make yourself happy.



Aquarius (January 20-February 18)

Today finds you thinking about your youth but not having much luck when it comes to learning from it in order to teach someone younger than you at this time the pitfalls of being young. Arguments could ensue. Today is a day where you take others wrong and they return the favor. Difficulties and blocks of all kind keep you from working well and you sure don't play well with others either. Maybe you should just stay home today before it even starts. Live to fight another day, later. The one spirit that won't turn you down and gives you unconditional love is your pet. Give him or her some time.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Right now you're more aggressive in nature. You want things and you have little patience for waiting on them. This may include work issues you need to get done with the help of others. Coworkers better be on your time table. Otherwise you let them have it and that doesn't mean they can take it home. You find yourself being something other than a shy violet. It doesn't mean you're completely outgoing, however, but you're not introverted either. New beginnings, where new and different ideas, are used to promote work and anything you touch is where it's at now.

Wordsearch Puzzle

Fantasy 2 - Word Search

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

- | | | |
|------------|--------|---------|
| ARCHERS | FOREST | PRINCE |
| CASTLE | GNOME | QUEST |
| CENTAUR | GOLD | WEAPONS |
| CHALICE | HERO | WINE |
| CROSSBOW | HORSE | WITCH |
| DAGGER | MACE | |
| DRAWBRIDGE | MOAT | |
| DUNGEON | OGRE | |

Yesterday's Solution

Fantasy 1 - Solution

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 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 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 R T O Z P E V I L T N K
S A A A N S B 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 | EVIL | SWORD |
| ARMOR | FAIRY | TROLL |
| ARROWS | GOOD | UNICORN |
| AXE | KING | WAND |
| BLACKSMITH | KNIGHT | WIZARD |
| CRYSTAL BALL | MAGIC | |
| DRAGON | POTION | |
| DWARF | PRINCESS | |

Yesterday's Solution

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

Daily Sudoku

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

Yesterday's Solution

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

Lifestyle

THURSDAY, MAY 2, 2019



Russian Trade Unions' members holding balloons, flags and artificial flowers parade on Red Square during their May Day demonstration in Moscow yesterday. — AFP

Tirana's 'pyramid' puts checkered past behind it for new tech future

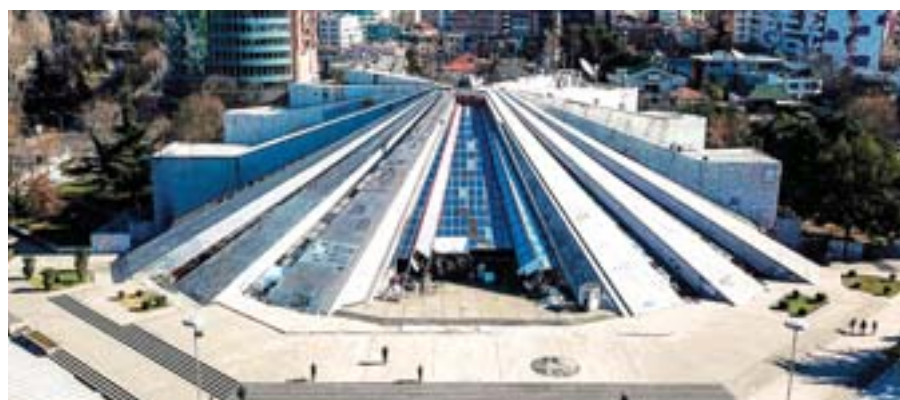
The sprawling, space-age "pyramid" in Tirana's center had many uses before falling into ruin: built as a museum for a dictator, it later hosted a NATO base, TV studio, nightclub and more. After years of neglect, the crumbling structure is now set for another rebirth as an IT hub in the heart of Albania's fast-changing capital. "I don't think there is anyone who thinks it is beautiful," admits Joni Baboci, a city hall architect involved with the redesign. "But it's a sort of a landmark of the city, and people want to preserve them in a city that has lost a lot" to development, he added.

The 127,000-square-foot (11,400-square-metre) behemoth has triangular wedges of graffiti-covered marble and dark window panes that meet at a peak, giving it the pyramid look. For the project's architects, its overhaul is about striking a balance between preserving and reclaiming a relic from a dark period of Albanian history. The bizarre building was originally erected 30 years ago to glorify the life of former communist dictator Enver Hoxha, who ruthlessly ruled Albania for four decades until his death in 1985.

After communism collapsed a few years later, the museum was shuttered and the pyramid became a venue for a merry-go-round of uses, reflecting the explosion of culture in a country that had been hermetically sealed under Hoxha's iron grip. But for the past 10 years the building has sat virtually abandoned, aside from the locals and tourists who can be seen scaling its walls for the 360-degree city view at the top. When authorities announced plans to demolish the pyramid several years ago, protests broke out, revealing how the unusual monument had won its way into people's hearts. The demolition plan was scrapped and city hall came back last year with a project to turn the pyramid into a digital learning center.

'Open to everyone'

"We thought there couldn't be a better symbol than giving the building back to Albanian society in its best form, to the kids, for their future education," said Martin Mata, of the



A general view of Tirana's pyramid, a former museum that was named after late Albanian communist dictator Enver Hoxha.

Albanian-American Development Foundation, which is funding the more than \$10-million (nine-million-euro) renovation. It is a fitting purpose for a country suffering from high youth unemployment and emigration rates. Designs revealed last month by Dutch firm MVRDV will open the structure on all sides of the ground floor, bring light into the atrium with more glass, surround it with trees and carve stairs onto its exterior to make the pyramid walls a safer climb.

"The pyramid will be open to everyone" and the building will be nearly "transparent", the chief architect, Winy Maas, said at the presentation in Tirana. Inside will be a mix of commercial space and a learning centre for youth, run by non-profit group Tumo, offering classes in programming, design and other digital skills.

'Making Albania great again'

For Tirana's mayor, Erion Veliaj, the project is a "story of resurrection"-for the pyramid and Albania itself. "Since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the start of (Albania's) transition, the

question has been how do we make Albania great again?" he told AFP. The pyramid's renovation is part of a dizzying amount of transformation that the country's capital has undergone in recent years. The collapse of communism unleashed a massive wave of migration from rural areas to the capital, leading to unchecked construction, an explosion of cars and chaotic urban spaces.

As mayor of Tirana in the early 2000s, Edi Rama, who is now prime minister, gave the city a major face-lift by splashing its drab communist buildings with bright colours and bold patterns. Veliaj says he is trying to further spruce up the city by cracking down on illegal construction, creating more parks and recently turning a massive Skanderbeg Square traffic roundabout into a pedestrian space.

Architectural hodgepodge

The changes are raising Tirana's profile on the tourist map. Its vibrant cafe scene now comes in for praise, as well as the unique hodgepodge of architecture, including Italian

fascist buildings, Soviet-style tower blocks, Ottoman-era mosques and, of course, the pyramid. But not all of city hall's revamps are popular. There have been regular protests in the last year over plans to knock down homes and shops for a ring road project. In the center, a crowd has been demonstrating daily against a government-backed project to bulldoze Tirana's national theatre, built in 1930, and replace it with a modern one.

As for the pyramid, some would have preferred to see it become an archaeology museum or national library, among other things. But for Rama, the transformation of a "symbol of dictatorship" to a "symbol of each individual's power in a new time" is an apt roadmap. "I am happy that we have managed to solve a problem that has vexed us for 30 years now," he said. — AFP



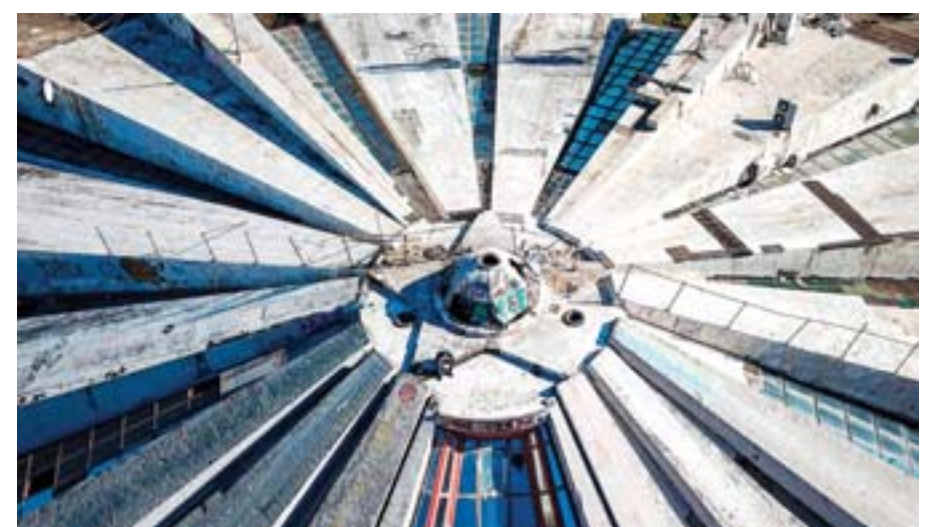
This aerial picture taken in Tirana Albania shows a general view of Tirana's pyramid, a former museum that was named after late Albanian communist dictator Enver Hoxha.



Dutch architect Wilhelmus "Winy" Maas speaks during a press conference to present the final project of the pyramid's revival in Tirana, Albania.



An interior view of Tirana's pyramid, a former museum that was named after late Albanian communist dictator Enver Hoxha.



A general view of Tirana's pyramid, a former museum that was named after late Albanian communist dictator Enver Hoxha. — AFP photos



In this file photo Brazilian musician Beth Carvalho performs during the "Lula Livre" (Free Lula) Music Festival in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP



Brazilian singer Beth Carvalho of Mangueira samba school during the second night of the carnival parade at Sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.

Brazil's 'godmother of samba' **Beth Carvalho** dies

Brazilian singer and "godmother of samba" Beth Carvalho died from sepsis in Rio de Janeiro on Tuesday, her publicist and hospital said. She was 72. "Our dear Beth Carvalho departed at 5:33 pm (2233 GMT) today surrounded by the love of her family and friends," according to a statement issued by publicist Afonso Carvalho. The statement did not specify cause of death,

but the Pro-Cardiac Hospital said in a WhatsApp message that Carvalho had succumbed to a "generalized infection (sepsis)."

Sepsis is a life-threatening condition in which the body is attacked by its own immune system. Carvalho had been confined to a wheelchair in recent years due to back problems. She had continued to perform, however, moving

Brazilian fans with hits including "Coisinha do Pai" or "Father's Little Thing." In a career spanning 50 years, Carvalho was a symbol of the Brazilian samba school Mangueira. Carvalho recorded more than 30 albums and won two Latin Grammy awards among others. — AFP



Spike in US teen suicides after Netflix '13 Reasons Why' release

The suicide rate among US teenagers spiked in the months after the release of the controversial Netflix drama "13 Reasons Why", which follows the story of a high school girl who kills herself, a new study has found. The series was met with concern when it aired in March 2017, with health and education professionals fearing the content was potentially harmful for vulnerable populations, such as adolescents. According to the new study, researchers estimated there were an additional 195 suicide deaths—an increase of nearly 29 percent—among 10 to 17 year-olds in the nine months after its release.

The number of suicide deaths among the same age category "increased significantly" in the month immediately after it hit screens, said the paper, published in the Journal of the American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. The additional deaths mainly affected boys. The researchers however were not able to establish a causal link between viewing the television series and the increase in suicides and acknowledged other factors may have played a role.

Author of the report Jeffrey Bridge, who led the research team from the Nationwide Children's Hospital in Ohio, told AFP that the Netflix drama portrayed the lead

character's suicide in a sensationalized manner. "It is very concerning that a graphic depiction of the method of Hannah's suicide was shown, which can be traumatic for survivors of suicide loss or suicide attempt and also provides a particular pathway for suicide in some cases," he said.

"The results of this study confirmed concerns about how the series disregarded best practice guidelines for depicting suicide in the media." Researchers analyzed national suicide statistics from January 2013 to December 2017, allowing for seasonal effects and an underlying increasing trend in monthly suicide rates. The study found no significant change in the level or trend of suicides among 18 to 64 year-olds. A previous study had already suggested a 19 percent increase in internet searches concerning suicide in the days after "13 Reasons Why" was released. Netflix, which has renewed the drama for a third season, said it was "looking into the research". "This is a critically important topic and we have worked hard to ensure that we handle this sensitive issue responsibly," a Netflix spokesperson said. — AFP

Does my life look good in this? The London homes that make a perfect selfie

Standing on black and white steps - chequered like her Chanel handbag - Helen Schweitzer poses elegantly on a London doorstep to capture the winning photograph for her Instagram page. Fellow Insta fiend, Chantal Mallett, prefers the pastel patchwork and blossoming wisteria of a nearby Notting Hill street for her bridal couture feed. While Luisa Hille models a classical stone gatepost, soaking up the sunshine, as her legs dangle on the wall of a multi-million-pound, sea-green home. The front-step selfie is a phenomenon that grew with social media in an era when few can afford to buy the actual lifestyle.

