

MP Adasani threatens to grill minister again, cites violations

Panel to discuss fake bedoon passports

1k traffic fines on Jaber Causeway in first 5 days



Photo shows Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

KUWAIT: The Relations and Security Information Department at the Interior Ministry said environment police patrols will be on the streets in coordination with the Environment Public Authority round the clock on Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway to control any violations of throwing garbage.

It said it will strictly deal with any violation of the law on roads and bridges, and articles 107 and 108 will be applied against any violator. The final statistics about the number of violations that were accounted for by traffic control cameras on Sheikh

Jaber Causeway and Doha Spar since it was opened (on 1/5/2019) is 1043 violations, and the total violations on Doha Spur is 769 violations.

Meanwhile, the Traffic Department and Operations are working on maintaining the traffic flow in all areas of Kuwait, that in addition to stationary and mobile patrols. The Traffic Department announced the trucks ban hours during the holy month of Ramadan as follows: Trucks will not be allowed on the roads from 8:30 am-10:30 am for employees' entry; Time of employees exit will be from 12:30 pm - to 3:00 pm while, time for vehicles on the left shoulder will be from 8:00 am until 12:00 noon.

By B Izzak

KUWAIT: MP Riyadh Al-Adasani said yesterday he has already prepared a second grilling for Information Minister Mohammad Al-Jabri who faces a no-confidence vote on Wednesday. The lawmaker warned that if racist or tribal means are used in the voting session, he will file the second grilling against the minister.

Jabri was grilled last week by Adasani, MPs Adel Al-Damkhi and Mohammad Al-Dallal over alleged violations and wrongdoings at the Information Ministry and the Agricultural Authority and Sports Authority which come under the minister. During the grilling, the three lawmakers presented to the Assembly what they said was proof for the allegations but the minister categorically denied the charges and insisted that he has carried out reforms.

In a separate statement, MP Dallal argued that the minister failed to refute the charges and that he did not even respond to most of the charges during the grilling debate that lasted several hours. Dallal said that under the minister, a large number of violations were committed in the Agricultural Authority espe-

cially in the distribution of state-owned land for agricultural purposes. He said that some of the land was distributed to relatives in a clear violation of the law while those who qualified for distribution were denied.

In the meantime, MP Al-Humaidi Al-Subaiei, who heads an investigation committee into fake passports bought by stateless people or bedoons, said the committee will discuss in its next meeting the issue of the passports with Interior Ministry officials.

Several years ago, hundreds of bedoons purchased passports from various African and Latin American countries as they reeled under Interior Ministry pressure to find a nationality when they were denied the right to Kuwaiti citizenship. Many of those passports later were found to be fake and holders were faced with even more problems. The issue was taken up by the National Assembly which decided to form a committee to investigate the issue.

Meanwhile, Minister of State for Economic Affairs Mariam Al-Aqeel yesterday said she was prepared to be grilled any time when asked about threats by MP Safa Al-Hashem that she wanted to grill the minister. Aqeel said that grilling is a constitutional right for lawmakers and she was prepared to face it.

Qatar will not grant visas to its 'enemies'

DOHA: Qatar will not grant visas to those it considers "enemies", the secretary-general of the National Tourism Council said in reference to Egyptians seeking to enter the country amid an ongoing political rift. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain and Egypt cut diplomatic and trade ties with Qatar in 2017, accusing it of supporting terrorism. Doha denies the allegation. While citizens from the three Gulf states were recalled to their

home countries due to the rift, Egyptians, who make up the largest Arab minority in Qatar, have remained and make up a sizable portion of the tiny but wealthy country's workforce.

Speaking at an event to promote a summer tourism campaign, the tourism council's Akbar al-Baker said Qatar would not let Egyptians enter the country to take part in promotions aimed at boosting its tourism industry. "The visa will not be open for our enemies - it will be open for our friends," Baker said of Egyptians looking to come. "Are visas open for us to go there? No. So why should we open it for them? Everything is reciprocal."

The comments were the first by a Qatari official since the nearly two-year rift began suggesting Qatar would no longer grant visas to people from Egypt, the most

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Ramadan Kareem

Islam in a nutshell

By Dr Teresa Leshner

The essence of Islam can be found in a single statement, the 'kalimah', which embodies both its doctrine and practice. We hear this statement five times a day from the minarets: "There is no god except Allah and Muhammad is His messenger." Any true religion should offer sound doctrine and clear practice, and this simple statement sums it up.

The doctrine is that our Creator - the Lord of the universe - is the only one deserving of our worship; all matters of faith revolve around that. To understand the significance of this statement, consider Islamic art - the geometric, symmetric, and possibly infinite continuation of lines, curves and patterns - which always begins with a single point on a page or canvas.

It is from this point that a line or circle is first drawn, and from which a beautiful work of art takes shape. Without that point of reference, without the consideration that each line and curve originated from that point, and without respect for the relation that every intersecting point has with the original one, the whole pattern will be imperfect, unbalanced and eventually unrecognizable.

Islam, as the inspiration for this beautiful art form, is identical in that it, too, has as its epicenter a single point from which every thought, intention, action and hope begins. That point of reference is God. When someone makes God the single reference point in his life, from which all expression originates, his life can be one of both precision and beauty, of discipline and creativity.

In Islamic art, the original point is simply a dot on a page. In Islam, a single, unique God is the focal point, around which all of life revolves. The second part of the statement instructs us of the practice of Islam: that Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) is God's messenger, a man whose role was to convey the message and implement it in all spheres of human conduct.

Thus, he is a role model for humankind. He is the teacher with textbook in hand, and his role was to apply the teachings of the Book, answering the questions of his students along the way. Not only did Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) relate God's Word to the world, he answered, with his sayings and conduct, one of the most important questions ever asked: "How are we supposed to live?"

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13 killed as plane catches fire mid-air

MOSCOW: At least 13 people on board a Russian Aeroflot passenger plane were killed yesterday when the plane caught fire mid-air and made an emergency landing at a Moscow airport yesterday, Russian news agencies reported. Television footage showed the Sukhoi Superjet-100 making an emergency landing at Moscow's Sheremetyevo airport with much of the rear part of the plane engulfed in flames.

Many passengers then escaped via the plane's emergency slides that inflated after the hard landing. Medical workers told the TASS news agency at least 13 people had been killed and that others remained unaccounted for. Russian news agencies said the plane, which had been flying from Moscow to the northern Russian city of Murmansk before turning back, had been carrying 78 passengers. It was unclear how many crew had been on board.

Russian investigators said they had opened an investigation and were looking into whether the pilots had breached air safety rules. The cause of the fire was not immediately known. — Reuters



MOSCOW: Fire engulfs a Russian-made Superjet-100 at Sheremetyevo airport. — AFP

Deadly escalation as Israel retaliates over Gaza rockets

GAZA: Israel's military carried out waves of retaliatory strikes in the Gaza Strip yesterday after Palestinian rockets hit Israeli cities as a deadly escalation showed no signs of slowing, raising fears of war. Gazan authorities reported nine Palestinians killed, including at least three militants, by Israeli strikes in the fighting that began Saturday with massive rocket fire from the strip. Israel however disputed their account of the deaths of a pregnant woman and a baby, blaming errant Hamas fire.

Three people were killed in Gaza rocket strikes on southern Israel yesterday. One was confirmed as Israeli, but police had not released the nationalities for the other two. The Palestinian

dead included a commander for Hamas's armed wing who Israel said it targeted due to his role in transferring money from Iran to militant groups in the Gaza Strip.

Yesterday morning, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said he instructed the military "to continue its massive strikes on terror elements in the Gaza Strip."

He said he had also ordered "tanks, artillery and infantry forces" to reinforce troops already deployed near Gaza. The flare-up came as Hamas, the Islamist movement that rules the blockaded enclave, sought further concessions from Israel under a fragile months-old ceasefire.

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GAZA: Palestinian mourners carry the shrouded body of Saba Abu Arar during her funeral yesterday. According to the Palestinian health ministry, the baby and her pregnant relative were killed by an Israeli airstrike. — AFP

Local



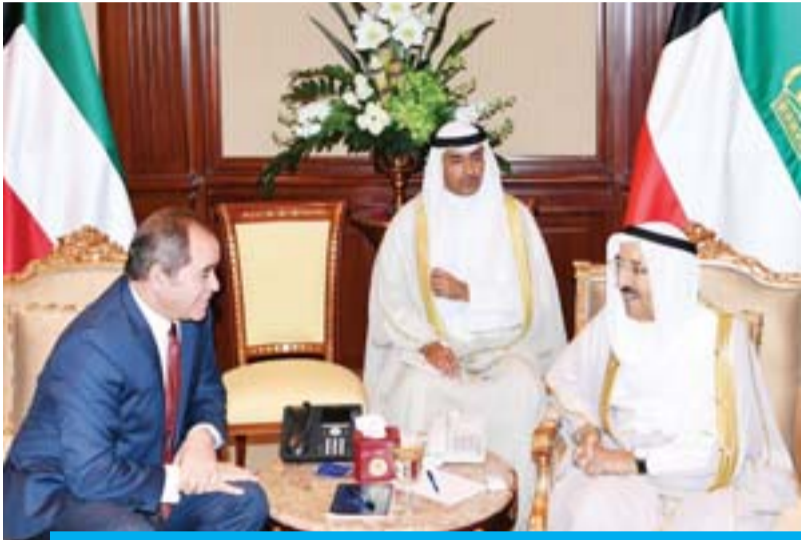
KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. — KUNA photos



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Algerian Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum.



His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Chairman of Supreme Judicial Council, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah.



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah.

Amir meets top officials, receives cables of congratulations on Ramadan

Amir shares Ramadan greetings with Arab, Muslim nations

KUWAIT: His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday at Bayan Palace. His Highness the Amir also received National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah and Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council, the Cassation Court and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa.

Later, His Highness the Amir received Deputy Premier and Foreign Minister Sheikh Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, along with visiting Algerian Foreign Minister Sabri Boukadoum who handed to His Highness a written message from Algerian Caretaker President Abdoulqader bin Saleh, congratulating him on the holy month of Ramadan and the good brotherly

relations between the two countries and people. Minister of the Amiri Diwan Affairs Sheikh Ali Jarrah Al-Sabah also attended the meeting.

In the meantime, His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received at Bayan Palace Parliament Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Minister Sabah Khaled Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Interior Minister Sheikh Khaled Al-Jarrah Al-Sabah and Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

Meanwhile, His Highness the Amir received cables of congratulations on the holy month of Ramadan from HH the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, National Assembly Speaker Marzouq Al-Ghanem, Chief of the National

Guard His Highness Sheikh Salem Al-Ali Al-Sabah, Deputy Chief of the National Guard Sheikh Mishaal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, His Highness Sheikh Nasser Al-Mohammad Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah, His Highness the Prime Minister Sheikh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait's Supreme Judicial Council, the Cassation Court and President of the Constitutional Court, Justice Yousef Jassem Al-Mutawaa and First Deputy Prime Minister and Defense Minister Sheikh Nasser Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Sabah.

They expressed their sincere congratulations and best wishes to His Highness on this blessed occasion, wishing him good health and all prosperity and development for Kuwait. His Highness the Amir replied expressing his thanks and appreciation for their good feelings, asking Almighty Allah to bring back this holy month to the dear homeland, and citizens with blessings,



His Highness the Crown Prince Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah meets with Deputy Premier and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs Anas Al-Saleh.

safety, security and prosperity. His Highness the Amir also exchanged greetings with the leaders of Arab and Muslim countries on the occasion of the holy month of Ramadan, wishing them good and blessings. —KUNA



KUWAIT: The Ambassador of the Republic of Poland Pawel Lechicz hosted a reception recently at Salwa Sabah Al-Ahmad hall on the occasion of Poland's national day. Higher officials, diplomats and media persons attended the event. — Photos by Joseph Shagra



Local

Minister halts disconnecting electricity from 'bachelors' houses in Ramadan

1.2 million people tested for AIDS in 2018

By A Saleh and Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs Fahd Al-Sholah ordered halting disconnecting electricity from houses inhabited by 'bachelors' in private residential areas during Ramadan, but called for the continuation of listing the violations to deal with them after Eid. The government has recently been ramping up efforts with the aim of evicting single unmarried men out of apartments or rooms they are renting in government houses located in residential areas around Kuwait. MPs have lately joined many residents of said areas in complaints that the presence of 'bachelors' residing

among families presents security, cultural and demographic risks. In other news, a team from Kuwait Municipality's Capital municipality division decorated the Souq Mubarakiya area in celebration of the holy month of Ramadan.

AIDS tests

The Ministry of Health (MoH) subjected 1.2 million people to AIDS tests in 2018, assistant undersecretary for general health and the head of the national committee for fighting AIDS Dr Majeda Al-Qattan said. Qattan added that AIDS awareness campaigns are on all year long and that the tests are done in absolute secrecy with more focus on the most vulnerable cate-

gories such as teenagers, drug addicts and others. Qattan urged AIDS-vulnerable individuals to make use of the voluntary tests and free advice round the clock at the infectious diseases hospital.

Budgets' discussion canceled

Head of the parliament's budgets committee MP Adnan Abdulsamad announced that the committee had to cancel discussing a bill on the 2019-2020 youth authority's budget and its 2017-2018 final statement, as well as the budget of the Holy Quran publication authority because they were "examples of government blunders." Abdulsamad added that budgets had been allocated for two youth authority departments despite

receiving a decree on cancelling the authority itself because of similarity between its work and that of the ministry of state for youth affairs.

Grading exams

Ministry of Education (MoE) Undersecretary Saud Al-Harbi yesterday authorized various schools to decide on the time of grading the final exams due to start tomorrow for grades 5-11 and choose whether to do so before or after iftar. Speaking at a meeting with educational zone directors, Harbi urged school directors to check all air conditioners and water coolers to provide the most suitable atmosphere for students.



Minister Fahd Al-Sholah

KISR successfully concludes capacity building program

KUWAIT: Today, the Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research (KISR) celebrates the successful conclusion of the publication and subsequent capacity building program of the first edition of the Kuwait Energy Outlook. The report, which presents ground-breaking analysis to predict and plan for Kuwait's energy future, is the first of its kind in the Gulf region, and puts forward recommendations to create a more sustainable, energy-efficient and diversified economy and society in Kuwait. The inaugural KEO highlights and analyses three main challenges Kuwait is facing in ensuring prosperity for future generations: the need to diversify the country's oil-dependent economy, stimulate efficient energy usage, and further develop renewable energy sources.

Yesterday's closure event celebrates the report's major achievements so far, including the successful publication of the first ever KEO, supported by a gender-balanced team working out of a dedicated space: the strengthening of institutional capacity in Kuwait through intensive training programs supported by the UNDP and partnerships with international bodies including the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI); and the improved collaboration between Kuwait's key energy players, including the establishment of an editorial committee from seven government institutions to oversee the production of future editions.

The event welcomed high-level individuals to mark the momentous occasion, including representatives from Kuwait's energy industry, Ministries and Embassies, as well as representatives of KISR's Energy and Building



Research Center (EBRC), the General Secretariat of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSCPD) and United Nations Development Program (UNDP), which all contributed to the first edition of the KEO.

Following the ceremony, Dr Samira AS Omar, Director General of KISR, stated that: "KISR's ambition at its founding was to be at the forefront of energy reform in the country, guiding and offering solutions to one of Kuwait's most challenging industries. Going forward, the Kuwait Energy Outlook will play an essential role in increasing collaboration between government entities on energy-related issues and up skilling Kuwait's energy professionals as we work towards creating a more sustainable Kuwait."

Dr Khaled Mahdi, Secretary General of the Supreme Council for Planning and Development (GSSCPD), commented that: "Kuwait is leading the region in mapping out a sustainable, diversified energy future based on an evidence-based analysis such as KEO.

Adhering to the recommendations as set out in the report will further increase Kuwait's global competitiveness, benefiting generations to come."

Khaled Shahwan, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative, underscored the importance of the first Outlook: "UNDP is supporting Kuwait on its journey to achieve its Sustainable Development Goals. Through the first Energy Outlook in the region, Kuwait has taken a major step forward with regards to its socio-economic and environmental development plans."

KISR has established the Kuwait Energy Policy Team, which has been tasked with the creation of future editions of the report that will likely be published every three years going forward. These Energy Outlooks will be presented at dedicated Forums that will bring together international and domestic stakeholders to discuss Kuwait's energy future. In addition, special thematic reports will be released periodically that will provide in-depth analyses of specific energy issues.

Police detains man for insulting, threatening him

KUWAIT: Authorities at the interior ministry said an Egyptian insulted a policeman while on duty at a hotel, and threatened to throw him out. A verbal exchange took place between the two, then the Egyptian made the threats. The man was detained for questioning.

Man smashes police cars

A young man, thought to be in an abnormal condition, smashed the windows of two patrol cars following a fight with a girl in Ali Sabah Al-Salem. A passerby called police, who responded and saw the man beating the girl, so they rescued the girl and took both to the patrol car, but they continued the fight in the car, so the girl was taken out and he was left alone despite his objections. He then damaged the back door of the patrol car. Back-up was called and he was controlled and put in the car, but he

smashed its windows. Investigations are being made.

Trapped bedoon

A bedoon aged 33 told police that two men and a woman detained him in an Egaila flat, beat him and stole KD 170. Police went to the flat and freed the man. Paramedics were called and took him to Adan hospital. Charges of movement restriction and bodily torture were ordered by the prosecutor as criminal detectives are investigating.

Naked man caught

Interior ministry operations received a call about two persons who seemed in an abnormal condition, with one totally naked. Police arrived at the scene and found one of them sleeping, while the naked person escaped, but was chased and caught. Both were taken to Shamiya police station to face

KFH launches Ramadan TV ad 'Quran Is Life'



KUWAIT: Kuwait Finance House (KFH) launched its Ramadan advertisement this year entitled "Quran Is Life", praising the virtues of the holy book "Quran" in the Holy Month of Ramadan. The ad aims to encourage people to avail this opportunity to read and memorize Quran and take it as a guide and a companion in the journey of goodness and charity.

The advertisement reflects the bank's Islamic identity and values and reiterates its significant social role. KFH has succeeded to produce an advertisement with Kuwaiti thoughts, hands and skills. They have compiled, prepared and performed the expressive roles in coordination with the main scenario which highlights the virtues of Quran and the significance of an individual being a follower of Quran eg "Best Friend - Your My Conscience - My Guidance and My Award". The advertisement was concluded by highlighting the main concept which reiterates that Quran is our companion from Cradle to Grave and our loyal friend in life and heaven.

The advertisement carries a valuable

human and social message and context to cope with the Holy Month of Ramadan during which the revelation was made. The detailed verses of Quran are always with us to guide us to charity and good deeds right from the day we are born until the day we die. They organize life, lighten paths, enlighten minds, guide hearts and purify souls. Quran teaches us good virtues, forgiveness, love, brotherhoods, development of earth and achievement of human happiness.

The advertisement takes the viewer into a journey that sheds light on the main concept "Quran Is Life" and pictures man's various life stages in magnificent portraits with highly impressive sound effects of our daily life. The advertisement will be broadcasted on various media platforms including TV, KFH social media channels, Websites and other means. The advertisement is expected to achieve highly significant viewing ratios considering its distinguished idea and attractive scenes. The advertisement shall be accompanied by a set of competitions to enhance viewers' reaction with the adver-

tisement, increase number of viewers and ensure that it has reached all society tiers.

KFH Quran Application is considered as one of the most downloaded applications on internet. Millions around the world have downloaded the latest 4th edition of this application which comprises new features and qualifies including new navigation system, multi-language display, screen steering as per user's choice ... etc. KFH Quran Application is the best choice for all those who wish to read Quran via smart phones.

It is worth mentioning that KFH has several Ramadan activities, thus affirming its leading position in bearing its social responsibility through its rich Ramadan program "Communicate with Goodness in the Month of Goodness5" which comprises various human and social activities, qualitative initiatives and daily communication with the public. The program aims to affirm KFH commitment to the human and social message and to strengthen the concept of social responsibility which is driven by social values.



KUWAIT: Firemen battle a blaze in a paper recycling factory belonging to the Ministry of Health in South Khaitan yesterday.

Firemen put out blaze at paper recycling factory

By Hanan Al-Saadoun

two instead of keeping them for long.

KUWAIT: Firemen from five different fire stations battled a blaze in a paper recycling factory in South Khaitan yesterday, the public relations and information department of Kuwait Fire Service Directorate (KFSD) said. Farwaniya, Ardiya, Subhan, Capital and backup stations were involved in fighting the blaze, led by Deputy Director General for Fire Fighting Maj Gen Jamal Al-Bulaihees. The fire covered an area of 3,000 sq m. No injuries were reported. Meanwhile, an investigation was opened to reveal the cause of the fire. And in following up with the case, Ministry of Education's assistant undersecretary for financial affairs Yousif Al-Najjar said Minister Hamed Al-Azmi gave immediate instructions to install surveillance cameras at all warehouses, as well as selling scrap items every month or

Woman falls from first floor

A woman fell down the light shaft of a building in Hawally. Firemen discovered a skylight was broken, and found the woman had fallen from the first floor to the basement while walking on the glass. The woman suffered various fractures.

Patrols at Jaber Causeway

The relations and security information department at the interior ministry said environment police patrols will be on the streets in coordination with the Environment Public Authority round the clock on Sheikh Jaber Al-Ahmad Causeway to control any violations of throwing garbage. It said it will strictly deal with any violation of the law on roads and bridges, and articles 107 and 108 will be applied against any violator.



Zain launches its annual Ramadan social campaign

Company welcomes Holy Month with plethora of social contributions



KUWAIT: Zain, the leading digital service provider in Kuwait, announced the launch of its annual campaign for the Holy Month of Ramadan with a great number of humanitarian, social, religious, sports, and recreational contributions. Zain's extensive program of various social, charitable, and humanitarian initiatives planned for the Holy Month comes in line with the company's Corporate Sustainability and Social Responsibility strategy that closely focuses on giving back to the community. The company carefully selected the activities and programs that most presented an added value to all segments of the society. In this report, Zain showcases the initiatives and programs it will undertake during Ramadan this year:

Ramadan Machla

Zain already kicked-off its Ramadan campaign before the beginning of the Holy Month, where it delivered 'Ramadan Machla' (supplies) to a number of its strategic partners of non-profit organizations, who will in turn distribute them to underprivileged families in Kuwait during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The 'Ramadan Machla' initiative is one of the main pillars of Zain's annual Ramadan campaign, which comes in line with the company's Corporate Social Responsibility and Sustainability strategy. Every year, Zain prepares boxes containing essential food supplies and delivers them through the network of its strategic partners of non-profit organizations. This year, the company favored delivering vouchers instead of the boxes to give every family the opportunity to choose specific supplies as per their different needs.

Zain delivered the 'Ramadan Machla' vouchers to strategic partners of non-profit organizations: the Kuwait Red Crescent Society (KRCS), Kuwait Food Bank, Direct Aid, Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Social Care Centers, and Zakat House. The vouchers will be distributed to underprivileged families in Kuwait who are in need of support during the month of fasting. The vouchers can be used at Saveco, an all-inclusive one-of-a-kind one-stop mega market, considered one of the biggest in Kuwait and the region, and offers a vast range of products and services. Zain also dedicated a day of special deals and exclusive offers for voucher holders in collaboration with Saveco.

Zain Quran App

Zain launched an all-new update to its Quran App, which the company gifts to its customers during Ramadan of every year. The app offers the best Quran reading experience on iOS and Android smart devices, and now supports Apple Watch. The app features a user-friendly interface and many great features, including reading all pages of the Holy Quran, downloading and listening to the Holy Quran in the voices of over 20 famous reciters, read Tafseer (interpretations) to understand the meaning of verses, searching the whole text of the Holy Quran, as well as synchronizing usage between multiple devices. The app also includes a dark mode feature for easy reading in the dark, prayer times and Athan notifications, Qibla direction, and much more. Customers can download the app for free by searching 'Zain Quran' in the App Store and Google Play Store.

Iftar Halls

Every year, Zain launches the Iftar Halls initiative, which is a main pillar of the company's Ramadan campaign. Through this initiative, Zain provides fasting individuals with daily Iftar meals under the supervision of its volunteer team. The banquets are spread in two main halls in Jleeb and Jahra as part of a strategy to cover the most populated areas of Kuwait in order to assure the maximum amount of



individuals' Iftar needs are covered. This year, Zain will offer nearly 35,000 daily Iftar meals in total during the Holy Month.

"Zain Al Khair" online donation portal

Before the Holy Month of Ramadan, Zain launched "Zain Al Khair" (khair.kw.zain.com), an online donation portal that allows Zain customers - both prepaid and postpaid - to donate to any of the listed charitable organizations with any amount ranging from 1 - 80 KD. Customers can simply select the preferred organization, pick one of the available projects to donate to, then specify the donation amount. The donated amount will then be automatically added to the customer's monthly phone bill or prepaid balance with ease.

All the charitable organizations listed in the portal are certified and licensed by the official authorities in Kuwait, and each one features a number of different charity projects to choose from. The current list includes: Al Najat Charity, Al Manaber Al Quraniya Society, Social Reform Society - Rahma International, Social Reform Society - Namaa, Kuwait Food Bank, International Islamic Charitable Organization, Sheikh Abdullah Al Nouri Charity Society, Revival of Islamic Heritage Society, and the Kuwaiti Charity Society for Serving the Holy Quran and its Sciences. More organizations will be added to the portal during the upcoming period.

'Ya Baghi Al Khair Aqbel 3'

This Ramadan, Zain launches the third edition of its charitable initiative "YaBaghi Al Khair Aqbel" in collaboration with Direct Aid. As part of the initiative, Zain will donate 500 Fils each time a customer pays their bill anytime during the Holy Month of Ramadan through one of Zain's electronic or direct channels, including Zain's website, Zain's smartphone app, any of Zain's Quickpay machines, and the company's main branches available throughout the country. The collected donations will be used to support Direct Aid's Medical Sciences College project at Kenya, where 6 classrooms will be built for the Environmental Health section in the college.

This year, Zain also collaborates with Direct Aid to sup-

port the "2000 Projects" campaign, which will be held throughout an entire day to receive donations through the official online portal and Zain's SMS service. All of the campaign's proceeds will go to supporting 2000 projects in Africa, 500 of which are water wells, 500 health projects, as well as 1000 developmental projects for empowering family economies.

Telly offer

This Ramadan, Zain presents its customers with an exclusive offer for the first time in Kuwait, allowing them to enjoy Telly for two FREE months, courtesy of Zain. Telly is one of the biggest Video on Demand (VoD) platforms in the Arab World, offering the largest collection of Arabic content, including Telly originals, Kuwait TV programs, Bollywood movies, locally produced content featuring the biggest Arab stars from Kuwaiti, Khaleeji, and Arab shows, and more.

Through the new exclusive offer, Zain provides its customers with the opportunity to enjoy Telly with ease. Zain's postpaid and prepaid customers can easily subscribe to Telly without the need of using a credit card or additional payment methods. The exclusive offer includes two FREE months of Telly, courtesy of Zain, as well as early access to exclusive Ramadan content a day before it airs. Telly is available on Apple's App Store and Google's Play Store.

Al Roudhan Football Tournament 40

Zain is the Main Sponsor of the 40th edition of Al Roudhan Ramadan Football Tournament for the fourth consecutive year, which comes under the patronage of His Highness the Amir Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah. On Ramadan of every year, the Kuwaiti audiences, especially young ones, eagerly look forward with great passion to Al Roudhan Tournament, given the fact that it witnesses high levels of professionalism and excitement through both the competing local teams as well as the international football stars hosted.

As it does every year, Zain will be present at Al-Roudhan Tournament on a daily basis, where it will be interacting with the audiences through various competitions, activities, and entertainment programs. The company will also be distributing valuable prizes and holding daily challenges and competitions on its official social media channels. This year, Al Roudhan tournament will witness the participation of three international football legends that have millions of fans around the world: Italian legend Francesco Totti, Ivorian legend Didier Drogba, and Croatian legend Luka Modric.

'Rijeemy' Health Program

This year, Zain is the strategic partner of the 'Rijeemy' Health Program, which is considered one of the biggest

health and sports programs in Kuwait during the Holy Month of Ramadan. The event is held on a daily basis at Mall 360, and aims at promoting a healthier and more active lifestyle during fasting. The event works to elevate the level of health awareness among people who are fasting during Ramadan, especially while fasting, through engaging participants in exciting activities.

Social visits

Every Ramadan, Zain is keen to reach out to the many segments of the community, including orphaned children, the elderly, and people with special needs, by visiting the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labor's Care Centers to share the joyful blessings of the Holy Month with them. Zain believes in the importance of embracing the beautiful values of the Islamic religion as well as the noble traditions of the Kuwaiti heritage all year round and especially in the Holy Month of Ramadan. Zain will also share the joys of the Holy Month with children and patients in a number of the biggest hospitals in Kuwait. The company's team always visits the hospitals during this blessed time of year to distribute gifts and Girgien to children and their families and celebrate the occasion in a family atmosphere full of joy and happiness. Zain will also share the joys of Girgien with special needs children in collaboration with Al Kharafi Activity Kids Center, where the company's volunteers will visit the children and their families to distribute Girgien and gifts while also organizing many other fun activities.

Qiyam prayers and last 10 days of Ramadan

During the last 10 days of Ramadan and during Qiyam prayers, Zain will be present at a number of Kuwait's biggest mosques, where the company's volunteers will distribute refreshments and snacks to worshippers to contribute in lightening the hot weather conditions and offer a more comfortable atmosphere.

Cultural and recreational programs

Every Ramadan, Zain is keen on diversifying the content of its campaign to include cultural and recreational programs. This year, Zain sponsors "Jaber Khater", a social and cultural show hosted by social media influencer Fahad Al Beshara. In the show, Al Beshara discusses many topics related to good deeds, politeness, and the values of the Holy Month in a simple and creative way on social media channels. The show presents ideas in a modern way to attract the attention of viewers, especially young ones. As for the classic Ramadan competitions that the public eagerly waits for every year, Zain announced its sponsorship of "Kanz FM" daily radio show throughout the whole month. Customers can enjoy participating in the show's quizzes and win valuable prizes on a daily basis.



Photo of the Day



KUWAIT: A panoramic view of Kuwait city. — KUNA/ Mohammed Subhi

Ooredoo communications the sponsor of Hana Eleven Expo

KUWAIT: Ooredoo Kuwait, has recently concluded its communications sponsorship to Hana Eleven Expo, an exhibition which presented a selected range of products and services local, regional and international companies, as well as creative, individuals, all within a unique showcasing experience targeting fashionable and empowered women. The exhibition was held at Al Raya Ballroom from 28 to 30 April 2019.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Mijbil Al Ayoub, Senior Director of Corporate Communication, at Ooredoo said: "The main goal behind sponsoring Hana Eleven is to support Kuwaiti women participating in the exhibition to showcase their product lines and promoting their small businesses among targeted audience. Empowering women is a foundation pillar in our CSR strategy Ooredoo's support of this exhibition is another step towards achieving that goal along with our commitment to supporting entrepreneurs and small businesses."

Mariam Abdullah Al Suwailem, Managing Director of Hana Eleven, said:



"Through this exhibition, we aspire to achieve a new qualitative leap in the exhibition industry in Kuwait, which has witnessed great development over the past years and has become an important destination and attraction for visitors from the Gulf countries."

Worth mentioning that Ooredoo was the main sponsor for the ninth edition of the Road Rush Racing Competition for Women which took place at Kuwait Motor Town. Where it included a number of exciting activities such as Road Rush Market, Road Rush Kid's Wonderland, a live performance by Miami band, as well as other fun activities. The sponsorship came from the alignment with the company's core values of caring, connecting, and challenging. It further underscores the company's commitment to empowering women and giving them the opportunity to live their passions.