"Your backdrop is important because it gives out a subliminal message to the audience that you're pitching to - just as pop videos do," said Henry Pryor, an estate agent. Schweitzer is typical of the trend - young and beautiful. Scroll down her online feed and the German blogger appears outside another London property, this time nestled in a thick coat, leaning on the railing of a Barbie-pink home. In a third shot, the 20-year-old brunette dances through a cobbled mews - where homes top a million pounds (\$1.3 million) - with a retro, red moped to the rear. Schweitzer is not alone in property stalking.

Thousands flock to the west London area of Notting Hill - one of Britain's priciest postcodes - to seek out colorful facades to elevate and enliven their social media. "Notting Hill is actually my favorite area in London. The homes are the prettiest," the blogger, with more than 1,000 followers, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. "A lot of rich people live there, which is why the area is very clean and pretty." Pryor - who sources homes for the rich, famous and "plain hard working" - said modeling top property connoted success. "There is something very aspirational, very safe and traditional about being photographed in Kensington and Chelsea."

Mi casa...

The trend of 'borrowing' backdrops for social media irks some home owners, while others say the mostly young photographers are just living a dream they will never afford. Schweitzer, who posts five to 20 lifestyle pictures a month as an unpaid hobby, said she had never received complaints but sympathized with owners whose iconic homes are photo-bombarded. "I can imagine that people get annoyed if they hundreds of people take pictures in front of your door," she said.

When resident Gabriele bought her Notting Hill home in 2006, she was unaware it had featured in the hit romantic film 'Love Actually'. She soon found out when a regular weekend "selfie brigade" crammed her sidewalk lining up

Sounds of Syrian prison nominated for UK art prize

A sound installation based on interviews with former detainees at a high-security prison in Syria has been nominated for Britain's Turner Prize for contemporary art in a shortlist unveiled yesterday. Lawrence Abu Hamdan used sound effects to help six survivors of Saydnaya "recall their audio memories, to map the unknown architecture of the prison and to understand what happened there", the judges said. Amnesty International said as many as 13,000 people were hanged between 2011 and 2015 at the military-run prison near Damascus.

In May 2017 Washington claimed that Damascus had built a "crematorium" at Saydnaya to cover up thousands of prisoner deaths. The shortlist also features London-based Helen Cammock, nominated for a film on the role of women in the civil rights movement in Londonderry in 1968 at the start of three decades of unrest in Northern Ireland.

Colombian-born Oscar Murillo and self-taught artist Tai Shani were also nominated for the prestigious prize, which is to be announced on December 3. An exhibition with the works of all four nominated artists will open in September at the Turner Contemporary gallery in the seaside town of Margate. The prize is open to visual artists born or based in Britain. — AFP

for a front-door shot. "Some days it's ok, as long as they ask nicely, and other days you just want to shoot them," said Gabriele, who preferred to keep her full identity private. Her front door won fame in the 2003 Richard Curtis movie featuring Hugh Grant and a series of romantic entanglements between Keira Knightley, Colin Firth and Emma Thompson.

On a sunny Saturday, her home draws up to 200 camera-phone wielding visitors, seeking the bright pink backdrop of her property for their online feeds, she said. "We are the most Instagrammed house in Notting Hill." The hashtag #NottingHill had close to 1.2 million posts on the Instagram platform, with doorsteps a recurring theme.

Some snap-happy visitors want more than a quick shot. Gabriele said she had witnessed an Indian wedding and multiple marriage proposals on her stoop. Often models bring multiple outfit changes or even pose on her bike. "It beggars belief," she said. Her area is already one of London's richest, lined with elegant stucco houses owned by bankers, oligarchs and celebrities. Yet according to agent Pryor, a property known from television shows or hit films could potentially increase its visibility and add a price premium of up to 10 percent on sale.



Sympathy or cynicism?

The price of the average house in London has increased from 11 times the average income in 2009 to 17 times the average income today, according to the thinktank Centre for Cities. "It has become increasingly difficult for young people to get on the property ladder without support," said Anthony Breach, analyst at Centre for Cities.

"Younger people are now paying the price of London's housing shortage in both higher house prices and higher rents," he said. An average house in Notting Hill costs just over two million pounds (\$2.55 million) according to real estate agent Foxtons, up from about 392,000 pounds (\$500,000) two decades ago. A single Londoner hoping to buy a property would need at least 15 years to save for a deposit, according to recent data published by real estate agents, Hamptons International. Nor is the selfie doorstep phenomenon limited to London. Multicolored Rue Cremieux in Paris is a dream for fashion shoots and Instagram fiends alike, its once modest worker cottages now among the city's most expensive properties. — Reuters

Searching for superpowers? Chefs look to forgotten ingredients

On three continents, three women have taken three different paths to find healthy and tasty solutions to one of the world's greatest health crises - poor nutrition. Chef Bela Gil found her solution in Brazil's Amazon; in India, Anahita Dhondy discovered her answer in her grandmother's recipes; and Rosette Fien, an entrepreneur in Cameroon, pulled what she needed from the environment around her. The trio is among a growing number of culinary innovators tackling unhealthy diets by concocting meals with local, sometimes forgotten, grains and plants to nurture better health but also alleviate poverty and even protect the environment.

For the race is now on to tackle unhealthy eating that has overtaken smoking as the world's biggest killer, according to the latest Global Burden of Disease study that found one in five deaths in 2017 was due to poor diet. It was after visiting the Amazon for the first time in 2014 that Brazilian television celebrity chef Gil realized the rainforest held unexpected culinary treasures.

"The Amazon is (much) more well understood about (its) medicinal properties; we don't look much to the Amazon as a resource for food," Gil, who also has several cookbooks to her name, told the Thomson Reuters Foundation. Exploring the jungle's nuts, fruits and plants, she saw the forest held the key to better nutrition - and its own survival.

Yet, Gil realized that nutritious resources like babassu oil and flour - made from the Amazon's babassu palm that is rich in iron, fibre, vitamins and minerals - were virtually unknown to the forest's indigenous communities. "The babassu flour was something that they really didn't know how to use," she said.

Amazonian treasures

In 2017, she began teaching about 100 cooks from northern Para state how to use the babassu flour to prepare school meals, instead of more mainstream and less nutritious ingredients like corn starch or wheat flour. "They loved the recipes, the kids loved the recipes as well," said the chef as she baked cookies with babassu flour and cocoa nibs, another Amazonian ingredient. The cultivation of such ingredients also benefits the forest directly by helping to support indigenous communities who are the best protectors of the forest, said Gil.

"If they don't find any other work or anything to sell or to maintain themselves over there, they will leave. And if they leave, maybe a soy producer will just come and deforest everything," she said. Stefano Padulosi, senior scientist for Bioversity International, a Rome-based non-profit, said plenty of benefits could be unleashed from a wealth of underutilized food species. "What we need today is a true paradigm shift: no longer focusing purely on yield, but con-

sider also quality of food, the nutritional yield needed to nourish people and keep them healthy," he said.

Across the Atlantic ocean, in Cameroon's economic centre of Douala, entrepreneur Rosette Fien has been tapping into the country's moringa trees, soya beans and other ingredients to tackle the scourge of malnutrition. Nearly a third of children living in six of the country's 10 regions experience growth stunting or chronic malnutrition, according to the United Nations children's agency (UNICEF). Nutritious food for babies and small children - most of which is imported - is too expensive for many to buy, Fien said.



Cameroon challenges

More than a third of Cameroon's population lives in poverty, according to the World Bank. "It's ever so difficult for a woman, a single mum, to afford 250 francs (\$0.40) for a sachet of an imported brand (of baby food), and that will run out quickly," she said, adding that babies need multiple sachets every day. In 2013, after giving birth, Fien set about trying to devise her own baby food, consulting doctors, dieticians and nutritional experts and using local ingredients.

The result is a mix of organic cereals for children aged 6 months or older, as well as adults, that costs about a third of the price of imports, sold under the name Kayvey Nutri Foods. "This came as a solution that everyone could afford, that was locally made and free of chemicals," she said. Since 2015, Fien has run a small factory where she works with six others. She also employs 21 women as distributors. "We sell in a lot of slums, that had been our target area from the beginning. They are the ones that need us the most. Our food is something they can buy," she said. "I've really seen how it has changed lives, given good health to babies." — Reuters

Lifestyle | Music & Movies



AVENGERS: ENDGAME

Comedy, action and a good drama

By Sahar Moussa

I was honored to be invited to the Kuwait premiere of Avengers: Endgame by the Walt Disney Company Middle East, Italia Films & VOX Cinemas (@brazen-pruae). This means that I got to watch it before anyone else in Kuwait on April 23, 2019. But I don't know if I was lucky or not, because for some reason I felt that I owe it to the Russo brothers to keep their secret and control my enthusiasm, intense and eager enjoyment and don't give spoilers after their genuine letter to their fans (I am one of them). "Because so many of you have invested your time, your hearts, and your souls into these stories, we're once again asking for your help," the Russo Brothers said. "When you see Endgame in the coming weeks, please don't spoil it for others, the same way you wouldn't want it spoiled for you."

Yes, I felt it was my duty and mission to keep my mouth shut and not to write anything about the ending or spoil it for others. So it's finally the end for Avengers. After 11 years and 22 movies, the Avengers: Endgame is the final movie in the Infinity Saga. I can't say it's totally the end of the Marvel Cinematic Universe by any stretch. There are more movies to come, including Captain Marvel and television series, a standalone Black Widow movie and more from Spider-Man.



I will not write too many spoilers, but just give a quick review of the movie. "Endgame" concludes the story of the six original Avengers in Marvel's cinematic universe - Iron Man, Captain America, Black Widow, Hawkeye, Hulk and Thor. It picks up after last year's "Avengers: Infinity War" left fans hanging when many of the Marvel heroes seemed to turn to dust at the hand of the villain Thanos, played by Josh Brolin.

Although it's an action movie, this doesn't mean it doesn't have emotional scenes that will leave you in tears. In fact Endgame was a mixture of comedy, action and good drama. The cinematic scenes certainly did not disappoint, and lived up to the high standards we came to know and love in Marvel movies.



The only two negative comments that I have to say about the movie was I wish that the fight scenes were elongated, for I know for a fact that Marvel fans were hungry and waiting for this epic confrontation and 'the fight'. The second comment is I wish there was a further twist in the story, which we usually expect from Marvel movies. Unfortunately, the flow and the sequence of the story was a bit predictable, but can't say it wasn't enjoyable, because after all, we waited long for this epic ending.

There were three scenes that really put me in awe. The first was the most emotional scene that not only



left me in tears, but made me very sad: when two of my favorite characters died. Later I felt better when one of my colleagues comforted me by saying, "Come on, you know that death means nothing in the comic world." (That makes sense). The second scene was when Captain America carried Thor's hammer to fight Thanos, and the third was when all the powerful women gathered in one amazing act to show girl power.

But it's undeniable the three-hour movie keeps you glued to your seat, because you don't want to miss a single scene. After all, we are at the first true stopping point of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. Last but not the least, if you watch the movie, remember what an Avenger will do to protect their friends, and know that you have a mission not to spoil for other people who are still waiting to get a ticket to watch the movie.

Some tips when watching the movie:

- 1) Don't forget to bring some tissues (I guarantee you will cry).
- 2) Don't forget to wear the most comfortable clothes you have (warm socks and a blanket is not a bad idea).
- 3) Don't forget to bring a lot of munchies, water and food (You will be hungry after three hours and the adrenalin rush).



'Avengers' finale shatters records with \$1.2 billion debut

"Avengers: Endgame," the hugely-anticipated superhero series-ender from Marvel, set a new standard for Hollywood blockbusters this weekend with stunning hauls of \$357 million in North America and \$1.2 billion worldwide, industry data showed Monday. The fourth and final chapter in the adventures of Iron Man, Hulk, Thor and company managed 43 times the domestic take of the No. 2 film, Marvel's "Captain Marvel," which made \$8.3 million. With a star-studded cast including Robert Downey Jr., Chris Evans, Mark Ruffalo, Chris Hemsworth, Scarlett Johansson, Bradley Cooper and Josh Brolin, it took in a jaw-dropping \$330 million in China alone, the highest ever opening in the Middle Kingdom.

With a sky-high 96 percent rating from critics on the Rotten Tomatoes reviews website, "Avengers" could lead to "the biggest revenue-generating summer (and year) in box office history," Comscore's Paul Dergarabedian said. Packed with spectacular fight scenes, special effects, gags and tear-jerking moments, it almost doubled the previous world record opening weekend take held by its predecessor, "Avengers: Infinity War." The movie cost around \$500 million to make including marketing costs and was expected to break even during its debut weekend, a feat unheard of for a major blockbuster.

Entertainment media are predicting a final global take of up to \$2.5 billion, which would give it a place among the most lucrative movies of all time alongside "Avatar" (\$2.8 billion), "Titanic" (\$2.2 billion), "Star Wars: The Force Awakens" (\$2.07 billion), and "Infinity War" (\$2.05 billion). "The Marvel Studios team have continued to challenge notions of what is possible at the movie theater, both in terms of storytelling and at the box office," said Alan Horn, the chairman of Walt Disney Studios, which owns Marvel.

Around the clock screenings

Among the many other superlatives being thrown in Marvel's direction, "Endgame" is the widest release in North American history, showing on 4,662 screens in the US and Canada, according to box office monitor Exhibitor Relations. It averaged \$75,075 a screen-another record. Around the world, "Avengers" fans reserved their tickets well before the movie's release. In India, 2.5 million tickets were pre-sold in a variety of languages including English, Hindi, Tamil and Telugu. Others who had failed to do their advance planning had to line up for hours at box offices to see the final installment of the story that began with 2008's "Iron Man."

In Venezuela, beset by blackouts, civil unrest and an economic crisis, fans got up before dawn to watch a special early morning screening, as evening shows were considered too risky in a country with sky-high crime rates. To meet exceptional demand in the United States, and taking into account the three-hour running time of the blockbuster, AMC cinemas organized around-the-clock screenings over the weekend in dozens of movie theatres across the country, often playing to packed houses. In total, the film became the biggest opening weekend box office hit in 44 countries, including Britain, Korea, France, Argentina, Brazil, Mexico, Italy and Spain, and broke records for one-day earnings in 29 countries. "From the very beginning with 'Iron Man,' all we've wanted to do was tell stories that brought these characters to life onscreen the way we've experienced them as fans of the comics," said Kevin Feige, the head of Marvel Studios.

Back on Earth...

Feige, who has produced all 22 movies in the Marvel Cinematic Universe, ascribed the "unbelievable" success of the latest addition to "fans around the world who have supported us through it all." Back on Earth, last week's top film, Warner Bros.' horror flick "The Curse of La Llorona," slipped to third spot behind the two Marvel movies, with \$8 million. It stars Linda Cardellini, Raymond Cruz and Patricia Velasquez in the story, loosely based on Mexican folklore, of a Los Angeles woman trying to protect her children from a ghost. In fourth place was "Breakthrough," at \$6.8 million. The faith-based story of a mother (Chrissy Metz) who refuses to abandon hope after her son (Marcel Ruiz) falls into an icy lake, was produced by NBA star Stephen Curry.

And in fifth was Warner Bros.' lighthearted superhero tale "Shazam!," at \$5.6 million. It stars Asher Angel as Billy Baston, an unhappy foster kid who becomes a muscular superhero (Zachary Levi) when the secret word is pronounced. Despite its title, "Avengers: Endgame" will not mark the end of the Marvel Cinematic Universe. "Spider-Man: Far From Home," which Marvel made in partnership with Disney rival Sony, comes out in July.

Rounding out the weekend's top 10 were: "Dumbo" (\$3.49 million), "Little" (\$3.47 million), "Pet Sematary" (\$4.9 million), "Missing Link" (\$1.3 million), "Us" (\$1.2 million), "Penguins" (\$1.1 million)—AFP

New UK opera revisits death of former Russian spy

The 2006 radiation poisoning of the Russian dissident Alexander Litvinenko is to be set to music at Britain's Grange Park Opera as part of its 2020 season, the company said on its website on Tuesday. Told largely in English, with some choruses sung in Russian, next June's world premiere performance of "The Life & Death of Alexander Litvinenko" will explore the spy's defection and death through a series of flashbacks, flash-forwards and historic film footage.

The former FSB agent fled Russia in 1999, after revealing an alleged plot by the agency to kill tycoon Boris Berezovsky, a supporter-turned-foe of President Vladimir Putin. Seven years later, he fell ill after having tea with two Russians in a London hotel and died three weeks later. A British inquiry said later that Putin "probably approved" the killing. Former City fund manager Anthony Bolton composed the score for the Litvinenko opera, using a wide range of inspirations including an army marching song and the Chechen national anthem. The opera will run from 6 June to 19 July. — AFP

Woodstock 50 fest under threat as investor pulls out

A highly anticipated celebration of the storied Woodstock festival's 50th anniversary appeared under threat Monday, with a primary investor saying it was canceled as promoters held it was still on. Contemporary heavyweights including Jay-Z, along with veteran acts like Santana, were to play the anniversary weekend August 16-18 in upstate New York's Watkins Glen. But Amplifi Live, a lead financier of the festival, released a statement saying that "despite our tremendous investment of time, effort and commitment, we don't believe the production of the festival can be executed as an event worthy of the Woodstock Brand name while also ensuring the health and safety of the artists, partners and attendees."

"As a result and after careful consideration, Dentsu Aegis Network's Amplifi Live, a partner of Woodstock 50, has decided to cancel the festival," said the state-

ment obtained by AFP. "As difficult as it is, we believe this is the most prudent decision for all parties involved." But organizers are disputing that the festival has been scrapped, according to upstate New York's Poughkeepsie Journal newspaper, which quoted them as saying "Woodstock 50 vehemently denies the festival's cancellation and legal remedy will (be) sought."

Woodstock promoters did not immediately respond to an AFP inquiry. Amplifi Live is the investment arm of Dentsu Aegis Network, a London-based marketing firm owned by the Japanese company Dentsu. The 2019 edition of peace, love and music was to span genres in a bid to appeal to fans of the original weekend-where icons including Jimi Hendrix and Janis Joplin jammed in the pouring rain-as well as today's young concert-goers.

But last week ticket sales were postponed for the festival to "refine logistical plans," while a report from industry insider Billboard cited concerns over capacity-some 100,000 festival-goers were anticipated-site readiness and permit snags. According to Billboard, Amplifi Live has already invested some \$30 million on the star-studded line-up. The festival, slated to be held about 115 miles (185 kilometers) from the original 1969 site, is separate from an anniversary concert planned for that spot over the same weekend. — AFP



Buddhist novices play with toy guns during the rocket festival in Nantar, Shan state. — AFP photos



Pa'O ethnic people prepare homemade rockets for launching during a festival in Nantar, Shan state.



Pa'O ethnic people carry homemade rockets.

Dragons and wizards fired up at Myanmar rocket festival



Pa'O ethnic people prepare a homemade rocket for launching.



Pa'O ethnic women visit a stall during the rocket festival.

Clad in elaborate headdresses representing dragons and wizards, Myanmar's ethnic Pa'O fire huge, homemade rockets into the sky—an annual call for plentiful rains and a chance for a windfall of cash. The Pa'O are one of the largest of the country's minority groups, numbering around 1.2 million people and living mainly in Shan state's highlands. They are overwhelmingly Buddhist but many intertwine animism with their faith, believing they descend from a she-dragon and a wizard with mystical powers, known as a "weiza".

Twelve days after Myanmar's new year celebrations, as temperatures rise to over 40 degrees, Pa'O communities travel to Nantar village for the annual rocket competition, which ended yesterday. "Calling the rain like this every year means we get bumper rice harvests," co-organizer Rike Kham tells AFP at the Pwe Lu Phaung festival's 144th edition.

Dragons and wizards

People dress in their finest, donning dark tunics and trousers in mourning for the kingdom they lost to the Bamar (Burmese) nearly 1,000 years ago. But their headwear make up for their sombre attire. Many women opt for a traditional bright orange cloth, symbolizing the dragon. Others, like Nan Pyone Kha Cho, 21, choose a more modern approach, sporting turbans of scarlet, gold or silver. A golden hairpin is the "mother dragon's fang", she explains. Men wear rolled-up cloth of various hues on their heads in the image of the "weiza" as they parade singing and dancing into the village, holding aloft their homemade rockets.

'Safety first'

In the past, these were crafted entirely from bamboo and would carry up to 40 kilos of explosives. Now they are made with bamboo-wrapped metal, holding five different grades of gunpowder. For "safety reasons" the maximum length is three feet (0.9 meters) and the diameter must not exceed three inches (eight centimeters). A monk blesses each device, praying for a safe and long flight, then one-by-one the teams are called to the 10 meter-high bamboo firing rig. The rocket is laid in position, the trajectory carefully adjusted. The team captain takes a drag from a cigarette then uses it to light the fuse, before clambering down the bamboo rungs as the rocket lifts off with a deafening roar. They can land up to seven or eight kilometers away, creating craters 1.5 meters deep in the fields. A team of "linesmen" note the landing positions so they can later be collected.



Pa'O ethnic people watch the launching of a homemade rocket.

High stakes

Accidents are rare, says Rike Kham. Aside from an unlucky water buffalo hit in 2016, nobody has been hurt since two people died ten years ago after "badly mixing the gunpowder". The whole village celebrates a good flight—they after all clubbed together to fund the rockets that cost around \$170 each.

Judged by distance, the villages behind the top three placed rockets each take a share of the pooled entry fees. With 75 rockets in this year's competition, the prize money amounts to some \$4,000 — enough to upgrade a road, build a bridge or connect more homes to the grid.

Girl rocket power

One group of women is challenging the traditionally testosterone-driven festivities. They dance into the village for the second year holding high their own rocket, albeit full of donation money rather than gunpowder.

But next year they will take part with "real rockets", Mhoe Phar Ohn Ye, 67, said smiling, adding that women from other villages are following their lead. As the sun sets and the rockets fall silent, the next generation is in training. Groups of boys set off fireworks to squeals of delight and fire toy guns into the air in celebration.— AFP

Romania's witches harness the powers of the web

"Repeat after me! To be together with who I want," a family of Romanian witches chant via a video call to a client in India paying for a love spell. The session, in a decorated shed in a back yard 15 km (9 miles) north of Bucharest, is one of many consultations the family holds online, alternating them with rituals livestreamed on Facebook to build up their digital following. "A truly powerful witch can solve problems from a distance," explains 20-year-old witch Cassandra Buzea. "It's not the phone or Facebook that are doing the magic. It's the words that we're saying, the rituals that we're doing and it's enough to look each other in the eye for the ritual to work."



The power of the Internet has allowed Romania's busy witch community to gradually migrate their ancient practices onto the Web. Witchcraft has long been seen as a folk custom in the eastern European country, and many of

its estimated 4,000 witches are luring customers from Europe, Asia and the United States. Buzea said it was the younger generation that had persuaded the old about the powers of the 'selfie', and her mother was quickly on board. "Nothing's changed, the craft is the same, but now it's much easier for us to be in contact with clients from other countries," said Mihaela Minca, who taught her daughter Buzea the family craft.

Love, health, money

They would not disclose how much they earn but said a tarot reading starts at 50 euros (\$56.11). However, many of the special rituals, often to do with love, health or money, last weeks and can run into the hundreds. The witches also said they had recently turned their attention to politics, joining anti-corruption protests. Minca said she connected online with nine witches and wizards from across Europe to the United States, seeking to put a curse on Romanian lawmakers seen by witches as corrupt.

Streamed online, the group had performed a mass ritual simultaneously with their overseas associates, against "those who don't do their jobs, those who have bad intentions, will lose their positions and suffer health problems," said Minca. She said they plan to harness the global power of the Internet once more ahead of May's European parliament elections. "We will continue this ritual on the 25th of May. We will do a powerful ritual against the Romanian government, so on the 26th when the European elections are taking place we will cast our spell for the good of the country."

Transparency International ranks Romania as one of the EU's most corrupt states and Brussels has kept its judicial system under special monitoring since it joined the bloc in 2007. Romania's ruling Social Democrats spearheaded an overhaul of the country's criminal codes last year. The European Commission said the proposed changes were a reversal of a decade of democratic and market reforms in the former Communist country. — Reuters



Eddie Redmayne opens new Planet OMEGA exhibition in Shanghai

To celebrate the world debut of the new Planet OMEGA exhibition in Shanghai, the renowned English actor, Eddie Redmayne, joined guests for the event's grand opening. Installed at the Power Station of Art in Shanghai, Planet OMEGA offers a unique insight into one of the world's most iconic watch brands. Along with many heritage and modern timepieces, the showcase explores all of the diverse histories, passions and partnerships that set OMEGA apart. Raynald Aeschlimann, President and CEO of OMEGA, welcomed Eddie Redmayne to the stage and spoke about his pride in opening the new exhibition. He said, "I have always described OMEGA as a truly aspirational brand. This exhibition shows you exactly why. It covers all of the varied areas that OMEGA has influenced, from space exploration to the Olympic Games, and I think everyone will be able to see the unique impact our watches have had."