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Newly-crowned Thai king carried in royal procession

Migrant fears, EU suspicion in Orban's heartland

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This picture taken on Saturday shows rocket launchers firing during a test of weapons in an undisclosed location in North Korea. (Inset) North Korean leader Kim Jong-un supervises the 'strike drill'. — AFP

N Korea tested launchers, guided weapons

Kim oversees drill amid concerns Pyongyang escalating provocations

SEOUL: North Korea's state media said yesterday that leader Kim Jong Un had overseen a rocket and tactical guided weapons test, after the drill Saturday raised concerns Pyongyang was escalating provocations with US nuclear negotiations deadlocked. The North last carried out a missile test in Nov 2017, before a rapid diplomatic rapprochement saw tensions ease on the peninsula and a series of summits.

A return to missile launches would be likely to infuriate US President Donald Trump, but the North's official KCNA news agency shied away from the term in its report, saying Kim had ordered a "strike drill" involving "long-range multiple rocket launchers" - which are not targeted by UN sanctions resolutions - and unspecified "tactical guided weapons". Seoul's defense ministry said yesterday an analysis of the launch indicated Pyongyang had tested "240-mm and 300-mm multiple rocket launchers and a new type of tactical guided weapons with a range of around 70 to 240 kilometers".

The United States and North Korea have been at loggerheads since the collapse of a Trump-Kim summit in February, when the two sides clashed over sanctions and the extent of Pyongyang's concessions on its atomic arsenal. But despite the latest sabre-rattling from

Pyongyang, Trump insisted that a breakthrough was possible. "Kim Jong Un fully realizes the great economic potential of North Korea, & will do nothing to interfere or end it," Trump tweeted. "He also knows that I am with him & does not want to break his promise to me. Deal will happen!" The US leader did not elaborate on Kim's promise.

During Saturday's drill Kim urged his troops to remember "the iron truth that genuine peace and security are ensured and guaranteed only by powerful strength", KCNA said. The state-run Rodong Simmun newspaper yesterday carried 16 photos of the weapons test on its front page, including a picture of a grim-looking Kim clutching his binoculars in an observation post as well as several images of projectiles shooting skywards.

Broken promises?

Trump proclaimed that the North Korean nuclear threat was over after the two sides' historic first summit in Singapore in June, when Kim pledged to work towards "complete denuclearization of the Korean peninsula". The two have since disagreed over what that means, but Trump has insisted the leaders remain close even after their follow-up meeting in Vietnam

broke up without a deal or even a joint statement, and that Kim would maintain his moratorium on long-range missile and nuclear tests.

But with negotiations lagging, the North appears to be testing the US while staying below that threshold. The Saturday drill followed last month's test-firing of very short-range tactical weapons, and came days after a senior North Korean diplomat chastised US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo for making "foolish and dangerous" comments during nuclear talks. Analysts said Pyongyang appears intent on raising pressure on Washington. "Kim wants to ensure the world knows it is upset with the US hardline stance on denuclearization and will not bow to external pressure," said Scott Seaman of the Eurasia Group.

'Unwanted outcome'

But Ankit Panda of the Federation of American Scientists stressed that the projectile launch "does not violate Kim Jong Un's self-imposed missile-testing moratorium", which "only applied to intercontinental-range ballistic missiles". Even so, a statement from Seoul's presidential Blue House said it was "greatly concerned", calling it a violation of a military agree-

ment signed by both Koreas last year.

On Friday, South Korean Foreign Minister Kang Kyung-wha said Pyongyang should show "visible, concrete and substantial" denuclearization action if it wants sanctions relief - the issue at the centre of the Hanoi debacle. Earlier this week, North Korean Vice Foreign Minister Choe Son Hui warned Washington of an "unwanted outcome" if it did not adjust its stance on economic sanctions.

Biegun visit

Since the collapse of the Hanoi summit, South Korean president Moon Jae-in - who brokered the first meeting between the mercurial US and North Korean leaders - has tried to salvage diplomacy, but Pyongyang has remained largely unresponsive. Last week, on the anniversary of the first Panmunjom summit between Moon and Kim, KCNA said Washington and Seoul "keep pushing the situation of the Korean peninsula and the region to an undesirable phase", criticizing their joint military exercises. The North Korean drill comes just days before US special representative Stephen Biegun is to visit Japan and South Korea for talks on Pyongyang's nuclear arsenal. — AFP

Egypt thought Italian student was spy: Report

ROME: Egyptian police arrested and beat an Italian student who was later found murdered because they thought he was a British spy, according to fresh testimony reported by Italian newspapers yesterday. The account of how Giulio Regeni, a 28-year-old doctoral researcher at Britain's Cambridge University, disappeared in Cairo in January 2016 came from a witness who overheard an Egyptian intelligence agent speaking about "the Italian guy", La Repubblica newspaper said.

The conversation about the tumultuous situation in Egypt in Arabic took place at a police convention in an unnamed African country in 2017 and was related to Italian prosecutors who have now asked Egyptian authorities for more information. The Italian foreign ministry tweeted yesterday that it "supports the Rome prosecutor's request for information, in the strong hope that it contributes to the path of justice for Giulio Regeni."

The unnamed eavesdropper learned the Egyptian's name when he exchanged business cards with a colleague, La Repubblica said. He was one of five agents Italian prosecutors said in December last year that they were investigating for involvement in the murder of Regeni, who disappeared on his way to a Cairo metro station on Jan 25. "We thought he was an English spy, we picked him up, I went and after putting him in the car we had to beat him. I myself hit him several times in the face," the intelligence agent said, according to the Corriere della Sera newspaper.

Regeni's body was found days later by a roadside bearing extensive marks of torture in a case that strained the traditionally close relations between Cairo



ROME: In this file photo taken on Jan 25, 2017, activists of human rights organization Amnesty International hold a picture of Giulio Regeni and candles as they take part in a demonstration in front of the parliament. — AFP

and Rome, which has accused Egypt of insufficient cooperation in the probe. Italian prosecutors believe the new testimony is credible and have sent it along with other details to Egyptian prosecutors, requesting in particular the agent's whereabouts at the time of the overheard conversation in the summer of 2017.

Egypt has always denied suggestions that its security services were involved in the death of Regeni, who was researching trade unions, a sensitive subject in Egypt. Frustrated at the slow pace of the probe, Italy withdrew its ambassador to Egypt in April 2016, but sent a new envoy to Cairo the following year. Egyptian authorities initially suggested Regeni died in a traffic accident, but later said he was killed by a criminal gang that was subsequently wiped out in a shootout with police. — AFP

Blacklisting Muslim Brotherhood could radicalize members

CAIRO: Washington is considering blacklisting the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist organization, but experts warn the move would risk radicalizing its members and further destabilizing the Arab world. A grassroots Islamist movement with affiliates in several countries including Turkey's ruling AKP party and Tunisia's Ennahda, the Brotherhood has militant offshoots but officially renounced violence in the 1970s. Placing the movement on Washington's list of foreign terrorist organisations (FTOs) would ban its members from entering the United States and make it a crime for any American to assist the group.

Abdelrahman Ayyash, a researcher on Islamist movements, warned that the decision could escalate repression of the Brotherhood in Egypt and push its adherents towards more hardline groups. "It would end up adding... more extremists to ISIS-like groups," he said, using an alternative acronym for the Islamic State group. Founded by Egyptian scholar and schoolteacher Hassan Al-Banna in 1928 as an Islamic charity and political movement, the Society of the Muslim Brothers grew rapidly, spawning offshoots from Morocco to Turkey, many of which are active today.

Despite repeated crackdowns over the decades, it remained a major political actor in Egypt (despite long being banned), before taking power in a 2012 election after president Hosni Mubarak was deposed the previous year. But after the army's 2013 toppling of Mubarak's successor Mohamed Morsi, the country's first elected civilian president and a Brotherhood official, Cairo once more banned the movement and

declared it a terror group.

The month after the Islamist president's ouster, security forces broke up two pro-Morsi protest camps in Cairo, killing at least 700 people. President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi's government has since executed dozens of Brotherhood members and imprisoned thousands. Sisi, who met President Donald Trump in April, reportedly urged him to blacklist the group. The White House announced on Tuesday that the designation was "working its way through the internal process". The move would allow US officials to impose sanctions on any person or organization with links to it.

But Fawaz Gerges, a political science professor at the London School of Economics, said that while the move would isolate the Brotherhood, it would ultimately adapt. "The movement's dominant narrative celebrates the pain and sacrifice of their members as part of their political DNA," he said. That echoes the experience of one of the Brotherhood's key figures, Sayyid Qutb. The American-educated Egyptian religious scholar was jailed under President Gamal Abdul Nasser in the 1960s. He became increasingly hardline in prison, and his calls for a more violent strain of Islamism inspired future militant groups including Al-Qaeda.

Some Brotherhood members have reacted violently to Egypt's latest crackdown. Armed Brotherhood affiliates Hasam and Liwaa al-Thawra emerged in 2016 and have since claimed responsibility for a string of deadly attacks, notably targeting judges and police officers. The Brotherhood remains a diverse movement with a presence in many countries, according to Yehia Hamed, a Brotherhood member who was investment minister in Morsi's government. He warned that blacklisting the movement could drive Muslim Brotherhood members to join the ranks of groups such as Al-Qaeda and IS. "They will go to the young members and say: 'You are peaceful - and still you are labeled a terrorist'," he said. Hamed said he was planning to sue Trump as he would be personally affected by the blacklisting. — AFP

International

As protests demand civil rule, Sudan's allies back generals

Military council has resisted calls to transfer reins to civilians

KHARTOUM: Demonstrators camped outside Sudan's army headquarters may be baying for the military to hand over power, but Khartoum's key Arab allies are throwing their weight behind the generals, analysts say. Sudan's army ousted veteran president Omar Al-Bashir on April 11 on the back of a popular uprising, and since then the military council that took power has resisted calls to transfer the reins to civilians. For weeks now, the 10-member council and protesters have failed to make a breakthrough at talks on forming an overall ruling joint civilian-military body.

And while Western powers are backing protester demands for a transfer of power, Sudan's allies Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Egypt seem to be angling for the generals to stay put. "There are clear signs that Egypt and Gulf Arab states have thrown their support to the military council, thereby emboldening the council," said Eric Reeves, a Sudan expert at Harvard University. Just days after Bashir's toppling, Saudi Arabia and the UAE voiced backing for the army council, calling for "stability".

The regional powerhouses then offered a \$3-billion aid package to Sudan, which is battling a worsening economic crisis - the key factor that triggered nationwide protests against Bashir. Alongside the two Gulf countries is Egypt, analysts said, with Cairo appearing to use its diplomatic clout as the head of the African Union to extend a time-frame set by the regional body for Sudan to carry out a "democratic transition". "It certainly shows these countries find it necessary to keep the army in Sudan's ruling council," said Khaled Tijani, editor-in-chief of Sudanese economic weekly Elaff.

'Dangerous example'

"One of the main interests of Saudi Arabia and the UAE will be in ensuring Sudan remains committed to its troop deployment in Yemen," said Willow Berridge, author of *Civil Uprisings in Modern Sudan* and lecturer in history at Newcastle University. Bashir deployed Sudanese troops to

Yemen in 2015 as part of a major foreign policy shift that saw Khartoum break its decades-old ties with Shiite Iran and join a Saudi-led coalition fighting Houthi rebels.

The chief of Sudan's ruling military council General Abdel Fattah Al-Burhan and his deputy Mohamed Hamdan Dagalo, widely known as Himeidi, have been the architects behind Sudan's troop deployment in Yemen, analysts and rights groups say. The Gulf countries "are likely to want to keep them in as powerful a position as possible", Berridge told AFP. It has remained unclear how many of Khartoum's soldiers are fighting in Yemen, but Sudanese media has reported that hundreds of soldiers and officers are deployed and have often suffered casualties, fanning popular ire against Bashir before he was ousted.

Beyond conflict-torn Yemen the Arab powers may have a reason closer to home to back the generals - a fear of the protests catching on. The crowds of Sudanese taking to the streets do not want the military - who they see as a "copycat" of Bashir's regime - to decide the fate of their country. For some authorities around the region, any chance of a repeat of the 2011 Arab Spring that roiled Egypt and the wider region is a frightening prospect. "Neither Egypt nor the Gulf states want a secular democracy in the region - a dangerous example to their own people suffering under their repressive regimes," said Reeves.

'Lot of hard feelings'

Neighbor Egypt also has its own special motives for wanting Sudan to remain in the grip of the generals. "Egypt's relations with Sudan are more complex than those with Gulf countries," said Tijani. The two countries have often had tense relations including over a border dispute and disagreements about the construction of a dam on the Nile by Ethiopia that Cairo says threatens its share of the water.

Prior to Bashir's downfall, President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi had patched up ties with Khartoum, and analysts say the Egyptian leader sees the generals as his best bet to



KHARTOUM: Sudanese protesters, waving a national flag, take part in a sit-in outside the army headquarters yesterday as thousands of people remain encamped in the area to demand the current 10-member army council that took power after the ouster of the country's former president be replaced by a civilian administration. — AFP

maintain that. The day Bashir was ousted, Cairo voiced its full belief in "the ability of the brotherly Sudanese people and their loyal national army to overcome the challenges of this critical stage". The maneuvering by the Arab powers has not gone unnoticed on the streets of Khartoum.

Protesters gathered outside Cairo's embassy in Khartoum last month, flashing "no to intervention" banners and calling on Sisi to "mind his own business". Demonstrators have also railed against Saudi Arabia and

the UAE despite the aid package offered to support Sudan's weakening currency and provide food and fuel supplies. Many have carried placards reading "No to Saudi and Emirati aid" and "Leave us alone". Egypt, Saudi Arabia and the UAE "are fighting hard on behalf of the military council, and in doing so are generating a lot of hard feelings on the part of the uprising", said Reeves. These feelings "will not go away if the uprising is successful", he cautioned. — AFP

Nigerians accused of prostitution arrested, assaulted

ABUJA: In Nigeria, being a young woman "is a crime", said a 25-year-old beautician, arrested two weeks ago while walking home in the capital Abuja. She says she was detained, assaulted and then raped by those meant to protect her. "Around 9:30 pm, or 10:00 pm, I was walking back home," she said. "The police arrested me in the street, accusing me of 'being out late'." The officers demanded she pay 4,000 naira (\$11) but she did not have the cash. So the officers grabbed her, she said. "They took me to the bush behind a building," she said, her voice cracking with emotion. "There were four of them. They molested me, and while three were holding me down, one of them raped me. He didn't use a condom." Several other women reported similar assaults that night.

Mass arrests

In two dramatic raids last month, dozens of women were dragged out of nightclubs, hotels and bars - or simply taken off the streets - in Abuja. They were arrested for prostitution, a charge many furiously denied. The sweeping police crackdown in the federal capital has sparked outrage in the news and on social media in Africa's most populous nation. Prostitution, although illegal in Nigeria, is still widespread in the cities and often tolerated in the

Christian south, but less so in the Muslim north where sharia law applies in some states. Abuja - situated slightly north of Nigeria's center - is a mix of southern and northern tribes and traditions. Testimonies from women given to AFP provide shocking stories of multiple and brutal sexual assaults. The women accuse officers from the federal police force.

Sex for freedom

Lawyer and activist Martin Obono happened to be at the Utako police station in Abuja on the night of April 26 for another case. "I was there when the girls got out of the vehicles, screaming, and some of them were bleeding," Obono said, adding the women said they had been attacked in the vehicles as they were brought to the police station. "They told me the policemen used objects, like sticks, to touch their private parts," Obono said.

One of the women was a mother with a two-month-old baby. "She wasn't allowed to breastfeed her, despite continuous crying," Obono said. "It took the intervention of a female police officer for that." One of the women dragged into the station on that Friday was a 22-year-old who had been at a party in a hotel when the police arrived. "They dragged me out, accusing me of being a prostitute," she said, explaining how police suddenly arrived in a fleet of pickup trucks. Many of the women were later released - after making forced payments. "Some of the girls paid bribes," she said. "Others accepted to have sex with them in exchange for their release."

'Making noise'

A spokesman for the Abuja police told AFP he would not be available for comment "until next month", while

multiple other calls and messages to other police officials went unanswered. However, Abayomi Shogunle, Assistant Commissioner of Police, posted a message this week on social media addressed to "those making noise on the clampdown on prostitutes in Abuja". Shogunle made no comment on specifics on the raids, and did not respond to allegations of rape. But he did say that prostitution was "a crime under the law" and a "lifeline of violent criminals".

Some of the women have already appeared in court. On Monday, 27 of the young women were handed one-month suspended prison sentences and fines of 3,000 naira each for prostitution. Some were sentenced without access to legal representation, said lawyer Jennifer Ogbogu who represented two organizations at the trial - the Nigeria Sex Workers Association and Heartland Alliance International. "Some were prostitutes, others not, but in no case can this justify their rights being violated," Ogbogu said.

In an open letter, a coalition of 72 women's organizations, leading campaigners, civil society and human rights groups, said they "strongly condemn the recent raids, public humiliation, assault and sexual harassment of over 100 women" in Abuja. They demanded a government investigation. Nigerian security forces have faced such accusations before. In Oct 2017, a court of the Economic Community of West African States, ECOWAS, ordered Nigeria's government to pay 18 million naira in damages to three women.

The court said the women had been illegally arrested and detained by the same police unit in Abuja accused of carrying out the recent raids. "They know we are vulnerable, and they don't treat us as human beings," said the beautician. "All this has to end. They should be punished for what they've done to us." — AFP

ANC vows to punish corrupt officials

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa's ruling African National Congress (ANC) will kick-start the economy and deal with corruption, it vowed yesterday, three days before elections at which its overwhelming majority faces its sternest test since the party rose to power. Though the ANC has won each parliamentary election since the transition from apartheid in 1994, recent opinion polls predict that it will bleed support to opposition coalitions that have gained ground as the ANC has been dogged by political scandal and a flagging economy.

President Cyril Ramaphosa, who took over from scandal-plagued Jacob Zuma as ANC leader in December 2017, told about 70,000 supporters packed into Johannesburg's Ellis Park Stadium on Sunday that the party would punish members guilty of stealing public money. A judicial corruption inquiry that began in 2018 has heard chilling evidence of how top officials took bribes from local and multinational companies in exchange for lucrative contracts from state firms.

"We are determined that those found guilty of corruption or involvement in state capture will not be allowed to occupy positions of responsibility, either in the ANC, in parliament or in government," Ramaphosa said at Sunday's rally. "The era of impunity is over. We are now entering the era of accountability." The torrent of allegations has hit ANC support, especially in urban areas. Three opinion polls in recent weeks show the ANC's support ranging between 51 and 61 percent, compared with the 62 percent it won in 2014.

Analysts said it was telling that the ANC, as well as the two largest opposition parties - the Democratic Alliance (DA) and Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) - held their final campaign rallies in



JOHANNESBURG: A supporter of the ruling party Africa National Congress reacts at the Ellis Park stadium yesterday during the final campaign rally of the party ahead of May 8 legislative and presidential elections. — AFP

Gauteng. Despite being the province with the smallest land area, Gauteng generates more than a third of South Africa's gross domestic product (GDP) and is the most populous province with a population of 14.3 million. In 2016 local polls the ANC lost control of the three largest metropolitan municipalities - economic hub Johannesburg, administrative capital Pretoria, both in Gauteng, and Nelson Mandela Bay in the eastern province.

Ramaphosa said the ANC would revive economic growth and ease unemployment, which sits at more than 27 percent, by hitting an investment target of 1.4 trillion rand (\$100 billion) and limiting policy uncertainty. "It has never been done before in South Africa and only the ANC will be able to mobilise these kind of resources," Ramaphosa said. South Africa's economic growth has slowed sharply in recent years, averaging about 2 percent in the past decade, while medium-term GDP is seen around 1 percent, well below the 4-5 percent needed to dent rising poverty and joblessness. — Reuters

With focus on Hodeida, war rages elsewhere

ADEN/DUBAI: With global attention on Yemen focused on a fragile truce in its main port of Hodeida, fighting between rival forces in the country's four-year war has surged elsewhere. Escalating hostilities in the southwestern Al-Dhalea area have disrupted the main south-to-north goods route, displaced thousands and complicated efforts to battle a cholera epidemic and feed millions on the brink of starvation. "The clashes taking place in Al-Dhalea are less visible than those in along Yemen's west coast (where Hodeida is) but threaten to have a similarly disastrous impact," said Suze van Meegen of the Norwegian Refugee Council. "It is absolutely critical that supplies coming through Aden move inland as quickly as possible, keeping commercial markets afloat and replenishing humanitarian supplies."

The Saudi-backed coalition of pro-government forces and their Iran-aligned Houthi enemies agreed a ceasefire and troop withdrawal in Hodeida in December, in the first major diplomatic breakthrough in a conflict that broke out in late 2014. That deal averted an all-out assault on the port that risked unleashing famine but, while the fragile peace is largely holding, the troop pullback has stalled and thousands of tons of grain - inaccessible by aid agencies until yesterday - have started to rot.

Meanwhile, in other areas, ground fighting has intensified and air strikes continue. Al-Dhalea straddles the main roads between the government-controlled southern port of Aden, a major entry point for aid and commercial supplies, and the Houthi-controlled capital Sanaa. Heavy clashes and artillery in Al-Dhalea are forcing aid, commercial traffic and civilians to divert onto long and dangerous mountain passes, reducing humanitarian access and increasing journey time and costs. "Since November 1 I think we are on our fourth

alternative route as things (hostilities) expand," said Frank McManus of the International Rescue Committee (IRC) aid organization. Two weeks ago a bridge connecting Al-Dhalea to neighboring Ibb was blown up, severing that route. Local reports blamed the incident on the Houthis after they stormed the area, though responsibility has not been confirmed. Heavy fighting has also broken out in the last couple of months in northwestern regions Hajjah and Abbs, and Taiz in the southwest, causing deaths and displacing hundreds of thousands. The IRC said the Al-Dhalea clashes have forced it to suspend and relocate health clinics, cholera treatment, education and other services in recent weeks.

Yemeni authorities have reported more than 200,000 suspected cases of cholera since January. A UN Development Program report said that if the conflict were to end this year, it would have killed around 233,000, with 56 percent of those being indirect deaths from lack of food, health services and infrastructure.

Shifting front line

Before the Hodeida agreement, the Al-Dhalea front between the Houthis and government forces was static. "(Now it's) an active front line with people being displaced on a regular basis and with the expectation it (fighting) will continue in that area," McManus said. Deep mistrust between the warring parties has stalled UN efforts to implement the Hodeida deal, with which local security forces will run the port after withdrawal a key sticking point.

The UN is optimistic a troop withdrawal can happen soon, but diplomats have told Reuters a breakthrough remains distant. Government coalition allies Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, the United States and Britain last week repeated calls for the Houthis to redeploy from Hodeida. They said they would be looking for the UN Security Council to review progress on May 15 "with the expectation that implementation will be under way at that point". The head of the Houthis' Supreme Revolutionary Committee, Mohammed Ali Al-Houthi, told Reuters that, while discussion points remained, he hoped troop redeployment would take place soon. — Reuters

News in brief

Iran selling oil on 'grey market'

DUBAI: Iran has mobilized all its resources to sell oil in a "grey market", bypassing US sanctions that Tehran sees as illegitimate, state media quoted Deputy Oil Minister Amir Hossein Zamaninia as saying yesterday. "We have mobilized all of the country's resources and are selling oil in the 'grey market'," state news agency IRNA quoted Zamaninia as saying. "We certainly won't sell 2.5 million barrels per day as under the (nuclear deal)," Zamaninia said, giving no figures for current sales. "We will need to make serious decisions about our financial and economic management, and the government is working on that." — Reuters

Woman with cancer dies in UAE jail

DUBAI: A woman with terminal cancer who was serving a 10-year prison sentence in the UAE has died in jail. Human Rights Watch said yesterday, two months after the UN called for her release on medical grounds. United Nations human rights experts in February called on UAE authorities to release Alia Abdulnoor to live her final days at home and said they were concerned about reports that she was suffering degrading treatment, including being chained to a bed under armed guard. Abdulnoor was sentenced in 2017 to 10 years in prison after being convicted of charges including financing terrorist groups. She was diagnosed with breast cancer after her arrest in 2015. — Reuters

MSF resumes work in Aden

ADEN: Doctors Without Borders (MSF) resumed its work in a hospital in Yemen's second city of Aden yesterday after a one-month suspension following the kidnapping and killing of a patient. MSF stopped admitting people early last month when a group of armed men threatened staff and took a patient who was later found dead on a street. "MSF Aden Trauma hospital has resumed its activities as of today May 5th, after a month of suspension following a security incident that happened in the hospital in which a patient was taken from the hospital and found killed nearby," it said on Twitter. — AFP

Turkey to buy Russian missiles despite US 'threats'

ISTANBUL: Turkey yesterday dismissed US threats of sanctions if it went ahead with a Russian missile purchase, saying it would not renege on a pledge to Moscow. Washington has warned its NATO ally for months that Ankara's adoption of Russian S-400 missile technology alongside US F-35 fighters would pose a threat to the jets and endanger Western defense. The US has said it will halt a joint F-35 program with Turkey if it acquires the Russian missile defense system. A US law furthermore provides for sanctions on any country concluding arms deals with Russian companies.

"The US threats of sanctions shows that they don't know Turkey," Vice President Fuat Oktay told Kanal 7 television. "The decision on the S-400 has been taken. Once a pact has been signed, one's word given, Turkey respects it," he said. The S-400 purchase is one dispute fuelling tensions between two nations also at odds over US support for Syrian Kurdish militias which Ankara brands as terrorists and Turkish backing for US foe Venezuela.

Ankara said the first deliveries of the S-400 are scheduled for June or July. Last month, after repeated warnings, the United States said Turkey's decision to buy the S-400 system was incompatible with it remaining part of the emblematic F-35 jet program. Turkey had planned to buy 100 F-35A fighter jets, with pilots already training in the United States. Washington has placed a freeze on the joint manufacturing operations with Turkey, and suggested Ankara might be able to obtain a US missile defense system if it forgoes the one on offer from Moscow. — AFP

International

Migrant fears, EU suspicion in Orban Hungary heartland

Opposition parties' election campaigns noticeably absent in Csorna

CSORNA, Hungary: Never mind the EU-funded roads and hospital. In the sleepy Hungarian town of Csorna, there is only one European Parliament election poster on billboards and bus-shelters: "Back Viktor Orban's program, stop immigration!" Csorna is staunch pro-Orban territory, 150 km west of Budapest on the flatlands near the Austrian border. At the last two general elections, Orban's ruling Fidesz party gained its biggest wins nationally in the town of 10,000, where many locals are proud of their combative prime minister.

"Orban stopped the migrants, thank God, and stands up for Hungary against Brussels," Istvan Balassa, 49, said from the hatch of a fast-food van parked outside the town hall. "Europe has been too liberal with the migrants, it doesn't need any more Muslims," he said while doling out "langos", a popular Hungarian snack made of fried dough.

'Stop Brussels'

Orban has framed May's vote as a fight for "Christian civilization" and warns that "Brussels bureaucrats" want to "replace" Europe's population with immigrants. His seven-point programme calls for Brussels to stop issuing refugees with what Hungary calls "migrant visas", despite the European Commission insisting it has "zero plans" to introduce such permits. Budapest also rejects pre-paid "migrant bank cards" that it says could be used by terrorists to travel and stay in Europe.

Locals attributed the apparent lack of migrants in Csorna to Orban's tough measures, including a border fence installed in 2015. "The (southern) border is well defended and keeps them out," kindergarten worker Borbely Ferenc told AFP. "Why should my taxes go to migrant visas or bank cards? Brussels is not handling the migration issue well," the 56-year-old said.

Orban's program is just the latest in a series of anti-EU and anti-immigration campaigns waged by Budapest. In 2017, it urged Hungarians to "Stop Brussels" over its alleged interference in national sov-

ereignty. A nationwide billboard campaign this year targeted European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker and Hungarian-born US billionaire George Soros for allegedly encouraging illegal immigration. The posters - which the Atlatzo.hu investigative website says cost more than €30 million (\$33.5 million) of taxpayer money - led to Fidesz being suspended from the European People's Party (EPP), its own centre-right political grouping in the European Parliament.

Csorna's former socialist mayor Jozsef Papp said he detected a growing ambivalence about the EU since Orban and Fidesz swept to power in 2010. "The campaigns scare people," the 59-year-old told AFP in the town's leafy Saint Stephen's Square. "They also deflect attention from people's real problems, like young people leaving for higher wages in Austria."

Meanwhile, opposition parties' election campaigns are noticeably absent in Csorna. The cash-strapped parties complain that businesses owning advertising platforms only accept Fidesz posters, or charge them inflated prices, making it difficult to get their pro-EU messages out. Last month, opposition politicians also protested outside the public broadcaster's headquarters in Budapest to demand they receive more airtime on news programs. "Around 70-80 percent of Hungarians only hear the messages produced by the government propaganda organs," protester Akos Hadhazy told AFP.

'EU money is squandered'

Still, support among Hungarians for EU membership remains high, according to a recent Eurobarometer survey. More than 80 percent of participants said they would vote in favour of staying in the bloc in a referendum, mainly for practical benefits like freedom of movement and financial aid. Trucks en route to Austria no longer clog up Csorna town center thanks to a new ring road, partly built with EU structural funding. A wing of the local hospital and the town's drainage system have also been revamped.



CSORNA, Hungary: A picture taken on April 25, 2019 shows a giant cube displayed at a roundabout in this sleepy Hungarian town. —AFP

"Hungary opened its markets to EU firms who take out huge profits, so deserves any money it gets in return," a cyclist on a new EU-funded lane said before speeding off without giving his name. But some locals voiced suspicions about rampant corruption. "The EU money is squandered on unnecessary overpriced investments, given to circles of friends, without any competition," bus driver Gyorgy Szabad, 54, told AFP.

Last March, the EU's anti-fraud agency OLAF opened a probe into a solar panel plant project that

received around six million euros of EU aid. A sun-faded board outside the still-shuttered factory says the investment - whose cornerstone was laid in 2014 by Csorna native and current Hungarian president Janos Ader - was scheduled for completion in 2015. The investigation is "ongoing", OLAF's press office told AFP this week, without giving further details. Both the Fidesz member of parliament for the Csorna area and the party's local head declined requests for interviews. —AFP

Panamanians go to polls to elect new president



PANAMA CITY: A citizen casts her vote during presidential and parliamentary elections yesterday. —AFP

PANAMA CITY: Panamanians went to the polls yesterday to elect a new president after a campaign dominated by concerns about corruption. "Voting begins," Panama's Electoral Tribunal tweeted. Some 2.7 million people are eligible to vote. Social Democrat Laurentino Cortizo was favored to win, with pre-election polls giving him a 10-point lead over his closest challenger, former foreign minister Romulo Roux of the Democratic Change party. Independent Ricardo Lombana was a close third in the polls.

Yesterday's winner will succeed Juan Carlos Varela, who is unable to stand for re-election as Panama's constitution limits presidents to a single five-year term. Corruption scandals played a significant role in election campaigning in a country struggling to shed its image as a money-laundering paradise following the Panama Papers scandal three years ago. Equally damaging was the admission by Brazilian construction giant Odebrecht that it had paid \$59 million in bribes in Panama between 2010 and 2014 to secure major public works contracts.

Panama is home to the strategic canal that links the Atlantic and Pacific oceans, making it a key conduit in the global maritime trading system. Cortizo, a 66-year-old former agriculture minister known popularly as "Nito," said he wanted to "rescue and transform Panama" and "leave a legacy" untainted by corruption. "I'm leaning towards Nito Cortizo because of his ability, experience and knowledge, and I think he has all the tools and structure to carry out a large part of what he has proposed," Miguel Carrio, an insurance salesman, told AFP.

The surprise candidate in the race, lawyer and journalist Lombana, has surged in the polls on an anti-corruption ticket, garnering almost 20 percent of voter intentions, compared to Cortizo's 36 percent. Lombana, a former Panamanian consul to Washington, has hit out at the traditional parties, a popular tactic at a time when public confidence in the political establishment has been hit by numerous scandals. While he may be behind, 45-year-old Lombana could yet win yesterday's election, political scientist Harry Brown told AFP, given that "the context of corruption scandals favors independents."