Eddie Redmayne, who joined OMEGA in 2015, said, "In just four years with OMEGA, I've been so impressed by the diversity of the brand. Their qualities



of style, reliability and precision have had such a wide-ranging importance throughout the world. It's great to see everything come together in one exhibition. As an actor, I love stories and OMEGA certainly has many extraordinary stories to tell."



OMEGA's heritage began in 1848 and, since this time, the brand has grown into a leading name within watchmaking and beyond. Visitors to the exhibition will be able to explore seven distinctive topics, including Olympic Games & Sports, Space, Glamour, Precision, Ocean, James Bond and Heritage. This is a chance to really see how OMEGA has captured time - through time. Open in Shanghai from April 27 to May 12, Planet OMEGA will continue to tour China in 2019 before commencing a world tour over the next several years.

Classifieds

Thursday, May 2, 2019

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 DIRECTORATE GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION
 METEOROLOGICAL DEPARTMENT

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www.met.gov.kw

DAY: Wednesday 01/05/2019 Valid From 7 PM To 7 AM

Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Fair with light to moderate variable wind to southerly wind, with speed of 06 - 24 km/h.

BY DAY: Hot with light variable wind to light to moderate south easterly wind, with speed of 06 - 30 km/h.

WEATHER WARNING			No Current Warnings	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 01/05/2019 1200 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	38 °C	26 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	38 °C	21 °C		
ABDALY	40 °C	20 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	39 °C	23 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	37 °C	22 °C		
SALMIYAH	33 °C	26 °C		
AHMADI	31 °C	26 °C		
NUWASIB	35 °C	22 °C		
WAFRA	39 °C	19 °C		
SALMY	38 °C	21 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Thursday	05/02	Hot	40 °C	21 °C	VRB-SE	06 - 30 km/h
Friday	05/03	Hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for rising dust and rain that might be thundery later on	41 °C	22 °C	SE-S	15 - 45 km/h
Saturday	05/04	Hot and Partly cloudy causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery	38 °C	24 °C	SE-NW	15 - 40 km/h
Sunday	05/05	Hot and some high clouds will appear	40 °C	23 °C	NW	15 - 38 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:40
Sunrise	05:06
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	15:21
Sunset	18:25
Isha	19:48

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	36 °C
MIN. Temp.	18 °C
MAX. RH	73 %
MIN. RH	13 %
MAX. Wind	S 28 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

All times are local time unless otherwise stated. UPO

2019/05/01 15:09 UTC V1.00 T2.4 8-1 ع م ج ق

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

The Embassy of Canada
 in Kuwait seeks two full time positions:

1-Security Officer
 The ideal applicant must have experience in the field of security/crisis management, speak English and Arabic and be legally residing in Kuwait.

2- Receptionist
 The ideal applicant must speak English, French and Arabic and be legally residing in Kuwait.

To apply, please follow the link www.kuwait.gc.ca, complete the online application form and upload a CV and a covering letter by the Closing date: 09 / 05 / 2019

Please note that only those chosen for further consideration will be contacted.

CHANGE OF NAME

I, Gayathri Vinodkrishnan D/o Vinod Krishnan Erath Unikkat 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, Mustafaa Sabbar 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 hereby change my daughter name from Husaina to Husaina Mustafaa Virpurwala, with immediate effect. (C.5521)

I, Varughese Benoy, Indian Passport holder No: L3819609 issued in Kuwait hereby change name as it appears in my passport from given name: Varughese Benoy to given name: Benoy, surname: Varughese for all future purposes. (C.5524)

Hakimuddin S/o Shabbir Husain Jawddiya Passport No. Z2689498 has change my name from Hakimuddin I want to add my surname as Jawddiya. Given name: Hakimuddin. Surname: Jawddiya. (C.5523)

I, Hakimuddin father of Munira, holder of Indian Passport No. L9664327, issued at Kuwait 19/06/2014 and presently residing at Khaitan, do hereby change my daughter name from Munira to given name: Munira, surname: Jawddiya. (C.5523)

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

Directorate General of Civil Aviation Home Page (www.kuwait-airport.com.kw)

Flight Schedule

DIAL 161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Thursday 2/5/2019				Departure Flights on Thursday 2/5/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	JZR	212	Jeddah	13:45
JZR	254	Amman	00:20	KAC	662	Abu Dhabi	14:00
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	KAC	672	Dubai	14:00
KAC	102	London	00:50	KNE	231	Riyadh	14:10
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	QTR	1078	Doha	14:10
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	FDB	5059	Dubai	14:15
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	GFA	221	Bahrain	14:15
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	SVA	500	Jeddah	14:15
JZR	734	Cairo	01:35	KAC	792	Madinah	14:40
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	JZR	222	Riyadh	14:45
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	304	Mumbai	14:45
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	618	Doha	14:50
PGT	828	Istanbul	02:00	KAC	562	Amman	14:50
ETH	620	Addis Ababa	02:15	KAC	788	Jeddah	14:55
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	118	New York	15:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	KNE	529	Jeddah	15:05
KAC	156	Istanbul	02:35	KAC	412	Bangkok	15:10
PGT	860	Istanbul	02:50	ETD	303	Abu Dhabi	15:15
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	OMA	645	Muscat	15:20
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	ABY	127	Sharjah	15:35
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	UAE	857	Dubai	15:45
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	KAC	546	Cairo	15:50
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	KNE	531	Jeddah	16:05
JZR	724	Alexandria	03:30	FDB	051	Dubai	16:10
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	JZR	732	Cairo	16:10
LMU	510	Cairo	04:00	KAC	502	Beirut	16:15
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR	1072	Doha	16:15
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	FEQ	241	Alexandria	16:45
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	FDB	8065	Dubai	16:55
MSR	0516	Cairo	04:25	SAW	705	Damascus	17:00
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	JZR	116	Doha	17:05
DHX	170	Bahrain	05:05	SVA	510	Riyadh	17:15
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	GFA	215	Bahrain	17:30
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	JZR	214	Jeddah	17:35
KAC	552	Cairo	05:50	JZR	124	Dubai	17:40
KAC	362	Colombo	06:05	JZR	104	Bahrain	18:00
BAW	157	London	06:10	QTR	1080	Doha	18:10
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	612	Tbilisi	18:15
JZR	112	Doha	06:35	JZR	302	Istanbul	18:20
KAC	106	London	06:40	MSR	620	Cairo	18:30
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	JZR	704	Asyut	18:45
KAC	206	Islamabad	06:50	RJA	640	Amman	19:05
IRA	601	Tehran	06:50	GFA	217	Bahrain	19:05
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:00	ABY	123	Sharjah	19:20
JZR	402	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	744	Dammam	19:25
QTR	8511	Doha	07:05	NIA	161	Cairo	19:30
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC	616	Bahrain	19:40
JZR	714	Sohag	07:20	KAC	776	Riyadh	19:45
KAC	354	Bengaluru	08:00	KNE	381	Taif	20:00
KAC	332	Trivandrum	08:05	FDB	057	Dubai	20:05
KAC	352	Kochi	08:05	OMA	647	Muscat	20:05
JZR	408	Ahmedabad	08:05	DLH	624	Frankfurt	20:10
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	MEA	402	Beirut	20:15
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	JZR	126	Dubai	20:20
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	RBG	213	Sohag	20:30
OMA	641	Muscat	09:00	KAC	620	Doha	20:30
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	174	Munich	20:30
FDB	5055	Dubai	09:20	QTR	1088	Doha	20:40
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	KLM	445	Amsterdam	21:00
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	ETD	307	Abu Dhabi	21:10
IRA	675	Lar	09:55	UAE	859	Dubai	21:15
SVA	512	Riyadh	10:00	ALK	229	Colombo	21:15
JZR	410	Delhi	10:30	KAC	168	Paris	21:20
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	THY	764	Istanbul	21:30
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	KAC	676	Dubai	21:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	KAC	164	MXP	21:40
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	GFA	219	Bahrain	21:50
JZR	716	Sohag	12:10	KAC	564	Amman	21:55
JZR	252	Amman	12:20	QTR	1082	Doha	22:05
KAC	614	Bahrain	12:30	ETD	309	Abu Dhabi	22:15
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	KAC	786	Jeddah	22:20
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	AIC	981	Chennai/Ahmedabad	22:25
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	RBG	555	Alexandria	22:30
IRA	667	Esfahan	13:00	JZR	128	Dubai	22:50
AXB	393	Kozhikode	13:10	GEC	8456	Frankfurt	22:55
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	BBC	043	Dhaka	23:00
				MSC	501	Alexandria	23:10
				MSC	415	Sohag	23:15
				MSR	614	Cairo	23:30

Despite full reservoirs, Iraq water woes far from over

AL-MASHAHADA, Iraq: After plentiful winter rains, Iraq is heading into summer with overflowing reservoirs and lush marshes. But don't be fooled, observers warn: its water woes and related protests are not over. Far from last year's shortages, "the land between the two rivers" is expected to hold 42 billion cu m in its reservoirs at the start of summer, more than twice the 2018 amount. But that has not washed away longstanding challenges: Poor infrastructure, few funds, sharing disputes with neighbors, climate change and population booms.

Nestled between palms and tall reeds north of Baghdad, the Al-Mashahada pumping station is punched through with bullet holes, its metal pipes and cisterns rusted. Broken plastic pipes litter the dirt road leading up to it. At another overgrown station nearby, a main tank leaks a steady stream, day and night. These stations are par for the course in Iraq, whose water infrastructure dates back decades and has been worn by consecutive wars, sanctions blocking spare part imports, the US-led invasion and finally, the Islamic State group.

Parts of the network were installed over 60 years ago in soil that can be corrosive when wet, said Iraqi environmental expert Azzam Alwash. "So you have a network with corroded pipes full of holes," he said, that could leak out as much as 60-70 percent of pumped water before it reaches households or farmlands. Once there, it is hardly used responsibly, with farmers relying on wasteful flood irrigation and families leaving taps running unnecessarily. The United Nations estimates Iraq's daily per capita water consumption is nearly double the world standard of 200 litres.

'Almost zero'

In 2014, Iraq prepared a 20-year, \$180-billion plan to manage its water crisis. But it was stillborn, as IS seized a third of the country the same year and money was diverted to fight it. "We've needed a new station for years, but the funding totally froze in 2014 for military purposes," said Ahmad Mahmud, who heads Al-Mashahada's water resources. Despite IS's defeat in 2017, promised funds never came, he told AFP, and a new station is now being built by UN children's agency UNICEF. "I couldn't afford pipes without them," Mahmud admitted.

Mehdi Rasheed, who heads Iraq's dam projects, said the ministry's budget was "almost zero" as Iraq fought IS. Last summer, massive protests over water shortages put the spotlight squarely on services, and Iraq's government appeared to take notice. It allocated nearly \$760 million to the water ministry



AL-MUSHAHADA, Iraq: Workers check the Al-Mashahada pumping station north of Iraq's capital Baghdad on April 19, 2019. — AFP

for this year - about 60 percent higher than for 2018. "It's reassuring, but it's just a good start," Mehdi said.

It remains one of the smallest ministerial budgets, around 15 times less than the electricity ministry. Even Iraq's premier has admitted the water systems are not ready for summer, when temperatures in Iraq can reach a blistering 55 degrees Celsius. "I would not be faithful if I said infrastructure is ready to receive all this," Adel Abdel Mahdi said, speaking in English.

Iraq's shortages can also be sourced beyond its borders. Roughly 70 percent of its water originates from its neighbors, according to the International Energy Agency, with the Euphrates winding from Turkey through Syria, while the Tigris - also from Turkey - is fed by rivers from Iran. As Turkey and Iran have developed their own dams and reservoirs, flows to Iraq have dropped. "We used to get about 15 billion cu m of water a year from Iran, we no longer get that," due to dams and rerouted rivers, said Alwash, the expert.

And when Turkey fills its massive Ilisu dam, levels in the Tigris are expected to sink even further. Iraq

is negotiating with both neighbors to reach water-sharing agreements, but its position as a receiving country gives it little leverage. Grinding on slowly behind the man-made disasters is climate change, with the World Bank predicting more severe droughts for Iraq starting in 2020. "One year we have to deal with a drought, the next year we have floods. This is the climate extremism we see worldwide," said Kareem Hassan, manager of the massive Tharthar barrage north of Baghdad.

Despite Hassan's nod to climate change, his answer to how Iraq should respond was less reassuring: "It was God's will to bless us with rain this year, so we'll see what next year brings." The apparent lack of planning is stark, considering Iraq's population of 40 million is projected to grow by another 10 million before 2030. That will leave the country with a 37 percent deficit in its water supply, according to the Iraq Energy Institute. That gap was already on Mahmud's mind as he looked at the fresh paint on Al-Mashahada's UN-funded station. "It's great now, for the 300 families here. But in three years, there will be double that number here," he said. — AFP

How Trump's hawkish advisors won debate on Iran oil sanctions

WASHINGTON: US President Donald Trump's unexpected decision to ban all Iranian oil purchases after May 1 - ending exemptions for eight nations - came after hawkish economic and security advisors allayed the president's fears of an oil price hike, according to three sources familiar with the internal debate. The unprecedented move to fully sever Tehran's financial lifeline - finalized just days before the April 22 announcement - underscores the influence of hardliners within Trump's National Security Council, which two of the sources said were the biggest advocates for the decision.

They had for months argued for tightening the sanctions over the objections of State Department officials who favored allowing some partners and allies to keep buying Iranian oil. "No one's actually tried to take this all the way to zero," a senior administration official told Reuters, adding that forging a consensus among government agencies required "a lot of work".

President Donald Trump has been eager to halt Iran's oil exports since slapping sanctions on the Islamic Republic last November for the first time since 2015, a move intended as punishment for Iran's nuclear ambitions and its support of armed militant groups in the Middle East. But he initially backed a go-slow approach, providing waivers to allies and trading partners such as China, India and Turkey.

The United States currently removes about 2 million barrels of oil per day from the world's supply through sanctions on the Iran and Venezuela industries. But Washington hopes that soaring US oil production - now at an all-time high of more than 12 million barrels per day - will keep global markets well-supplied and hold prices down.

By the weekend of April 20, with the initial 180-day waivers given to countries due to expire May 1, top economic and security advisors convinced Trump that the time had come to cut off Iranian oil exports completely, according to the sources, who spoke on condition of anonymity. The National Security Council played a key role in driving the argument to end the waiver program - especially Richard Goldberg, a new member of the Trump administration and a longtime advocate for confronting Iran, according to the two sources. He was "instrumental," one of the sources said.—Reuters

Indian Maoists kill 16...

Continued from Page 1

He reaffirmed Kuwait's strong condemnation of such heinous criminal acts that go against teachings of all faiths and humane values. HH the Amir prayed to Allah Almighty to bestow mercy upon those who lost their lives, and wished a speedy recovery for the wounded, HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and HH the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah sent similar cables to the Indian president.

Thousands of armed men and women - also known as Naxals - say they are fighting for the rights of indigenous tribal people, including for land, resources and jobs. India's current election began on April 11 and is due to run until May 19. Attacks by Maoist rebels often spike as the country goes to the polls. Last weekend rebels opened fire on Indian police, killing two constables and wounding a villager in the central state of Chhattisgarh, the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency reported.

One constable and an assistant constable died at the scene and the villager, shot in the chest, was taken by local residents for treatment, PTI reported. A roadside bomb attack on a political convoy in early April killed five people in Chhattisgarh, two days before the world's biggest election began. The rebels often call for a boy-

cott of elections as part of their campaign against the Indian state.

The Gadchiroli district, some 900 km east of state capital Mumbai, has long been a hotbed of violence, with at least 17 police killed there in 2009. It is a key transit point for the guerrillas, connecting western India with central and southern states in a restive tranche known as the "red corridor". On April 11, the day voting began, a landmine planted by Maoists exploded near a polling center there. There were no injuries.

In April 2018, raids on rebel camps in the region killed at least 37 insurgents, police said. Many of the slain rebels were women, police said. Yesterday's attack was the deadliest by Maoists in India since 2017 when at least 25 paramilitaries were killed in the Sukma district of central Chhattisgarh state. That in turn was the deadliest since Maoists killed 75 paramilitary soldiers from the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF) in 2010 in the same state.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi yesterday swiftly condemned the latest attack. "Strongly condemn the despicable attack on our security personnel in Gadchiroli, Maharashtra. I salute all the brave personnel," Modi tweeted. "Their sacrifices will never be forgotten. My thoughts & solidarity are with the bereaved families. The perpetrators of such violence will not be spared," he added. Devendra Fadnis, chief minister of Maharashtra and Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) ally of Modi, said he was "anguished" by the "cowardly" attack. Home Minister Rajnath Singh called it "an act of cowardice and desperation". "We are extremely proud of the valor of our police personnel," he said. "Their supreme sacrifice while serving the nation will not go in vain." — Agencies

and the extradition request has lapsed. However, Assange is facing a US extradition request, which was only revealed following his dramatic arrest, when he was dragged shouting from the embassy by police.

Assange appeared in court within hours of his arrest, and a judge found him guilty of breaching his bail conditions. The biggest concern for his lawyers is the US extradition request. An initial hearing in the case has been scheduled for today. The US indictment charges him with "conspiracy" for working with former US Army intelligence analyst Chelsea Manning to crack a password stored on Department of Defence computers in March 2010. Manning passed hundreds of thousands of classified documents to WikiLeaks, exposing US military wrongdoing in the Iraq war and diplomatic secrets about scores of countries. Assange could face up to five years in jail if found guilty, although his team is fighting his extradition and the process could take years. The charge has raised serious concerns among free speech advocates, including politicians such as British opposition Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn.

WikiLeaks is also back in the news in the United States, over its alleged role in the leak of Hillary Clinton's emails in 2016 US presidential election. The Swedish claims against Assange date back to 2010, when he was at the centre of a global storm over WikiLeaks' exposures. The sexual assault claim expired in 2015, but while the rape claim was dropped in 2017, the alleged victim wants the case reopened. If Stockholm makes a formal extradition request, Britain must decide whether to consider it before or after that of the United States. A group of British lawmakers have urged the Swedish case to take precedence, saying the rights of the alleged victims must not be lost in the political row. — AFP

Protests erupt at May Day rallies...

Continued from Page 1

But police swiftly broke up a sanctioned march by supporters of opposition leader Alexei Navalny

US AG grilled over handling of...

Continued from Page 1

The Democrats are debating whether Trump should be impeached for obstruction of justice based on the evidence set out in Mueller's 448-page report into Russian interference in the 2016 election. Barr rejected accusations that he misrepresented its conclusions when he declared in a March 24 memo that it did not support criminal charges against Trump. In a previously private March 27 letter to Barr made public Tuesday, Mueller complained that the attorney general's four-page summary "did not fully capture the context, nature, and substance" of his conclusions, and had generated "public confusion".

The letter also made clear that at least twice in March Mueller proposed that his boss make public the investigation's own summaries first, and that Barr had ignored that idea to release his version. Barr's summary of the report, the result of a two-year investigation which saw six former Trump aides convicted of various crimes, had a significant political impact. It allowed Trump to declare "complete and total exoneration" over accusations of conspiracy with Russia and obstruction of justice, and to claim that it proved that the Mueller probe was a politicized "witch hunt".

But when Barr released a redacted version of the full report on April 18, it painted an altogether more damaging picture of the president's conduct. Mueller said his team did not find evidence that Trump's campaign criminally conspired with Russians, but the report detailed repeated efforts by the Trump team to benefit from the sabotage. Mueller also laid out a damning pattern of obstructive behavior by the president and suggested Congress itself should investigate. But he declined to give his own opinion on whether Trump had committed a crime.

Barr told lawmakers he was surprised to find Mueller not making a decision on the obstruction issue, and said it would have been "irresponsible and unfair" to release the report without reaching a conclusion. He said his own summary had been an attempt to "notify the people of the bottom-line conclusion."

In testy exchanges with Democrats, Barr dismissed concerns about Mueller's letter, while skirting questions about his previous testimony to Congress, when he said

and made some 60 arrests after protesters chanted anti-Putin slogans.

Protests also marked Labor Day rallies in Algeria, where marchers called for top politicians to quit, and the Philippines, where a giant effigy of President Rodrigo Duterte was torched. And the tense standoff between pro- and anti-regime elements continued in Venezuela after opposition leader Juan Guaido called for a massive May Day protest to increase the pressure on President Maduro. — AFP

he had not received any objection from Mueller about his handling of the report. "It was my decision how and when to make it public, not Bob Mueller's," he said. The hearing made clear that Democrats remain convinced that Trump did obstruct justice but are unable to decide on whether to open an impeachment action against him based on the Mueller report now that the Justice Department has declined to pursue the issue further.

Barr was asked specifically about the report's finding that in June 2017 Trump directed White House counsel Don McGahn to tell the Justice Department's No. 2 official, Rod Rosenstein, that Mueller had conflicts of interest and must be removed. McGahn did not carry out the order. Rosenstein had appointed Mueller the prior month. Barr seemed to minimize the incident and said Trump believed "he never outright directed the firing of Mueller". "We did not think in this case that the government could show corrupt intent," Barr said.

Barr told Senator Dianne Feinstein, the top Democrat on the committee, "There is a distinction between saying to someone, 'Go fire him, go fire Mueller,' and saying, 'Have him removed based on conflict.' ... The difference between them is if you remove someone for a conflict of interest, then there would be - presumably - another person appointed." Feinstein, sounding unconvinced, responded, "Wouldn't you have to have in this situation an identifiable conflict that makes sense, or else doesn't it just become a fabrication?"

Democratic Senator Dick Durbin was more blunt. "I think the president's intention was very clear. He wanted this to end," Durbin said, referring to the investigation that cast a cloud over his presidency. Barr said it will be Trump's decision whether McGahn will be allowed to testify before Congress on the matter. Contrary to Trump's declarations of total and complete exoneration, the special counsel's report contained substantial evidence of misconduct, Feinstein said.

More ire was directed at Barr himself yesterday. "Attorney General Barr should resign," said Democratic Representative Adam Schiff, chairman of the House Intelligence Committee. "He misled the American people with his inaccurate summary of Mueller's report. Then he misled the Congress when he denied knowledge of Mueller's concerns."

"AG Barr is a disgrace, and his alarming efforts to suppress the Mueller report show that he's not a credible head of federal law enforcement," said Senator Elizabeth Warren in a tweet. "He should resign - and based on the actual facts in the Mueller report, Congress should begin impeachment proceedings against the President." — Agencies

Sports

Sabathia notches 3,000th career strikeout but D-backs top Yankees

Paddack, Reyes power Padres past Braves

ARIZONA: New York Yankees left-hander CC Sabathia struck out five to become the 17th major-leaguer to record 3,000 career strikeouts, but he was outduelled on his historic night by Zack Greinke, who won his fifth straight in the Arizona Diamondbacks' 3-1 victory Tuesday in Phoenix. Sabathia (1-1), in his 19th and final season, reached the plateau early, striking out the side in the second inning. After Arizona's Wilmer Flores hit his first homer of the season for a 1-0 lead with two outs, Sabathia surrendered a single to Nick Ahmed before getting John Ryan Murphy swinging on a 1-2 changeup for No. 3,000. Greinke (5-1) gave up five hits and one run in 7 2/3 innings with seven strikeouts and one walk. Greg Holland pitched a scoreless ninth inning for his sixth save. Sabathia (1-1) yielded two runs on five hits and two walks in 5 1/3 innings.

CARDINALS 3, NATIONALS 2

Adam Wainwright gave up just two runs in 6 1/3 innings, and St. Louis triumphed at Washington for the second night in a row. The Cardinals have won nine of their last 10 games while the Nationals have lost eight of 11. Wainwright (3-2) gave up six hits and two walks while striking out five. Andrew Miller got the last two outs for his first save. Washington starter Anibal Sanchez (0-4) went five innings and allowed three runs on five hits and two walks with seven strikeouts. Cardinals veteran Yadier Molina caught Wainwright for the 248th time. That ties Tom Glavine and Javy Lopez of the Atlanta Braves for 10th most on the all-time list among batterymates (since 1908).

ODDERS 10, GIANTS 3

Justin Turner hit his first home run of the season, one of three home runs Los Angeles belted in beating host San Francisco to win for the fifth time in six games. David Freese and Enrique Hernandez also went deep while Walker Buehler pitched 5 1/3 effective innings for Los Angeles, which became the first team in the majors to reach 20 wins. Chris Taylor and Austin Barnes added two-run doubles in a six-run sixth. Buster Posey and Brandon Belt each drove in a run in the bottom of the sixth to chase Buehler from the game. San Francisco starter Drew Pomeranz (1-3) gave up three runs on three hits over four innings with two walks and three strikeouts.

ASTROS 11, TWINS 0

Gerrit Cole took a no-hitter into the sixth inning, and George Springer, Alex Bregman and Jake Marisnick homered to power Houston past Minnesota in Minneapolis. Cole (2-4), who walked the first two batters he faced during a 26-pitch first inning, settled down to throw seven scoreless innings and allow just one hit and three walks. He struck out 11, including five in a row in the third and fourth innings. Josh Reddick and Michael Brantley each had three hits. Carlos Correa finished 2-for-3 with three RBIs, and Springer had two hits and two RBIs for the Astros, who bounced back from a 1-0 loss on Monday night in the series opener to bang out 15 hits.