Speaking to AFP, Dolores De Gracia said she would vote for Lombana "because in truth I'm looking for a change, this country needs a change. I trust him and I hope the corruption will end." In recent days, Lombana has been boosted by public backing from singer Ruben Blades, a legend of salsa. While Blades did not mention Lombana by name, it was clear he was referring to the outsider candidate when he called on voters to pick an independent candidate promising constitutional reform in a bid to end corruption. —AFP

Buttigieg impact felt in US beyond White House dream

WASHINGTON: The unprecedented campaign of Pete Buttigieg, with husband and potential first gentleman Chasten at his side, is shaking up politics and promises to change perceptions of same-sex marriage - and what it means to be a family in America. The Buttigiegs are the most visible same-sex couple of the moment, riding a wave of popularity as Pete, the 37-year-old mayor of South Bend, Indiana, seeks the Democratic presidential nomination and the right to challenge Donald Trump in 2020.

Should the improbable become reality, Buttigieg would serve as America's first openly gay commander in chief, and his 29-year-old husband of 11 months would become the first-ever US first gentleman. Together they would challenge expectations of what the first couple could or should be. While that remains a far-off dream 18 months from election day, experts say

the pair is already having substantial cultural impact.

Millions of Americans have now watched Buttigieg's televised town halls, seen the candidate and his husband in person on the campaign trail or viewed their television interviews. This week's Time magazine profile boldly titled "First Family" features a cover photo of the couple standing outside their home, sleeves rolled up - an unremarkable image capturing a remarkable cultural moment. "Pete and Chasten are so... normal and American and relatable," Annise Parker, the former mayor of Houston and one of the first openly gay mayors of a major American city, told AFP.

Because of heightened media coverage during Buttigieg's rising star campaign - he was virtually unknown weeks ago but now polls in the top tier among 21 candidates - "it's driving this mainstream middle-American image of a young happily married couple," said Parker, who now heads Victory Fund, which supports LGBTQ candidates. "It's hard to discriminate against someone you can relate to so strongly."

The average American's position on gay marriage has evolved rapidly, said

Maduro rallies military; opposition appeals to troops

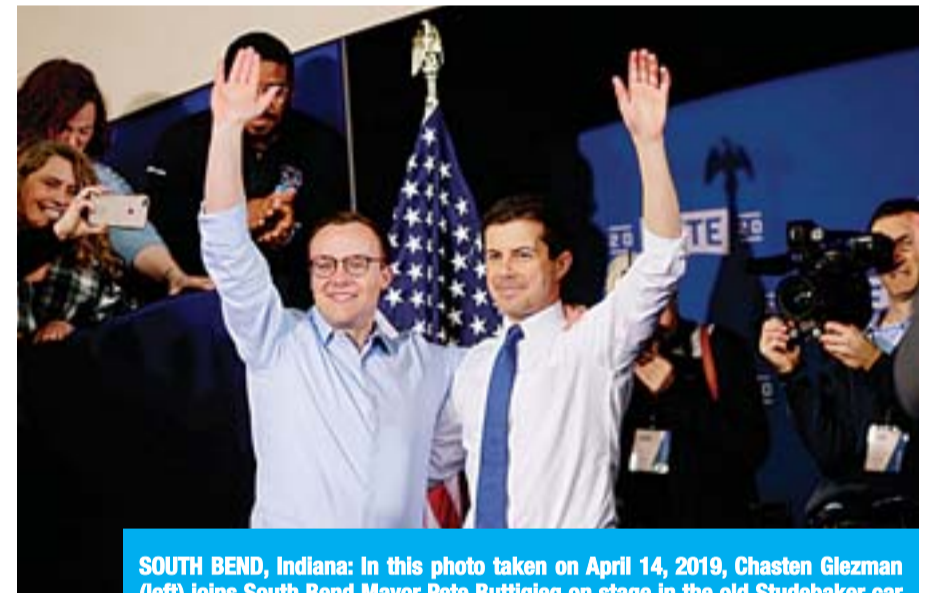
CARACAS: Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro urged his troops Saturday to be "ready" for potential US military action, as a limited number of opposition supporters marched on military barracks in a bid to win the armed forces' support. The small turnout for the Saturday marches - with participants in the hundreds, not the thousands - is another setback for opposition leader Juan Guaido, following a failed military uprising earlier in the week. Maduro on Saturday instructed the military "to be ready to defend the homeland with weapons in your hands if one day the US empire dares to touch this territory, this sacred earth."

Underscoring the continued military support for his socialist regime, Maduro delivered his televised address from a base

in northwestern Cojedes state - where he appeared alongside his defense minister, Vladimir Padrino, and in the presence of more than 5,000 troops. The United States has refused to take the threat of military action off the table in its push to oust Maduro - although it so far has limited its campaign to ramping up sanctions.

Guaido's cause gained renewed support on Saturday from US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, who issued a video address to the Venezuelan people, telling them: "The time for transition is now." "You can hold your institutions, your military and their leaders to the highest standards and demand a return to democracy," Pompeo said in the message. "The United States stands firmly with you in your quest." National Assembly head Guaido, 35, has branded Maduro a usurper over his controversial re-election last year, and in January declared himself acting president, plunging Venezuela into a political crisis that deepened its already grave economic woes.

But Maduro has held firm, bolstered by the continued support of the powerful



SOUTH BEND, Indiana: In this photo taken on April 14, 2019, Chasten Glezman (left) joins South Bend Mayor Pete Buttigieg on stage in the old Studebaker car factory. —AFP

Brian Powell, a sociology professor at Indiana University who studies same-sex marriage. In 2003, his research showed, a traditional husband-wife-children view of family dominated. By 2015, the "inclusionist" ideal prevailed, and

marriage equality was the law of the land. Much of that shift was attributable to television, notably shows like "Will and Grace," which helped normalize same-sex households to millions of viewers. —AFP



EL PAO, Venezuela: Venezuela's President Nicolas Maduro speaks to troops during military exercises of cadets of the Bolivarian Military University at a training center on Saturday. —AFP

armed forces. "I told the generals and admirals yesterday: loyalty, I want an active loyalty... I trust you, but keep your eyes open, a handful of traitors cannot tarnish the honor, the unity, the cohesion and the image of the armed forces," the president

said in his speech from the military base. Maduro also mourned the loss of "seven worthy officers of the country" who were killed in a helicopter crash while traveling to the base for military exercises seen as a show of strength against Guaido. —AFP

Polarized North Macedonia votes for president

SKOPJE: North Macedonia returned to the ballot box yesterday for a presidential run-off that risks turning into a major headache for the ruling Social Democrats, whose candidate is battling a nationalist-backed rival. Turnout figures will be as important as who wins, with 40 percent of the electorate needed to vote to validate the poll. The two candidates, the ruling party's Stevo Pendarovski and right-wing favourite Gordana Siljanovska-Davkova, finished in a near dead heat in the first round last month.

Their tie reflected a split between pro-West and nationalist camps who have clashed over the govern-

ment's recent move to change the country's name to North Macedonia, which ended a long-running row with Greece. But record-low turnout in the first round, at barely over 41 percent, also reflected a failure to galvanize most of the 1.8 million voters. If turnout sinks below 40 percent yesterday, the entire poll will be annulled, threatening a new period of political uncertainty in one of Europe's poorest states.

"The country has been divided for a long time and I think one of the first duties of the new president must be to work to reduce this division," 70-year-old voter Roza Jovanova said after casting her ballot in the capital Skopje on a drizzly Sunday morning. Prime Minister Zoran Zaev is confident "the elections will succeed". But if not, he said he would call a snap parliamentary poll. While the presidency is a largely ceremonial role, the office can exercise some veto powers. The current president, opposition-backed Gorge Ivanov, has protested the country's name-change by refusing to sign bills in recent weeks. —AFP



SKOPJE: A child casts her father's ballot at a polling station yesterday. —AFP

International

Newly-crowned Thai king carried in royal procession

Thais have opportunity to 'pay homage' to Vajiralongkorn

BANGKOK: Thailand's newly-crowned King Maha Vajiralongkorn was carried by soldiers on a gilded palanquin through the streets of Bangkok yesterday, in front of crowds who craned to witness the historic event. The king, Rama X of the Chakri dynasty, wore a bejewelled robe and broad-brimmed hat with a feather on the second of three days of pageantry and royal splendor. The 7-kilometre procession brings the public into close proximity with the 66-year-old monarch for the first time, two years after he ascended the throne in an increasingly assertive reign.

It started around 5 pm (1000 GMT) at the grand palace in Bangkok's old quarter as trumpets blared, soldiers shouted commands and cannons fired a 21-gun salute. Thais wearing yellow shirts - the royal color - and carrying hats and umbrellas to protect against temperatures reaching 36 degrees Celsius filled the streets outside with many clutching portraits of Vajiralongkorn and shouting "Long live the King!" "It may be my first and last chance to see this," 57-year-old street Nattiyra Siripattana told AFP ahead of the first ceremony of its kind in 69 years.

The three-day coronation, which started Saturday, is the first since Vajiralongkorn's adored and revered father was crowned in 1950. The highlight of Saturday's sombre ceremonies was the King's anointment with holy water, before he placed the 7.3 kg golden tiered crown on his head. Early yesterday, the king bestowed royal titles on family members who crawled to his throne in a striking show of deference to the monarch, who was joined by his new Queen Suthida.

The queen, 40, was deputy commander of the king's royal guard before her marriage to Vajiralongkorn, which was announced days before the coronation. During the procession, she marched in red and black uniform next to the palanquin. Thailand's monarchy is swaddled in ritual, protocol and hierarchy all orbiting around the

king, who is viewed as a demigod.

During the hours-long procession Thais will have the opportunity to "pay homage" to the king who will also stop at several major temples to pray before large gilded Buddha images. On the ground authorities sprayed mists of water over the crowds whose numbers were bolstered by droves of "Jit Arsa" - or "Spirit Volunteers" - intended to project a show of devotion and fealty to the monarchy. But soaring temperatures threatened to thin out the numbers.

Vajiralongkorn ascended the throne in 2016 after the death of his father Bhumibol Adulyadej. The elaborate coronation ceremonies have been broadcast on live television and include a network of the powerful and influential in Thailand. Junta chief Prayut Chan-O-Cha, who seized power in a 2014 coup, took part in many of the key rituals, including the procession.

The king and queen stayed the previous night in the royal residence, where a Siamese cat and a white rooster were placed on a pillow as part of house-warming rituals intended to bring good tidings. One of the family members to receive royal titles was 14-year-old Prince Dipangkorn Rasmijoti, who knelt and prostrated in front of his father as he was anointed with water. The teenager is the king's son from his third marriage. He has six other children, including four sons from two previous wives.

'Focus on politics'

Criticism or in-depth discussion of the royal family in Thailand is guarded by harsh lese-majeste rules that carry up to 15 years in prison. All media must self-censor and the country's lively social media platforms have been subdued. But the dazzling display of the primacy of the monarchy in Thai life belies a simmering political crisis held over from elections in March. The junta that seized power in 2014 and has vowed to defend the monarchy is aiming to return to power through the ballot box.



BANGKOK: Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn is carried on a golden palanquin during the coronation procession, as daughter Princess Bajrakitiyabha Mahidol (bottom left in black hat) marches alongside yesterday. —AFP

Its proxy party has claimed the popular vote. But a coalition of anti-military parties says it has shored up a majority in the lower house. Full results are not expected until May 9, a delay that has frustrated many Thais. "When the event (coronation) is finished we will have to focus on politics," said Titipol Phakdeewanich, a lecturer at Ubon Ratchathani University.

Since ascending the throne the king has taken sev-

eral assertive moves, including bringing the assets of the Crown Property Bureau under his direct control. Though the royal family is nominally above politics, the king issued an election-eve message calling on Thais to vote for "good people" against those who create "chaos". And in February, he scuttled the prime ministerial bid of his older sister Princess Ubolratana with an anti-junta party. —AFP

Militants kill India politician ahead of vote

SRINAGAR: Suspected militants shot dead a local leader of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's ruling party in disputed Kashmir ahead of the latest round of polling, highlighting bloodshed that has marred India's mega-election. The killing in Anantnag district of India's only Muslim-majority state is the latest in a string of attacks to have marred the election which began last month. The militants opened fire on Gul Mohammad Mir, who belonged to a local unit of the Hindu nationalist Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), at his house in south Kashmir on Saturday night.

Police called it a "terror crime" and Modi condemned Mir's killing in a Twitter post yesterday, saying "there is no place for such violence in our country". Police said a polling station to be used in today's voting was set ablaze in the nearby Shopian area. Voter turnout in Indian Kashmir has barely crossed 10 percent in the previous rounds, and Anantnag is expected to suffer today - the fifth round of voting in the six-week long election which ends May 19. Results are to be released four days later. Political killings are common in India's bitterly-fought elections with party and regional rivalries often boiling over. The National Crime Records Bureau says there were more than 100 political murders in 2016. Kerala state in the south and Uttar Pradesh and Bihar in the north are the worst for political murders. The world's biggest election has been mostly targeted by far-left Maoist rebels. Last week guerrillas killed 15 police commandos and their driver in western Maharashtra state. The Maoists, who have traditionally boycotted elections as part of their campaign against the Indian state, killed two police in Chhattisgarh state last month. —AFP

Lanka expels 200 Islamic clerics after Easter attacks

COLOMBO: Sri Lanka has expelled over 600 foreign nationals, including around 200 Islamic clerics, since the Easter suicide bombings blamed on a local jihadi group, a minister told AFP yesterday. Home Affairs Minister Vajira Abeywardena said the clerics had entered the country legally, but amid a security crackdown after the attacks were found to have overstayed their visas, for which fines were imposed and they were expelled from the island. "Considering the current situation in the country, we have reviewed the visas system and took a decision to tighten visa restrictions for religious teachers," Abeywardena said. "Out of those who were sent out, about 200 were Islamic preachers."

The Easter Sunday bombings that killed 257 people and wounded nearly 500 were led by a local cleric who is known to have travelled to neighboring India and had made contact with jihadists there. The minister did not give the nationalities of those who have been expelled, but police have said many foreigners who have overstayed their visas since the Easter attacks were from Bangladesh, India, Maldives and Pakistan.

"There are religious institutions which have been getting down foreign preachers for decades," Abeywardena said. "We have no issues with them, but there are some which mushroomed recently. We will pay more attention to them." The minister said the government was overhauling the country's visa policy following fears that foreign clerics could radicalise locals for a repeat of the April 21 suicide bombings, which targeted three Christian churches and three luxury hotels. —AFP

Lanka Catholics say lonely prayers as churches close

NEGOMBO: Father Suranga Warnakulasuriya said prayers alone in his church yesterday, as Catholic services were suspended across Sri Lanka for the second straight week since the Easter suicide attacks. With the army staging raids across the country and authorities maintaining high levels of security, the country's 1.25 million Christians are still on edge after jihadist bombers killed 257 people. Warnakulasuriya has been saying mass in an empty church in Negombo, just north of the capital, every day since the slaughter at three hotels and three churches, one not far from his.

"Sometimes we feel lonely by not being able to celebrate the mass together," admitted the fresh-faced 32-year-old who only became a priest in 2015. With churches closed, the country's Catholics had to make do Sunday with a second televised mass by the Archbishop of

Lanka tourism takes a hit after bombings

BENTOTA/COLOMBO: Sri Lanka's \$4.4 billion tourism industry is reeling from cancellations as travellers shun the sun and sand Indian Ocean island after multiple suicide bombings that killed over 250 people two weeks ago. Suspected suicide bombers from little-known Islamic groups in Sri Lanka attacked churches and luxury hotels in the country on Easter Sunday, killing worshippers, tourists and their families. Islamic State claimed responsibility for the attacks.

Tourism, which accounts for 5 percent of the country's gross domestic product, has suffered as tourists from around the world cancelled hotel and flight bookings fearing more attacks. "It's a big blow to the economy, as well as the tourism industry," Sri Lankan President Maithripala Sirisena said in an interview on Saturday. "For the economy to develop, it's important tourism return to where it was before

Taleban bomber, gunmen attack police headquarters

KABUL: A Taleban suicide bomber detonated his explosives-laden car at a police headquarters in northern Afghanistan followed by clashes between gunmen and security forces, officials and the Taleban said yesterday. The death toll was not known but at least 40 people had been injured, said Mohibullah Habib, provincial health director in the city of Pul-e-Khumri. A member of the Baghlan provincial council said clashes were ongoing and that it had sought immediate deployment from neighboring provinces. "Clashes have not stopped," said Assadullah Shahbaz.

Colombo, Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith. A few people went to St Anthony's Shrine in Colombo to say prayers in front of a barrier set up in front of the church where dozens died on April 21. But the faithful are frustrated.

Door to door prayers

"It's not enough because we cannot receive the eucharist through television, that's the important thing," said Shehani Rangana, 33, whose father was among the dead at St Sebastian's church in Negombo. Since the bombings, Catholics - shaken by physical and psychological scars from the jihadist attacks - have been organizing their own services and solidarity groups. Sometimes Warnakulasuriya and other priests say prayers in the homes of parishioners. Rangana put up a cross of dried leaves at the door of her home for one service.

Warnakulasuriya said he goes to up to 20 homes each day to celebrate communion. "They share their views on this attack," he said. "Sometimes they have hatred feelings, so we try to control them, to persuade them not to have revenge. We try to calm them by saying that Jesus is not hatred but love." Around St

the attacks." Net hotel bookings dropped a staggering 186 percent on average over the week following the attacks compared to the same period last year, data from travel consultancy ForwardKeys showed. A decline of more than one hundred percent indicates more cancellations than bookings. Cancellation rates at hotels across the country averaged 70 percent as of Saturday, with the capital Colombo taking a bigger hit. Sri Lanka's Tourism Bureau Chairman Kishu Gomes told Reuters. "Some airlines have also discontinued frequency of flights. Load factor is much lower than it used to be," Gomes said. "It is a worrying factor for sure."

Tourism took off in Sri Lanka, which boasts of a 1,600-km long coastline, following the end of the decades-long civil war with Tamil separatists in 2009. It was Sri Lanka's third largest and fastest growing source of foreign currency last year. Decisive policy and security measures will be important to revive the industry and support economic growth, the International Monetary Fund has said. For now, businesses from luxury hotels to beach shacks are facing mounting losses.

In Bentota, one of a string of beach resorts south of Colombo, occupancy rates have plummeted, according to interviews with



COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan Christian watches a live broadcast of a service conducted by the Archbishop of Colombo Cardinal Malcolm Ranjith at her house near St Anthony's Shrine yesterday. —AFP

Sebastian's Church, ravaged by a suicide bomber who killed 102 people, nearly all the houses have white flags, the color of mourning.

The bigger pennants are a sign that

someone from the house died in the massacre. The local cemetery did not have enough room to bury all the dead and one local resident offered land so that victims could be buried together. —AFP



COLOMBO: A Sri Lankan bomb disposal squad officer uses a sniffer dog to check for explosives at a school yesterday ahead of the reopening of all public schools after an extended Easter holiday. —AFP

hotel managers. Samanali Collone, 54, runs the seven-room Warahena Beach Hotel in Bentota, where rooms cost 10,000 Sri Lankan rupees (\$56) per night. Her hotel had previ-

ously been fully booked for the day when Reuters visited on Thursday, but when news of the bombings on Easter Sunday emerged, all of her guests cancelled. —Reuters

The Taleban claimed responsibility for the attack. "Several other Taleban fighters are presently clashing with the Afghan forces," Taleban spokesman Zabihullah Mujahid said. Nasrat Rahimi, a spokesman at the Interior Ministry in Kabul, said several Taleban fighters had managed to penetrate the headquarters. The Taleban have stepped up attacks on security installations, even as they hold direct talks with the US officials to end the war in Afghanistan.

The Taleban hold sway over more territory than at any point since their ouster at the hands of US-led troops following the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks on the United States. Earlier this week the group rejected appeals made by Afghan President Ashraf Ghani and US special envoy for peace in Afghanistan, Zalmay Khalilzad to declare a ceasefire. The Afghan-born US diplomat Khalilzad who is leading the sixth round of talks with the Taleban in Doha to pursue a deal that would see the withdrawal of foreign forces in return for Taleban security guarantees on Saturday said

that America stands ready for "all sides" to lay down arms in the 17-year conflict.

"All sides agreeing to reduce violence is a necessary step toward achieving that outcome and the morally responsible choice to make. We stand ready," Khalilzad tweeted. Khalilzad's comments came a day after Ghani said he was prepared to call an "immediate" and "permanent" ceasefire. About 45,000 Afghan security forces have been killed since Ghani took office in Sept 2014.

The Taleban said they will not lay down their arms ahead of the holy month of Ramadan. "A ceasefire will only get discussed once a deal about foreign force withdrawal gets finalized," Suhail Shaheen, the Taleban's political spokesman based in Doha told Reuters. The Resolute Support Mission in Afghanistan consists of 17,000 troops, about half of them from the United States. A smaller number of US troops operate in Afghanistan under a counter-terrorism mission. —Reuters

Analysis

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The First Daily in The Arabian Gulf

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Putin challenges US in Venezuela power play

Russia emerged as a crucial power broker in the crisis in far-away Venezuela this week when Washington accused Moscow of convincing President Nicolas Maduro not to flee to Cuba. US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo said Maduro had a plane on the tarmac ready to fly to Havana when "the Russians indicated that he should stay". Moscow hit back, dismissing the claim as fake and accusing Washington of supporting a coup "that has nothing to do with democracy" by backing opposition leader Juan Guaido.

Moscow has its reasons for standing behind Maduro - he's a rare ally in Latin America and Russia has poured billions into the Venezuelan economy. But analysts say Russian President Vladimir Putin is also playing the long game, hoping to use Venezuela as leverage in his global tug-of-war with Washington. "Russia is seeking to translate its influence over Maduro - which is in fact not absolute - into an opportunity to have dialogue with the United States," Tatyana Stanovaya, head of R.Politik, a Paris-based analysis firm, told AFP. "Maduro is a bargaining chip."

Tensions in Venezuela have soared since Guaido declared himself acting president in January, claiming Maduro's re-election last year was illegitimate. More than 50 countries led by the United States lined up behind the 35-year-old head of the National Assembly, but Russia and China have backed Maduro. Reeling from Western sanctions, Moscow has quickly sensed an opportunity, even if it meant locking horns with the United States in Latin America, Washington's traditional sphere of influence. In a highly publicized move in March, Moscow sent two planes with around 100 soldiers and equipment to Caracas, where Russian mercenaries are also believed to be operating.

'Cutting a deal with Trump'

Ties between Russia and the West plummeted over Moscow's annexation of Crimea in 2014, its backing for separatists in eastern Ukraine and military support for President Bashar al-Assad in Syria. But the audacity with which the Kremlin inserted itself into the Venezuela crisis has drawn gasps in Washington.

"Russia is making the next play in our hemisphere," Frederick Kempe, president of the Atlantic Council, wrote last month. "Vladimir Putin may be laying the ground for making Venezuela the defining foreign policy debacle for President Trump in the same way Syria became that for the Obama administration." Russia and Venezuela enjoy a long history of ties and Maduro's predecessor Hugo Chavez, known for his passionate tirades against the United States, was a welcome guest at the Kremlin.

After Chavez's death in 2013 the relationship with a country that boasts the world's largest proven oil reserves has continued to thrive. Russia is the second largest lender to Caracas after China, with Moscow heavily investing in Venezuela's oil resources and Caracas acquiring Russian arms worth billions of dollars. However that also means, analysts say, that Russia has a lot to lose from a change in leadership. But what it stands to gain from a possible deal with Washington may be more important for the Kremlin.

"Putin would cut a deal, if in agreeing to let Maduro leave he got something really big from Trump in exchange," said Timothy Ash, a strategist at BlueBay Asset Management. He suggested that Moscow wanted Washington to lift the damaging sanctions, to allow Russian oil companies to freely operate in Venezuela and agree on "spheres of influence". "I think they (the Trump administration) would be happy to cut a deal with Putin, where he gets his troops out of Venezuela, in return for the US turning a blind eye to developments in Ukraine," Ash said.

High-stakes meeting

Pompeo and Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov are set to discuss the Venezuela crisis on the sidelines of an Arctic Council meeting starting Monday in Finland. In dueling statements this week, Pompeo accused Moscow of "destabilizing" Venezuela while Lavrov said Washington was a "destructive influence" in the country. Analysts say both sides appear reluctant to consider military options and are likely looking to make backroom deals.

Events on the ground may matter more. After the military uprising in support of his bid fizzled out this week, Guaido has called for demonstrations at army bases. Other experts doubt Russia's real ability to influence the crisis. The Trump administration is "greatly exaggerating the role of Russia and China. I don't think that's a decisive factor at all," said Ted Galen Carpenter, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute, a libertarian think-tank in Washington. "Maduro's base of power remains reasonably intact. The military will be the key power." —AFP

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Mourners light candles during a vigil in memory of the victims in Colombo, Sri Lanka's churches remained shut forcing Christians to say prayers of grief in private over the Easter suicide attacks that the country's Roman Catholic leader called 'an insult to humanity.' —AFP

'Save us from Satans': Sri Lankans pray

A dozen rifle-toting soldiers guarded a small community hall as day broke in the eastern Sri Lankan town of Batticaloa yesterday morning. Around 9 am local time - roughly the same time a suicide bomber killed 29 of their fellow parishioners at the evangelical Zion Church two weeks ago - worshippers streamed silently into the hall. Survivors of the attack on Easter Sunday ambled in on crutches or with an eye patch. Some clutched bibles. Many wiped away their tears. Inside, several hundred worshippers knelt on the tile floor, addressing Jesus Christ in prayer. "Come to our protection in this world where we are being hit by waves," their voices sang out in Tamil.

More than 250 people were killed and nearly 500 wounded in the attacks by Islamist militants on churches and hotels across the Indian Ocean island on April 21. The suicide bombers were identified as members of Islamist militant groups based in Sri Lanka, but Islamic State claimed responsibility. Although Islamic State gave no evidence to back up its claim, Sri Lanka President Maithripala Sirisena told Reuters in an interview on Saturday that he believed the group orchestrated the attacks that plunged

Sri Lanka in a nightmare.

The government has warned that the militants were plotting more attacks, and police and military were conducting a security sweep of schools ahead of the staggered re-opening of state institutions yesterday. "Save us from the Satans who are trying to destroy our nation," the Christian worshippers in Batticaloa chanted. Zion would need more repairs before the church could be used again. There were also no services at St Sebastian's Church in Negambo, where at least 102 people perished. But a mass was held behind closed doors at St. Anthony's Church in Colombo, the third church bombed that day.

The suicide bomber who attacked the congregation in Zion Church was from the neighboring town of Kattankudy just across a lagoon from Batticaloa. Witnesses say Mohamed Nasar Mohamed Asath had stood close to a generator when he detonated the bomb in his backpack, amplifying the force of the blast. Fourteen children, many of whom were having breakfast in the church portico, were killed and several dozen worshippers in this largely low-income congregation were wounded, according to Zion

church officials.

"Why does the Lord take us through this fire?" Reverend Roshan Mahesan said, his voice breaking, after about an hour of singing. Mahesan, who was travelling on Easter Sunday and missed the bombing, praised parishioner Ramesh Raju, who reportedly kept the bomber from entering the main church hall because he grew suspicious of him. Raju died in the blast. Worshippers also prayed for the injured, like 30-year-old Arul Prashanth who helped others before collapsing from his wounds. Shrapnel had pierced his shoulder and back.

Sumathi Karunakaran, a 52 year-old homemaker, received a volley of shrapnel on the upper left side of her body before she escaped by climbing over a wall. She attended service with a bandaged eye and an arm in a sling. "I will keep on coming," said Karunakaran, whose 22-year-old daughter Uma Shankari was still undergoing emergency care from injuries sustained in the blast. "In fact, my husband is here for the first time. He came for our daughter," she said as parishioners walked out of the three-hour service. —Reuters

The street: Expanding arena in Europe's political battle

European governments from across the political spectrum have in the last months found themselves increasingly challenged on the streets by popular protest movements. These tensions are set to come to a head when EU states hold elections for the European Parliament, where populist forces are hoping to make big gains against established parties. Protest movements have taken on many different forms in Europe, from the "yellow vest" protesters who have rattled French President Emmanuel Macron to the thousands who rallied in Slovakia after the death of an opposition journalist. Here is a rundown of some of the main protest movements in Europe as EU states prepare to vote from May 23-26:

Britain

The vote for Britain to leave the EU was itself seen as a slap in the face for the political establishment, after the leaders of all main political par-

ties at the time came out against Brexit. With Prime Minister Theresa May now seeking to implement Brexit, hundreds of thousands of people swamped central London on March 23 to press for Britain to stay in the bloc, in one of the biggest protests seen in the capital in years. But others have also taken to the streets to demand that Brexit be implemented and press the government not to opt for a soft exit from the EU.

France

The "yellow vest" movement erupted in November 2018 as a show of anger against the perceived lack of concern on the part of Macron for the problems of ordinary French. The protests rapidly morphed into a nationwide movement against inequality and have frequently turned violent, with authorities accusing radical protesters of acts of criminal aggression. Macron has acknowledged that some of the protesters' demands were just, and embarked on a vast nationwide debate to hear people's grievances. In late April he promised a range of measures for easing the burdens for those worst-off, after unveiling in December a minimum wage top-up and other financial relief valued at 10 billion euros (\$11 billion).

Hungary

Prime Minister Viktor Orban, who has proudly promoted himself as a nationalist-conservative scourge of liberalism, has become one of the most

polarizing figures in the country's post-Soviet history. His policies, including labor reforms denounced as a "slave law" and a crackdown on immigration, have prompted regular protests drawing thousands of people in Budapest and other cities. One of the biggest protests saw 15,000 people gather in central Budapest on December 16.

Slovakia

The assassination of investigative reporter Jan Kuciak and his fiancée in February 2018 as he was about to publish a story on alleged ties between Slovak politicians and the Italian mafia, prompted protests on a scale never seen before in Slovakia. The protests brought down the government of prime minister Robert Fico and sparked a political transformation that culminated in the election this year of anti-corruption campaigner Zuzana Caputova as president.

Poland

The fatal stabbing in Poland of Gdansk's liberal mayor Pawel Adamowicz in January prompted one of the biggest gatherings seen in the country since the Solidarity movement helped bring down communism. Tens of thousands of people gathered in January for the funeral of Adamowicz, who had been mayor of the Baltic port city for 20 years. His killing became a lightning rod for anger against the conservative Law and Justice party (Pis),

which is despised by opponents notably by a series of controversial legal reforms that have drawn rebukes from the European Union.

Germany

The far-right and Islamophobic Pegida has taken its fight to the streets with protests especially in the east of the country, sometimes in alliance with the far-right AfD party. Last year, 8,000 people answered a joint call by the AfD and Pegida to protest in the Saxony city of Chemnitz. A smaller counterprotest of liberals was called in response, and a dozen people were wounded in clashes. The tensions underscored the divisions in Germany over Chancellor Angela Merkel's decision three years ago to keep the country's borders open to asylum seekers, many fleeing war in Syria and Iraq.

Spain

Spain's radical leftwing Podemos party was born from the protest movement that swept the country during the financial crisis and established itself in parliament starting in 2015. It is now challenged by another radical upstart from the other side of the political spectrum, the ultranationalist Vox movement, which denounces Islam and liberalism. Vox scored a major breakthrough by winning just over 10 percent of the vote in April elections. Podemos, which took around 14 percent, could help the ruling Socialist party remain in power. —AFP

Hugs and selfies: Thai coronation gives glimpses of royal relations

Normally inscrutable king pulls his sister in for a hug and selfies of royal siblings rebound across Instagram - the coronation of Rama X has provided Thais rare glimpses into a highly-private family cocooned by palace protocols. King Maha Vajiralongkorn, 66, was crowned Saturday in a sumptuous ceremony rich in symbolism and ritual. The monarchy is the apex of Thai society and projections of its power are unmissable in the kingdom, from towering portraits and public appearances relayed nightly on television news.