There's no one like Tiger: Li

SHENZHEN: China's number one Li Haotong said yesterday he didn't realise how good Tiger Woods was until he played with his golfing idol at the Masters last month. Li, the world number 39, had a front-row seat as one of the greatest comebacks in sporting history unfolded—he was grouped with Woods for the first two rounds at Augusta.

"Tiger is Tiger," Li told reporters. "Only if you have played with him can you just realise how good he is. When I knew I was going to play with him, I was extremely nervous," admitted Li, who was playing his second Masters and finished 43rd, 12 strokes behind the American.

"Once I was on the course I relaxed and played some good golf," said Li, who has a best major finish of third at the 2017 Open Championship. Woods went on to win his 15th major after an 11-year hiatus to complete a scarcely believable resurrection after injury, surgery and marital strife.

Speaking on the eve of the milestone 25th Volvo China Open in Shenzhen, Li said he had sensed that Woods was gunning for a fifth Green Jacket.

"I thought he might have a chance of victory, but when he won I was happy for him," the 23-year-old told reporters of the 43-year-old Woods, who was Li's boyhood idol.

Li revealed that in travelling halfway around the world to play in his home national open this week he had given up a place in a top-quality field against the likes of Rory McIlroy at the US PGA Tour's \$7.9 million event at Quail Hollow.

Instead Li is teeing up in the \$3 million flagship China event before jetting back to the States on Monday to prepare for the year's second major, the US PGA Championship at Bethpage in two weeks' time where he will again lock horns with Woods.

"It's very important to me to support the Volvo China Open, that's why I have come back to play," he told AFP. "I had scheduled America this week, but I just thought as a Chinese player it is more important to play here," said the highest-ranked player in the 156-man field.

The tournament, which has carried European Tour status since 2004, carries sentimental value for Li who won it in 2016 to lift his maiden European Tour title. "It means a lot to me, I was 15 the first time I came to this event, and I won my first European tournament here. So I definitely want to play and win the Volvo China Open again." —AFP

CUBS 6, MARINERS 5

Kyle Schwarber hit a two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning as Chicago defeated host Seattle. Anthony Rizzo also hit a two-run shot for the Cubs, who opened the two-game series with their third consecutive victory. Brad Brach (3-0) got the victory with 1 1/3 innings of scoreless relief, and Steve Cishek pitched the final 1 1/3 innings for his first save of the season. Edwin Encarnacion homered for the Mariners, who lost their third in a row.

BREWERS 4, ROCKIES 3

Jhoulys Chacin threw six shutout innings and Jesus Aguilar hit a three-run homer in the seventh inning to send host Milwaukee past Colorado for the second time in two games to open a four-game series. Chacin (3-3) gave up two hits, struck out one and walked three to end a personal three-game losing streak. Junior Guerra replaced Chacin and struck out the side in the seventh and eighth innings. He came back out for the ninth and gave up a one-out RBI double to Nolan Arenado for Colorado's first run. Josh Hader then came in and gave up a two-run homer to Ian Desmond to make it 4-3 before getting the final out for his seventh save.

RED SOX 5, ATHLETICS 1

Rick Porcello scattered two hits and struck out eight over eight scoreless innings as host Boston cruised over Oakland. Mitch Moreland snapped an 0-for-15 stretch with a two-run homer in the fourth inning, while Mookie Betts continued his torrid stretch with a solo shot in the first. Rafael Devers and Sandy Leon each drove in a run, and rookie Michael Chavis collected two hits and scored two runs for the Red Sox, who recorded just their second series victory of the season. Boston posted a three-game sweep of Tampa Bay from April 19-21.

PADRES 4, BRAVES 3

San Diego hit three home runs—two by Franmil Reyes—and got another strong effort from rookie right-hander Chris Paddack to win at Atlanta. Reyes was 3-for-4 with a double, his seventh and eighth homers, and three RBIs. Eric Hosmer also hit a solo homer for the Padres, who have won six of their past eight games. Paddack (2-1) gave up two runs on four hits in six innings with five strikeouts and one walk. Through his first six career starts, Paddack has yet to surrender more than three runs in a game.

TIGERS 3, PHILLIES 1

Niko Goodrum hit a two-run home run to lift Detroit over host Philadelphia, ending a four-game losing streak. Tigers right-hander Tyson Ross had been scheduled to start but was placed on the paternity list. Spencer Turnbull (2-2) got the start and was fairly effective, allowing three hits and one run in six innings. He struck out five, tossed three wild pitches, walked two and hit two batters in an odd outing. Shane Greene picked up his 12th save after throwing a scoreless ninth.



PHOENIX: Wilmer Flores #41 of the Arizona Diamondbacks hits an RBI single against the New York Yankees during the fourth inning of the MLB game at Chase Field in Phoenix, Arizona. —AFP

ANGELS 4, BLUE JAYS 3

Brian Goodwin's one-out home run in the eighth inning snapped a tie and lifted Los Angeles over Toronto in Anaheim, Calif. Goodwin's fourth homer of the season stole the spotlight from the Blue Jays' Vladimir Guerrero Jr. The 20-year-old son of Angels Hall of Famer Vladimir Guerrero was making his fourth start since being called up last Friday. Guerrero went 0-for-2 with two walks and a strikeout and is hitting .214 (3-for-14).

PIRATES 6, RANGERS 4 (11 INNINGS)

Rookie Bryan Reynolds and Starling Marte hit home runs in the 11th inning as Pittsburgh came back to beat Texas in Arlington, Texas, and end an eight-game losing streak. The Pirates tied it 3-3 with three runs in the ninth, including Josh Bell's two-run double. In the 11th against reliever Jesse Chavez (0-1), Reynolds led off with his first career homer, a blast to center. An out later, Adam Frazier reached on left fielder Shin-Soo Choo's two-base fielding error. Marte, just off the injured list earlier in the day, hit his third homer, to right-center, making it 6-3.

INDIANS 7, MARLINS 4

Carlos Gonzalez blasted a three-run homer and Carlos Santana homered and had two RBIs, sending Cleveland to victory at Miami. There were three lead changes in the first three innings, but Gonzalez's homer in the third gave the Indians the lead for good. Trevor Bauer (4-1) earned the win, allowing four hits,

four walks and four runs in seven innings. He struck out 10. Former Marlin Brad Hand pitched a scoreless ninth for his ninth save of the season.

METS 4, REDS 3 (10 INNINGS)

Pete Alonso's 10th-inning sacrifice fly lifted host New York to an eventful 4-3 win over Cincinnati. The Mets carried a 3-1 lead into the ninth and were one out from a relatively stress-free win when the Reds rallied for two runs against Jeury's Familia, who was entrusted with a six-out save opportunity with closer Edwin Diaz unavailable after pitching the previous three days. Kyle Farmer and Jose Peraza hit run-scoring singles in the ninth to tie the game. New York beat Raisel Iglesias (1-4) in the 10th thanks to a double by J.D. Davis and a single by Jeff McNeil ahead of Alonso's fly to right.

ORIOLES AT WHITE SOX, PPD

Baltimore's scheduled game at Chicago was postponed due to inclement weather. The teams will make it up with a straight doubleheader Wednesday, starting at 4:10 p.m. ET. The originally scheduled game will begin 30 minutes after the conclusion of the opener.

RAYS AT ROYALS, PPD

Tampa Bay's scheduled game at Kansas City was postponed with heavy rains expected. The teams will make it up with a single-admission doubleheader Wednesday, with the first game starting at 1:15 p.m. ET and the second game starting 45 minutes after the conclusion of the opener. — Reuters



Tiger Woods

Agility signs Porsche Carrera Cup Asia partnership

SINGAPORE: Agility, a leading global logistics provider, has signed a two-year logistics partnership agreement with Porsche Motorsports for the eight-weekend Porsche Carrera Cup Asia (PCCA) racing series.

Agility Fairs & Events has been the official logistics partner for the PCCA since 2016. With this partnership, Agility will handle the movement of all cars for the series, organizing shipping, transport and handling of the race cars across Asia-Pacific, as well as spare parts support from Porsche Germany to race sites in Asia-Pacific.

Essa Al-Saleh, President and CEO, Agility Global Integrated Logistics, said: "Our longstanding partnership with the PCCA demonstrates our ability to meet the pressures of race-day conditions, and also shows our strong capacities in automotive logistics – a key vertical for Agility. We've been able to meet the exacting requirements of Porsche Motorsports and the teams competing in the past, and will continue to provide high level of service over the course of the partnership."

Porsche Carrera Cup Asia Manager Jochen Schafer said: "Fantastic co-operation, the ability to react and adapt instantly in the fast-paced Motorsport environment makes Agility the number one choice to handle the logistics side of the Porsche Carrera Cup Asia. We are more than happy to partner up for another two years thanks to their proven track record of exceptional service and enthusiastic support." The 2019 edition of the PCCA series opened with an official test day March 22 - 24, followed by the first race on April 12-14 in Shanghai, China, and will have 15 30-minute rounds held at six circuits across Asia.

WADA collects 2,200 samples from Moscow lab

MONTREAL: The World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) said Tuesday it had retrieved 2,262 samples from Moscow's former drug-testing laboratory which will be subjected to further analysis.

WADA said in a statement investigators had collected A and B samples from the former laboratory which were split into 4,524 collection bottles. The samples had been removed from Moscow for re-testing at a WADA-accredited laboratory outside of Russia.

"WADA Intelligence and Investigations is pleased to be continuing to make progress in this complex and difficult case," WADA investigations director Gunter Younger said. "These samples will be used to strengthen cases against those who may have cheated and may exonerate athletes who have not committed an anti-doping rule violation."

The removal of the samples comes after WADA investigators retrieved a trove of analytical data from the lab in January. Younger said the samples removed corresponded to data in the lab's database. A progress report from the analysis of the information obtained from the laboratory would be sent to WADA's Compliance Review Committee in early May. An update on the investigation would be presented to WADA's Executive Committee and Foundation Board meeting on May 15-16.

Providing full WADA access to the Moscow lab's data and samples was a key condition of Russia's controversial reinstatement last September following a major scandal over state-sponsored doping.

WADA wants to complete the review of data and samples by June 30 as part of the reinstatement deal, an agreement widely condemned by athletes and organizations worldwide. The Russian Anti-Doping Agency (RUSADA) was suspended by WADA in November 2015 after revelations of a vast state-sponsored doping regime stretching back several years and spanning the 2012 Olympics, 2013 World Athletics Championships and 2014 Winter Olympics in Russia. —AFP

Sports

All Blacks lock in Whitelock after bending rules on overseas play

Folau row splitting Wallaby dressing room: Reports

WELLINGTON: New Zealand Rugby signed forward Sam Whitelock to a long-term deal yesterday, but only after the world champions relaxed their selection rules to let him remain an All Black while playing a season in Japan.

The All Blacks usually refuse to pick overseas-based players but such is Whitelock's importance to the team that the rule has been tweaked for the first time to keep the 108-Test lock in the fold.

"We have to be flexible when it comes to renegotiating with our leading players and that's what we have done with Sam," NZR chief executive Steve Tew said. Whitelock, 30, is seen as a future captain, replacing Kieran Read, who is among an number of senior players leaving after this year's World Cup in Japan.

The two-time World Cup winner will be tasked with maintaining the All Blacks' standards after this year's tournament, much like Read did after the 2015 edition, when eight top players retired.

"His recommitment alongside a number of other key players gives us a strong foundation for the next four years," Tew said. Whitelock will skip the 2020 Super Rugby season to play with Panasonic Wild Knights in Japan's Top League.

Such overseas sabbaticals have been granted before but only on the understanding that they will not be eligible for All Black selection. However, Tew said Whitelock would still play with the team in 2020 "on the basis of his long-standing and outstanding service to New Zealand rugby and the fact he has signed a four-year deal".

Whitelock said he was looking forward to playing in Japan, where he will be reunited with his former Canterbury Crusaders coach Robbie Deans. "Ultimately, this decision allows me to take some time

with my family to experience a new rugby environment in Japan, before coming back refreshed and ready for the remainder of 2020 and beyond," he said.

Meanwhile, controversy over rugby superstar Israel Folau's homophobic comments is reportedly threatening to divide Wallabies players ahead of the World Cup, with some unwilling to play with the controversial fullback and others feeling their religion is under attack.

Rugby Australia wants to sack the devoutly Christian Folau over a social media post that said "hell awaits" gay people and the matter will be heard at a code of conduct hearing on Saturday. But the Australian newspaper reported that if Folau wins the case-saving his multi-year, multi-million-dollar contract—a number of Wallabies could "make themselves unavailable" to play with him.

It did not say how many were considering a boycott but pointed to a string of comments critical of Folau by senior players and management. Just last week, Wallabies director of rugby Scott Johnson backed Rugby Australia's move to axe Folau, saying "we want a game that includes everyone".