But Rama X remains an intensely private figure, spending much of his time overseas. The enigma of the new king is double-locked by one of the world's harshest royal defamation laws, which keep a tight lid on the dissemination of royal gossip and prevent public criticism inside the kingdom. His coronation, the first in 69 years and given blanket coverage on Thai TV, has stirred curiosity over the goings-on inside the royal court.

"I would like to see them loosen up a bit more so we can get to know them," 22-year-old student Jin said near the Grand Palace, declining to give her full name. The introduction of Vajiralongkorn's fourth wife Queen Suthida, a flight attendant turned royal bodyguard whose marriage to the king was

unexpectedly announced on Wednesday after years of conjecture about her status, piqued the interest of the watching public. Jin said she was "wowed" by the king's marriage to a commoner.

Intimate rituals

Throughout the coronation formalities the king has remained unsmiling - befitting the somber, symbol-laden ceremonies held in front of a coterie of palace officials and generals. But Saturday's rituals, symbolizing his transformation from human to the divine, provided intimate imagery of the monarch. A water purification ceremony led by Hindu Brahmins saw the king wear a white robe with one shoulder exposed, a modest moment from a monarch normally seen during official duties in military uniform.

Un-guarded interactions have also set tongues wagging. Newspapers ran photos of a warm meeting late Friday between the king and his family in a palace hall. There were big smiles and a hug for Ubolratana, his colorful Instagram-posting elder sister, while his fashion designer daughter Sirivannavari and 14-year-old Dipangkorn - children from his second and third ex-wives - looked on. True to form, Ubolratana - seen as one of the more approachable royals - posted beaming selfies with her younger sister Princess Sirindhorn.

Then on Sunday she released a mobile phone photo of her brother wearing the 7.3-kilogram tiered golden crown, hashtagging it #coronationday and #onceinalifetime. Ubolratana's warm exchange with her brother comes after he dashed her political aspirations in the lead-up to March 24 elections, torpedoing her nomination as a prime ministerial candidate by a now-dissolved political party. Also taking to social media was daugh-



This frame grab shows people gathering around the Democracy Monument as Thailand's King Maha Vajiralongkorn (right) is carried in a golden palanquin during the coronation procession in Bangkok. —AFP

ter Sirivannavari, posting studio photos of herself wearing an elegant golden traditional dress for the ceremonies on Facebook.

There is no indication whether the flickers of informality herald a new direction by the palace PR machine, or just a coincidence of modernity from royals armed with smartphones. But observers say the effect could serve to open a channel of communication with the public. "The images of King Vajiralongkorn wearing a sacred crown and then socializing with family members serve the dual purpose of rendering him both divine and relatively approachable," said

anthropologist Edoardo Siani of Kyoto University.

Older Thais are more accustomed to their royals holding a remote, venerated position. There should be a "distance" between royals and the public, said 80-year-old Kanha Kitevej as she watched soldiers march by the Grand Palace. "I am his (the king's) subject." Aunyporn Wisanurak, 62, who had volunteered to hand out food during the coronation, echoed the sentiment, insisting nightly royal news bulletins provided ample insight. "Thai people already know every activity of their king," she said. —AFP

Business

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KIB reports KD 6.2 million in net profits for Q1 2019

Financing income increased by 20% to reach KD 24.6 million

KUWAIT: Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah, Chairman of Kuwait International Bank (KIB) announced that the Bank recorded a net profit attributable to shareholders of KD 6.2 million at the end of the first quarter of 2019, mainly contributed by increase in financing income accompanied by an effective cost optimization. The financing income increased by 20 percent, or by KD 4 million, reaching approximately KD 24.6 million compared to KD 20.5 million during the first quarter of 2018.

Additionally, KIB's total assets increased by approximately KD 272 million or 14 percent to reach approximately KD 2.25 billion compared to KD 1.98 billion as at 31 March 2018. The growth in total assets was a result of a growth in the overall financing portfolio of approximately KD 282 million to reach KD 1.63 billion, which is an increase of 21 percent compared to KD 1.35 billion for the same period of last year.

Moreover, depositors' account increased by approximately KD 86 million or 7 percent to reach KD 1.37 billion as of 31 March 2019 compared to KD 1.28 bil-

lion as at 31 March 2018.

NPL ratio at 1.04 percent

KIB significantly improved all its asset quality matrices, achieving an NPL ratio of 1.04 percent. Total provision and collateral coverage was 331 percent at 31 March

- 20% growth in financing income
- 14% growth in total assets
- 21% growth in financing receivables
- 7% growth in depositors' accounts
- Annualized return on Arzaq deposit in KD increased to 3.5%
- Al-Boushra Kuwaiti dinar three-year deposits were offered 3.7%
- Savings Investment Account in Kuwaiti dinar was offered at 2.1%

2019. Al-Jarrah added that the distributions to depositors' accounts registered a consistent growth whereby the annualized return at the end of the first quarter of 2019 on Al-Boushra (KD) three-year deposits was 3.7

percent and Arzaq (KD) deposit increased to 3.5 percent during Q1 2019. On the other hand, the savings investment account (KD) achieved a return of 2.1 percent per annum for the first quarter of 2019, with a quarterly profit distribution reflecting the bank's performance.

Al-Jarrah stated that KIB's consistent financial performance reflects its strong growth in a number of business areas, in line with its newly implemented strategy. KIB's new strategy implementation is forg-

ing ahead, taking the customer banking experience to the next level and delivering much more than just 'banking' in the traditional sense.

Al-Jarrah added: "At KIB, we always strive to meet the ever-changing needs of our customers. For this reason, we adopt cutting-edge technology and digital solutions that are accessible at any time and any place to truly satisfy our customers."

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

One of the most notable achievements was receiving the 'Best CSR Business Model - GCC 2018' award from World Finance. In addition, 'Best Islamic Bank in Kuwait' and 'Best Islamic Bank in the GCC' awards, as well as the 'Excellence in Islamic Banking Products and Services' award from the WUAB and "Best Customer Acquisition in Kuwait" from CPI Financial. Moreover, KIB earned the 'Best Branding in Kuwait' from



Sheikh Mohammed Jarrah Al-Sabah

CPI Financial. The Bank was also awarded 'Best Sharia-compliant Bank in MENA' and 'Fastest Growing Islamic Bank MENA' from Capital Finance International (CFI.co).

Skills shortages, labor curbs may hit Singapore manufacturing

SINGAPORE: Singapore has attracted high-tech manufacturers with incentives and a well-educated workforce but growing demands for highly skilled labor and government moves to curb numbers of foreign workers may mean a tougher path ahead. The city-state is a major producer of products ranging from aircraft engines to medical equipment and oil rigs, and top firms such as Rolls-Royce and German industrial conglomerate Siemens have operations there.

British appliance pioneer Dyson will open its first electric car plant in the city-state, with vehicles set to roll off the production line from 2021, and this year announced plans to move its global headquarters to Singapore. But a potential shortage of more specialized skills as firms shift into fields such as robotics and 3D printing, as well as moves to make it more difficult to hire foreigners in the space-starved country, may make it less attractive to set up shop in Singapore in future.

Authorities work closely with businesses to help them set up and find workers, as well as giving them incentives such as tax breaks, but rapid technological changes in many industries makes it tougher for a government used to planning well ahead. "Ten years ago, policymakers could plan with greater certainty,"

Song Seng Wun, a regional economist with CIMB Private Banking, said.

"The age of disruptive technology is creating a lot more uncertainty," he added. In a recent report, the ministry of manpower said that one in three job openings in 2018 was left unfilled for at least six months and among the reasons employers gave was "lack of candidates with the necessary specialized skills".

Foreign labor curbs

Singapore has traditionally welcomed foreign workers in sectors ranging from construction to investment banking to plug skills shortages and do jobs that locals shun, and 40 percent of its 5.6 million inhabitants are from overseas. But in recent years unease has been growing at the large number of foreigners in the city-which is just half the size of Los Angeles-with local residents blaming them for overcrowding and pushing up living costs.

The government has responded by making it more difficult to hire in certain sectors and making companies prioritize local recruitment. This includes moves such as accepting applications for certain higher-skilled jobs only from Singaporeans for a set period before opening them up to foreigners.

At a forum on Singapore's labor challenges, participants raised concerns that "certain policies such as increasing foreign worker levies and blanket foreign worker quotas have seemingly constrained growth for many companies", wrote Mooris Tjioe, from Singapore think-tank the Institute of Policy Studies.

"Participants agreed that, for now, Singaporeans appear to have accepted a trade-off of lower economic growth for a restrictive foreign labor policy, in favor of social considerations," he wrote.

Still, a large number of high-tech manufacturers

view Singapore as the best place to set up their Asian headquarters and plants due to proximity to booming regional markets, ease of doing business and political stability, despite the relatively high costs.

The city-state makes half the world's top 10 drugs, 70 percent of its oil rigs and is the fifth biggest source of refined oil.

From rigs to drugs

Rolls-Royce produces its "Trent" engines for Boeing's 787 Dreamliner as well as the Airbus A380 and A330neo at its Singapore plant, and believes that cooperation between companies, the government and educational institutions is a major advantage.

Singapore-based companies are in close contact with universities and polytechnics so they can tailor their courses according to the requirements of high-tech manufacturing, said Bicky Bhangu, Rolls-Royce president for Southeast Asia, Pacific and South Korea.

"What you see in Singapore is a very effective coming together between government, industry and academia," he told AFP, adding an annual student internship scheme was a major source of recruits for the firm. Local schools may however face a tougher time in future as they scramble to adjust their curricula fast enough to meeting changing demands from industry, and the city's leaders are warning that workers must urgently take action to improve their skills.

In a Labor Day speech, newly appointed deputy prime minister Heng Swee Keat-who is tipped to take over as premier in the coming years-warned that without action, some Singaporeans could fall behind in the jobs market. "Those who are well-educated and digitally savvy can go on to build more skills and do even better. Those who start with less may risk falling behind," he said. — AFP

Sudan faces fuel crisis and worsening cash crunch

KHARTOUM: Sudan is facing a pre-Ramadan fuel crisis and a worsening cash crunch less than a month after president Omar al-Bashir was ousted following protests sparked by bread and fuel shortages.

Cars queued at almost every petrol station in Khartoum on Saturday as motorists waited for fuel for several hours. Soldiers manned the stations to ensure order. The crisis, along with a cash shortage and electricity outages, pose challenges to the country's ruling Transitional Military Council (TMC), set up after generals deposed Bashir and arrested him on April 11.

The TMC is locked in a standoff with the opposition over who will control a proposed joint civilian-military body to oversee the country until elections can be held. Protests have continued in a bid to push the council to cede power to civilians. At least a dozen ATMs in a commercial area in central Khartoum had no cash, and dozens of people lined up at those still dispensing money. A Reuters witness counted 88 customers in one line on a main road in central Khartoum.

Queues had previously been shorter and more ATMs held cash. "I am searching since the morning for an ATM to withdraw cash from," said Ahmed Yassin, 52. "I have been standing in line for three hours and I must withdraw so that I can buy Ramadan needs for my family."

One banking employee, who declined to be named, said most ATMs held no cash. Most Sudanese employees get paid near the beginning of the month, and consumer spending often increases during the Islamic month of Ramadan, likely to begin on May 6, contributing to the liquidity crisis.

The maximum daily withdrawal has long been set at 2,000 Sudanese pounds (\$45). Some have set up several bank accounts to try to circumvent the limit. Most residential areas in the capital experience near-daily electricity outages for hours. The increasing blackouts occurred as Khartoum's temperatures soar to highs of 45 Celsius.

Bashir's government had run up enormous budget deficits by subsidizing fuel, bread and other products. To cover the deficit, it expanded the money supply. But that served to debase the currency, causing inflation to rise and the value of the Sudanese pound against other currencies to plummet - in turn pushing up the cost of subsidies and widening the deficit even further. Attempts to raise bread and fuel prices to reduce the cost of subsidies sparked the protests that led to the military's overthrow of Bashir last month. —Reuters



This photograph taken on March 18, 2019 shows a technician working at Rolls-Royce engine rotor assembly facility in Singapore. Singapore has attracted high-tech manufacturers with incentives and a well-educated workforce but growing demands for highly skilled labour and government moves to curb numbers of foreign workers may mean a tougher path ahead.

Mutawa Alkazi Unveils the Latest from GAC MOTOR - The GS3 & GA4



As part of its ongoing commitment to meet customers' requirements and introducing the best offers and products, The Mutawa Alkazi Company the exclusive and authorized distributor of GAC Motor in Kuwait, unveiled the new GS3 and GA4 vehicles. The ceremony was held at Avenues Mall in the presence of the Executive Manager, Omar Sulaiman Alkazi, General Manager of Sales, Ahmad Abu Al-Huda, company officials and representatives of GAC Motor and the Embassy of China in Kuwait.

Mr. Omar Alkazi stressed the company's keenness to provide the local market with the latest GAC vehicles in line with the international markets. This comes in light of the strong demand for the latest models in the global vehicles industry that are equipped with the latest technology.

He explained that the solid partnership between Mutawa Alkazi and GAC Motor reflects positively on the customers in Kuwait by empowering them with the best vehicles of all categories at the most competitive prices in the market. "The GAC MOTOR fleet has been expanding in recent years, reflecting eagerness to satisfy all tastes in the local market and around the world," Alkazi added. He pointed out that Mutawa Alkazi offers a wide range of GAC Motor vehicles that cater to every customer needs, the best promotions in the local market including prices, and after-sales service.

Alkazi revealed that the company will be launching additional new models as part of its plan to increase the brand market share and increase the number of luxurious choices to its customers.

He stressed that Mutawa Alkazi is committed to satisfying customers by providing them with the best after-sales service promotions. Manufactured in China, all GAC Motor cars are subject to maximum testing standards before being officially launched in the market. Meanwhile, Abu Al-Huda stated that the launch of GA4 and GS3 vehicles at the company's showrooms reflects its commitment to consistently provide customers with the best products and services. He added that Mutawa Alkazi provides



customers with the best financing solutions in cooperation with banks and finance companies. In addition to an 11 year warranty, free maintenance up to 5 years or 100,000 km, open mileage and many other benefits.

GS3 - A Modern Driving Experience

The entirely new GS3 prides itself with its superior performance and a powerful and sophisticated engine. The GAC Motor Group manufactures and designs cars according to its strategy of strict quality control and providing customers who seek a comfortable driving experience. The car incorporates features that ensure a distinctive driving with the world's most advanced and efficient technology system. The car has an advanced and safe suspension

with automatic braking in emergencies. A voice warning against leaving the lane is activated when the car deviates from its course. The front collision system is automatically activated when the speed exceeds 30km/h, and an adjustable speed system that ensures a safe distance between vehicles at all times.

GA4 - Attractive Design

The seats of the new GA4 are designed to be comfortable with a butterfly-shaped three-part headrest to comfort the head and minimize neck strain. The seats are made of Nappa leather with exclusive padding technology offering a pleasant blend of elegance and luxury. Parts of the doors are covered in leather showcasing exquisite and elegant design and trimming.

GAC Motor chose a distinctive design for the car's rear with the upward-opening luggage door to ensure easy loading, along with an attractive rear bumper fitted with reflecting lights and three-dimensional tunnel rear lights. Two chrome exhaust pipes are integrated with the bumper.

GAC Motors' GA4 is a powerful and sophisticated car which has scaled the heights of world markets.

It reflects the results of GAC Motors' R&D tireless efforts to introduce state-of-the-art technologies and applications, achieving the top fifty technologies used in this car.



Business

Warren Buffett gives new hint about his successor

Investment in Amazon not a shift in strategy to focus on Silicon Valley firms

OMAHA: Billionaire Warren Buffett on Saturday gave a clue on who might succeed him to run his Berkshire Hathaway empire, but did not completely reveal his hand. The world's third-richest man also said at his company's annual shareholder meeting that its recent investment in Amazon was not a shift in strategy to focus on Silicon Valley firms, which have largely remained missing from Berkshire's voluminous portfolio.

Buffett, 88, was pressed by questions—each greeted with a torrent of applause—about who would succeed him.

Without answering directly, Buffett said Gregory Able, 57, and Ajit Jain, 67 — both promoted last year to the board of directors—would in the near future join him and long-time business partner Charlie Munger, 95, on the stage to answer shareholder questions. “You could not have two better operating managers than Greg and Ajit. It's just fantastic what they've accomplished,” said Buffett, who is known as the “Oracle of Omaha.” For decades, Buffett and Munger have been the two stars of Berkshire Hathaway, but on Saturday, Jain answered a shareholder question, though he did so from the floor.

'Unbureaucratic'

Abel joined the company in 1992 in the energy division, and for more than a year has overseen all non-insurance activities, while Jain came on board in 1986 in the insurance division, which he currently leads.

But who will prevail, or could they jointly take the helm? “One of the reasons we have trouble with these questions is because Berkshire is so very peculiar. We have a different, kind of unbureaucratic way of making decisions,” said Munger.

“But I don't want to be like everybody else because this has worked better. So I think you're going to have to endure us,” he said. Buffett's departure is likely to open a new era at the company, especially with shares of Berkshire considered to be 10 to 15 percent above their

real value thanks to the billionaire's presence at the helm.

Some analysts say a Buffett-less Berkshire Hathaway could be a candidate for being broken up into multiple companies.

Investing in tech

On Saturday, Buffett and Munger also faced an onslaught of questions about strategy for investing in technology companies after Berkshire revealed a stake in Amazon. Buffett said Amazon chief Jeff Bezos has pulled off “close to a miracle” by transforming an online bookseller into the e-commerce giant it is today. Munger also acknowledged that he and Buffett felt “ashamed” for missing the boat on Google.

“We just sat there sucking our thumbs,” he said. “We screwed up.” But there's no indication of a strategy shift at Berkshire to invest more heavily in tech, aside from its new stake in Amazon and a \$40-billion stake in Apple. On Saturday, Berkshire Hathaway announced a net profit of \$21.66 billion—a result that does not take into account expected losses from its stake in Kraft Heinz, which has recently depreciated assets valued in the billions of dollars.

Berkshire Hathaway has holdings in companies such as American Express, JPMorgan Chase and Goldman Sachs, and is active in sectors like insurance (Geico), rail (BNSF) and energy (PacifiCorp).

The Berkshire Hathaway shareholder meeting, which draws tens of thousands to the small city of Omaha in the American heartland, has been dubbed “Woodstock for Capitalists.”

Unlike other annual meetings, the goal here is not to release company results but to hear Buffett identify companies that he might invest in, or from which he might withdraw his money.

Some 20,000 people secured a coveted pass to hear Buffett speak in person, after lining up from 5:00 am, with thousands more left to soak up the atmosphere from out-



OMAHA: Warren Buffett (C), CEO of Berkshire Hathaway, speaks to the press as he arrives at the 2019 annual shareholders meeting in Omaha, Nebraska. — AFP

side the theater. Buffett kicked off the day by touring the souvenir stands at CHI Health Center and mingling with the crowd of attendees, made up of leading executives, investors and billionaires from around the world. This year, many Chinese delegations made the trip. He later made a surprise appearance at a sideline event organized by a

group of women financial professionals aiming to end the gender imbalance in investing.

“It's long overdue,” Buffet said of the goal. Buffett, who is worth almost \$90 billion, still lives in a relatively modest house about 10 minutes outside downtown Omaha that he bought in 1958. — AFP

NBK MONEY MARKETS REPORT

Fed keeps rates steady despite Trump calls

KUWAIT: The Federal Reserve has left its key interest rate unchanged despite renewed calls by President Trump to slash rates sharply. The Fed also signaled that it will be patient when it comes to its next move. The announcement came from the Chairman of the US Federal Reserve Jerome Powell, he said that the Central Bank will keep its benchmark rates in the range of 2.25 percent–2.50 percent unchanged since March.

The Federal Open Market Committee explained that the labor market is strong and that economic activities are continuing to rise at a solid rate. “All I can see is that we have an economy where the expansion is continuing, growth is at a healthy level, the labor market is strong, we see job creation, and we see wages moving up. Inflation is low which gives us the ability to be patient, and we do expect it to move up to 2 percent,” said Powell.

The Fed acknowledged that both overall and core inflation have declined and are running below the Central Bank's 2 percent target. The Chairman also added that there was a slowdown in household spending and business investment during the first quarter, noting that the two are the bases for a healthy economy. Earlier on Tuesday President Donald Trump had tweeted that the Fed should reduce rates by 1 percent to help the economy “go up like a rocket”. While we have seen reports that the key officials of the Fed are reviewing conditions of the benchmark rates, the Fed Chair said that for now a low inflation allows the Central Bank to be patient in deciding on any further changes to its overnight benchmark funding rate.

Although the Fed ended last year signaling it would continue raising rates to ensure the economy does not overheat, many investors are now forecasting a rate reduction, with traders betting on a downward move before the end of the year. During the meeting, Powell was noticed to resist questions aimed at provoking a discussion about the likelihood of rate cuts and the conditions that might prompt the Fed to endorse them. He instead made it clear that the Fed was sticking with its “patient” stance while it monitors incoming data. The Fed is avoiding the open discussion of rate reductions due to the risk that it could send a bearish signal about the economic outlook and end up spooking investors. In addition, the Fed is also trying to fend off unprecedented lobbying from Trump, who not only wants to see rates slashed, but also wants the Central Bank to restart its quantitative easing program.

While keeping its target range for rate unchanged, the Central Bank made a technical adjustment to the rate of interest paid on excess bank reserves. This is one of the tools that the regulator uses to steer borrowing costs. The adjustment entailed a small cut in that rate to 2.35 percent, in hopes that this will counter an upward drift in the effective Federal Funds rate. A rally in US Treasuries saw itself fading as Powell played down the notion of a near rate reduction. The yield on the 10-year note was down 0.2 basis points at 2.5053 percent, while the more policy sensitive two-year note yield by the end of the day went up 4 basis points to 2.312 percent.

Sturdy economy

US consumer spending posted its biggest increase since August 2009 as signs of consumer strength remain vigorous. The Department of Commerce released the figures on Monday revealing a growth of 0.1 percent in personal income for March 2019, a touch below the 0.2 percent expected. Personal spending rose 0.9 percent on a monthly basis in March and 0.1 percent in February. The figures suggest that the US economy remains sturdy despite the uncertainty in regards to global growth and trade tensions. First quarter GDP figures on Friday delivered an upbeat report and Treasuries rallied. Nonetheless, inflation remains well below the Fed's 2 percent target. Core PCE, the figure that the Fed keeps a close eye on, came in at 1.6 percent on a yearly basis in March, falling short of the market expectation of 1.7 percent.

Confident consumers

US Consumer Confidence rebounded in April at 129.2,



up from the previous 124.2 level and well above the 126.2 expected. This week, data revealed a rebound in consumer spending while inflation remained sluggish, illustrating firm economic growth and a resilient labor market against soft inflation. It appears that consumers are continuing to spend with confidence in their economy despite the uncertainty over the outlook of the global economy and continuing trade tensions.

Weak manufacturing activity

The US manufacturing sector saw its weakest level of growth in two and a half years during April, according to the latest survey by the Institute for Supply Management. The ISM manufacturing PMI dropped to 52.8 in the last month, down from 55.3 in March and missing economists' forecast of 55. The index was weighed down by weaker readings on new orders, production and employment. New orders, which fell to 51.7 from 57.4, had reached its lowest level since December, while export orders fell into contraction at 49.5 down from 51.7 in the month before. It is worth noting that the worse than expected figure came a week after the US commerce department said that the nation's economy grew at a robust 3.2 percent in the first quarter.

Accelerated hiring and stagnant wage growth

Data released in Friday showed that US hiring rose at a sharp manner during April, showing the latest sign of strength in the world's most important economy. According to the Labor Department report, non-farm payrolls rose 263,000 comfortably passing the median forecast of 190,000 from a survey of economists. Average hourly earnings on the other hand increased 0.2 percent m/m and 3.2 percent y/y, unchanging the annual pace from the previous month against expectations for a slight rise. Unemployment rate fell from 3.8 percent to 3.6 percent, reaching the lowest reading since December 1969.

Yields on Treasuries edged higher after the US jobs report showed the labor market continued to tighten with the US economy creating the most jobs in four months. The yield on the US 10-year Treasury climbed up to 2.5770 percent up from 2.5648 percent before the report. Yields move inversely to prices. Meanwhile, the dollar index, a gauge of the buck against a weighted basket of peers, dropped 0.59 percent from the start of the week reaching 97.5, while the euro found support from the strong inflation figures rising 0.52 percent against the dollar and closing at 1.1202.

Bank of England

In its statement, the Bank of England continued to signal that it believes a “gradual” and “limited” amount of monetary tightening would be appropriate to return inflation sustainably to their 2 percent target over a conventional horizon. This stance contrasted other major central banks that have recently shifted in a more dovish direction. The BoE did not provide any signal that it is planning to raise rates further in the coming quarters which disappointed some of the more hawkish expectations ahead of the meeting.

The BoE's relatively hawkish policy stance is supported by their outlook for an inflation overshoot over the medium-term, while other central banks are more concerned over downside risks to inflation. BoE Governor Mark Carney said that there would need to be interest rate rises and that these would be “more frequent than financial markets currently expect”. But in a sign of the outgoing Governor's fading influence over markets, traders instead took their cue from the Monetary Policy Committee's unanimous vote to leave interest rates at 0.75 percent. The bank's inflation report was considerably more hawkish than economists had expected. The BoE, assuming a smooth Brexit process over the next three years, forecast that if there was only one interest rate rise over the period, as markets predict, “excess” spending would amount to 1 percent of the

size of the economy by 2022, with growth picking up strongly after a mediocre 2019. The bank said that this would leave the annual growth rate at 2.1 percent within two years and reduce unemployment to 3.5 percent by 2022.

UK local elections

In the UK, Theresa May's Conservative party saw its worst local election performance in over 20 years, losing 37 councils and more than 1,000 seats. The Labor party also suffered, losing 60 votes and crushing their hopes of winning 400 seats. Voters appear troubled with both parties over their handling of Brexit as frustration builds. Talks will resume between Tories and Labor on Tuesday, with May focusing on a form of customs union with the EU which would see Britain foregoing an independent trade policy on goods. The elections have added pressure to Brexit decision-makers, illustrated by the joining of the two parties to resolve the issue. Mr Corbyn announced that there was now a “huge impetus” on every MP to get a Brexit deal done. The change in sentiment lifted the Sterling to a one-month high of \$1.3176 on hopes that a deal would pass through parliament.

Eurozone inflation

Eurozone inflation, a key metric for the ECB's monetary policy, had picked up with consumer spending rising 1.7 percent in April from a year earlier; the number had surpassed forecasts of 1.6 percent. The narrower inflation gauge that strips out volatile components such as energy and food came in at 1.2 percent hitting a 6 month high and surging from 0.8 percent in March. The pickup in inflation came just days after a report showed the pace of growth in euro-area economy unexpectedly doubled in the first quarter amid a surge in Spain, resilience in France and a rebound in Italy. Such reading should mean that additional stimulus is less urgent, in line with policy makers already expressing some confidence that the economy is stabilizing.

Trade talks

In trade updates, the US and China held a meeting in Beijing on Wednesday that was described as being productive and are expected to continue their discussions in Washington next week. Beijing and Washington have cited progress on issues including intellectual property theft and forced technology transfer to help end the conflict that cost both sides billions of dollars. 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. President Donald Trump on the other side said that he may keep some tariffs on Chinese goods for a “substantial period”.

China manufacturing

The Chinese manufacturing sector eased its growth in April while remaining in the expansive territory. The China manufacturing PMI slipped to 50.1 down from 50.5 in the month before, while the Caixin-Markit China PMI slipped to 50.2 against the 50.8 reading in March. The figures marked the third consecutive month of growth for the manufacturing sector, albeit a slowing one. China has introduced a series of stimulus measures as the economy faced its lowest growth rate in 30 years, a slowdown driven by a combination of factors including slowing demand for exports.

Oil decline

After a list of geopolitical concerns, including turmoil in Venezuela and tighter US sanctions on Iranian Crude exports helped oil price edge higher in April, oil prices reversed those gains reaching their lowest levels in a month on Thursday. Traders have turned their focus in recent sessions to strong American and Russian oil output, pulling Brent below the \$70 a barrel threshold. Brent crude slipped 3.3 percent to \$69.79 a barrel, while the West Texas Intermediate tumbled 4 percent to \$61.05. The declines extended a sell-off that began on Wednesday in reaction to US oil inventories data. Domestic stockpiles swelled 9.9m barrels, their biggest weekly gain so far this year, as production raced to a new record high of 12.3m barrels a day.

Kuwait

Kuwaiti dinar at 0.30395

The USDKWD opened at 0.30395 yesterday morning.

AUB congratulates winners of Al-Hassad weekly draw

KUWAIT: Ahli United Bank announced on April, 2019 the winners of its weekly draw of Al Hassad Islamic account which is the very first draw account in Islamic banking in Kuwait that has reshaped the lives of thousands lucky winners. Al Hassad has have over 850 prizes, over a 12 month period.

The weekly draw announced the grand prize winner of KD 10,000 as Mona Nabil Alissa.

20 other winners won prizes of KD 1,000 and are as follows: Ali Abdula Kmsahd, Manayer A Al-Waqyan, Ahmad Saleh AlDaaji, Ghazi Sulaiman Al Mutairi, Sarah Jamal Ahmad, Abdulhakeem Ibrahim Mubarak, Hashem Mohamed Noor, May Momtaz Al-Matrouk, Mohammad Ibrahim Khaleel, Bader Salem Alajmi, Zakakreya Jassim Al Turkomani, Hasan Ahmad Ali, Faisal Mohammad Al-Kandari, Awatef Hamad Abdullah Al-Subeeh, Fatima Abdulla A.Nabi, Fadel Abbas Isa, Latifa Khalifa Mubarak Faris Saleh Khaliah, Eman Ahmed Abbas and Sundara Raj Reddi.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 4 quarterly mega prizes of KD 250,000 that will help the lucky winners achieve their dreams and aspirations in addition the monthly draw to win a prize of KD 100,000. One powerful new aspect of the Al-Hassad Islamic Account is the prize draws on the holy occasion of both Eid ul Fitr and Eid Al Adha, when the winning customers will receive the eid prizes of KD 100,000 each. May the Eid always bring prosperity and blessings to the Islamic nation.

Al-Hassad Islamic Account presents also 21 weekly prizes comprised of a grand prize of KD 10,000 and 20 prizes of KD 1,000 each

In addition to the highly attractive package of the prizes, there will be the annual expected profits on, which makes the Al Hassad account a useful tool for family and other savings, both for the short term and for the longer term – a fact which well appreciated by a large multitude of new and old customers.

To be eligible to participate in the draw, the customer should have a minimum balance of KD 100, whereby the customer has two chances to participate, with a maximum of 30,000 chances per draw, in addition to annual profits for all participants. Every KD 50 invested for at least 15 days entitles the customer to one chance in the each draw. The longer the customer keeps his balance the bigger the changes of participation in the draw. Draws are held every Wednesday at AUB Kuwait or AUB Bahrain depending on the draw plan. On the occasion Ahli United Bank congratulate its winning customers, and commented that there are many chances to win waiting for our customers For more information on Ahli United Bank's products and services, customers are invited to visit any of the Bank's branches or dial the customer service “Hayakom”, or log on the Bank's website www.ahliunited.com.kw

Business

In partnership with NBK, NBK Capital brings SmartWealth to customers

Service provides investors with customized investment advice



KUWAIT: National Bank of Kuwait continues to bring innovative solutions to its customers, most recently introducing the SmartWealth service which was developed by the investment arm of NBK Group, NBK Capital. The service provides investors with the ability to obtain customized investment advice and execution services aimed for long-term investing.

The service enables investors to gain exposure to equities, fixed income, real estate and commodities securities as part of a multi-asset investment allocation. Investors will gain exposure throughout the world to regions such as the US, Europe, Asia and emerging markets. The service

targets long-term investors who are planning for financial life goals such as home ownership, education funds, or general retirement. SmartWealth provides trusted solutions for long-term investing. SmartWealth is a digital investment service based on a state of the art technology that customizes the model portfolio based on the customer's risk appetite, financial goals and aspirations.

Speaking of the service, Hosam El-Hourani, CFA from NBK Capital - Asset Management, said, "NBK Capital SmartWealth facilitates for investors to achieve their financial goals by availing to them best of breed solutions for long-term investing. The service enables them to obtain



exposure to investments that are geographically diversified, in addition to exposure to multiple asset classes". El-Hourani added that SmartWealth has already received great response, proving that investors want solutions that support their goals and are in line with their lifestyle.

On another hand, Amal Al-Duwaisan, Senior Manager, Consumer Banking Group, National Bank of Kuwait, said, "NBK and NBK Capital have partnered to launch investment workshops that are being run weekly in select branches across Kuwait. During these workshops, investment specialists from NBK Capital provide an overview of investment best practices and key principles of investment methodology.

For investors interested in understanding SmartWealth further, this venue offers them an ability to discuss and work with specialists for their custom investment plan." SmartWealth provides investors with advice, recommendations, and execution services. In addition, investors have the ability to review, analyze, and administrate their investment portfolio through the use of SmartWealth service available on the website or mobile application.

Customers can open an account with SmartWealth by visiting nbkcapitalsmartwealth.com, download the application NBK Capital SmartWealth, or contact their relationship manager at an NBK branch.

ABK announces official working hours during Ramadan

KUWAIT: Al-Ahli Bank of Kuwait (ABK) announced yesterday its official working hours to serve its customers during the holy month of Ramadan which will be from 10.00 am to 1.30 pm in all its branches across Kuwait. On the first day following the Eid Al-Fitr holiday, the bank will resume its regular working hours.

ABK's customers will have full access to the Bank's online services at www.eahli.com and the Call Center will be available 24 hours a day and can be reached by calling a customer service agent via 'Ahlani Ahli'.

On this occasion, ABK would like to extend its warmest wishes during this holy month of Ramadan to the Amir of the State of Kuwait, His Highness Sheikh Sabah Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, HH the Crown Prince of Kuwait, Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah and to the Kuwaiti government and its people as well as all residents.



Smart tech the new tool for African farmers

DAKAR: How do you manage the trick of feeding school children better and at a lower cost?

How do you count the number of mangoes on your farm so that you get a fair price?

And what's a clever-but-cheap way for a farmer to cut down his irrigation bill? Agriculture in sub-Saharan Africa may have the image of relentless toil and low productivity, but experts say new tech is changing the picture. Farmers, crop buyers and other sector professionals have started to harness smart gadgets and crunch numbers to improve productivity, reduce costs and smooth out wrinkles in the markets, they say.

'Digital revolution'
"There's a digital revolution unfolding in Africa," says Pascal Bonnet, a deputy director of CIRAD, the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development. "Around the continent, there are excellent researchers in information technology-digital agriculture is a real opportunity for qualified young Africans."

The idea of directly linking farmers to consumers, cutting out wholesalers and stores is a familiar story in Europe and North America. Awa Thiam, a 28-year-old telecoms engineer, is following suit in her native Senegal.

The company she founded,

Lifantou, connects school canteens with farming cooperatives with the help of big data. "There's a huge need for this," Thiam said, showcasing her work at an agri-tech conference in Dakar last month.

"Today, between 25 and 50 percent of the cost of school meals goes to intermediaries, but schools have limited budgets. If you shorten the supply chain, canteens can bring down the cost of meals and offer the children more varied menus."

Her one-stop platform draws on a databank of crop production and schools to match potential demand with supply. It group-purchases to lower the cost for schools and in a final flourish organizes the transport of the goods, with operations monitored in real time.

Counting by mobile

A project called Pix Fruit, meanwhile, aims to help farmers who have until now estimated their mango crop by counting the fruit on a bunch of

trees and then extrapolating for the whole plantation.

This rough-and-ready method has considerable room for error. Emile Faye, a French researcher in digital agro-ecology who works for Pix Fruit, says the margin for mistakes could be as much as a factor of 10.

A purchaser, for instance, could pay the price for two tons of mangos while taking delivery of 20 tonnes from the farmer, although errors may go either way. Pix Fruit's alternative uses advanced modelling software to produce a more precise count of the crop.

Using a smartphone, the farmer takes photos of a selection of trees in his fields.

Fruit-recognition technology then calculates the likely overall harvest, drawing on a databank compiled with the help of drones that also includes information on climate, soil and administrative constraints.

That way, farmers learn the true worth of their crop, while wholesalers and price negotiators have a better



Reaping the benefits of smart tech. — AFP

CBK announces winners of Al-Najma weekly draw

KUWAIT: Commercial Bank conducted the weekly and monthly draws on Al-Najma Account and the draw on the "Salary and Cash on Top" campaign. The draws were conducted in the presence of Ministry of Commerce and Industry representative Abdulaziz Ashkanani.

The results of the draw were as follows:

- Al-Najma monthly account - the prize of KD 20,000 and was for the share of Khaled Adel Al-Tabtabaai.

- Al-Najma weekly account - the prize of KD 5,000 and was for the share of Bhemji Patidar

- The "Salary & Cash on Top campaign" prize of KD 1,000 and was for the share of Sawsan Ismael Eissa Abdulredha.

The bank stated that the account prizes this year is featured by the highest cash prize and diversity of prizes throughout the year clarifying that Al-Najma Account will offer weekly prize of KD 5,000, monthly prize of KD 20,000 and a semi-annual prize of KD 500,000 in addition to the largest prize - linked bank account payout of KD 1,500,000. Al-Najma Account can be opened by depositing KD 100, and customer should maintain a minimum amount of KD 500 to be eligible to enter all draws on Al-Najma

Account prizes. As for the chances of winning, the more balance a customer maintains in Al-Najma Account, the more chances the account holder will get to win, where each KD 25 will give the customer one chance to win, the account also offers additional benefits like the ATM card, a credit card against customer's account and all CBK banking services that customer can enjoy.

As regarding "Salary & Cash on Top" campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees as well as the retirees and which is valid until 31 December 2019 and the mechanism of joining this campaign for availing its benefits, the bank explained that Kuwaiti employees with a salary of KD 500 and above whether newly recruited or in service can transfer their salary to the Bank and avail the benefits of this campaign by getting instant cash gift of KD 250 or an interest free loan 5 times the salary up to KD 10,000, add to this they will automatically enter the weekly draw on KD 1,000. As for the expatriate customers categorized under Premier Banking Account with a salary KD of 1,700 and above, they will get instant cash gift.

The retirees with pension KD 1,000 & above will also get an instant cash gift of KD 150 when transferring their pension to the Bank and automatically enter the weekly draw on a prize of KD 1,000 and avail the benefits of this campaign designated for Kuwaiti and expatriate employees working in private & public sector as well as the retirees. Further, the campaign provides customers with the opportunity to get additional benefits and take advantage of the advanced and unrivalled services and products the Bank provides to its customers to meet their needs and expectations.

Win cash with Gulf Bank's summer cards campaign

KUWAIT: Gulf Bank has announced the launch of their 2019 Summer Cards Campaign. The campaign gives Gulf Bank cardholders the chance to win cash prizes of up to KD 20,000 when using their credit, debit or prepaid cards locally and internationally from 1st May till 31st August 2019.

During the campaign, customers using their Gulf Bank credit or debit cards will be automatically entered into the final draw. For every KD 10 spent locally on a Gulf Bank credit or prepaid card, customers will receive one entry in the draw. For every KD 10 spent internationally using a credit, debit or prepaid card, customers will receive three entries in the draw. The final draw will take place on 22nd September 2019 in the presence of officials from the Ministry of Commerce and Industry. A total of five winners will win cash prizes at the conclusion of the summer campaign. The first prize winner will receive KD 20,000 cash, while the second prize is for KD 10,000 cash. The third prize, which will be given out to three customers, is KD 5,000 cash each.

Gulf Bank credit cards are packed with powerful travel benefits and features for added convenience, which customers can avail during their travels during the summer holiday. In addition, Gulf Bank credit card customers can also receive free travel insurance for themselves and their families, which can be used for the Schengen Visa application.

Gulf Bank credit cards provide customers with a variety of travel offers and benefits such as discounts on hotel bookings, flights, and car rentals such as Avis, Hertz etc. Additionally, Gulf Bank credit card customers can also take advantage of complimentary airport lounge access at over 600 airports across the world. Moreover, Gulf Bank credit card customers also earn Gulf Points, which can be redeemed for free flights, hotel bookings or travel packages, whenever they spend using their cards during the summer campaign. Commenting on the campaign, Ahmad Al-Amir, Assistant General Manager for External Communications at Gulf Bank, said: "The Summer Cards Campaign, exclusive to Gulf Bank, highlights the Bank's commitment to providing our customers with the most exciting offers and promotions, alongside the best financial solutions, products and services."



Burgan Bank branch timings for Ramadan

KUWAIT: Burgan Bank announced yesterday its branch timings which will be applicable throughout the holy month of Ramadan. All Burgan Bank branches will commence operations in one shift from 10:00 am to 1:30 pm, ensuring utmost convenience to its customers.

Additionally, the airport branch will remain open 24 hours for seven days a week with a break time from 2:30 pm till 9:30 pm. Moreover, customers can also contact the call center at any given time during the Holy Month for more updates on the bank's products and services. The bank takes this opportunity to extend its best wishes to everyone during this blessed month of the year.



What's On



Suad Al-Sabah receives certificate from Guinness World Records

Mubarak Al-Kabeer Educational Zone director, Mansour Abdullah Al-Daihani recently handed Dr Suad Mohammed Al-Sabah a certificate of appreciation from the Guinness World Records in

appreciation for her support to the longest flag banner in the world executed by the zone schools last February to mark the national anniversaries celebrations. At her residence; The White Palace, Al-Sabbah received Al-

Daihani accompanied by former MP Raja Hujailan Al-Mutairi and Mubarak Al-Kabeer's educational affairs manager, Mohammed Ayedh Al-Ajmi where they discussed Kuwait's educational concerns.

Amazing Ramadan nights awaits you at the Exceptional

Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel is offering exceptional Ramadan nights in its captivating Tent with enticing prices for great gathering. KD 13 per person for Iftar and special Ghabka for KD 11 per person. The Holy month of Ramadan always brings so many precious moments that are priceless. Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel, appreciates such special occasions and celebrates it uniquely. The hotel is well-known for its famous Ramadan Nights, and year after year, the hotel takes the experience to the next level.



Few more days until Ramadan knocks our doors, and Symphony Style Kuwait, is on the right track in preparing its Ramadan tent, rich international cuisines featuring confluence of past and present flavors for Iftar and Ghabka buffets during the holy month of Ramadan along with live oriental music. The Exceptional welcomes you all to the Symphony Ramadan tent. With capacity to accommodate up an attendance of up to 150 people, being the ideal venue to enjoy Iftar or Ghabka with family, friends or colleagues.

to the swimming pool with magical views of the Arabian Gulf and will be open for Iftar until 8:30 pm and from 9 pm until 2 am for Ghabka. The Exceptional invites you and your loved ones to immerse yourselves a culinary feast featuring international and Arabic favorites, live cooking stations, traditional desserts and Ramadan beverages, in addition to exclusive flavors of Shisha. Last but not least, the hotel offers daily live entertainment programs.

In celebration of Ramadan's authentic spirit, Symphony Style Kuwait, A Radisson Collection Hotel, offers a daily rich Iftar buffet including beverages for KD 13 per person including Ramadan drinks, water and the Ghabka buffet for KD 13 including mezzah, snacks served on the tables, stations of indulgent bites, Ramadan traditional drinks and a rich dessert buffet with all the traditional and international delicacies.

Win valuable prizes this Ramadan at Safir Fintas Hotel

Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel has offers and raffle tickets to win a MG Car Morris Garages the British Luxury offered by Adel Al Ghanem Automotive, airline tickets from KLM Royal Dutch Airlines and other valuable prizes in the month of Ramadan and Eid Al Fitr 2019. Preparations for unique and one of its kind offers have been made for companies, groups and families during the holy month at the Ramadan-themed Royal Tent with 1,400 square meters located in the beach garden where daily Iftar buffet inclusive of live cooking stations is served at special prices.

Ramadan offers:
• Get a coupon for every 10 K.D spent at the Ramadan-themed Royal Tent and during your stay in the hotel.

• Individual, group and family bookings are eligible to enter the raffle.

• Iftar or Ghabka and Suhour buffet inclusive of live cooking for group, corporate, families, and individuals at special prices.

• Live oriental music and shisha.

• Family stay inclusive of Iftar and Suhour buffet for two persons and a child in a deluxe room starting from KD 55 per night (room rate is subject to 15% service charge).

The hotel is a five-star property located on the Arabian Gulf which is suitable for business as well as leisure travelers. Guests can choose from 150 rooms and suites to a one and two-bedroom serviced apartment accommodations. Safir Fintas Kuwait Hotel has a stunning view of the cityscape and Arabian Gulf. In addition to its proximity to main shopping centers (The Gate Mall, Al Baira and Al Kout Center) and the main food complexes (The Village, The Lake, Divonne, Spoons, Sedra, Light, Levels, Meral Mall, and others).

Al Roshenah Kuwaiti Restaurant

Al Roshinah Kuwaiti Restaurant offers the chance to get a coupon for every KD 10 spent at the restaurant while enjoying a distinguished experience. Al Roshinah Restaurant offers Ramadan Set Menu with local delicacies and famous dishes along with special menu for children. Al Roshinah Restaurant is considered to be the only Kuwaiti restaurant in a five-star hotel.

Outside Ramadan catering events

Outside Catering Department offers you the chance to enter the raffle by getting a coupon for every KD 10 spent at your Ramadan catering events. The hotel has prepared variety of Ramadan menus to satisfy every need and taste.



Al-Sultan Brahim holds Graish dinner for media

By Faten Omar

Lebanese restaurant Al-Sultan Brahim held a Graish dinner recently for the media to welcome the holy month of Ramadan. During this event, the restaurant launched their new special menu for Ramadan including both Iftar and Suhour, consisting of popular Lebanese dishes, which makes Al-Sultan Brahim the perfect place to gather during this holy month. Abbed Akkawi, Sultan Ibrahim's operations manager, welcomed the media and spoke briefly about the restaurant and how quickly it was able to gain the trust of its customers and get a sizeable market share for its high quality service in Kuwait.

During Ramadan, Al-Sultan Brahim is serving special appetizers and main courses, which are prepared specially to meet the standards of all tastes. The Iftar menu includes a rich selection of cold appetizers including fatoush, homos, mutabal, vine leaves, hindaba, mini shawerma, and Ras Asfour fish followed by warm appetizers including lentil soups, fried kubba and



cheese spring rolls.

The restaurant also offers a wide selection of main courses including stuffed lamb, sayadiya, spicy fish, shrimp Kabsa and much more. The menu concludes with a massive variety of Lebanese sweets that perfectly match the holy month of Ramadan. As for Suhour, Sultan Brahim offers appetizers and pastries that will make the restaurant the premium destination of gourmet of Kuwait, who know how to choose the finest food.

During the holy month of Ramadan, Al-Sultan Brahim preserves Kuwaiti traditions

with special oud (lute) musical nights. This provides a unique Iftar and Suhour experience that is sure to bring joy to both the mind and body. Al-Sultan Brahim is highly ranked among the five-star restaurants from Lebanon, Qatar and now in Kuwait. Its luxury standard of services has paved the way to various prizes including the 'Best Restaurant in the Arab World' from the Arab Countries Committee in 2016. Al-Sultan Brahim wishes happy Ramadan and promises to provide a unique Iftar experience and traditional Ramadan evenings.



NAFO's 16th anniversary, an exquisite cultural feast



NAFO Kuwait (National Forum Kuwait) celebrated its 16th anniversary in a colorful and splendid manner on 26th April, 2019 at the American International School (AIS), Maidan Hawally. Raj Gopal Singh, Deputy Chief of Mission, Indian Embassy-Kuwait inaugurated the function along with Chief Guest, Vijay K Nambiar-IPS (Rtd), Mazen Al-Ansari, Guest of Honor Director, Ministry of Information-Kuwait and NAFO officials, lighting the traditional lamp. R Vijayakrishnan, NAFO President chaired the meeting and in his presidential address he briefed about NAFO'S resilient motto "Like Mindedness" and recent socio-welfare activities including the recent flood relief activities executed by NAFO.

General Secretary Murali S Nair welcomed the chief guest, guest of honor, embassy delegate, celebrity Navya Nair and her team and the august audience. Treasurer Vijayakumar Menon, Advisory Board members V R Vijayan Nair and Dr Prasad Nair also had attended key roles in the function to felicitate guests and title sponsor. Raj Gopal Singh appreciated NAFO for its relentless services to the humanity and promoting the rich Indian cultural heritages in Kuwait. He also wished all success to its future socio-welfare activities. On behalf of NAFO, Singh was honored with a memento in respect of his commendable services rendering to Indian diaspora.

Chief Guest Vijay K Nambiar in his key note address, emphasized that every gathering of diaspora is inducing the sweet nostalgic memories of cultural traditions and heritages of mother land India. The expertise of knowledge and vast experiences of Indian diaspora shall be transferred to our younger generations, in the transformation and making of new India, he said. He congratulated the philanthropic supports and timely helps extending by NAFO. Guest of Honor Mazen-Al-Ansari through his message also expressed his happiness for inviting him and greeted the socio-cultural missions of NAFO.

NAFO Entrepreneurship Award for the year 2019 was conferred on Vinod Pillai and Jayakrishnan Nair reckoning their innovation and enterprise. The maiden "NAFO Corporate Icon Awards" in recognition of outstanding achievements among corporate sectors were conferred to Dr T A Remesh and Ravi Varrier and Rajasekharan Nair who have carved a niche for themselves by sheer hard work, determination and unique accomplishments in their respective fields. Following the inaugural session, "Nivedhyam," a flamboyant cultural treat comprising the most celebrated art forms of Kerala was staged by a blessed group of twenty five NAFO Talents, which was conceived, conceptualized and directed by Preeti Rajiv.

Health & Science

UN committee weighing in on French right-to-die case

LILLE: A UN committee has asked France to suspend any decision to withdraw life support for a man kept alive in a vegetative state for a decade, weighing in on a bitterly-disputed legal case which has torn his family apart. The move by the UN committee on disabled rights was the latest twist in a long-running legal drama that has ignited a heated debate in France on the right to die. The case centers on the fate of Vincent Lambert who suffered severe brain damage after a car accident in 2008 which left him a quadriplegic. Since then, he has been kept alive through artificial nutrition and hydration at a hospital in Reims, northeastern France.

In 2014, the doctors, backed by Lambert's wife Rachel, five of his siblings and his nephew Francois decided to stop his nutrition and hydration in line with France's passive euthanasia law. But his parents, deeply-devout Catholics, and his half-brother and sister obtained a court order to halt the move on grounds his condition might improve with better treatment. Speaking to AFP late Saturday, Jerome Triomphe, a lawyer for Lambert's parents, said the UN committee had asked France to suspend a decision to halt the intravenous food and

water keeping him alive while it conducts its own investigation.

"The application has been filed and this international committee has begun its investigation," he said, indicating it could take "several years". With the inquiry under way, the committee had asked France to ensure that Lambert's care was continued, in line with the conventions on disabled rights, Triomphe said. In response, Health Minister Agnes Buzyn said although France would answer the UN committee, it was not under any legal requirement to abide by its request. "We are not legally bound by this committee, but of course we will take into account what the UN says, and we will respond," she told BFMTV yesterday. "All the legal appeals have been exhausted and all judicial bodies, both national and European, confirm that the medical team in charge of his case has the right to halt (Lambert's) care."

Palliative care or specialized unit?

"This is a great accomplishment: finally, a specialized body will be able to consider the merits of the case," Triomphe said. "Is it right for him to be in a palliative care service... or

should he be in a specialized unit?" Since the legal battle first began, the French courts have largely backed the doctors, upholding a decision earlier this year to withdraw life support for Lambert, a former psychiatric nurse who is now 42.

His parents then appealed to the Council of State, France's highest administrative court, and when it confirmed the decision late last month, they then turned to the European Court of Human Rights and the UN committee on disabled rights. In a ruling issued on Tuesday, the European court rejected their appeal for a suspension, echoing a 2015 decision. But it was accepted by the UN committee, which has given France six months to present its observations on the case.

Gerard Chemla, lawyer for Lambert's nephew Francois, described the latest twist as "appalling", telling AFP the UN committee's intervention "in the name of human rights, would violate the rights of a man who has been suffering gratuitously for years". Active euthanasia, by which a person deliberately causes a patient's death, is illegal in France despite recent efforts to ease legislation dealing with the terminally ill. — AFP

Curacao vows to end measles spread from Scientology ship

CURACAO, Netherlands Antilles: The Dutch territory of Curacao said Saturday it would do what was needed to prevent measles spreading from a Scientology cruise ship, after a crew member came down with the disease. The Freewinds, which left the Caribbean island of St. Lucia on Friday, arrived back in its home port of Curacao Saturday. There were about 300 people aboard the ship, according to Saint Lucia authorities.

The Curacao government said it would "take all necessary precautions to handle the case of measles on board of the Freewinds," including vaccinations. "An investigation will also be done to determine who will be allowed

to leave the ship without (posing) a threat to the population of Curacao," it said in a statement. The vessel is moored in an area not accessible to the public. Three health officials had gone aboard to examine passengers, Dutch broadcaster NOS said, quoting its correspondent in Curacao.

Anyone who could prove they had been vaccinated or who had contracted measles in the past would be allowed to leave the ship while the others would have to stay on board, the reporter told NOS. "It is imperative to make all efforts to prevent a spread of this disease internationally," the Curacao government said. It said the risk of the disease spreading was relatively low as many people had been already been vaccinated in the past but advised parents to make sure their children were vaccinated.

The Church of Scientology says the 440-foot vessel is used for religious retreats and is normally based in Curacao. The vessel had arrived in St Lucia from Curacao on Tuesday, when it was placed under quarantine by health authorities because of a measles patient, said to be a female crew member. —AFP

CLINIC

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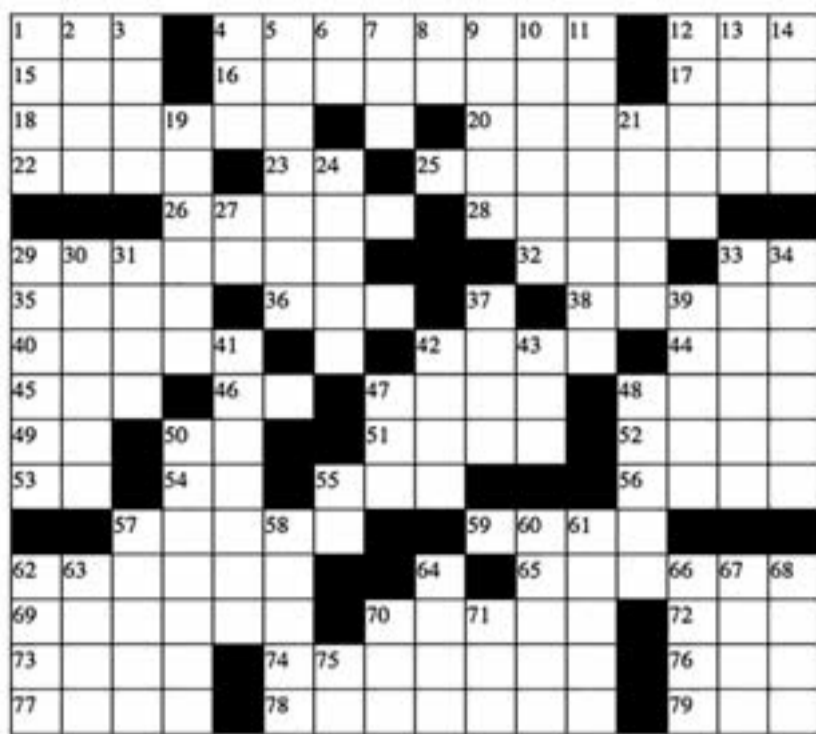
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Stars

CROSSWORD 2200



ACROSS

1. Rare (usually fatal) brain disease (usually in middle age) caused by an unidentified slow virus.
4. Frivolous banter.
12. An intricate network suggesting something that was formed by weaving or interweaving.
15. The syllable naming the sixth (submediant) note of a major or minor scale in solmization.
16. A genus of herbs of the family Cruciferae.
17. Title for a civil or military leader (especially in Turkey).
18. Evergreen Indian shrub with vivid yellow flowers whose bark is used in tanning.
20. An ancient country in central Italy.
22. Surrealist Spanish painter (1904-1989).
23. A state in northwestern North America.
25. Not stary.
26. (of an arrow) Equipped with feathers.
28. The Uralic language spoken by the Yeniseian people.
29. A tricycle (usually propelled by pedalling).
32. A river in north central Switzerland that runs northeast into the Rhine.
35. A feeling of strong eagerness (usually in favor of a person or cause).
36. A rotating disk shaped to convert circular into linear motion.
38. A telegram sent abroad.
40. Of or relating to or characteristic of Asia or the peoples of Asia or their languages or culture.
44. An associate degree in applied science.
45. The unit of frequency.
46. A soft white precious univalent metallic element having the highest electrical and thermal conductivity of any metal.
49. (astronomy) The angular distance of a celestial point measured westward along the celestial equator from the zenith crossing.
51. (prefix) Outside or outer.
52. A set of rules or principles or laws especially written ones.
53. A period of time containing 365 (or 366) days.
54. The use of bacteria or viruses of toxins to destroy men and animals or food.
56. Taking place over public roads.
59. Small deciduous Asiatic tree bearing large red or orange edible astringent fruit.
62. The upper house of the parliament of the Republic of Ireland.
65. A member of an agricultural people in southeastern India.
69. Small wooden bat with a flat surface.
72. The act of slowing down or falling behind.
73. A genus of European owls.
74. A usually malignant tumor arising from connective tissue (bone or muscle etc.).
76. 4-wheeled motor vehicle.
77. (statistics) Approximating the statistical norm or average or expected value.
78. The slender spear of the Bantu-speaking people of Africa.
79. A flat wing-shaped process or winglike part of an organism.

DOWN

1. Wearing or provided with clothing.
2. An island in Indonesia south of Borneo.
3. Tropical woody herb with showy yellow flowers and flat pods.
4. The cry made by sheep.
5. An annual publication including weather forecasts and other miscellaneous information arranged according to the calendar of a given year.
6. A metric unit of volume equal to one tenth of a liter.
7. Being one more than two.
8. A silvery soft waxy metallic element of the alkali metal group.
9. A sharp narrow ridge found in rugged mountains.
10. A Spanish female Gypsy.
11. The range within which a voice can be heard.
12. Commodities offered for sale.
13. Armor plate that protects the chest.
14. South African term for 'boss'.
19. Small genus of erect perennial shrubby herbs.
21. (used of opinions and actions) Far beyond the norm.
24. Cubes of meat marinated and cooked on a skewer usually with vegetables.
27. A radioactive element of the actinide series.
30. Antineoplastic drug (trade name Elspar) sometimes used to treat lymphoblastic leukemia.
31. A platform raised above the surrounding level to give prominence to the person on it.
33. Type genus of the Alaudidae.
34. Defeated in a competition.
37. An investment trust that owns and manages a pool of commercial properties and mortgages and other real estate assets.
39. Used as a Hindi courtesy title.
41. Small arctic whale the male having a long spiral ivory tusk.
42. Noisy talk.
43. A rapid bustling commotion.
47. A unit of length of thread or yarn.
48. Strong and sharp.
50. The trait of lacking restraint or control.
55. A Mid-Atlantic state.
57. Genus of sticky herbs with yellow flowers open in morning or evening but closed in bright light.
58. A port city of south central Ukraine on an arm of the Black Sea.
60. Small terrestrial lizard of warm regions of the Old World.
61. A family of Sino-Tibetan languages spoken in southeastern Asia.
63. Freedom from difficulty or hardship or effort.
64. A South American shrub whose leaves are chewed by natives of the Andes.
66. Type genus of the Alcidae comprising solely the razorbill.
67. Any of numerous local fertility and nature deities worshipped by ancient Semitic peoples.
68. A city in northern India.
70. A form of address for a married woman.
71. A wooden pin pushed or driven into a surface.
75. A very poisonous metallic element that has three allotropic forms.

Friday's Solution



STAR TRACK



Aries (March 21-April 19)

Aries, something that happened to you when you were young still presents issues today. This may cause problems with those younger than you. Taking the time to work through those memories could help you in the long run. You have no patience for those who don't help themselves. Aries. So, you know what you have to do. Changing in an emotional manner sees you looking towards diversity in all matters which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Make sure you like the changes you're making because you'll have to live with them for some time to come. If this is in your love life, really look before you leap. Have a nice night at home with your pets and think.



Taurus (April 20-May 20)

Taurus, thinking beyond self is a goal for you now. You want to help everyone in one fell swoop. Work needs to be of a humanitarian nature for the moment. Perhaps you can find ways to assist in making it better for the common good. You'll be happier if you do. Friendships mean more to you also. Making all who come into contact with you feel good and be happier is also a goal. Wow, look at you, Taurus. Just remember that you can't control situations for everyone. They have to and do control themselves. Because of this you can try to help but that doesn't mean your aid is received. Be happy you tried.



Gemini (May 21-June 20)

Gemini, you're in the middle of feeling two ways at once without either permanently taking hold. Walking in water could be what you equate it to. This cycle is one of change where you're running around exposing yourself to differing points of view so that you can make up your mind as to which you'll employ. Variety seems to be winning the race as to what you want in life. Your values are something you realize and hold close without the will to change though, Gemini. Knowing who you are and what you want is the important issue you're learning here and now.



Cancer (June 21-July 22)

Leo, politics, one of the two taboo subjects, and the other, religion, has you trying to learn about the two. It may be best that you don't discuss these two subjects with others right now. You don't need the worry when you're doing so well. Find a group for politics and work with different churches to learn their doctrines so that you can educate yourself and make better decisions there as well. Leo. Learning about both satisfies your need for variety. That's a great thing for you at this time. It means you don't have to go far to satisfy your craving. For that you should be thankful.



Leo (July 23-August 22)

Virgo, enjoy your time while you can. This should be an easy, enjoyable time where ideas flow and talk with loved ones is rampant. Take advantage. Peace is in the air. Understanding, for others little issues and sensitive problems, has you helping with the care of a mother who's just bandaged their youngster's boo boo. Virgo. Now for the other side of your Jekyll and Hyde story. Things are changing. Habits especially. This isn't something you entertain very well, not when behaviors decide to do change all at once. Communication is very important now. Learn and decide what you need to keep and what you need to alter. Remember you're in charge.



Virgo (August 23-September 22)

Libra, ideas and thoughts don't come easily today. Perhaps you should do what you did yesterday if it worked for you in a good way. If you have others over or go to meet them, you could be found blurring out the wrong thing which causes considerable grief. Libra. You'll be receiving some of it if this happens. Irritations can and probably will happen even when you're trying to assuage them. Be careful too where love is concerned. You find yourself looking at people you shouldn't wonder in your mind. That could cause major problems if not kept in check.



Libra (September 23-October 22)

Libra, ideas and thoughts don't come easily today. Perhaps you should do what you did yesterday if it worked for you in a good way. If you have others over or go to meet them, you could be found blurring out the wrong thing which causes considerable grief. Libra. You'll be receiving some of it if this happens. Irritations can and probably will happen even when you're trying to assuage them. Be careful too where love is concerned. You find yourself looking at people you shouldn't wonder in your mind. That could cause major problems if not kept in check.