Rugby Australia feels it has no choice but to act after Folau escaped sanction last year after sparking outrage with another anti-gay social media post. Further complicating the situation is anger among some players from Pacific Islander backgrounds that the Folau case has led to their religious beliefs being targeted.

Centre Samu Kerevi faced online criticism after posting a Christian message over Easter, with prop Taniela Tupou rushing to his defence. "Might as well sack me and all the other Pacific Islands rugby players around the world because we have the same Christian



WELLINGTON: All Blacks lock Sam Whitelock who has played 108 tests and has now been contracted through to 2020.

beliefs," he said in a Facebook post that has since been deleted. "I will never apologise for my faith and what I believe in, religion (has) got nothing to do with rugby anyway." A split among his players is the last thing Wallabies coach Michael Cheika wants as he looks to

build momentum for this year's Rugby World Cup in Japan. Cheika has vowed not to select Folau for the tournament because of his "disrespectful" comments. Australia, finalists in 2015, are currently ranked sixth in the world. —Agencies

Joshua to defend heavyweight titles against Ruiz Jr

NEW YORK: Anthony Joshua will defend his heavyweight titles against Mexican-American Andy Ruiz Jr at Madison Square Garden on June 1, the British boxer's promoter announced yesterday. Ruiz Jr, who will be bidding to become Mexico's first heavyweight world champion, replaces Joshua's scheduled opponent Jarrell Miller, who was barred from fighting after failing drugs tests.

"The chills—I'm really excited for this fight," said Californian-born Ruiz, 29, in a statement released by

Matchroom Boxing. He cited Mexican great Julio Cesar Chavez, a world champion in several lighter classes, and former heavyweight world champions Mike Tyson, Evander Holyfield and Lennox Lewis.

"This is my chance to make history. I want to be one of those greats like Chavez, Tyson, Holyfield, Lennox Lewis. I want to be in that category." "I'm going to bring the titles back to Mexico. I'm going to be able to change my whole family's lives, my life and all my kids."

Ruiz has won 32 of his 33 professional bouts, with his only defeat coming in a world title challenge against New Zealand's Joseph Parker. Joshua, 29, who has won all of his 22 fights, will be fighting in the United States for the first time and defending his WBA, IBF, WBO belts.

"Ruiz is a different kind of challenge but one I embrace," said Joshua. "We have worked in the boxing gym week on week and whomever is put in front of me at Madison Square Garden on June 1 will be dispatched in style. The rent will be collected." —AFP



Anthony Joshua

Bangladesh change World Cup strip after uproar

DHAKA: Bangladesh has altered its World Cup cricket strip to add a touch of red following uproar over the initial design, which some had likened to rival Pakistan's kit, the cricket board said yesterday. The national flag of Bangladesh is red and green, but the 'Tigers' jersey unveiled Monday for the tournament starting later this month in England and Wales was green and white. Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) spokesman Jalal Yunus said cricket's world governing body had originally asked it to drop the red colour due to "commercial complications", but relented following a subsequent request from the BCB.

"It made the jersey green and white. But people wanted a touch of red in the jersey. So we requested the ICC (International Cricket Council) again and they accepted our request," he told AFP. The original design had featured the names of players and the word Bangladesh in red, Yunus noted.

Social media was awash with complaints after the strip was unveiled, with former BCB president Saber Hossain Chowdhury among those to criticise the original design. "Red and green, our national flag colours, have always been reflected in jerseys of @BCBTigers over the years. So very sad this is no longer so," Chowdhury tweeted.

Many cricket fans saw a similarity with the jersey of Pakistan, from which Bangladesh became independent after a bloody war in 1971. But BCB president Nazmul Hassan, also known as Papon, blasted the suggestion that the resemblance of Pakistan jersey prompted the swift change in design. "Bangladesh is written on the jersey, how can you confuse it with Pakistan?" Nazmul asked reporters in a press conference on Tuesday. "After seeing the 'Tigers' picture and BCB logo if someone thinks that it's not Bangladesh's jersey but Pakistan's then I think that person should stay in Pakistan," he said.

Bangladesh cricket team left home yesterday and will open their World Cup campaign against South Africa at the Oval on June 2. First they will play a tri-national tournament in Ireland from May 5-17 along with fellow World Cup participants Ireland and the West Indies. The World Cup begins on May 30. —AFP

From name to fortune, Delhi change for the better in IPL

NEW DELHI: For a franchise used to spending the business end of the Indian Premier League (IPL) wondering what went wrong, the Delhi Capitals have surprised themselves by making the playoff with two matches to spare in a remarkable turnaround.

If their long-suffering fans found it difficult to be upbeat about the team at the start of this season, they could hardly be faulted. The underperforming side underwent a major rebranding late last year—becoming the Delhi Capitals with a new jersey, a new logo and a new anthem—after JSW Sport, part of a \$13 billion business conglomerate, acquired a 50 percent stake.

They appointed Australian Ricky Ponting as the head coach, but still ended the season bottom of the standings, their fourth such finish in 11 seasons. To their fans, who had not seen the side make the playoffs since 2012, all of the changes looked cosmetic as they prepared for another season of underperformance.

Ponting, however, knew they just needed to be patient. "Success doesn't happen overnight," Ponting said in a team video. "Even last year, we felt we were very close to playing great cricket ... but all the big moments popped up."

"This year we're winning those moments." That's largely because of the balance in the side. Delhi retained wicketkeeper-batsman Rishabh Pant, skipper Sheras Iyer, who was elevated into the role during the middle of last season, and South African speedster Kagiso Rabada while adding opener Shikhar Dhawan—smart investments that paid off.

The team effort this year contrasts with the sporadic individual brilliance of last season. "These did not add up to anything," Ponting said. "We had outstanding individual performances but not much in the middle."

"This year (opener) Prithvi (Shaw) played well when



CHENNAI: Delhi Capitals cricket captain Shreyas Iyer (R) and teammate Jegadeesha Suchith celebrate the dismissal of Chennai Super Kings Shane Watson during the 2019 Indian Premier League (IPL) Twenty20 cricket match between Chennai Super Kings and Delhi Capitals in Chennai yesterday. —AFP

we needed him to, Shikhar played well on a number of occasions, Rishabh won two games of his own and Rabada is the leading wicket-taker by a long way."

Delhi have IPL's youngest skipper in Iyer, who was just 23 when he was appointed, but his relatively youthful side have been guided by Ponting and former India captain Sourav Ganguly, who came on board as an advisor earlier this year.

Ganguly's presence has been particularly helpful to fellow left-handers like Pant and Dhawan and the improved performances have brought the fans back to

Feroz Shah Kotla Stadium. "It helps when you win," Ganguly said. "It helps when you play well, that's what brings people back. If you can do that, this would be a big brand." Sajjan Jindal, Chairman and Managing Director of the JSW Group, which also owns teams in India's franchise-based soccer and kabaddi leagues, agreed. "The world wants to be with the winners, nobody likes the loser, right?" he said. "After seven years, coming into playoff, it's a big deal for Delhi Capitals. I'm sure they will go a long way. And I won't be surprised if they win this championship." —Reuters

titles in the past seven years and racked up eight Grand Tour victories in total but were mired in controversy for using special exemptions to administer drugs that can enhance performance.

"This is a momentous day for the team, our fans and cycling in general," said team principal Dave Brailsford. "We are hugely excited about the future with Ineos at the helm." Environmental protesters are expected to line the route of the four-day Tour de Yorkshire, beginning on Thursday, to voice their anger at Ineos's record on fracking and plastics. Wednesday's press conference was held far from the public gaze in a pub in North Yorkshire. Brailsford defended the new owners of his cycling team, speaking alongside Ratcliffe and four-time Tour de France winner Froome, who unveiled the new team kit.

"I'm not an expert in chemicals, I'm an expert in trying

to make Chris ride his bike faster," he said. "But when I did come to educate myself I realised there's a very simplistic view and when you dive down into it and take the effort you can find out there's a very different view. I'm very comfortable with the situation we're in." Brailsford said that where Sky had promoted recycling campaigns, "if anybody can do anything about it, it's these guys". Ratcliffe defended his company's operations, saying Ineos had pioneered new methods of recycling plastic.

On fracking, he said the majority of environmental groups he has met with are "ignorant" of the facts, and said it was a cheap source of energy. Team Dimension Data rider Mark Cavendish will join Froome on the start line for the race in the north of England, hoping to battle the likes of Katusha-Alpecin's Marcel Kittel in the anticipated sprint finishes. —AFP

Froome helps launch Team Ineos ahead of Tour de Yorkshire

LONDON: Chris Froome helped officially launch Team Ineos yesterday ahead of the Tour de Yorkshire as the former Team Sky plot to build on a decade of success. Chemicals giant Ineos, founded by Britain's richest man Jim Ratcliffe, confirmed its takeover of the British outfit in March after Sky announced it would end a ten-year commitment. Deep-pocketed Team Sky won six Tour de France

Smith says elbow 'all good' ahead of Australia return

SYDNEY: Australia's Steve Smith has brushed aside concerns for his surgically repaired elbow after landing awkwardly from a stunning diving catch in the Indian Premier League. Smith, who is due to play in the World Cup starting later this month, helped his Rajasthan Royals to victory Sunday when he took a outstretched catch to his right off a mistimed hit from international compatriot David Warner.

The former Australian captain landed heavily on the right elbow that underwent a major operation in January. "All good, I just landed on it quite heavily, more heavily than I had landed on it previously," Smith said Tuesday ahead of his next IPL clash with the Royal Challengers in Bangalore.

"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." Cricket Australia's official website reported him saying. —AFP

Sports

Pochettino accepts blame for 'sloppy' Spurs as Ajax close in on CL final

'I think it was an amazing evening, an amazing result'

LONDON: Tottenham manager Mauricio Pochettino admitted he was at fault as Ajax closed in on a first Champions League final for 23 years thanks to Donny van de Beek's early goal to win the first leg of their semi-final 1-0 on Tuesday.

Van de Beek's opener on 15 minutes was just reward for the Dutch side's first-half dominance as Tottenham badly missed the presence of the injured Harry Kane and suspended Son Heung-min.

Tottenham improved after the break despite another injury blow as Jan Vertonghen had to be helped down the tunnel after a sickening head knock, but lacked the inspiration needed to get back on level terms without their two top scorers.

"Watching now of course I can accept it was a mistake the shape we used. But there were not too many options," said Pochettino. "I am not happy, but our lack of energy from the beginning made our game difficult. We were a little sloppy."

Ajax had shown they are not fazed on the road despite the tender age of many of their squad by shocking Real Madrid and Juventus away to reach the last four and started confidently. Hakim Ziyech's through ball picked out midfielder Van de Beek who took his time to leave Hugo Lloris prone before slotting into the bottom corner.

"I think it was an amazing evening, an amazing result," said Ajax coach Erik ten Hag. "In the beginning we very strong, we were completely dominating the game and we made a fantastic goal."

Lloris kept his side in the game 10 minutes later from another Van de Beek effort as Ajax threatened to run riot. "The way we conceded the goal was so painful. I think we were so poor in this action," added Pochettino. "They showed more energy than us, but I think after 30 minutes we started to equalise the game."

On top of Kane and Son, Spurs were shorn of the injured Erik Lamela and Harry Winks and lost another key player when Vertonghen came off worst as he contested a high ball with Ajax goalkeeper Andre Onana and teammate Toby Alderweireld.

The Belgian was patched up and briefly returned to the field before having to be helped down the tunnel leading to questions over why the Spurs medical staff allowed him to continue. "I wasn't involved," insisted Pochettino. "It is the doctors' decision."

"I think (the health of the player) is so important, the protocol is there and our medical staff follow the protocol." Despite that latest blow, the hosts reacted well to end the half on top with Vertonghen's replacement



LONDON: Ajax's Dutch midfielder Donny van de Beek (2R) vies with Tottenham Hotspur's English midfielder Dele Alli during the UEFA Champions League semi-final first leg football match between Tottenham Hotspur and Ajax at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in north London. — AFP

Moussa Sissoko driving a long-range effort wide. Pochettino's half-time pep talk had the desired effect as Spurs dug deep into their energy reserves to raise the tempo and intensity of their display after the break. Yet, the quality needed in the final third to get back on level terms was missing without Kane and Son. "We arrived in the last third but we didn't find a way to create clear chances," continued Pochettino.