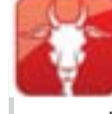
Scorpio (October 23-November 19)

Scorpio, emotional change sweeps into this period, starting today. It has the ability to drive you nuts if you allow it. Your water energy makes you sensitive. This will have you looking from two sides of your emotions with the devil on one shoulder and an angel on the other. Both counsel you to their way of thinking. Scorpio. Neither of them attracts and retains your attention for long and that's fine. You can't handle the divisiveness. The good thing about this time period is that you want to educate yourself further. Intelligence takes over and prods you on to do more.



Sagittarius (November 22-December 21)

Sagittarius, if you go shopping now and buy, you'll hate it later. Colors, at this time, are not what they appear to be later. You'll end up giving them away. It's not that way at work or in making decisions about life though. It's only in choices of shopping that you're a step behind. Sagittarius. Original creative thoughts, however, keep you on top of the discussion so that you can help anyone who needs your assistance. Work related ideas come in rapid succession but you'll have to hold on to them until tomorrow unless you work for yourself. Be thoughtful of speaking with an older person today. You may not like where the conversation goes. Hold your tongue.



Capricorn (December 22-January 19)

Capricorn, right now is a time for coming to grips with your past. Look it over, see how to change things in it you don't like and see where you can make better decisions for future events you desire. Having this ability now gives you a feeling of being complete which is something you need at this time, Capricorn. You're entering a cycle that has you changing your habits. Make sure these choices are something you want. Otherwise you'll be upset by them because these behaviors will last into your future. Learning and communication scratch an intuitive itch.



Aquarius (January 20- February 18)

Aquarius, coworkers, including higher ups, see you as a stable person who is more conservative than not and who can make the company more secure by your actions. This is a good way to be noticed. Good will from authority figures can help you a lot. Aquarius. Emotional change has started today and will be here until the end of the month. Try to keep it to yourself but you're feeling two ways at the same time. That isn't easy to take. The two angels on your shoulder are fighting to get you to look at life the way each does. Feeling torn between the two can cause hardships. The good part of this is that you want to learn and communicate the information you've gleaned.



Pisces (February 19-March 20)

Pisces, you have a need for respect both at home and at work. If you don't get this requirement fulfilled, you'll be unhappy with others as well as yourself even when you feel that you've accomplished your goals. Work, achievement and ambition all make your world go around. Right now, and for the rest of the month, you're feeling two ways at once. Being in one place and feeling as if you're in another too can be disconcerting. Pisces. You may find that you're a little foggy brained because of this. Getting to the end of something you're trying to achieve may feel as if you're walking in deep water, getting nowhere fast.

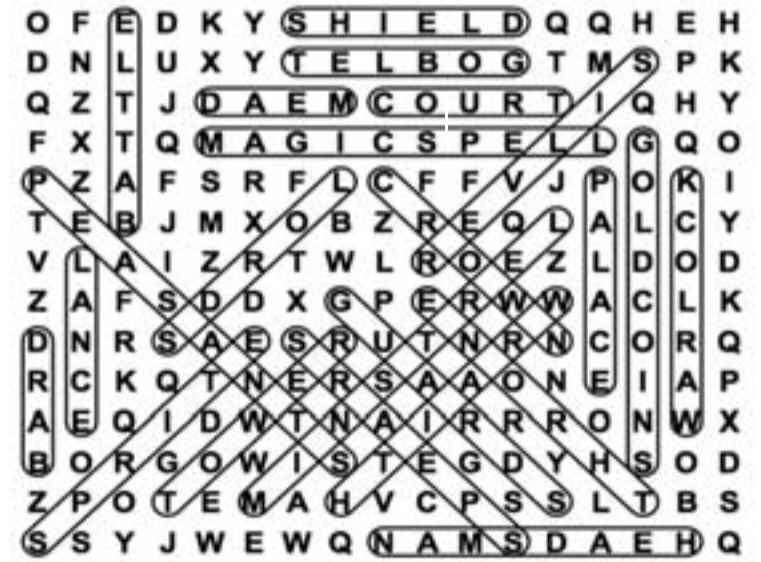
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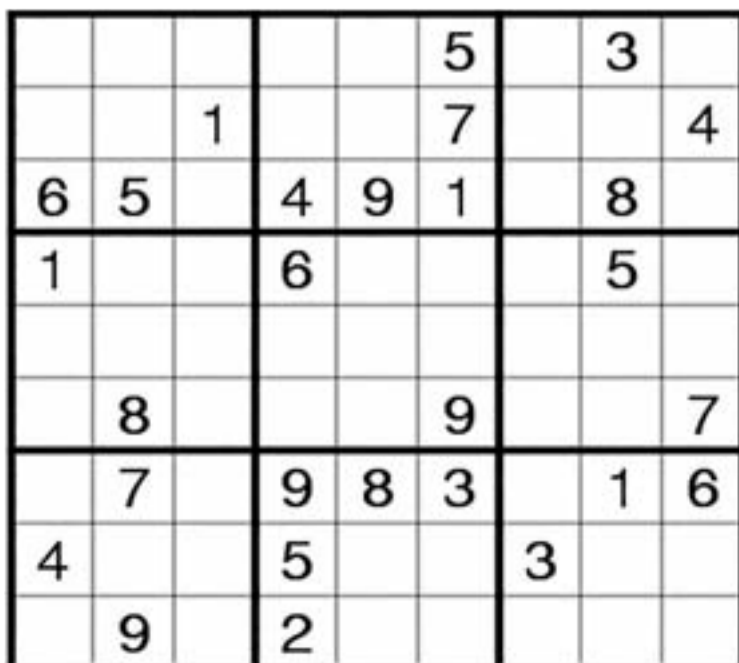
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Fantasy 3 - Solution



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Daily Sudoku



Friday's Solution



Lifestyle

MONDAY, MAY 6, 2019



People watches the Eldorado parade in Lille, northern France during the Lille 3000 event with "Mexico" as this year's theme. — AFP

Gaza skaters battle blockade and conservatism

Street vendors holler and drivers blare their horns incessantly, but at the city's port an unfamiliar sound can be heard—the rumble, grind and clatter of skateboards. The ramps and ledges a few hundred meters (yards) from the sea may not look like much, but they make up the first and only full skate park in the Palestinian enclave. The young men that come most days say it provides them a rare opportunity for fun in Gaza, hemmed in physically by an Israeli blockade and mentally by a conservative culture. On a recent evening, around a dozen young men were rattling forwards and back, perfecting new tricks. Rajab Reefi, 23, appeared to be the team's leader. He is officially a builder, but there isn't much work around due to Gaza's stagnant economy.

Wearing a cap and looking more skater-bro than Muslim Brotherhood, he said the park is an oasis from the stresses of Gazan life. "We love skateboarding but more than that we love to live," he told AFP. "We don't just want to play here, we want to go from this place to international competitions to show the Western world that Palestinians, and us in Gaza, don't live just war and destruction." "We live for freedom, even though we are under a blockade."

Closed off

Skateboarding is also growing in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, the other major part of the Palestinian territories, with a number of parks built with the support of SkatePal, a UK-based NGO. But Gaza is largely cut off from the outside world, with Israel maintaining a blockade on the strip for more than a decade. Egypt's border had also been mainly closed in recent years, though it reopened a year ago and has remained so most of the time since.

Israel says that the blockade is necessary to isolate Gaza's Islamist rulers Hamas, with whom the Jewish state has fought three wars, and stop it from obtaining weapons or materials to make them. Critics say it amounts to collective punishment for Gaza's two million residents.

Reefi said that even getting skateboards into the strip was tough, often resulting in two or three people having to share the same board. They rely heavily on YouTube videos

to learn new tricks. Gaza has also become more conservative since Hamas seized control in 2007 and many supposedly Western pursuits are banned or frowned upon. To build the park, which was completed in January, the Italian Cultural Centre in Gaza jumped through Israeli administrative hoops to be able to bring in a few dozen skaters a year.

On each visit they stayed several weeks, building the park and also training young people. "The coordination needed to get 30 people through Erez (Israeli checkpoint) is not easy, with all their applications etc.," Sami Abu Omar, from the cultural center, said.

Andre Lucat, an Italian who was part of a group which visited Gaza in January, said they worked all hours finishing the park. He said that they were shocked by the conditions under which Palestinians in Gaza live and wanted to bring a bit of joy to the young people. "(Skateboarding) can allow them to live children's lives, even for only a little bit. That's the most important lesson I learned over there."

Release

Yasser Massoud, 13, sold tea and coffee along Gaza's seafont for a few dollars a day until, one day, by chance he heard the skateboards rattling by. He clambered down to join in and hasn't looked back since. More than a year later, his family allowed him to stop working to focus on studies, and he now spends most of his free time at the park. "I used to come down every day and play a bit and then it became more and more," he said. "But my dream is to leave Gaza." A group of women in hijab Muslim head coverings leaned over a barrier from a nearby road to watch.

Conservative attitudes mean that the skate team is male only. "Till now there are no girls but we try because we all should have the same life—not merely me living and having fun and the girls not," Reefi told AFP. "But (it should be) in the right way that we were raised with." Lucat said that Hamas authorities had at times been skeptical of the project, seeing skateboarding as a Western concept, though such concerns have apparently eased. The park, Reefi pointed out, is busiest on Friday afternoons when people are off school and work.

It provides bored young men an alternative to joining the weekly Hamas-backed protests along the Israeli border fence. At least 265 Gazans have been killed by Israeli forces since the protests and clashes began in March 2018. Two Israeli soldiers have been killed over the same period. Ezzedine Mashharawi, another underemployed member of the team, told AFP that skating was his only release. "Here in Gaza you have a blockade, a lack of work—psychological pressures on young people," said the 24-year-old. "We get rid of all that negative energy through skateboarding." — AFP



Palestinian youths ride their skateboards near the sea port of Gaza City. — AFP photos

Da Vinci 'claw hand' may have impaired later art

Leonardo da Vinci may have suffered traumatic nerve damage that left him with a "claw hand", impairing his ability to paint in later life, a new study said. The damage could have been the result of a fainting episode, according to Italian research published Friday in the British Royal Society of Medicine journal. Reconstructive surgeon David Lazzeri and neurologist Carlo Rossi said the handicap prevented the Renaissance artist from even holding his palette in his right hand, though he continued to draw with his left.

Many researchers have assumed that the palsy of his right hand stemmed from a stroke or Dupuytren's contracture, a condition that causes fingers to become permanently bent. The two scientists reached their finding by studying a chalk drawing of da Vinci attributed to the 16th-century Lombard artist Giovanni Ambrogio Figino. The picture shows the great Italian polymath with his right hand emerging from his clothing, as if he were wearing a sling, with the fingers contracted.

"Rather than depicting the typical clenched hand seen in post-stroke muscular spasticity, the picture suggests an alternative diagnosis such as ulnar palsy, commonly known as claw hand," Lazzeri said in the report. For the Italian experts, Leonardo's physical weakness was not accompanied by any cognitive decline.

But according to Lazzeri, it may explain "why he left numerous paintings incomplete" even including his most famous, the Mona Lisa, during the last five years of his career as a painter "while he continued teaching and drawing". According to another study, carried out by Florence Museum researchers and published last month, Leonardo was completely ambidextrous—capable of writing, drawing and painting as well with his left hand as his right. The findings were based on analysis of his earliest work. French President Emmanuel Macron and Italian counterpart Sergio Mattarella on Thursday kicked off commemorations to mark 500 years since da Vinci died in France. — AFP

Richards didn't like travelling the world with Steps

Claire Richards used to get too homesick to enjoy travelling the world with Steps. The 41-year-old singer - who has children Charlie, 11, and nine-year-old Daisy with husband Reece Hill - didn't properly appreciate the opportunities that came her way in her early 20s because she felt "too nervous" to go out and explore new cities she performed in with the band. Speaking to Closer magazine, she said: "I was only 19 when I joined Steps and I really missed my mum and dad when I was away from home on tour with the band. "I spent a lot of time travelling the world, but not actually appreciating all these amazing countries. "Instead, I would stay in my hotel room because I was too nervous to explore. "I wasted a lot of

opportunities. I wish I had ventured out more, instead of getting caught up in a bubble of homesickness." Claire finds the key to finding a balance with her professional and personal life is to regard her music career as just a job and creating a true "separation" between her public and private personas. She explained: "It's easy to forget that being famous is just a job and having a good balance between family and work is key. "The glitz and the glamorous side of showbiz is amazing, but it's not real life. "I try to remember that I'm going to work, just like everybody does, and I have to have that separation between work and family. It took me a long time to figure that out. "When I come home, I'm not Claire from Steps - I'm Mrs Hill."



Carly Rae Jepsen wrote 200 songs for album

Carly Rae Jepsen wrote 200 songs for her new album. The 33-year-old star is a self-confessed workaholic and admitted she struggled to whittle down the 200 songs she wrote for her fourth record 'Dedicated', which is set for release on May 17. She said: "I rarely write a song and am like, 'It's done!' It's sort of my passion and obsession in a way: late at night being like, 'I found the lyric!' I envy writers that are like, 'I just wrote this and put it on the album.' I'm like, 'How do you sleep at night?!' " And Carly revealed her album is inspired by love, both her break-up with her ex, photographer David Kalani Larkins, and her relationship with her current musician boyfriend. She told Rolling Stone: "When you get to the place where you know somebody, and they've seen your absolute embarrassing worst and love you still, there's a rush and a high. I try to create that with the music that I make: a feeling of a moment being so intense that you're present in it and you're nowhere else." Carly found fame with the catchy track 'Call Me Maybe' but it was her follow-up album that resonated with fans and Carly isn't interested in huge, worldwide fame but instead she wants to make an emotional connection with her fans through her music. She said: "Here's how I'll put it. I would much rather have a small and mighty group of people who are getting what I love about music and connecting than a 'Call Me Maybe' ever again."

Mitchell enjoys freedom to improvise on Coogan comedy

David Mitchell has enjoyed the freedom to improvise with Steve Coogan on set for their new movie. The two British stars are set to appear together in an as-yet-unnamed comedy satire focused on a retail tycoon (Coogan) and a writer (Mitchell) "paid to write a very complimentary biography about him", and the former 'Peep Show' actor has found it almost liberating to have more time to work around the script after filming it word-for-word before doing "other stuff" around it. Speaking on the 'Adam Buxton Podcast', he said: "Oddly, I have had a bit of fun with it. My expectation was very much that it'd be, 'Well, I'm happy with the line'. But it's not felt like we've compromised the line. "The line's there, but then we can do other stuff as well that might be useful. So I've been more comfortable with that. Certainly in my experiences with TV they're always under the pressure of time when you're filming, and so I'm quite a believer in thinking about what's going to be said in a different room where there isn't a crew waiting. "But when you've got a little bit more time and you're not worried about dropping a scene if you don't move on, then it turns out I can enjoy that and bit a little bit less arsey." The project - which has almost finished filming - has been directed by Michael Winterbottom, who previously worked with Alan Partridge star Coogan and Rob Brydon on 'The Trip'. Mitchell added: "I think he has a slightly... it's not a spoof documentary but it has a slightly documentary-ish feel to it. There's not like a video village where the director and costume people are looking at the monitors. "It's like, Michael's there behind the camera deciding what the shots should be then and there. It's quite informal in that way. And I think therefore quite quick."



Minogue 'anxious' about Glastonbury performance

Kylie Minogue gets breathless with nerves whenever her Glastonbury performance is brought up. The 50-year-old singer - who was scheduled to hit the stage at the music extravaganza in 2005, but was forced to pull out a month before when she discovered that she had breast cancer - is nervous about finally getting to play at the five-day festival on the iconic Pyramid Stage on June 30. Speaking on 'The Zoe Ball Breakfast Show' on Friday Kylie said: "I keep losing my breath every time someone mentions 'Glastonbury'. I'm kinda like 'yep, yep... that's happening!' " Zoe commented that the upcoming performance was going to be an "emotional" show considering the history and Kylie recalled: "It was 2005 and that was thrilling at that point in that time. "That would have been an evening headline slot, and then I received my diagnosis which put a halt to everything. So all those years have passed and I was thinking: 'I guess that's never gonna happen for me. I kind of missed the boat on that.' "And then bang, I was offered the Legends slot! Which is crazy to me and incredibly exciting/nerve wracking. The emotions attached to that are one thing and then separate to that is just excitement and the anxiety!" The 'Love At First Sight' singer follows in the footsteps of the likes of the Bee Gees star Barry Gibb, Dolly Parton, Neil Diamond and Lionel Richie in performing the Legend slot. Kylie - who released her 14th studio album 'Golden' last year - is "very excited" about her new song 'New York City' which was part of the sessions for the record but was put aside for a later release. And the pop



star - who sported iconic skin-tight gold hot pants in the video for her hit track 'Spinning Around' which was released in 2000 - revealed she isn't sure if she will wear her famous short shorts at Glastonbury this year. She said: "Well that was a suggestion from a journalist. I was like 'What! I think the hot pants have had their day!' But hmm... wardrobe TBD!"

McGovern's

Downton family reunion

Elizabeth McGovern says the 'Downton Abbey' movie felt like a "family reunion". The 57-year-old actress has reprised her role as Cora Crawley, Countess of Grantham, for the big screen adaptation of the hit TV show and Elizabeth said there was a party atmosphere on set as the cast got a chance to reunite. She told The Mail On Sunday's Event magazine: "'Downton' changed all our lives. It's not so much a television show as this juggernaut which took all of us by surprise. I didn't expect to see my career take on this new direction at my age. When the series [first shown in 2010] ended in 2015, every-



one was very emotional because it was the end of something so special, but everyone was also incredibly busy with other opportunities that came their way thanks to 'Downton'. Coming back felt like a family reunion. Everyone was in a holiday mood because it seemed such an achievement to be turning this show into a movie. We were all walking round with big smiles on our faces. "'Downton' has a reputation for being a good place to work. It's probably the friendliest set I have ever worked on because we are all camped out there for the duration and we all have a huge amount of respect for each other." While Elizabeth was excited to reunite with her co-stars, she also loved the addition of new actors, including Imelda Staunton, who plays the formidable Lady Bagshaw and Simon Jones and Geraldine James in the roles of King George V and Queen Mary. She said: "Imelda has been on set [with her husband Jim Carter who plays butler Carson] so often she felt like a member of the cast already, and Simon and Geraldine are both excellent actors. Everyone finds it exciting, and obviously we have Dame Maggie [Smith], possibly the most intelligent, inspirational, hilarious woman you could meet, so it just felt very special. "It was lovely to be back with my screen daughters Michelle [Dockery, who plays Lady Mary] and Edith [Laura Carmichael] and of course my screen husband Hugh [Bonneville], who we all adore. We all slot into our old patterns. There's a lot of music played because a few of us play guitar, but this year I played a lot less and Michael Fox [who plays footman Andrew Parker] did a lot of songs with Michelle."

Berry did three years of martial arts training in six months



Halle Berry crammed three years of martial arts training into six months ahead of filming 'John Wick 3: Parabellum'. The 52-year-old actress admitted she had never "worked so hard" in getting into shape for a role and thinks she's at her best "mentally and physically" as a result. She said: "You can't normally get to the level I got to in five months, it normally takes people two or three years and I got all this training under the guise of doing my work. "Seriously, these guys worked me so hard. "I never worked so hard in my whole life for this character and this movie. I have never been in better shape, mentally and physically." And Halle - who has children Nahla, 11, and Maceo, five, from previous relationships - has been happy to show off the results of her tough workouts on Instagram. She added: "Chad [Stahelski, director] got me into the best shape of my life, so why not show it off? " ... As an artist and as a woman who has something to say, social media has given me my own voice and my own outlet. "I can show the world through my eyes but I can also choose what I do and don't want to talk about." The 'X-Men' actress' personal trainer, Peter Lee Thomas, has previously shared details of her tough exercise regime. He said: "She pretty much had a checklist of things she wanted as far as her physique is concerned and we had a bulletproof battle plan ... You better believe we are doing some boxing, some kick boxing, some Muay Thai ... I'm definitely working on those skill sets with her and she's also doing strength and conditioning. "She's using kettle bells, bar bells, dumbbells, working on the pull up bar, doing dips, sprinting pushing heavy things, pulling stuff. It's just a really dynamic way to jump-start anyone's metabolism. I have never met anybody that works harder and trains harder and is just so resilient. She is getting faster, stronger and becoming more athletic. I've never met another person who can do it like her."



Richard Madden: 'All actors should be able to play all parts'

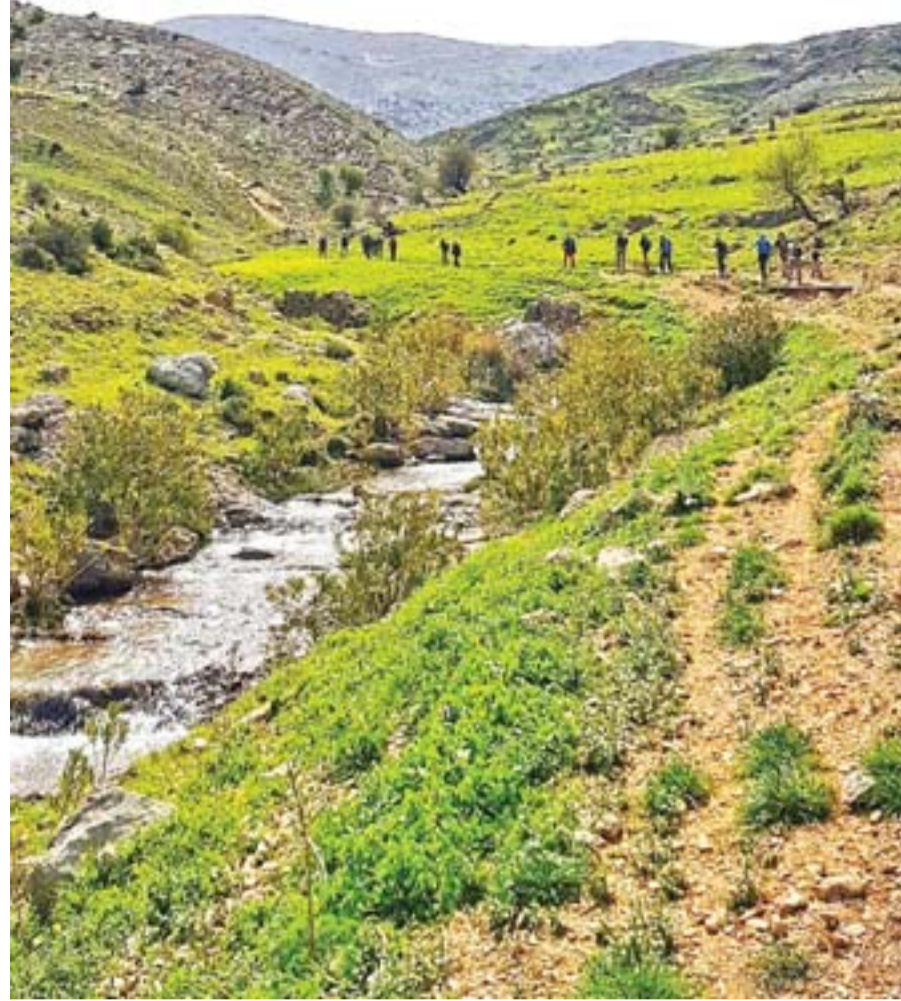
Richard Madden thinks all actors should be able to play all parts. While there has been some criticism of straight actors playing gay parts, Richard has admitted that there is a need for more diversity onscreen but says ultimately the best actor should get the part. He told The Guardian: "It's a really terrible route to go down if we start restricting people's casting based on their personal lives. We have to focus more on diversity and having everyone represented, but I'm also a firm believer in the best actor for the part." Richard plays John Reid, Elton John's first manager and one-time lover in the upcoming biopic 'Rocketman' and he loved working with star Taron Egerton and director Dexter Fletcher because they were both "so prepared". He added: "And that's how I like to be, as prepared as possible, so we get on set and we can just play. Even with dancing, the point is to prep to oblivion so that I don't think about it and can get on with telling the story." Although Richard, 32, played romantic heroes early in his career, he has enjoyed taking on darker parts recently, such as in the TV drama 'Bodyguard'. He said: "I spent my 20s playing Romeo. Twice, literally, and then versions of it. So I was glad to move into my 30s and be in a place where I might be the villain. I'm used to playing a guy with a few bad characteristics. With that, you think, 'What has made you this way?' and you justify them. But what was interesting with 'Bodyguard' was realizing that... sometimes people are bad. Or they're good, but they change. This character was fun because he's manipulative and snide in his tactics. You're being dark, and you're not justifying it. I enjoyed playing that." — Bang Showbiz

Lifestyle | Features



Lebanon

Mountain Trail... Fascinating natural beauty



Any person taking the Lebanon Mountain Trail will be fascinated by the beauty of nature, tradition, culture and environment of mountains, a 440-km-long trail extending from Andaket in the north to Marjayoun in the south.

Hikers taking the trail will pass by 75 towns and villages as well as three natural

reserves at altitudes ranging between 570 to 2,011 meters above sea level. Lebanon Mountain Trail Association (LMTA), established in 2007, is overseeing and maintaining the trail with the major aim of protecting this natural resource. — KUNA



Stars back France's 'yellow vests' as protesters march

Film stars Juliette Binoche and Emmanuelle Beart joined hundreds of people from the arts world in backing France's "yellow vests" movement, as the latest anti-government marches took place Saturday. Binoche and Beart joined more than 1,400 signatories to an open letter published in the left-leaning daily Liberation. Entitled "Yellow Vests: we are not fooled!", it denounced what it said were attempts to discredit the movement. It also backed the demands of the protesters, which it said included calls for greater social and fiscal justice, and radical measures to tackle what they called an ecological emergency.

The open letter condemned what it said were the increasingly repressive measures taken against the movement, noting that international organizations such as United Nations and the European Union had already expressed their concern. Binoche and Beart were among the most prominent signatories, which also included directors, scriptwriters and composers. Binoche won an Oscar for her role in "The English Patient" while Beart is perhaps best known internationally for her role in the first "Mission Impossible" film. Official estimates suggested that turnout for Saturday's marches was down, in the wake of the May Day rallies when yellow vest activists joined the traditional trade union march.

The interior ministry said 18,900 people demonstrated across France, 1,460 of them in Paris—well down on their count for the previous weekend, when they said 23,600 turned up across the country. The yellow vest organizers, who regularly dismiss the accuracy of the official count, put the turnout across France on Saturday at 40,291. The day's marches were relatively calm, with only a handful of arrests and eight people detained in Paris. In the southwest city of Bordeaux, where support for the movement has been strong, 61-year-old teaching assistant Jose acknowledged that the movement was running out of steam a little. "That's 25 weeks that we have put our life on hold for a bit to at least get back a minimum of dignity," he said.

At Charles de Gaulle airport, meanwhile, around 20 yellow vest protesters handed out leaflets objecting to government plans to privatise Aeroports de Paris (ADP), which runs the capital's three airports. Saturday's protests come just days after Wednesday's May Day protests, and the fallout over the violence was still being discussed. The IGPN, which investigates allegations of police misconduct, is looking at three incidents caught on video that appear to show police violence against May Day protesters.—AP



French singer and candidate for the upcoming European election Francis Lalanne (center) holds a banner during a yellow vests and alterglobalists demonstration on May 4, 2019 in Metz, eastern France, ahead of the G7 environment to be held on May 7 and 8. — AFP

'The Mikado' revamped for 21st century with Trumpian twist

As scandals under the Donald Trump administration offer a steady stream of fodder for satirists and comedy show hosts, now the world of musical theater is taking a stab at lampooning the White House. This weekend a New York take on "The Mikado"—a 19th century comic operetta originally intended to satirize British politics through Japanese imagery—sees its characters take on decidedly Trumpian airs. Ben Spierman's revamp of the Victorian musical in which a clownish despot rules over his juvenile population is an attempt, he says, to show that the more things change, the more they stay the same.

"For me 'The Mikado' is a perfect example," Spierman, the director of the Bronx Opera, told AFP. "The politics and the reality of the fact that we have corruption, and that we have unqualified people in jobs or whatever, nepotism: these things have not changed." Performed this week as part of New York's Opera Fest, the themes of the piece originally staged in smog-choked 1880s London by dramatist W.S. Gilbert and composer Arthur Sullivan resonate "almost too well," says Spierman. "We're in a time that's shadowed not just by this person, by Trump himself, but by 'Trumpism'—by this kind of cultural battle that we're having," he added.

Spierman's production, set in the White House press room, doesn't match characters one-to-one with members of the US president's administration, instead weaving elements of real-life personalities into the show. The likenesses of Trump's daughter Ivanka and his son-in-law Jared

Kushner are featured alongside elements of former chief strategist Steve Bannon, senior advisor Stephen Miller and press secretary Sarah Sanders. Another character evokes the personalities of Hillary Clinton and presidential candidate Elizabeth Warren—a champion of progressive causes in the US—while the titular Mikado himself recalls none other than Russian leader Vladimir Putin.

Trump himself is an overarching presence rather than a specific character, with all of the players in the comic romp inhabiting aspects of his persona. "To put Gilbert's words, or even the adapted words of Gilbert, into the mouth of Donald Trump just didn't make any sense to me," Spierman said. "He's just not that clever with the language."

Art as critical vanguard

Opera has long been a potent medium for provocative takes on the contemporary moment, according to Spierman—one that can make audiences laugh before encouraging more sober reflection on the state of our times. "I think that one of the things we have in this country which is important to remember is that we are allowed to poke fun at the president," he said. "It's important that we use that right, because if you don't... you lose that. It's important to be aware that yes, we've just laughed, but we also need to understand the serious issues that underlie what you just saw on the stage."

Spierman continues to update the script as events unfold at the White House, and even squeezed in some

tweaks when the infamous Mueller report into Russian interference in US democracy came out last month. "We all as artists have to be aware of what's going on; I think that part of our job is to be the vanguard in some ways of political criticism." At one moment in "The Mikado" a character presented as a female challenger to authority describes herself "an acquired taste," Spierman's nod to the double standards in contemporary coverage of male leaders and their female counterparts. "I really think that is very telling, when it comes to talking about how strong women are looked at in our political discourse," he said.

From footnote to chapter

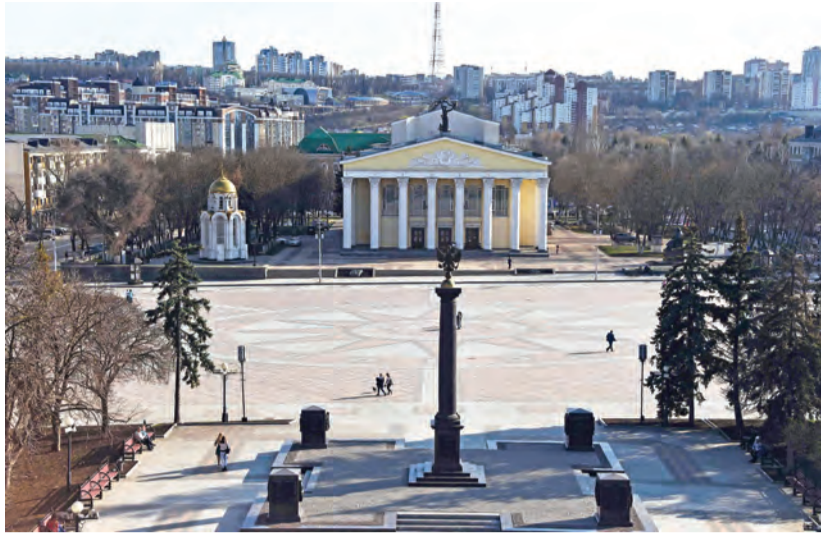
Considered a classic of British musical theater, "The Mikado" is no stranger to controversy: modern critics have skewered it not for its political commentary but for what they dub casual racism. Many point to the traditional production's setting in Japan that includes excessive bowing by white actors, who sing in pinched voices while wearing yellow-tinted makeup. The Bronx Opera's revamped version eschews those ingredients, aiming instead to "focus people on the fact that it is ultimately about the political state," Spierman said.

Actresses on his stage sport the business casual pantsuits quintessential to the halls and corridors of Washington's great institutions while several of the men don excessively long red ties, a clear visual nod to Trump. Twitter also features strongly in the show, whether via a

series of Trump tweets or allusions in the libretto to direct messages between characters. For now, the production is running solely as part of the city's annual Opera Fest—a bid to bring shows to a wide audience and highlight the diversity of New York's contemporary opera scene—but Spierman sees it as fitting into a broader narrative of the Trump presidency.

"He's just a fact of history," the director said. "That's what happened when he was elected president—he went from being a footnote to a chapter." Though he is satirizing the 45th US president's term, for Spierman it remains to be seen whether Trump is comedy or a tragedy: "I think we're not at the end of the show yet."—AFP





A photo shows a general view of the central part of the Russian city of Belgorod, some 700 km south of Moscow. — AFP photos



People rest in the park on the renovated embankment of the Vezelka river in the Russian city of Belgorod, some 700 km south of Moscow.



People rest in the park on the renovated embankment of the Vezelka river.

Tired to trendy: Architects give Russian provinces urban makeover



People rest in the park on the renovated embankment of the Vezelka river.



View of the "New Life" - a newly built suburb in the Russian city of Belgorod.



People rest in the park on the renovated embankment of the Vezelka river.



A general view shows the Russian city of Belgorod.

For decades, the banks of the river flowing through the Russian city of Belgorod were in a sorry state of disrepair. "It was hard to get down to the water, and it was really filthy in places," said architect Jezi Stankevici. Now reeds line the waterfront and teenagers lounge on wooden boardwalks that extend right across the river, overlooked by a wooden amphitheatre. The idea of creating pleasant public spaces might not seem groundbreaking but it is only just taking root in Soviet-planned cities like Belgorod, some 600 kilometers (370 miles) south of Moscow.

Such cities were built with the aim of fulfilling production targets rather than responding to the needs of residents, says Daria Paramonova, of the Strelka architecture firm leading the project. The Moscow-based firm has been awarded a contract to oversee the regeneration of 40 cities under a government program launched in 2017. The ongoing drive is "the largest urban regeneration project in post-Soviet Russia", according to Strelka. It comes as the country struggles to halt a tide of young people moving from the provinces to the capital in search of opportunities.

Quality of life?

Paramonova said that the notion of "quality of life" was initially alien to residents, whose needs and wishes had formerly not been a priority for city planners. "Now we say that what's important is keeping things human," she added, stressing the role of public consultations before taking decisions. Residents of Belgorod, a provincial city of some 400,000 inhabitants that was rebuilt after World War II, attended public meetings and were able to vote online for their favorite design project.

The riverside area where people can now stroll, play sports and walk their dogs, is just the start. The goal is to extend walkways and cycle paths for 20 km along the river. Strelka took charge for the initial stages and will advise local officials and architects on the rest. Other cities lined up for a makeover of their public spaces



A general view shows the Russian city of Belgorod.

include Russia's third biggest city Ekaterinburg, Vladivostok, Grozny, where a new park was created, and Novosibirsk.

Popular

Like many Russian cities, Belgorod has seen an exodus of young people since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 and closure of many local factories. As a result, budgetary revenues have fallen and regeneration projects have slipped right down the agenda.

While some have questioned how Belgorod will maintain costly new facilities, those using them—from students at a nearby university to young mothers with pushchairs—say they have been a hit since opening in November 2017. "It has really got prettier," said Yelena, a 38-year-old quality control specialist walking in the spring sunshine. "You're in the center of the city but you don't hear any traffic noise. I'd even call it calming."

Moscow's impact

Since 2010, the Kremlin has spent billions of dollars on improving public spaces, particularly through a federal program that has handed out 42.2 billion rubles (\$670 million, 600 million euros) for renovation work. And President Vladimir Putin last year asked the government to double its contributions to create a "comfortable urban environment". Paramonova highlighted the positive impact that Moscow's successful—and costlier—"My Street" renovation scheme had had on getting the provincial rejuvenation project off the ground.

Initiated in 2015, it radically changed the face of the capital ahead of the 2018 football World Cup. The project's costs controversially soared to 126 billion rubles and it was tarnished by accusations of corruption by municipal authorities. But Muscovites now rarely recall the three summers of noisy, dusty renovation work.

Retaining human capital

Paramonova acknowledges that it is tricky to bring the same ideas to the provinces "where there is less money and more problems". But she hopes that Strelka's work will encourage local architects to develop their own projects. Making provincial cities more attractive places to live in is crucial to ensuring their survival, according to local authorities.

People working in Belgorod earn less than half the average wage in the capital. "Today all cities are fighting to retain their 'human capital' and trying to create living conditions that will dissuade residents from leaving for Moscow or elsewhere," said Belgorod region's deputy governor in charge of urban planning, Yevgeny Glagolyev. "We have to do this too." — AFP



A general view shows the Russian city of Belgorod.

A cultural event organized by The Armenian Educational and Cultural Society Hamazkayin

The Armenian Educational and Cultural Society Hamazkayin organized a cultural event on May 3, 2019 in Kaifan theatre, under the patronage of Rev Archbishop Masis Zoubouyan the prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Kuwait. The event was attended by ambassador of the Republic of Armenia Sarmen Baghdasarian, the honorable consul of the Armenian Embassy Vartkes Avedisian, prominent religious and cultural personalities, Kuwaiti guests and more than 400 members of the Armenian community.

It was a delightful event with live performances of Armenian traditional "Ashough" music, love songs and folklore dance. The cultural evening started with the opening speech of Hamazkayin's Kuwait chairman Dikran Bayatian who welcomed the guests and explained the term "Ashough" as a traditional genre of Armenian troubadour music and songs and highlighted the role of Hamazkayin in the Armenian diaspora as an entity that besides organizing art shows and exhibitions, staging theatrical performances, running educational programs and institutions, publishing books and organizing youth forums, takes on itself the task of preserving and passing on of the rich cultural heritage of Armenian folk music and dance to the next generations.

Bayatian then invited host of the show Gilda Berberian-Ijian to the stage who opened the cultural

event with a poem dedicated to the most prominent Armenian "Ashough" Sayat Nova. It's worth mentioning that the stage setting was very unique and portrayed the Armenian village life with mount Ararat in the background and a festive scene, with performers sitting around a nicely decorated table, taking turns in singing just as "Ashough's" used to do in the 17th century. Throughout the evening, more than 30 young and experienced singers and dancers filled the theatre with melodies and moves of traditional Armenian music and dance, presenting the most popular troubadour love songs of "Ashough's" Sayat Nova, Jivani, Sheram, Havasi, Pakrad and Kusan Shahen in solo, duet and choir format. The dancers presented dances choreographed specifically for those melodies. The audience was very engaged and many of the attendees were singing along with the performers.

At the end of the evening, Gilda Berberian - Ijian thanked all the participants while dancers came on stage with bouquets of roses for the musicians, choreographers and the singers. Finally, the prelate of the Armenian Apostolic Church in Kuwait, Rev Archbishop Masis Zoubouyan took the stage to congratulate Hamazkayin Educational and Cultural Society for organizing the lively event. He stated that vision, determination and teamwork are the keys to success for any organization and commu-



The organizers and the performers together with Rev Archbishop Masis Zoubouyan prelate of Arm. Apostolic church of Kuwait.

nity. He thanked the performers, musicians, dancers, those who worked tirelessly behind the stage and those who donated financially to make this event a success. He underlined the importance of preserving the rich cultural heritage that has been passed down to us from previous

generations and wished success to Hamazkayin in its future plans and activities.

Classifieds

Monday, May 6, 2019

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Expected Weather for the Next 24 Hours

BY NIGHT: Partly cloudy with light to moderate variable wind to wind, with speed of 10 - 38 km/h with a chance for scattered rain later on.

BY DAY: Hot and Clouds will increase gradually with light to moderate freshening at times north westerly wind, with speed of 15 - 45 km/h causing rising dust with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times.

WEATHER WATCH			Thunder Rain	
STATION	MAX. REC.	MIN. EXP.	SFC. CHART 05/05/2019 0000 UTC	
KUWAIT CITY	38 °C	26 °C		
KUWAIT AIRPORT	37 °C	26 °C		
ABDALY	40 °C	24 °C		
BUBYAN	- °C	- °C		
JAHRA	41 °C	25 °C		
FAILAKA ISLAND	34 °C	24 °C		
SALMIYAH	33 °C	25 °C		
AHMADI	34 °C	25 °C		
NUWASIB	37 °C	26 °C		
WAFRA	40 °C	25 °C	M.S. Analysis (P.F.) Valid 05/05/2019 00:00 UTC	
SALMY	35 °C	22 °C		

4 DAYS FORECAST						
DAY	DATE	WEATHER	Temperatures		Wind Direction	Wind Speed
			MAX.	MIN.		
Monday	05/06	Hot and Partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	39 °C	25 °C	NW-VRB	12 - 38 km/h
Tuesday	05/07	Hot and Partly cloudy	41 °C	27 °C	NW-VRB	10 - 38 km/h
Wednesday	05/08	Hot and Partly cloudy to cloudy	41 °C	28 °C	VRB-NE	08 - 28 km/h
Thursday	05/09	Hot and Cloudy to partly cloudy with a chance for rain that might be thundery at times	41 °C	30 °C	VRB-SE	10 - 40 km/h

TOMORROW PRAYER TIMES	
Fajr	03:36
Sunrise	05:02
Zuhr	11:45
Asr	15:21
Sunset	18:26
Isha	19:51

RECORDED YESTERDAY AT KUWAIT AIRPORT	
MAX. Temp.	37 °C
MIN. Temp.	27 °C
MAX. RH	53 %
MIN. RH	21 %
MAX. Wind	S 53 km/h
TOTAL RAINFALL IN 24 HR.	0 mm

Hospitals

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

Clinics

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

NOTICE
 April 28, 2019

Mr. Steve George Thomas son of Mr. Thomas George, resident of Ponal Gilgal Bhavan, Vadakkadothucavu P.O., Adoor, Pathanamthitta, Pin: 691526, Kerala, India and Ms. Alan Mittu Pallikkunel daughter of Mr. Mathai Pallikkunel John, resident of Pallikkunel House, Onnam Mile, Perumbavoor Post office, Ernakulam, Kerala - 683542, both Indian nationals presently residing in Kuwait have given notice of intended marriage between them under the Foreign Marriage Act, 1969. If anyone has any objection to the proposed marriage, he/she may file the same with the undersigned according to the procedure laid down under the Act/Rule within thirty days from the date of publication of this notice. Communications in this regard can be made by Email (welfare2@indembkwt.gov.in) 1 letters 1 telephonic calls (00965 - 22550171, 00965 - 22533125).

(Kamveer Bhanu) Second Secretary (Cons) and Marriage Officer. Embassy of India, Kuwait. Email: welfare2@indembkwt.gov.in

CHANGE OF NAME

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, **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) 2-5-2019

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

I, **LATCHAIAH GARI PALANI KUMAR S/o LATCHAIAH GARI NARASA REDDY** (Old Name) R/o D.No. 4/36, Latchaiahgaripalli, Naramrajupalli, Akepadu, Rajampet Mandal, Kadapa District, A.P. Pin 516150 have changed my name as LATCHAIAHGARI PALANI KUMAR REDDY S/o LATCHAIAH GARI NARASA REDDY (New Name). (C 5526) 6-5-2019

I, **Zeny Lemniota Azavedo r/o H.No. 186, Mokim Cuncolim Goa** would like to change my name from Zeny Lemniota Azavedo to Zeny Lemniota Azavedo and my mother's name from Lucy Francisca Josefina Caero to Lucy Josefina Francisquinha Caero as per the birth certificate. (C 5525) 5-5-2019

Hakimuddin S/o Shabbir Husain Jawddiya Passport No. Z2689498 has change my name from Hakimuddin I want to add my surname as Jawddiya. Given



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

DIAL161 FOR AIRPORT INFORMATION

Arrival Flights on Monday 6/5/2019				Departure Flights on Monday 6/5/2019			
Airlines	Flt	Route	Time	Airlines	Flt	Route	Time
FEQ	441	Asyut	00:05	AIC	982	Ahmedabad/Chennai	00:05
IGO	1757	Kochi	00:10	MSC	412	Asyut	00:15
THY	772	Istanbul	00:20	MSR	615	Cairo	00:30
DLH	625	Dammam	00:50	FDB	072	Dubai	00:30
KAC	102	London	00:50	FEQ	342	Sohag	01:05
JZR	722	Alexandria	01:00	IGO	1758	Kochi	01:10
JZR	734	Cairo	01:00	KAC	677	Dubai	01:40
KAC	504	Beirut	01:00	THY	773	Istanbul	01:50
RJA	642	Amman	01:20	DLH	625	Frankfurt	01:50
UAE	853	Dubai	01:40	JZR	701	Asyut	02:00
KLM	446	Bahrain	01:45	KAC	417	Manila	02:00
KKK	1268	Istanbul	01:55	KAC	285	Dhaka	02:00
GFA	211	Bahrain	02:15	KAC	363	Colombo	02:00
QTR	1086	Doha	02:30	JZR	111	Doha	02:10
JZR	502	Lahore	02:55	THY	765	Istanbul	02:50
JZR	406	Kochi	03:05	KKK	1269	Istanbul	02:55
OMA	643	Muscat	03:05	KLM	446	Amsterdam	03:10
ETD	305	Abu Dhabi	03:05	JZR	305	Sharjah	03:15
MSR	612	Cairo	03:15	UAE	854	Dubai	03:30
KAC	418	Manila	03:20	ETD	306	Abu Dhabi	04:00
QTR	1076	Doha	03:30	OMA	644	Muscat	04:05
KAC	382	Delhi	04:05	QTR	1087	Doha	04:15
IGO	1751	Chennai	04:10	MSR	613	Cairo	04:15
KAC	346	Ahmedabad	04:15	IGO	1752	Chennai	05:10
KAC	784	Jeddah	04:25	KAC	303	Mumbai	05:15
DHX	170	Bahrain	04:30	QTR	1077	Doha	05:15
JZR	404	Hyderabad	04:30	JZR	1219	Jeddah	05:25
THY	770	Istanbul	05:20	THY	771	Istanbul	06:30
JZR	402	Mumbai	05:25	GFA	212	Bahrain	06:50
KAC	344	Chennai	05:30	RJA	643	Amman	07:00
KAC	552	Cairo	05:45	KAC	167	Paris	07:15
JZR	112	Doha	05:50	BAW	156	London	07:40
BAW	157	London	06:10	KAC	173	Munich	07:45
KAC	284	Dhaka	06:15	JZR	211	Jeddah	08:00
JZR	714	Sohag	06:20	IGO	1756	CNN	08:10
KAC	678	Dubai	06:40	RBG	214	Sohag	08:15
KAC	204	Lahore	06:45	KAC	163	MXP	08:35
KAC	302	Mumbai	07:05	KAC	501	Beirut	08:50
IGO	1755	CNN	07:10	KAC	545	Cairo	08:50
RBG	211	Luxor	07:25	KAC	561	Amman	08:55
UAE	855	Dubai	07:35	MSC	402	Alexandria	09:00
MSC	401	Alexandria	08:00	KAC	117	New York	09:05
KAC	384	Delhi	08:10	UAE	856	Dubai	09:05
KAC	352	Kochi	08:20	KAC	671	Dubai	09:15
JZR	702	Asyut	08:25	KAC	787	Jeddah	09:15
ETD	301	Abu Dhabi	08:50	KAC	741	Dammam	09:40
ABY	125	Sharjah	09:00	KAC	773	Riyadh	09:40
KAC	334	Trivandrum	09:00	ABY	126	Sharjah	09:40
FDB	5055	Dubai	09:20	JZR	731	Cairo	09:45
QTR	1070	Doha	09:30	ETD	302	Abu Dhabi	09:55
IGO	1753	Ahmedabad	09:40	KAC	101	London	10:05
AXB	889	Mangalore/Bahrain	10:20	FDB	5056	Dubai	10:15
GFA	213	Bahrain	10:40	KAC	515	Tehran	10:35
AXB	395	Kozhikode	10:40	KAC	617	Doha	10:40
MEA	404	Beirut	10:55	QTR	1071	Doha	10:40
JZR	1220	Jeddah	10:55	IGO	1754	Ahmedabad	10:40
QTR	1074	Doha	11:00	JZR	221	Riyadh	11:20
SYR	341	Damascus	11:00	AXB	890	Mangalore	11:20
THY	1282	Trabzon	11:05	GFA	214	Bahrain	11:35
AXB	789	CNN/Bahrain	12:10	AXB	396	Kozhikode	11:50
SAW	701	Damascus	12:30	MEA	405	Beirut	11:55
RBG	553	Alexandria	12:30	SYR	342	Damascus	12:00
THY	766	Istanbul	12:30	THY	1283	Trabzon	12:00
UAE	871	Dubai	12:45	JZR	213	Jeddah	12:05
MSR	610	Cairo	12:45	QTR	1075	Doha	12:10
KAC	742	Dammam	12:55	JZR	123	Dubai	12:45
KAC	774	Riyadh	13:35	AXB	790	CNN	13:10

'Serial killer' in court, Cyprus police retrieve the fifth body

NICOSIA: A Cypriot army officer who has allegedly confessed to killing seven foreign women and girls over nearly three years appeared in court yesterday, while police said they had recovered a fifth body. Captain Nicos Metaxas, 35, has not yet been formally charged over the murders - dubbed the Mediterranean island's first serial killings, which have unleashed anger against what the president described as police "negligence".

Police told reporters yesterday that they had retrieved a suitcase containing the remains of a human body at an acidic manmade lake southwest of Nicosia - the second such find in eight days. The body found yesterday at the lake near the village of Mitsero is in an "advanced state of decomposition", police spokesman Andreas Angelides said. He said a post-mortem would be carried out but did not say whether the body was that of an adult or a child. Cypriot newspaper Phileleftheros reported that the body found yesterday was that of a child.

Metaxas has allegedly confessed to the murder of five women, alongside daughters of two of the women - a six-year-old Filipina and a Romanian girl. The killings came to light in mid-April when unusually heavy rains brought the body of 38-year-old Filipina Mary Rose Tiburcio to the surface of the disused mine shaft where it had been hidden. That triggered a murder investigation which led to Metaxas being arrested on April 18.

Days later, authorities found the body of a second woman in the shaft, believed to be Arian Palanas Lozano, 28, also from the Philippines. These are the only two women to be officially identified. The suspect then guided investigators to a well near an army firing range outside the capital, where police found the body of a third

victim - a woman thought to be from Nepal. Police last Sunday recovered the remains of a fourth victim, stuffed in a suitcase at the bottom of the lake at Mitsero.

Metaxas was accused by police of raping a teenager during his court appearance yesterday. Neophytos Shailos, head of Nicosia's Criminal Investigation Department, told the Nicosia district court a Filipina woman, 19, came forward to file a complaint that Metaxas raped her. The police chief told the court that the suspect denied the allegation when questioned about it. At the hearing yesterday Metaxas was remanded in custody for a further eight days.

Shailos testified that the young woman said she made contact with the army officer online in 2016 when she replied to a modeling job for a photo shoot. Metaxas appeared in court without a lawyer and told the judge he had "no objections" to being remanded. Police say they have received a "deluge of information" about the suspect's activities with 350 witness statements taken and another 150 to be processed. Cypriot authorities have been accused of failing to properly investigate the women's disappearances due to neglect and racism.

President Nicos Anastasiades on Friday fired top police officer Zacharias Chrysostomou a day after Justice Minister Ionas Nicolaou announced his resignation over the case. Authorities have acknowledged that all the women and girls that the army officer has admitted to killing were reported missing to police, except the one from Nepal who was reported to immigration for being absent from her place of employment.

The police said yesterday they would continue to look for a third suitcase the suspect allegedly con-



MITSERO, Cyprus: A boat equipped with a sonar system sails on the acidic Red Lake near the village of Mitsero, southwest of the capital Nicosia, during the search for possible bodies of victims of a suspected serial killer. —AFP

fessed to dumping in the lake. Authorities said they were able to locate the second suitcase by using sophisticated equipment including a robotic camera flown in from the United States. "We will persist in our

efforts, conducting different kinds of tests in the area and elsewhere at a later stage," said Angelides. He said police were still assessing data found on electronic equipment belonging to the suspect. — AFP

Expats leaving Kuwait

By A Saleh, Meshaal Al-Enezi

KUWAIT: Public Authority for Civil Information's (PACI) daily statistics about population demographics showed that the total number of expats has dropped by 30,000 since the beginning of May (in just a few days), said official sources, noting that the Ministry of Interior (MoI) usually provides PACI with lists of expats cancelling their residency visas or getting new ones, so that the statistics could be kept up to date. "The numbers showed that expats dropped by around 30,000 in the first four days of May," the sources stressed. Further, the sources explained that as of last Saturday, the total number of citizens was 1,412,264 (29.7 percent

of the population), while expats were 3,333,027 (70.3 percent of the total population of 4,745,291).

Russian freed on bail

The Court of Appeal yesterday released the Russian defendant and Saeed Dashti in the KGL case on a KD 20 million bail each plus a travel ban pending another hearing on June 9. The Russian businesswoman was in jail after being convicted by a Kuwaiti court of misappropriating public funds in the 'Port Fund' case. Kuwait Port Authority had alleged that the woman and another defendant illegally took millions of dinars of its money, but she continues to deny the charges.

civilized Europe," he added.

Perhaps better known than the council itself is its judicial arm, the European Human Rights Court, which is itself celebrating its 60th birthday. It is a tribunal of final resort for those who feel their fundamental rights are being denied by a member state. Strasbourg - a French city close to the German border - was originally chosen to house the Council of Europe as a symbol of post-war Franco-German reconciliation. Germany joined the council in 1950, a year after it was created. From the Thirty Years War that began the 17th century to the mass destruction of the Second World War, the Alsatian city had been the focus of conflict and division.

Now it is home to an organization striving to bring harmony, safeguard the rule of law and to protect human rights. The rights court was also set up in Strasbourg. "We have in a way constituted the new civilized Europe after World War II" with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) going "much further than the universal declaration of human rights," said Jagland. Today he will meet with French President Emmanuel Macron in Paris, before France assumes the council's rotating presidency in Mid-May.

The host nation picks up the baton at a difficult time for the European Council. For years it has been in dispute with member Russia, which could reach the point of no return in June, notably with the election of Jagland's successor. After Moscow's annexation of Crimea from Ukraine in 2014, the council's Parliamentary Assembly deprived the Russian delegation of its voting and other rights.

In retaliation, Russia suspended its annual 33-million-euro (\$37-million) payment to the Strasbourg-based council - about seven percent of the body's total budget - and has not participated in sessions of the council's Parliamentary Assembly. The assembly brings together 324 men and women from the parliaments of the Council of Europe's 47 member states. Moscow is threatening to quit altogether if its rights within the Council of Europe are not restored in time for it to participate in the election of the new secretary general. — AFP

ment. "There is no God but Allah and Muhammad is His messenger" is a profound concept that sums up the thought and practice of a true Muslim. It is the vision, mission, objective and benchmark of life, all in one.

Courtesy of the TIES Center: the TIES Center aims at empower Kuwait's expats through social and educational services that promote a positive and productive role in society, and to facilitate opportunities for intra- and interfaith interactions that promote social solidarity. For more information, please call 25231015/6 or e-mail: info@tiescenter.net.

been effectively closed to them since 2017, with narrow exceptions made for the immediate family members of residents and for specifically approved events.

The interior ministry was not immediately available for comment. Qatar has a population of around 2.7 million but just over 300,000 nationals, and does not publish statistics breaking down population by nationality. A 2017 report by a private consultancy estimated Egyptians at 200,000. "When you open your arms to Qatar, Qatar will open its arms even bigger for you. But if you become an adversary of Qatar, then we will also treat you as an adversary," Baker said. — Reuters

Shared meals and parades: Indonesia welcomes Ramadan

BANDA ACEH: From cleaning up relatives' graves and sharing food with the poor to holding colorful torch-lit street parades, millions of Indonesians are getting ready to welcome the holy month of Ramadan in the world's populous Muslim-majority country. Ramadan begins today, with devotees fasting from dawn to dusk until Eid celebrations marking the end of the holy month.

In the conservative province of Aceh, Muslim families break their fast by eating meat together and sharing the meal with the poor, in a centuries-old tradition known as Meugang. As customers lined up in wait, butchers in the western province were busy at work, chopping bones and slicing meat. "It's a tradition that we must follow, I'll cook rendang and eat with my family," Ramla, who like many Indonesians has only one name, told AFP, referring to a popular beef stew.

In the capital Jakarta, thousands of Muslims marked the holy month by visiting cemeteries to clean up their relatives' graves and pray for the departed so they would get peace in the afterlife. Outside, flower sellers set up makeshift tents to sell blossoms to visitors so they could scatter petals on their relatives' graves.

"Before the fasting month begins we usually visit each other, but we don't only visit the living ones, we also visit the dead," said Cepi Imamsyah Arian Tandjung, who was visiting the graves of his parents, brother and uncle. About 90 percent of Indonesia's 270 million people follow Islam but influences from other religions are deeply ingrained in the country, including "Nyadran", a Javanese ritual heavily influenced by Hindu and Buddhist traditions.

In Temanggung in Central Java, over a thousand people joined Nyadran celebrations, carrying a round basket filled with food on top of their heads before sharing in a communal feast. In Tangerang, on the outskirts of Jakarta, hundreds of locals bathed in a spring or a river, taking part in a cleansing ritual known as "Padusan" to purify oneself before entering the holy month. In North Sumatra, locals including children wearing traditional dress chanted prayers as they held a torch-lit procession to make the start of Ramadan. — AFP



BANDA ACEH: Indonesian Muslims pray on the first night of the holy month of Ramadan at the Baiturrahman Mosque in Banda Aceh yesterday. — AFP

Deadly escalation as Israel retaliates...

Continued from Page 1

Israel said its strikes were in response to Hamas and Islamic Jihad firing more than 450 rockets or mortars across the border since Saturday, with Israeli air defenses intercepting more than 150.

In addition to those killed and injured, the rockets repeatedly set off air raid alarms in southern Israel and sent residents running to shelters while also damaging houses. The Israeli army said its tanks and planes hit some 260 militant targets in Gaza in response. It targeted mainly militant sites and in some cases militants themselves. Targets included an Islamic Jihad attack tunnel that stretched from southern Gaza into Israeli territory, it said. Two multi-storey buildings in Gaza City were also destroyed.

Israel said one of the buildings included Hamas military intelligence and security offices. Turkey said its state news agency Anadolu had an office in the building, and strongly denounced the strike. Israel said the other building housed Hamas and Islamic Jihad offices. The Gaza health ministry said the dead from the Israeli strikes included a 14-month-old baby and a pregnant woman, 37. It first identified the woman as the baby's mother, but the family clarified yesterday that she was the aunt.

Israeli army spokesman Jonathan Conricus said that based on intelligence "we are now confident" that the deaths of the woman and baby were not due to an Israeli strike. "Their unfortunate death was not a result of (Israeli) weaponry but a Hamas rocket that was fired and exploded not where it was supposed to," he said. Islamic Jihad's armed wing distributed a video showing militants handling rockets and threatening key Israeli sites, including Ben-Gurion international airport near Tel Aviv.

Yesterday, Hamas and Islamic Jihad said their armed

wings had targeted an Israeli army vehicle with a Komet missile. It was unclear if it was hit. Israel closed its crossings with Gaza for people and goods, as well the fishing zone off the enclave's shore, until further notice. Egyptian and UN officials held talks to calm the situation, as they have done repeatedly in the past, while the European Union called for an immediate halt to rocket fire from Gaza.

The UN envoy for the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Nikolay Mladenov, called on "all parties to immediately de-escalate and return to the understandings of the past few months." The United States said it fully supported Israel's "right to self-defense against these abhorrent attacks." Jordan, one of only two Arab countries with a peace treaty with Israel, urged it to "end its aggression against the Gaza Strip and respect international humanitarian law."

The escalation follows Friday clashes along the Gaza border that were the most violent in weeks. Four Palestinians, including two Hamas militants, were killed after two Israeli soldiers were wounded in a shooting during weekly protests on the frontier. Israel and Gaza militants have fought three wars since 2008 and fears remain of a fourth.

A ceasefire between Israel and Hamas, brokered by Egypt and the United Nations, had led to relative calm around Israel's April 9 general election. But recent days saw a gradual uptick in violence, placing the ceasefire at risk. A Hamas delegation led by its Gaza head Yahya Sinwar visited Cairo Thursday for talks with Egyptian officials. The truce has seen Israel allow Qatar to provide millions of dollars in aid to Gaza, paying salaries and financing fuel purchases to ease severe electricity shortages.

Israel has several reasons to seek calm. Netanyahu is engaged in tough negotiations to form a new government following April's election and the country celebrates its Independence Day on Thursday. Israel is also due to host the high-profile Eurovision song contest in Tel Aviv from May 14-18, expected to attract thousands of spectators. On the Gaza side, the Muslim holy month of Ramadan begins in the week ahead. — AFP

The Council of Europe turns 70 amid Russia crisis

STRASBOURG: The Council of Europe, a pan-continental rights watchdog yesterday marked its 70th anniversary at a time of mounting populism and a standoff with Russia as well as doubts over its own role in the modern world. "I didn't know about it at all, this is really completely new to me," admitted Zeinila, an 18-year-old student who was visiting the building hosting the Council of Europe in Strasbourg, in northeastern France, during an open day to mark its anniversary.

The 70-year-old body suffers from being often confused with the European Union Council. But its 47-nation membership stretches far beyond the EU's reaches to include the likes of Russia, Turkey, Switzerland, Armenia and Azerbaijan. Britain's World War II leader Winston Churchill was the first to suggest the creation of such a body back in 1942, at the height of the war, when he expressed the hope that "the European family may act unitedly as one under a Council of Europe".

The rights body was created through the treaty of London in May 1949. There were 10 initial signatories: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom. Their stated mission was to defend human rights, democracy and the rule of law, through international conventions and treaties.

"The main success is that Europe today (the 47 member states) is a totally death penalty-free zone," Council of Europe Secretary General, Norwegian Thorbjorn Jagland said. "If a member state wants to introduce the death penalty, it would have to leave immediately CoE within the session. These three articles — no death penalty, no torture, no forced labor - have in a way constituted the new

Islam in a nutshell...

Continued from Page 1

He provided guidance in all matters of life, whether in the home, on the job, in the marketplace, or on the battlefield. He interacted with men and women, young and old, friends and foes. He taught us how to manage personal relationships and international treaties. He taught us to be fully human, yet quintessentially spiritual. The simple state-

Qatar will not grant visas to...

Continued from Page 1

populous Arab country. Qatar has not said it would deport Egyptian residents already in the country and the comments did not suggest a policy shift that could endanger their status. Many Egyptians say the visa process has

Sports

Braun lifts Brewers over Mets in 18th

Diamondbacks use home runs to defeat Rockies

MILWAUKEE: Ryan Braun's two-run single with one out in the bottom of the 18th inning Saturday night finally capped a marathon game and lifted the host Milwaukee Brewers to a 4-3 win over the New York Mets. The Brewers have won the first two games of the three-game series from the Mets, who took the lead in the top of the 18th on Jeff McNeil's RBI single before falling below .500 (16-17) for the first time this season. Braun's career-high sixth hit ended the longest game for the Brewers since a 10-9, 19-inning win over the Chicago White Sox on May 1, 1991. It was the Mets' longest game since a 3-1, 18-inning win over the St. Louis Cardinals on July 19, 2015. Braun was the only Milwaukee player with multiple hits Saturday. His six-hit game was the first in the majors since teammate Christian Yelich went 6-for-6 against the Cincinnati Reds last Aug. 29. McNeil had three hits, while Alonso and Hechavarria had two apiece.