"Always we missed the last pass or shot." Ajax did not make the most of their chances on the break to kill the tie off, but were unfortunate when David Neres's effort back across Lloris left the French captain helpless only for the ball to rebound back off the post. "We could have kept the ball more and played calmer and that creates opportunities," said Ten Hag. "With for instance Neres that he didn't score that was

such a pity. Nevertheless winning 1-0 in Tottenham is an amazing result. "We know we can do a lot better next week to finish it off." Son will be back for the trip to Amsterdam next Wednesday and Spurs will hope the South Korean can repeat his double away to Manchester City in the last eight, but Ajax are in pole position for a final against Barcelona or Liverpool come June 1 in Madrid. — AFP

Mo Farah declines marathon spot at World Championships

LONDON: European record holder Mo Farah has declined a chance to contest the marathon in the World Championships in Doha, increasing the possibility of a return to the track. Farah, a four-times Olympic champion over 5,000 metres and 10,000 metres, retired from track athletics to focus on marathon events in 2017.

The 36-year-old has since broken the European record when winning the Chicago Marathon last October, but only finished fifth at the London Marathon last weekend, over three minutes behind Kenyan great Eliud Kipchoge.

British Athletics yesterday announced their marathon participants for the World Championships in September - the men's lineup consisting of Callum Hawkins and Dewi Griffiths - and Farah was the notable absentee.

Earlier this year, the three-time 10,000m world



Mo Farah

champion Farah said watching Briton Laura Muir claim the European Indoor 1,500m and 3,000m double made him realise how much he missed the track.

"Having seen my fellow athletes, who I've competed against in the past, and watching the European Indoor Championships on TV, I was thinking 'Oh man! I want

to get back out there,'" he said in March. "That's just me. If things are going well and I've got a chance to win a medal then I'd love to come back and run for my country. 'Part of me when I watch track races I'm like, 'can I still do it? I want to do it'. I do miss the track.'" — Reuters

"With players like David Luiz, Cesar Azpilicueta, Gonzalo Higuain, they have an unbelievable amount of experience," he said.

"We are the most inexperienced team in the semi-finals, but we deserve to be here nonetheless."

Frankfurt have won hearts across Europe with their fearless football and passionate support in the Europa League this season.

"We are like Ajax in the Champions League, nobody expected us to be in the semi-finals ahead of the season," said Huetter.

"It has been a long, hard road to get here, and the fans have given us incredible support," he said.

Frankfurt's Serbian midfielder Mijat Gacinovic also said his team were underdogs, but could pull off a surprise on Thursday with the fans behind them.

"I watch a lot of Premier League football on TV and Chelsea are one of the best teams in the world for me," he said.

"But with our fans, we can beat anyone."

Gacinovic, 24, is something of a cup specialist. He scored the decisive goal in Frankfurt's German Cup final win over Bayern Munich last season, and has notched up two goals and six assists in this season's Europa League campaign.

The Serbian is expected to start on Thursday, as Croatian attacking midfielder Ante Rebic is serving a one-game suspension.

Frankfurt are also without injured French striker Sebastien Haller, and having won none of their last three Bundesliga games, there are concerns that Huetter's side may be running out of steam.

"We have to be fresh and alert against an opponent like this," said Gacinovic.

Troubled PSG throw away lead again to lose at Montpellier

PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain's end-of-season meltdown continued on Tuesday as the Ligue 1 champions twice threw away the lead in a 3-2 defeat at Montpellier, three days after dramatically losing the French Cup final.

Souleymane Camara netted Montpellier's winner five minutes from time after Leandro Paredes was caught in possession on the edge of his own area. Before that, Presnel Kimpembe's own goal had cancelled out an Ambroise Oyongo own goal that had given PSG the lead. Angel Di Maria put the visitors back in front, but Andy Delort made it 2-2 before Camara sealed the points.

PSG wrapped up their sixth league title in seven seasons a week ago, but this result means they have won one and lost three of their last five league games. "We made individual errors, too many of them, and big mistakes," lamented coach Thomas Tuchel.

"In these conditions it is difficult to win a match at Montpellier, who are a very strong and aggressive team defensively." This latest defeat will increase the pressure on Tuchel, whose future has been called into question with his team's domestic slump following their humiliating Champions League exit against Manchester United.

PSG threw away a two-goal lead in Saturday's French Cup final before losing on penalties to Rennes. Kylian Mbappe was sent off in that game, while Neymar later apologised after hitting a fan who taunted the Brazilian as he went up to collect his runners-up medal.

Neymar started in Montpellier, but Mbappe was absent due to suspension, with several other players also absent. "The situation is always the same. We only have 15 players because everyone is injured," moaned Tuchel. "This has been the situation since January, February, and it's too long." When Cameroon defender Oyongo turned in Juan Bernat's low cross early on, it looked like PSG might get back to winning ways.

However, Montpellier equalised midway through the first half as Damien Le Tallec's header from a Florent Mollet free-kick was turned into his own net by Kimpembe, who had also scored an own goal in the Cup final. The home side tested Gianluigi Buffon in the PSG goal on several other occasions but it was the visitors who scored again just after the hour mark. A clearance by Montpellier's 41-year-old captain Vitorino Hilton came back off Marquinhos and the ball fell to Di Maria, who cleverly dragged the ball away from the diving Benjamin Lecomte and finished into an empty net. — AFP

Chelsea are our toughest opponents yet: Adi Huetter

BERLIN: Eintracht Frankfurt coach Adi Huetter has said that today's semi-final first leg against Chelsea will be the toughest challenge yet on his team's epic Europa League journey this season.

Frankfurt have knocked out the likes of Marseille, Inter Milan, Shakhtar Donetsk and Benfica on their way to a first European semi-final in nearly 40 years, but Huetter said on Wednesday that Maurizio Sarri's Chelsea were a "class above" such opponents.

"They are favourites, there is no doubt about it," said Huetter. "We need to do everything right, and play bravely and positively."

Huetter, 49, claimed to be an admirer of Maurizio Sarri in an interview with kicker last year, and he said he was looking forward to his first meeting with the Italian.

The Frankfurt coach said he had a plan to deal with Chelsea, and identified Belgian star Eden Hazard as the biggest threat.

"We will have to try and play him out of the game, because he is one of the three best wingers in the world in my opinion," said Huetter.

Yet he also warned that Chelsea were a "Champions League level team" who had quality all over the pitch.

Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
UEFA EUROPA LEAGUE	
Arsenal FC v Valencia	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 1	
Eintracht Frankfurt v Chelsea	22:00
beIN SPORTS HD 2	

25 Sabathia notches 3,000th career
strikeout but D-backs top Yanks



26 Joshua to defend heavyweight
titles against Ruiz Jr in NY



27 Mo Farah declines marathon
spot at World Championships



OAKLAND: Draymond Green #23 of the Golden State Warriors shoots the ball against the Houston Rockets during Game Two of the Western Conference Semi-Finals of the 2019 NBA Playoffs at ORACLE Arena in Oakland, California. — AFP

Warriors hold off Rockets for lead

Bucks bounce back with a vengeance to rout Celtics

LOS ANGELES: Kevin Durant scored 29 points and Klay Thompson added 21 on Tuesday as the Golden State Warriors downed the Houston Rockets 115-109 in a bruising NBA playoff clash. The reigning champion Warriors never trailed, but they had to battle to the end to take a 2-0 lead in the best-of-seven Western Conference second-round series, which shifts to Houston for game three on Saturday.

Both teams had injury scares in the first quarter, when Houston's 2018 NBA Most Valuable Player James Harden departed with a left eye injury after he was inadvertently swiped in the face by Draymond Green as they battled for the ball.

Warriors guard Stephen Curry left briefly with a dislocated middle finger on his left hand, returning with it taped up before the quarter ended. Harden returned in the second quarter, but appeared to feel discomfort from the injury during the game, sometimes squinting in the bright lights.

"He got raked pretty good in the eyes," Houston

coach Mike D'Antoni said of Harden, who finished with 29 points—including 13 in the fourth quarter. "I'm sure he would have loved to have played better, but under the circumstances I thought he played great."

D'Antoni said he knew Harden would return to the contest unless the injury was "catastrophic" but even with their superstar on the court the Rockets couldn't find a way past the Warriors.

"Tonight we just stayed the course," Thompson said. Houston trimmed a 15-point deficit to three points in the fourth quarter, but their 18 turnovers, leading to 24 Warriors points, were ultimately too costly.

Curry helped the Warriors' cause with 20 points and Green contributed a double-double of 15 points and 12 rebounds along with seven assists. "We had our chances toward the end," D'Antoni said. "They made big plays."

ANTETOKOUNMPO FUELS BUCKS

Giannis Antetokounmpo and the Milwaukee Bucks bounced back with a vengeance Tuesday, routing the

Boston Celtics 123-102 to knot their NBA playoff series at one game apiece. The top-seeded Bucks, who fell 112-90 at home to the Celtics in the Eastern Conference series opener, weren't about to allow a repeat. Antetokounmpo scored 29 points and pulled down 10 rebounds and Khris Middleton connected on seven of 10 from three-point range on the way to 28 points as the Bucks regained home court advantage in the best-of-seven series.

"We got an ass-whupping in game one, so we had to get game two," Antetokounmpo said. "It's tough when a team comes into your home and gets the two first games so we had that in the back of our minds. We came out, we played hard, we moved the ball, we trusted one another and that's why we got a win."

The Bucks drained a club playoff record 20 three-pointers and clamped down defensively, seizing control with 35 points in the third quarter in a game in which they led by as many as 30 points.

Middleton made five of his three-pointers before

halftime as Milwaukee took a 59-55 lead into the break. He added another couple of three-pointers early in the third before Antetokounmpo took charge.

Milwaukee's Most Valuable Player candidate drove the lane to earn a pair of free-throws, made a three-pointer and then assisted on Ersan Ilyasova's jump shot. A tip-in basket and another free-throw from Antetokounmpo added to Milwaukee's 12-0 scoring run, broken up by a three-pointer from Boston's Aron Baynes.

Antetokounmpo scored 15 points in the period and the Bucks closed the quarter on a 24-2 scoring run that essentially sealed Boston's fate. Marcus Morris led the Celtics with 17 points as star guard Kyrie Irving was held to nine points—connecting on just four of 18 shots from the field.

Antetokounmpo said the Bucks will need to come up with more of the same when the series shifts to Boston for game three on Friday. "We've just got to pick it up from where we left off this game," he said. — AFP

Semenya loses appeal over testosterone rules

CAPE TOWN: Olympic 800-metres champion Caster Semenya yesterday lost her appeal against rules that mean middle distance female athletes with high natural levels of testosterone must take medication to reduce it.

The Court of Arbitration for Sport (CAS) ruled the regulations were necessary for athletes with differences in sexual development (DSDs) to ensure fair competition. But it also voiced concern about how the new rules, which cover events ranging from 400-metres to a mile, would be implemented by the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF), the sport's governing body.

Testosterone increases muscle mass, strength and haemoglobin, which affects endurance. Some competitors have said women with higher levels of the hormone have an unfair advantage. "I know that the IAAF's regu-

lations have always targeted me specifically," Semenya, 28, said in a statement released via her lawyers. "For a decade the IAAF has tried to slow me down, but this has actually made me stronger. The decision of the CAS will not hold me back."

"I will once again rise above and continue to inspire young women and athletes in South Africa and around the world," Semenya, from South Africa, and her lawyers are considering appealing the ruling.

Semenya has said she does not wish to take medication to change who she is and how she was born, and wants to compete naturally. The case is likely to have far-reaching consequences, not just for the future of athletics, but all women's sport, and has split opinion around the globe.

The ruling means Semenya and other athletes with DSD hoping to compete at the World Championships in Doha in September would have to start taking medication to lower their testosterone levels within one week.

Professor Steve Cornelius, an advisor to the Athletics South Africa legal team, told television news channel eNCA the case could be elevated to the European Court of Justice.

The IAAF welcomed the verdict, saying it was "pleased that the regulations were found to be a neces-



Caster Semenya

sary, reasonable and proportionate means of achieving the IAAF's legitimate aim of preserving the integrity of female athletics in the restricted events.

"No athlete will be forced to undergo any assessment and/or treatment under these regulations. It is each athlete's responsibility, in close consultation with her medical team, to decide whether or not to proceed with any assessment and/or treatment," it said.

However, in the 165-page ruling, the CAS Panel expressed concerns as to the future application of the regulations. "The Panel found that the DSD regulations are discriminatory, but the majority of the Panel found that, on the basis of the evidence submitted by the parties, such discrimination is a necessary, reasonable and proportionate means of achieving the IAAF's aim of preserving the integrity of female athletics in the restricted events," the statement said.

Under the rules, female athletes who have high natural levels of testosterone will have to reduce their levels through medication to under 5 nmol/L, which is double the normal female range of below 2 nmol/L.

The court suggested the regulations be limited to events between 400- and 800-metres due to a lack of evidence that testosterone has a significant effect beyond these distances. This has been rejected by the IAAF for now, which says it could expand or reduce events under the regulations in the future if there is a compelling scientific case.

"We have enough evidence from the field across all the disciplines covered by our regulations so they will remain included in the regulations," a spokesperson told Reuters. The IAAF has received support from some current and former athletes. — Reuters