RED SOX 15, WHITE SOX 2

Xander Bogaerts and Eduardo Nunez hit two-run homers, and rookie Michael Chavis added a solo shot to highlight a nine-run third inning that saw visiting Boston string together 10 consecutive two-out hits en route to a blowout over Chicago. Chavis also homered in the fifth, his third in two games, and finished 4-for-6 with three RBIs, while Christian Vazquez also went 4-for-5 with a run scored. Every Boston starter except Vazquez had at least one RBI, as the Red Sox finished with a season-high 20 hits. Eduardo Rodriguez (3-2) allowed one run on six hits over six innings, striking out six. Chicago starter Manny Banuelos (2-1) retired the first eight batters he faced before the Red Sox broke loose in the third with 11 consecutive batters reaching base, the first 10 on hits.

ORIOLES 3, RAYS 0

Dwight Smith Jr. homered, and Dylan Bundy threw 7 1/3 shutout innings as Baltimore defeated visiting Tampa Bay. Bundy (1-4) gave the Orioles his best start of the season. He gave up just three hits and had four strikeouts and one walk while becoming the first Baltimore starter to make it into the eighth inning this season. Due to worries about the weather, the Rays made the unusual move of changing starting pitchers just over an hour before the game. They were going to go with Ryne Stanek as their opener, but instead shifted to Yonny Chirinos (4-1), who went 7 1/3 innings and allowed three runs on seven hits.

TWINS 7, YANKEES 3

Jake Odorizzi pitched six solid innings, and Minnesota hit three homers to halt an eight-game regular-season road losing streak to New York. Odorizzi (4-2) struck out eight and worked around four walks to win his fourth straight start. He allowed a leadoff single to DJ LeMahieu in the third, a single by Miguel Andujar in the sixth and worked out of a jam in the fourth. Mitch Garver hit a two-run homer while C.J. Cron and Nelson Cruz added solo homers, as the Twins won in New York for the first time since June 26, 2016. Including the playoffs, the Twins are 15-51 in the Bronx since 2002. New York left-hander J.A. Happ (1-3) allowed four runs on seven hits in 5 2/3 innings.

INDIANS 5, MARINERS 4

Carlos Santana belted a go-ahead two-run homer with two outs in the eighth inning as Cleveland beat visiting Seattle. Francisco Lindor homered to lead off the

third inning, and Jake Bauers and Roberto Perez each had a two-out RBI single for the Indians, who have won five straight against the Mariners this season. Former Cleveland slugger Edwin Encarnacion homered to lead off the second inning. Daniel Vogelbach followed suit in the fourth and Tim Beckham did the same in the eighth. Dylan Moore also went deep for slumping Seattle, which has lost six in a row and 15 of its last 20.

NATIONALS 10, PHILLIES 8

Kurt Suzuki hit a pinch-hit, three-run homer in the eighth inning off Adam Morgan, and Victor Robles followed with a solo shot off the lefty, as injury-plagued Washington battled back to beat Philadelphia in a wild contest. The Nationals made three errors but won for just the fifth time in 15 games. Washington lost first baseman Matt Adams (jammed left shoulder) and center fielder Michael A. Taylor (hand) to injuries. Morgan (1-1) entered the game having allowed no runs and just five hits in 16 outings this season. Jean Segura had three hits, and J.T. Realmuto drove in three runs for the Phillies, who had scored five in the seventh to lead 8-5 before the bullpen imploded.

BRAVES 9, MARLINS 2

Ozzie Albies hit a go-ahead grand slam in the sixth inning, leading Atlanta to victory over host Miami. Albies went 2-for-6 with five RBIs, but he wasn't Atlanta's only star. Catcher Brian McCann went 2-for-4 with three RBIs, and left fielder Ronald Acuna Jr. tied his career high with four hits, going 4-for-4 and raising his batting average from .270 to .294. Mike Soroka (3-1) earned the win, allowing three hits—all singles—two walks and two runs, none earned. Marlins reliever Nick Anderson (0-1) took the loss in relief, allowing five runs—including Albies' slam—in 1 2/3 innings. His ERA rose from 2.08 to 4.91.

ASTROS 14, ANGELS 2

Houston scored in each of the first six innings and cruised over Los Angeles in Monterrey, Mexico, its sixth straight win against L.A., including the final five contests between the two teams last season. Of the Astros' 14 hits, 10 went for extra bases, including two home runs by Alex Bregman and one homer each by Michael Brantley, George Springer and Yuli Gurriel. Brantley also had a double and four RBIs, Gurriel had a triple and two RBIs, and Bregman had three hits and four RBIs. For the first time this season, Angels outfielder Mike Trout did not reach base via a hit or walk, going 0-for-4 with one strikeout. He had reached base in his first 29 games of the season, setting a new club record.

RANGERS 8, BLUE JAYS 5

Isiah Kiner-Falefa had a career-high four RBIs, and Texas evened the three-game series against Toronto in Arlington, Texas. Kiner-Falefa delivered a three-run triple in the second inning and a run-scoring fielder's choice in the third to help the Rangers to an 8-2 lead. Nomar Mazara homered, and Logan Forsythe drove in two runs for Texas, which lost 1-0 in 12 innings in the series opener on Friday night. Rowdy Tellez and Billy McKinney each had two hits, Eric Sogard had two RBIs and scored twice, and Vladimir Guerrero Jr. drove in his first major league run for the Blue Jays.

DOGERS 7, PADRES 6

Alex Verdugo drew a bases-loaded walk from San



MILWAUKEE: Ryan Braun #8 of the Milwaukee Brewers hits a single in the 18th inning to beat the New York Mets 4-3 at Miller Park in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. — AFP

Diego closer Kirby Yates with two out in the ninth inning to give visiting Los Angeles Dodgers a one-run win. Yates (0-2) has been the losing pitcher each of the last two nights after converting 14 straight save opportunities to be named the National League Relief Pitcher of Month for April. Ross Stripling (2-2) earned the win for the Dodgers. Kenley Jansen picked up his second save in as many nights to give him 12 on the season. The game lasted four hours and 12 minutes—the longest nine-inning game in the history of Petco Park.

DIAMONDBACKS 9, ROCKIES 2

Nick Ahmed, Carson Kelly and David Peralta clubbed homers as Arizona rolled over Colorado in Denver. Right-hander Luke Weaver (3-1) gave up one run and three hits over seven innings for the Diamondbacks. Weaver struck out eight and walked one while winning his third straight decision. Arizona has scored 19 runs while winning the first two games of the series. The Diamondbacks have won four straight and nine of their past 11 games, while Colorado has dropped five of seven.

REDS 9, GIANTS 2

Five Reds players smacked home runs, and host Cincinnati didn't let a big lead slip away this time around in an easy win over San Francisco in the second game of a four-game series. One day after blowing an eight-run lead, the Reds used home runs by Eugenio Suarez, Tucker Barnhart, Derek Dietrich, Nick Senzel and Yasiel Puig to build a seven-run advantage in the rematch, which was more than enough for Cincinnati starter Tanner Roark (2-1) and two relievers. Puig had three of Cincinnati's nine hits as the Reds continued an offensive dominance over Giants pitching that dates back three years. The Reds have won eight of their last nine at home against the Giants, scoring 77 runs in those games. Duggar had two of San Francisco's five hits.

CUBS 6, CARDINALS 5

Javier Baez hit a go-ahead home run in the eighth inning, and Chicago rallied to beat visiting St. Louis. Backup catcher Taylor Davis clubbed a grand slam for his first career home run for Chicago, which won its sixth game in a row. The Cubs will go for the three-game sweep against the Cardinals in the series finale Sunday night. Matt Carpenter and pitcher Michael Wacha drove in two runs apiece to lead the Cardinals at the plate.

PIRATES 6, A'S 4

Kevin Newman's two-run triple and Francisco Cervelli's RBI single produced a three-run seventh inning as Pittsburgh rallied past visiting Oakland. Josh Bell homered twice for Pittsburgh, which has won three of its past four. Pittsburgh starter Trevor Williams allowed four runs and eight hits in six innings, with five strikeouts and one walk. Michael Feliz (1-0) pitched one scoreless inning. Felipe Vazquez pitched the ninth for his ninth save. Kris Davis was 2-for-4 with two RBIs and a run scored for the A's, who have lost seven of eight. Oakland starter Chris Bassitt gave up three runs and five hits in five innings, with six strikeouts and two walks. J.B. Wendelken (0-1) gave up the three runs in the seventh.

ROYALS 15, TIGERS 3

Alex Gordon had three hits, including a homer, and drove in five runs as visiting Kansas City routed Detroit while setting season highs in runs and hits (19). Whit Merrifield homered, rookie Kelvin Gutierrez had his first career four-hit game, Jorge Soler had three hits and two RBIs, and Adalberto Mondesi had two hits, three RBIs and three runs scored as the Royals evened the series. Jeimer Candelario and Ronny Rodriguez homered for the Tigers, whose pitching staff allowed 10 walks in defeat. — Reuters

WFF PRO-AM
bodybuilding
championship
concludes

By Nawara Fattahova

KUWAIT: One hundred ninety-seven bodybuilders from 22 countries including Kuwait are participating in the WFF PRO-AM Bodybuilding and Bermuda Beach Model International Championship at the Radisson Hotel. The event is organized by the Rasalsalmiya Fitness Gym Center. The championship consists of five categories for the Bermuda beach model, seven categories for bodybuilding, and two for professional. Seven international judges from various countries are judging the competitors. The first three winners of each category will receive a medal and trophy, and the first winner will also receive \$3,000.

Fitness Manager of Rasalsalmiya Fitness Gym Center Mohamed Salama said this is the second edition of this championship, and they plan to organize it annually. "This championship could be held in any other country in the Middle East in the future. Participation is open to any nationality. Kuwait, Iran and Egypt have the largest number of participants," Salama told Kuwait Times.

"The competition includes categories of different



ages including teenagers (under 20 years), juniors (under 30 years), over 30 years, and under 172 cm and above 172 cm height for the Bermuda beach model. Bodybuilding has five categories for different weights, one category under 24 years old, and one category of above 50 years old," he explained. "I aim to promote the sport in general and how we can learn from it. We should not just focus on practicing sports, the performance or

nutrition, but we should have full awareness about related issues. This is our goal for the championship and this sport in general," concluded Salama.

The first winner in each category are :

The bodybuilding categories: Sameh Abdelmalek in Extreme category, Sam Rezaelour in Fitness category, Nader Zareinour in Athletic category, Hossein Haider in

Super body category, Ahmed Elsayed in Junior category, and Javad Lalavi in Performance. The overall winner is Sameh Abdelmalek.

Bermuda beach model categories: Aravind Ravikumar in Short category, Alireza Kheirkah in Tall category, Geite Mardiroosi in Over 30 years category, and Yousef Ali Hamed in Teenager category. The overall winner was Aravind Ravikumar. — Photos by Yasser Al-Zayyat



Sports



Salto gymnast Margarita Mamonova at the Styrx Sports Rhythmic Gymnastics Cup 2019. Margarita won one gold and two silver medals in the competition.



Eleven year old Tamara Buhamad won three gold medals representing Kuwait at a gymnastics competition in Dubai this year.

Feature

Competitive gymnastics comes to Kuwait

'Young gymnasts represent Kuwait in competitions regionally and internationally'

By Sarah Ahmed

Eleven year old Tamara Buhamad has been practicing gymnastics in Kuwait for more than five years. This year she won three gold medals at a competition in Dubai, a proud moment for the young Kuwaiti athlete.

Slender with sparkling blue eyes, Tamara represents a growing trend of girls in Kuwait taking to the world famous sport of gymnastics and pursuing it to the competitive level. Competing, "makes us stronger," says the young gymnast. "When you go out on the floor, at first you feel scared but then you just feel confident and want to have fun."

There are no national teams for gymnastics in Kuwait so local clubs are pioneering the sport in the country. Now many of them are building competitive teams that are representing the oil-rich nation in competitions regionally and internationally.

The two most popular types of gymnastics taught by private clubs in Kuwait are artistic and rhythmic gymnastics.

"We were the first to open an artistic gymnastics school in Kuwait in 2017," explains Viktoria Marafie, co-owner of Salto gymnastics in Shuwaikh. "Artistic gymnastics is the foundation for all gymnastics. It includes four apparatus - beam, bars, floor and vault - and is a huge investment for a private club because of the space and height requirements. But we wanted a truly professional club that could prepare competitive gymnasts up to the highest levels of the sport. That is why all our coaches have not only a Masters of sport but also a Bachelor's degree in their area of expertise, for instance in artistic gymnastics, so that they can also



Salto gymnastics scored an historic first when they were the first Kuwaiti club to take part in an international Artistic Gymnastics competition in Amman in February. The Kuwait team won 1st place Team All Around Level 2 and 2nd place Team All Around as well as several individual medals.



know the pedagogical methods for teaching gymnastics as well," Marafie said.

Rhythmic gymnastics is a mix of dance/choreography and gymnastic elements jumps, balances, twists, and performance either freehand or also with ropes, hoops, clubs, ribbons and balls. Both types require dedication and commitment - from students and parents.

The benefits of gymnastics for children are many. Gymnastics is an 'all body' sport - it develops strength, muscle memory, flexibility, discipline, balance, depth perception, overall conditioning. Gymnastics is often utilized by athletes in other areas like football and soccer to build their overall conditioning and especially for men, to strengthen their upper body.

Children as young as three can begin developmental gymnastics focusing on fun and interactive games that encourage balance, conditioning and preparing to learn the foundational skills. Around the age of five, kids move into working on compulsory routines organized by levels.

At the competitive level, clubs like Salto are developing young women who can compete in the region and internationally. "We have recently adopted the USAG guidelines and standards for our club because its more widely used as the standard in competitions regionally and internationally," notes Marafie. "Salto girls have competed in in artistic competitions in Amman and will soon in the UAE as well as rhythmic

competitions in the region and internationally. But the level of competition is fierce, especially in Europe where girls are trained from an early age and focused on making gymnastics their career. We don't have that here where gymnastics is more a recreational sport and students do not view it as a long term career option."

Private clubs are the main organizers for competitions and interest in gymnastic meets have led to an increased number of competitions being held in the region including in Abu Dhabi, Amman, Doha and Dubai. For Kuwait, however, hosting competitions remains a distant possibility. While the clubs here have the talent, resources and specialized coaches to put on

a competition, obtaining visas for visiting gymnasts, coaches and parents would be a challenge.

"We could do it and would love to if the visas weren't a problem," says Marafie. "Hopefully it's something we will be able to do in the future."

In the meantime, local clubs continue to train girls and boys in Kuwait for competitions abroad. Margarita Mamonova, a nine year old gymnast at Salto, recently won a gold medal and two silver medals at the competition in Dubai for rhythmic gymnastics. "It was scary but when you get on the carpet, you focus and just do it." This young gymnast is already training for her next competition.



Sports

Rockets edge Warriors in NBA overtime thriller

Green posted his sixth career playoff triple-double with 19 points

LOS ANGELES: James Harden out-dueled Kevin Durant down the stretch to lift the Houston Rockets to a 126-121 overtime victory over Golden State on Saturday that trimmed the deficit in their NBA play-off series.

Harden drained a three-pointer with 49 seconds left in overtime and after Durant made three free throws he added a step-back floater that proved the final dagger.

"Close the game—that's what I'm here for, that's what I do," said Harden, who finished with 41 points, nine rebounds and six assists. "He's phenomenal." Rockets coach Mike D'Antoni said of Harden. "I don't even think he played great-in Harden-world. He could even go up to another level."

The Rockets, coming off back-to-back defeats on Golden State's home floor in Oakland, California, narrowed the gap in the best-of-seven Western Conference second-round series to 2-1. The Rockets withstood a 46-point performance from Durant, who threatened to spoil the Rockets' return home when he opened the fourth quarter on a 10-2 scoring spree that saw the Warriors turn a seven-point deficit into a 94-93 lead. In a see-saw final period, two free throws from Harden knotted the score at 112-112 with 38.7 seconds left. Durant missed a jump shot and then Houston point guard Chris Paul got wrapped up by Klay Thompson and Durant as he drove for a basket and it went to overtime. "It's going to be a fight, every possession, every game," Harden said. "You've got to be physically tough, mentally tough."

Forward Eric Gordon scored 30 points — 20 in the first half—and Clint Capela added 13 points and 11

rebounds for the Rockets. In addition to Durant's big night, Draymond Green posted his sixth career playoff triple-double with 19 points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists for the Warriors.

Andre Iguodala scored 16 points, connecting on three of four three-pointers to help the Warriors challenge despite a poor shooting night for Stephen Curry and Thompson, who combined to make just four of 15 from three-point range.

CURRY'S TOUGH NIGHT

Curry, who finished with 17 points, scored zero in the fourth quarter and overtime with four fouls. He missed both a layup and a dunk with his team trailing in the extra session. "He just had a tough night," Warriors coach Steve Kerr said of Curry. "It doesn't matter how good you are, you're going to have some bad games—just a tough night for him. It just didn't happen."

After D'Antoni had urged his players to "get down in the mud" and toughen up defensively for game three, Kerr noted Houston's response. "Let's be honest, it would have been a steal if we won that game. They outplayed us," said Kerr, noting that after a dismal rebounding effort in game two the Rockets had 20 more rebounds than the Warriors.

"They were the more physical, aggressive team right from the beginning," Kerr said. "We made that run in the fourth quarter based on Kevin's brilliance, and I felt like we started competing better at that point."

Overall, however, Kerr couldn't begrudge the Rockets the victory. "I thought they deserved to win," he said. — AFP



HOUSTON: Kevin Durant #35 of the Golden State Warriors takes a three-point shot defended by James Harden #13 of the Houston Rockets in the first half during Game Three of the Second Round of the 2019 NBA Western Conference Playoffs at Toyota Center in Houston, Texas.— AFP

Osaka plays through pain, beats Cibulkova

MADRID: Naomi Osaka eased concerns about her form and fitness by coming through a tricky first round against Dominika Cibulkova yesterday at the Madrid Open. Osaka has struggled since splitting with her coach Sascha Bajin in February while an abdominal injury forced her to withdraw in Stuttgart eight days ago, creating doubts about her challenge at the French Open later this month.

But there was little sign of physical problems during a testing 6-2, 7-6 (8/6) victory over Cibulkova and afterwards, Osaka said: "I feel good. I don't have much

pain in my abs so that's always a good sign."

The Japanese will now face the winner of an all-Spanish tie between Lara Arruabarrena and Sara Sorribes Tormo in round two. Osaka looked set for a more comfortable passage after a dominant opening set but she was stretched by the battling Cibulkova in the second.

By the end, Osaka had hit 43 winners to her opponent's 23. The world number one's pair of grand slam successes have come on hard, at the US and Australian Opens, but she is yet to find her best on clay.

If the abdominal injury has healed, Osaka can feel encouraged by her performance against Cibulkova, one of the tour's gutsiest competitors even if the Slovakian is also enduring a difficult start to 2019.

Osaka dropped serve in the third game but immediately hit back, a ripped backhand return too good for

Cibulkova to retrieve. Cibulkova played deep behind the baseline, allowing her opponent time to dictate as Osaka won five consecutive games to claim the set.

The second began like the first, with Cibulkova breaking early and she held the advantage until 4-3, only for a fourth double fault to allow Osaka back in. Three well-executed drop-shots from Cibulkova squared the set at 5-5 and an irritated Osaka, whacking her racket against her foot, was taken to a tie-break.

But frustration seemed to invigorate Osaka, who pulled 5-2 clear after a superb backhand winner. Cibulkova fought back to 5-5 and then saved a match point, on Osaka's serve, to level again. A big serve gave Osaka another chance and this time she took it, as Cibulkova went long to leave her relieved opponent pumping her fist after an hour and 55 minutes.—AFP

Live		Matches on TV (Local Timings)	
ENGLISH PREMIER LEAGUE			
Manchester City v Leicester City		22:00	
beIN SPORTS			
ITALIAN CALCIO LEAGUE			
AC Milan v Bologna FC		21:30	
beIN SPORTS			

Brisbane joins 2032 Summer Olympic bid

GOLD COAST: Brisbane is using a meeting of world sport movers and shakers in the nearby Gold Coast to start pushing a possible bid for the 2032 Summer Olympics. With the next two Olympics in Europe and North America, the 2032 Games should logically take place in the Asia-Pacific region.

Because Paris, in 2024 and Los Angeles, in 2028, were selected unopposed in 2017, the International Olympic Committee also needs a healthy slate of candidates to restore faith in the process.

The IOC will not select a host until 2025, but already several cities have bids in various stages of public development.

Jakarta, which hosted the last Asian Games, has officially applied. Mumbai has expressed interest.

In February, the IOC encouraged a joint bid from the two Koreas, to continue the rapprochement Olympic officials believe was initiated at the Winter Games in Pyeongchang in 2018 where the two Koreas marched under a common flag.

The Australian state of Queensland hosted the Commonwealth Games in Gold Coast in 2018.

With the five day SportAccord convention, which brings together the international sports federations, under the patronage of the IOC, opening in the surf resort on Sunday, it is the turn of the state capital, Brisbane, to push to host a major event.

IOC President Thomas Bach, repeated in Sydney on Saturday that he does not want "too many losers" among the candidates, suggesting that some cities might be discouraged from continuing their bids.

Bach, who is expected in Gold Coast on Tuesday, was in Sydney, Olympic host in 2000, at the invitation of John Coates, president of the Australian Olympic Committee.

Bach said Brisbane's feasibility study perfectly reflected the requirements of the IOC, particularly regarding the use of existing facilities.

He told a press conference in Sydney on Sunday that if the region improved its transport network, "would lead to, I think, a pretty strong candidature". "The first stage is for the Australians and for the Queenslanders, to say 'yes we want to be a host to the entire world'," he added.

On Monday, Bach will be in Brisbane where he will meet the mayor and visit the facilities. Bach became IOC president in 2013 and, under current IOC rules, he can serve a maximum of two terms, the first of eight years, the second of four years. If he is re-elected in 2021, the 2025 would come at the end of his reign.

"It is possible the decision for 2032 would be taken as one of the last big decisions of his 12 year presidency. In a way the 2032 Host City could define Bach's legacy," said a consultant on condition of anonymity.

The selections of Paris and Los Angeles came after numerous cities, including Budapest, Rome, Calgary, Boston and Hamburg, expressed interest then dropped out, several after being officially accepted as candidates.

The problem is continuing in finding a host for the 2026 Winter Games. The IOC will choose between Milan/Cortina and Stockholm/Åre on June 24 after local opposition forced Sion in Switzerland and Graz/Schladming (Austria) to withdraw.

"The current batch of high profile cities/nations expressing interest for 2032 has been quietly and efficiently orchestrated by the IOC to help counter the received wisdom that the bid process is in trouble," said the consultant.—AFP

Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah re-elected as president of KTF

KUWAIT: President of Arab and Kuwait Tennis Federations (KTF) Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah received a letter of congratulations from President of the International Tennis Federation David Haggerty on the occasion of his re-election as president of Kuwait Tennis Federation.

In his letter, Haggerty wished Sheikh Ahmad and the board of directors all success, as the International and Kuwait Tennis Federations are developing a close collaboration and understanding and working together to develop, grow, and promote the sport in Kuwait as a leading tennis nation in the Arab region.

ITF president sees a positive future as Sheikh Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah Tennis Complex is to be opened soon and ITF is looking forward to supporting the KTF as it fulfils this potential in the coming years.

Meanwhile, Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah received a similar congratulatory letter from President of Asian Tennis Federation Anil Khanna in which he wished KTF all success under the leadership of Sheikh Ahmad and his team.

Kuwait Tennis Federation had earlier held its general assembly, during which the administrative and financial reports were presented and a new board of directors was elected as follows:

- Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Abdullah Al-Sabah - Chairman,**
- Abdelsamad Al-Aryan - Deputy Chairman**
- Faleh Al-Otaibi - Secretary General**
- Ali Al-Daihani - Treasurer**
- Ali Hayat - Assistant Secretary General**
- Saleh Al-Sarawi - Member**
- Khalid Al-Musallam - Member**
- Fuad Mushari - Member.**



KUWAIT: File photo shows President of International Tennis Federation David Haggerty presenting a memento to President of KTF Sheikh Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah.

Liverpool turn to Rodgers to halt City

MANCHESTER: Manchester City must overhaul Liverpool once more in a titanic Premier League title race when Leicester boss Brendan Rodgers attempts to help out his old club at the Etihad today. The destiny of the title remains in City's hands as Pep Guardiola's men have two games to play to Liverpool's one.

But the Reds refuse to give up on a first league title in 29 years as Divock Origi's late winner in a thrilling 3-2 victory at Newcastle on Saturday sent them two points ahead at the top of the table once more. Rodgers came closer to ending that drought than any other Liverpool boss over the past three decades as his side fell just two points short of City in 2013/14. And in just over two months in charge, the Northern Irishman has rejuvenated the Foxes to give Leicester an outside chance of European football

next season if they win their final two games of the season.

"I think Brendan shows his incredible quality as a manager that in just two months his team play already they way he wants to play," said City boss Pep Guardiola. "They are so fast players, they have incredible quality. I was really impressed with the way they play, the players know it will be an incredible task for us, but of course it's already a final for us." However, Liverpool have been waiting a long time for City to slip up. Guardiola's men are on a 12-game winning run in the Premier League and have had the rare luxury of eight days off since they edged out Burnley 1-0 last weekend.

Yet, with City travelling to lowly Brighton on the final day of the season with the Seagulls now safe after Cardiff's relegation on Saturday, Leicester

and Rodgers present their best chance of springing a surprise. The Foxes beat City when the sides last met in December and held Liverpool at Anfield in January. Leicester also thrashed Arsenal 3-0 last weekend in their most complete performance since Rodgers took charge and Jamie Vardy has enjoyed the change of management more than most by bagging nine goals in eight games.

"We've got real speed in the team. You've got to be super compact as a team and tight," said Rodgers on the thread of Vardy. "They're littered with world class players and world class players will always find the space."

"You've got to try and nullify the space and then you know that when you break through that pressure there's going to be space, and that's something this team are very, very good at." — AFP

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27 Rockets edge Warriors in NBA overtime thriller



Chelsea secure Champions League return

Arsenal top-four hopes all but over after Brighton draw



LONDON: Chelsea's French striker Olivier Giroud (R) shoots but fails to score during the English Premier League football match between Chelsea and Watford at Stamford Bridge in London. Chelsea won the match 3-0. — AFP

LONDON: Chelsea secured a top-four Premier League finish and qualification for next season's Champions League after a 3-0 home win against Watford yesterday. Quickfire headers from Ruben Loftus-Cheek and David Luiz early in the second half put them in control and Argentine marksman Gonzalo Higuain added a third in the 75th minute.

However, Chelsea had to wait for Arsenal's 1-1 draw at home to Brighton & Hove Albion long after the final whistle at Stamford Bridge to confirm they would finish in the top four. The battle for the third and fourth spots behind runaway leaders Liverpool and Manchester City had become a comedy of errors in recent weeks with all the contenders dropping points with reckless abandon.

And it was fifth-placed Arsenal's draw

with Brighton that meant Chelsea would finish no lower than fourth—guaranteeing a return to Europe's elite club competition. With one game left Chelsea are third with 71 points, a point clear of Tottenham Hotspur in fourth and four ahead of Arsenal.

SECOND-HALF RALLY

It looked as though Chelsea were set to follow nine-man Tottenham's slip-up in a 1-0 defeat at Bournemouth on Saturday and Manchester United's earlier 1-1 draw at relegated Huddersfield as they struggled in a frenzied first half.

Watford had the better chances with Troy Deeney, Gerard Deulofeu and Jose Holebas all lively, but Chelsea, booed off at the break, came out flying in the second half. Loftus-Cheek found the net in the 48th minute after a Hazard short corner

and one-two with Pedro, the Belgian lifting the ball to the far post where the tall midfielder nodded it home. Moments later Brazilian defender Luiz headed Chelsea's second goal, straight from a Hazard corner, before the home side improved their goal difference with the third from Higuain via a Pedro assist.

Both teams have preoccupations away from the league, with Chelsea level at 1-1 as they prepare to face Eintracht Frankfurt in their Europa League semi-final, second leg on Thursday and Watford meeting Manchester City in the FA Cup final on May 18. "The schedule is tough, but when you have fantastic players, more than just 11, we can rotate and have the same quality," Luiz said. "We have that. It's tough but it's tough for everybody." Chelsea's players and their families did a lap of honour after their last

home league game of the season, with club captain Gary Cahill, who is leaving after 6-1/2 years at Stamford Bridge, leading his team mates out.

The former England defender won two Premier League titles, two FA Cups, a League Cup, a Champions League and a Europa League trophy with the west London club but has fallen out of favour under coach Maurizio Sarri this season.

Meanwhile, Arsenal's hopes of claiming a Champions League place via a top-four finish are all but over after Unai Emery's side were held to a 1-1 draw by Brighton & Hove Albion yesterday. Needing victory to keep their top-four chances realistically alive after Chelsea had earlier beaten Watford, Arsenal got the perfect start when referee Anthony Taylor pointed to the spot after Alireza Jahanbakhsh impeded Nacho

Monreal. Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang made no mistake with the penalty to notch up his 20th league goal of the season. There was a nervousness about Arsenal, however, and Brighton grew into the game, with the threat of relegation removed by Cardiff City's defeat on Saturday.

The visitors were level in the 61st minute when the dangerous Solly March made a strong goalwards run and Granit Xhaka was panicked into conceding a penalty that Murray converted. In an end-to-end climax both teams went close to scoring but the final whistle was met with stunned silence by the Emirates crowd.

With one game left, Arsenal are four points adrift of third-placed Chelsea and three behind Tottenham Hotspur, whose goal difference is eight better than the Gunners. — Reuters

Man Utd's Champions League hopes end by Huddersfield draw

HUDDERSFIELD: Manchester United's hopes of Champions League football next season were ended after an embarrassing 1-1 draw at already relegated Huddersfield yesterday. United have now won just two of their past 11 games in all competitions as Huddersfield ended a run of eight straight defeats despite goalkeeper Jonas Loss's error handing the visitors an early lead through Scott McTominay.

Terrible defending from Ole Gunnar Solskjaer's men gave the Terriers something to celebrate in their final home game before heading down to the Championship as Isaac Mbenza levelled on the hour mark.

Chelsea's 3-0 victory over Watford means United fall four points outside the top four with just one game of the season to go. And failure to beat statistically one of the worst teams ever to play in the Premier League will see further questions raised over the decision to hand Solskjaer a three-year contract in March.

The Norwegian has bemoaned United's lack of goals of late and recalled Alexis Sanchez to his starting line-up for the first time in two months in the search for more firepower. But the Chilean again failed to live up to his status as the club's highest earner before limping off just before the hour mark.

Instead the visitors had to rely on Huddersfield for a

helping hand as McTominay's strike from the edge of the box went straight through Loss's legs after just eight minutes. United quickly got the game restarted as they sought more goals to improve their inferior goal difference compared to their rivals for a top-four finish.

However, even against a Huddersfield side that previously registered just 14 points all season, United could not press home their advantage. Juan Mata curled inches wide after some neat interplay between Marcus Rashford and Paul Pogba before Pogba also saw a looping header come back off the crossbar.

Solskjaer had kept faith with David de Gea in goal despite three high-profile errors leading to goals in his previous four games. Huddersfield did not even test De Gea's nerve until five minutes before the break when Karlan Grant broke clear after an errant clearance from Phil Jones. However, De Gea spread himself well to

block a weak finish with his legs. Huddersfield had only scored nine goals at home all season, but one hopeful punt from Loss cut United open for the equaliser on the hour mark.

Luke Shaw failed to cut out the Danish goalkeeper's clearance and allowed Mbenza a clear run on goal to slot between De Gea's legs. A lengthy delay then ensued as a new corner flag was found to replace the one Mbenza kicked over and snapped in celebration.

And the wait at least gave United time to awake from their slumber. Rashford and teenager Tahith Chong, who replaced Sanchez, forced Loss into saves low to his left. Pogba then hit the crossbar for the second time in the game with a curling effort from the edge of the area. But in their desperation for a winner, United could have succumbed to another stunning defeat as De Gea was called on to deny Grant a memorable winner. —AFP